



**QUESTION TIME**  
OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**HANSARD**

Edited proof transcript

Tuesday, 31 July 2018

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**Questions without notice**  
**Dickson land swap**

**MR COE:** I have a question for the Chief Minister. On 6 June I asked you a question about documents that were alleged to be missing regarding the economic development directorate's dealings with the CFMEU regarding the land swap and the Tradies. You stated, Chief Minister:

I am not aware of an internal investigation on this matter. I will seek advice from the directorate. It is not my directorate, as the Leader of the Opposition would be aware.

Chief Minister, why did you claim that your directorate was not responsible for this land swap?

**MR BARR:** I did not. The Leader of the Opposition has misinterpreted my answer.

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, has an internal investigation been held into the missing documents from the Tradies land swap?

**MR BARR:** The claim has been made that there are missing documents. That has yet to be verified.

**MS LAWDER:** Chief Minister, why was the records management of your directorate related to this issue so poor?

**MR BARR:** That is a matter that the directorate and the Auditor-General have examined.

**ACTION bus service—Xpresso services**

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services and it is about Xpresso bus services. I have attended three public meetings where officials stated that Xpressos were only four per cent of bus patronage but have not given information about which Xpresso services are busy and which are not. Minister, will you release the patronage data for all Xpresso services so the community can make an informed decision or have informed views about which Xpresso services are valuable?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Yes, we can do that in the context of the consultation on the new bus network. There is a lot of information available on the your say website. We are looking to supplement that information. I will include the patronage data on Xpressos with that.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Minister, some of the new rapids will largely replace the Xpresso services, for example the—

**Mr Hanson:** Preamble!

**MADAM SPEAKER:** To the question, Ms Le Couteur.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Will you release travel time comparisons between the previous systems for the Xpressos and the new ones planned, so that passengers can see how much quicker or slower the new service will be?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Ms Le Couteur for the supplementary question. I will take that on notice. We will do our best to provide like for like travel time comparisons.

**MS CODY:** Minister, could you please expand on the consultation process and how that is going along?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Thank you, Ms Cody. It is a wonderful opportunity to outline this. This is exactly the kind of public discussion that we want to have about our transport network. We want to have a public discussion with the Canberra community about the types of bus services that will best service our community.

**Mr Coe:** You also said in your document that you weren't open to changing it.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Madam Speaker, the very point of consultation is to receive feedback. I have also said publicly that there may well be changes that will be made, but we do not—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members on my left!

**MS FITZHARRIS:** As I have said publicly, and as has been clear, as I understand it, from the many community consultations, workshops and meetings that have been attended, we are seeking feedback in order to design the network. That is exactly the purpose of public consultation. For those members of the public who have contacted me, we are keen to get as much information as we can through the your say website, through the huge variety of public consultation activities that are underway, so that we can further refine the proposed network that has gone out. That is exactly the purpose of genuine consultation. That is exactly what the government is doing.

With these changes, for those people who are current users of the system, we want to do everything we can to retain their confidence. This is one of the most significant changes to our public transport network that we have seen in this city. It is based on significant previous community consultation where Canberrans have told us very clearly that they want more frequent, more reliable bus services seven days a week. That is what the new network will deliver. It will deliver 10 rapid services, an increase on the government's previous commitment, as well as our commitment to deliver light rail. We really look forward to bringing all of the feedback together and releasing a new design of the network following assessment of that feedback.

### **Land—Dickson land swap**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to the Chief Minister regarding the Territory Records

Act. Chief Minister, what action have you taken to ensure that missing documents related to the land swap with the Tradies club are found?

**MR BARR:** There is an allegation that there are missing documents, and that is being investigated.

**MS LAWDER:** Chief Minister, which agency or directorate was responsible for maintaining those records, the LDA, the economic development directorate or which other directorate?

**MR BARR:** It would depend on the nature of documents we are being asked to speculate on. Certainly those two agencies, the LDA and the economic development directorate, may indeed be the most likely agencies to have the documents that are alleged to be missing. But it is really difficult for me to speculate on that at this point.

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, is it your understanding that there are missing documents or that there is a chronic shortage of documentation regarding your property deals?

**MR BARR:** I am aware of an allegation that was aired by a member of the opposition in a committee hearing. I am aware of a media report in relation to a former official who has indicated that he believes that there may be some notes of his that have not been forwarded to the Auditor-General. That is the extent of the allegations at this point. There are, of course, processes underway. I am obviously not personally seeking to find these documents. These matters are appropriately being investigated by the relevant directorate.

### **Trade unions—CFMEU**

**MR WALL:** My question is to the Chief Minister. I refer to media reports on 26 July 2018 about the CFMEU campaign on the so-called local jobs code. How much influence is the CFMEU seeking over ACT government contracts and purchasing decisions?

**MR BARR:** None.

**MR WALL:** Chief Minister, was your statement on the local jobs code in your speech this morning prompted by the pamphlet distributed last week by the CFMEU in your electorate?

**MR BARR:** No. It was prompted by the deeply held values shared by all members of the Labor Party about the rights of working people to be represented by unions.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Resume your seat. Members, you asked a question. Allow the answer. Chief Minister.

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. All members of the Labor Party share that important value that we believe that working people should be able to be represented by their union. That is a very straightforward statement of principle. It is interesting

that those opposite who proudly profess to believe in freedom of association support laws that restrict the ability of workers to be members of and to be properly represented by the unions. What we see—

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Coe, that is enough.

**MR BARR:** What we see is the far right of the Liberal Party once again on display: the extreme right wing agenda, the industrial relations agenda of Mr Wall writ large yet again. He hates unions. The Canberra Liberals hate unions. This is what we have come to expect from the conservatives in ACT politics.

**MRS DUNNE:** Chief Minister, does the CFMEU still have the capacity to threaten preselection of government members if they do not get what they want in the local jobs code?

**MR BARR:** Mrs Dunne, I am sure, would be aware that the Labor Party has a very democratic system of rank and file preselection.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Coe, I know we have had several weeks away from question time, but please control yourself.

**MR BARR:** Decisions on preselection for the Labor Party are made by the rank and file members of the Labor Party.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members of the opposition—

*Mrs Dunne interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mrs Dunne, side commentary—please leave it for after adjournment. Ms Cody, you have a question without notice.

**Ms Cody:** I certainly do.

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members! I am going to start warning folk soon. Ms Cody has the call.

### **Economy—performance**

**MS CODY:** Thank you; I could barely hear you, Madam Speaker. My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, the most recent Deloitte Access Economics business outlook report describes Canberra's economy as being "on a roll". What do recent indicators say about the performance of our economy?

**MR BARR:** I thank Ms Cody for the question. We have seen a period of sustained economic growth for the territory. Our annual gross state product is expected to reach 4½ per cent in the 2017-18 fiscal year, following growth of 4.6 per cent in 2016-17. This means that the ACT's economy is growing faster than that of any other Australian state or territory.

Commensurate with that economic growth has been a very strong result for the labour market. Employment has risen by almost three per cent, with 6,600 more jobs added during the 2017-18 fiscal year. Residential building approvals are up through the year. Our population is growing very strongly. People are coming here for work and we have also seen another record year of international visitation, with tourist numbers rising almost 17 per cent.

In describing Canberra's economy as being "on a roll", Deloitte has also forecast that our strong growth will continue into the coming years. The combination of continued growth of our education sector, more people being attracted to Canberra and the territory government's investments in major infrastructure works are all supporting a very positive outlook for the territory's economy.

**MS CODY:** Chief Minister, how are Canberrans seeing the benefits of sustained, strong growth in our local economy?

**MR BARR:** The latest data shows that Canberra's unemployment rate is now 3.5 per cent. This is not only the lowest unemployment rate in the country but also the lowest rate locally for more than six years. The number of job vacancies in Canberra rose by almost 25 per cent over the past year, even as our population grew very strongly. We are very pleased to see that our strong economy is delivering more jobs for younger Canberrans. I was particularly pleased to see that our youth unemployment rate is now at six per cent, which is significantly lower than 12 months ago and is five percentage points lower than the national average. Our youth unemployment rate is six per cent; nationally it is 11 per cent. More Canberrans are working because our economy is growing strongly and we are sharing the benefits of that growth right across our city.

**MS CHEYNE:** Chief Minister, what steps is the government taking to see strong economic growth and job creation continue into the future?

**MR BARR:** We will over the coming sitting weeks in August be debating the territory budget. That budget has a very clear plan to keep strengthening the territory economy by investing in Canberra. The government's investment in new health and hospital infrastructure, better transport link, and new and expanded education facilities will create more opportunities for local businesses and workers.

Our land release program of over 17,000 dwelling sites over the next four years will boost building activity while continuing to grow the supply of affordable and diverse housing for Canberrans.

Our focus on expanding major events, investing in new innovation businesses, supporting tourism and partnering with the higher education sector will continue to

diversify the territory's economy and create more jobs for Canberrans, whatever their line of work. The 2018 budget presents a strong economic plan for Canberra and builds on our past achievements, strengthens this city and creates even more good jobs for Canberrans.

### **Land—rural property acquisition**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Chief Minister and Treasurer. In the report on rural land sales the Auditor-General found that you approved the purchase of Milapuru for \$7 million despite the land being valued at \$4 million. The media has reported that you did not read the business case before signing the brief. Chief Minister, why did you approve the purchase of Milapuru for \$7 million when it was valued at \$4 million?

**MR BARR:** The Land Development Agency, its chief executive, its board, the treasury directorate and the Under Treasurer assessed the detail of the proposition and provided me with a briefing that recommended, in accordance with the land acquisition policy framework, that the ACT government secure that land. I was happy to accept that recommendation following that process and I agreed to the purchase.

**MS LEE:** Chief Minister, why did you or anyone from your office not actually read the business case before you took that decision?

**MR BARR:** I was provided with a detailed brief that outlined the rationale for the purchase. That included a letter from the Under Treasurer and an exchange of letters between the Under Treasurer and the director-general outlining treasury support for that land acquisition. Together with the detail contained within the brief, that was sufficient, noting that the particular land acquisition had both been through a Land Development Agency board internal process and been assessed by treasury and that there had been advice between the heads of the two agencies and a recommendation to me in a brief to support the acquisition. That was sufficient for me to approve the land acquisition.

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, what is the point of requiring ministerial oversight if you are just going to blindly go with the recommendation?

**MR BARR:** I read the brief; I discussed the matter with relevant officials; and approved the acquisition.

### **Land—rural property acquisition**

**MR PARTON:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, you have admitted that you did not read the business case for the purchase of Milapuru. Business cases were also prepared for the sale of Huntly and Winslade as the purchase price was over \$5 million. Did you read the business cases for the purchase of Huntly and Winslade?

**MR BARR:** I read all of the information provided to me in accordance with the land acquisition framework. That will include a range of background material, including business cases, for particular land acquisitions.

**MR PARTON:** What confidence, Chief Minister, can the community have that you will read the business case for the purchase of a property valued at \$5 million when you did not read the business case for the purchase of a property worth \$7 million?

**MR BARR:** The value of the property acquisition is not the important consideration. It is obviously related to levels of risk, and the associated briefing material that comes with a recommendation to the Treasurer. The treasury provides and assesses probably 300 or 400 business cases across budget bids and other areas of business case assessment across the ACT government over the entire year. I do need to rely upon the officers within treasury and on the Under Treasurer, as part of the briefing material that they provide to me. I cannot read every single business case that is presented to the treasury throughout the course of the year. But I can be, and am, accountable for the briefs that I read and sign. In this instance that is exactly what I have done, and that is the practice that I will continue to pursue. If I am provided with detailed briefing material from my agency, I will read that, of course, and make an appropriate decision.

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, by the end of today will you please provide to the Assembly the date on which you received the business cases for Huntly, Winslade and Milaparu and also when you received verbal briefs.

**MR BARR:** I will take that on notice. It may take some time to assemble that information.

### **University of Canberra Hospital—services**

**MS CHEYNE:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, what preparations have been underway for the University of Canberra Hospital to receive patients?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Ms Cheyne for the question about the UC hospital in the very heart of her electorate of Ginninderra. As members will know, the University of Canberra Hospital is now operational, with the first patients admitted on 17 July. This is a major milestone for health in the ACT and marks the culmination of almost seven years of planning, community consultation and construction work to deliver Canberra's third public hospital.

During this period, clinicians worked closely with health-care consumers to develop models of care and service delivery that are unique to UCH. In February, the facility was formally handed over to ACT Health. At that point in time, the recruitment of staff began in earnest.

The directorate also began to undertake a wide range of commissioning activities to ready the facility and the service for the admission of the first patient. This included testing equipment, mapping ICT requirements and the development of a comprehensive orientation and training program for the 300-plus ACT Health staff who will work at UCH.

The transition of services required careful planning for the transfer of patients from

both Canberra Hospital as well as Calvary hospital, together with their belongings, and the relocation of relevant ICT, clinical equipment and staff to the new facility. Work began in March to develop a comprehensive plan to support the transfer of these critical services.

Trial moves were undertaken from the Brian Hennessy Rehabilitation Centre and Calvary and Canberra hospitals to ascertain preferred routes and timings, which informed the final move schedule and the opening sequence. The move plan outlined key principles and processes that I am pleased to say resulted in the smooth and safe transfer of patients to UCH.

Success can also be attributed to ACT Health staff working collaboratively with one another and other ACT stakeholders such as the Ambulance Service. It is wonderful that Canberra's third public hospital is now open and caring for patients in a subacute setting specifically tailored to their needs. I congratulate everyone involved in this landmark project.

**MS CHEYNE:** Minister, what services have been consolidated across Canberra to bring rehabilitation services together in the one place?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** UCH brings together rehabilitation services and specialist staff from seven different locations across the territory under one roof. UCH has been purpose built to provide care and support for people over the age of 18 who are experiencing mental illness or who are recovering from surgery, illness or injury. Experienced, multi-disciplinary health professionals will work together to deliver innovative care and rehabilitation programs for both overnight and day patients tailored to the individual's needs.

Services have been removed from the following locations: parts of the Brian Hennessy Rehabilitation Centre were transferred to establish the adult mental health rehabilitation unit; the adult mental health day service has relocated from Belconnen community health centre to UCH; Canberra Hospital's rehabilitation unit has moved; the aged care rehabilitation service at Calvary Public Hospital has also been relocated; and specialised outpatient and day rehabilitation services that were based in Canberra Hospital and community-based health facilities, including Village Creek centre and the Belconnen, Phillip and city community health centres, have also been moved. This includes the community rehabilitation team, rehabilitation allied health services such as speech pathology, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, psychology, social work, exercise physiology and nutrition, the falls assessment and prevention service, the driving assessment and rehabilitation service and the vocational assessment and rehabilitation service. ACT Health's hydrotherapy service has also been relocated to UCH.

The unique design of UCH includes four therapeutic gyms where physios, occupational therapists and other professionals will work with patients to build their strength and guide their recovery. A wonderful hydrotherapy pool, 17 courtyards and spaces designed for learning activities of daily living complement each other to enhance patient outcomes. The purpose-built rooms and spaces in the mental health areas support the delivery of a broad range of therapies and services. UCH has been built on collaboration and a drive for excellence.

**MR STEEL:** Minister, what health services does the UCH provide and are these services now receiving patients?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mr Steel for the supplementary. UCH is a dedicated and purpose-built rehabilitation facility. It is now providing care and support for people over the age of 18 who are experiencing mental illness or recovering from surgery, illness or injury.

Patients are now receiving care in the adult mental health inpatient rehabilitation and day services, the inpatient rehabilitation units that have opened, including the neurological unit, Stromlo, the older persons rehabilitation unit, Majura, and the general rehabilitation unit, Namadgi, and general rehabilitation and aged-care day and ambulatory services in the Brindabella rehabilitation service.

On 10 July the majority of Brindabella rehabilitation centre services and the adult mental health day service commenced at UCH. The exceptions to this were medical clinics and hydrotherapy. On Tuesday, 17 July inpatient services began, when patients were transferred from Canberra Hospital, Brian Hennessy House and Calvary Public Hospital. On Monday, 23 July rehabilitation medicine clinics and hydrotherapy services commenced. The final service, the aged-care assessment team, relocated to UCH just yesterday.

This specialist facility offers tailored physical and mental health programs that will be developed in partnership with patients, their families and carers. Patients cannot present to the hospital without an appointment or with health conditions that need urgent treatment. Most people will be referred to UCH by their general practitioner, specialist, allied health professionals or nursing staff, although some will be able to refer themselves for some of the services by contacting the ACT Health community health intake line.

Being a dedicated rehabilitation hospital means that UCH does not have an ED or perform surgical operations. It is a hospital that is truly dedicated to rehabilitation, recovery and research. We are also delighted to have over 50 University of Canberra staff as well as numerous UC students who are on campus, learning and researching. *(Time expired.)*

### **Canberra Hospital—radiology department**

**MRS DUNNE:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. I refer to an interview on ABC Radio with Mr Stephen Crook of the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation regarding the Canberra Hospital radiology department. Mr Crook said that his federation had been raising concerns about the radiology department since May 2017. He claimed that there was concern about the shortage of staff and rostering. Minister, why was the Canberra Hospital so slow to respond to concerns raised by the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation last May?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mrs Dunne for the question. I did not hear the interview. Perhaps it was while I was on leave. With regard to accreditation in the radiology department, it is important to note that it is accreditation for training. That issue was

discussed during the estimates committee hearing. I understand, from memory, that there are some recommendations in the estimates report. Certainly there was discussion on that. As members will subsequently have become aware, ACT Health has not received the final report from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists at this stage but has been working through a number of their recommendations. They raised some serious issues. Some of those have already been addressed. Further ones will be addressed and, as is reflected in the estimates report, ACT Health will continue to work closely with the college and with important stakeholders, which includes ASMOF, and is confident that the training accreditation will return to an A grade in the next 12 months.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, why did your directorate fail to act on concerns raised about staff shortages, and their impact on inpatient care and on training, by radiology trainees when they raised them with the department in January and February of 2017?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I will take the question on notice. I have frequent meetings with ASMOF, and I will also look back on those meetings and correspondence with them and see if they refer to the radiology department. From memory, it has not been a key feature of my very frequent discussions with ASMOF. Nonetheless, I will look back over that and take the question on notice.

**MISS C BURCH:** What actions have you taken to resolve the cultural issues in the radiology department?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** As I have mentioned, and as was discussed in the estimates committee and subsequent to that, there have been a number of issues relating to the working environment and the particular relationships between particular staff. These have been addressed immediately.

**Mrs Dunne:** It was not raised in estimates.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** This issue was discussed at the estimates committee. The Chief Medical Officer—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I said “and subsequent to the committee”. There have been issues discussed, and that includes addressing a number of the immediate issues. There is a collaborative approach underway within the radiology department, and also with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists, to ensure that steps are taken to achieve the A-grade accreditation for training over the next 12 months.

### **Canberra Hospital—radiology department**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, during the health estimates hearing on 21 June this year, the Chief Medical Officer answered questions about the downgrade of the Canberra Hospital radiology department. The official referred to network issues but not to the problems with the negative environment or poor relationships within the department. When asked by the

media on 23 July, the senior official claimed that ACT Health had not finalised its reply to the accreditation committee. Minister, did the Chief Medical Officer mislead the estimates committee by omitting those details on 21 June when answering questions about the downgrade of the radiology department?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I certainly do not believe so. It was a very lengthy question. I am not familiar with the interview given on 23 July. I will take the question on notice. As I said in my previous answer, there was commentary and discussion in the estimates committee in June. There have been subsequent reports and public statements. What I have said today I understand has been covered in previous public statements. If not, as I said, there is recognition that there have been particular issues with the radiology training accreditation. It is important to note that it is accreditation for training and does not relate specifically to patient care.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, did you or any of the officials present at the estimates committee hearings on 21 June realise that the Chief Medical Officer may have misled the committee by failing to provide that full answer to the committee? If so, what action have you taken?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** As I said earlier, I do not believe at all that that is the case. Further information has come to light because ACT Health, particularly the Chief Medical Officer, has been working very hard on this over the month between the estimates committee hearing and subsequently in July. I will take the details of the question on notice.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, were you aware of issues facing the accreditation of training in the radiology department on 21 June 2018 or before 21 June 2018, and had briefing notes been prepared for you for estimates on this issue?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Yes. That is why I invited the Chief Medical Officer to address the committee and answer the committee's questions on this matter.

### **Education—early childhood strategy**

**MR STEEL:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Can the minister update the Assembly on the work towards an ACT early childhood strategy?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Mr Steel for his question and his interest in early childhood education. The ACT government took a commitment to the 2016 ACT election to develop for the first time a comprehensive early childhood strategy for the ACT. Our fundamental belief is that educational equity requires a renewed focus on equitable access to high quality early childhood learning and development opportunities.

Committing to a strategy responds to that belief and the government's aim to provide a comprehensive joined-up policy framework to guide the delivery of early childhood services and to coordinate education, health and community service provision. The strategy will lay out key plans and further work that the government needs to undertake to make sure that every child, regardless of their background or circumstances, is set up for success in life.

The work began with an initial discussion paper last year and since that time the education directorate has been deep in discussion with key stakeholders through a ministerial early childhood advisory council. A month or so ago I met with the advisory council to hear about the thinking that had been done so far and was encouraged by the direction of their conversations and some of the opportunities they had identified.

Particularly important was their view that the ACT needs to be the jurisdiction that puts children first. On a national level, there has been some important work done that is also contributing to the development of this strategy.

**MR STEEL:** Minister, why is the government looking at the issue of universal access to early childhood education for three-year-old children?

**MS BERRY:** As I referred to, there has been national work, particularly around *Lifting Our Game: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools through Early Childhood Interventions*. Recommendation 5 of the *Lifting our game* report recommends:

Australian governments progressively implement universal access to 600 hours per year of a quality early childhood education program, for example preschool, for all three year olds, with access prioritised for disadvantaged children, families and communities during the roll out.

The ACT government has accepted the overwhelming evidence culminating in this recommendation and decided in principle that a plan for incremental implementation of free, universal, quality early childhood education should be a key part of the ACT early childhood strategy which is currently being developed.

Well-established research evidence has shown that the period from birth through to eight years, especially the first three years, sets the foundation for a child's development. Child learning and development in the years before school are the determinant of future school achievement, social, emotional and health outcomes, and ultimately life opportunities.

Historically in Australia early learning has not been seen as a right for all children. Foundational learning is not equitably accessible to all children, yet policy settings and decisions by some governments, the federal government in particular, are not challenging this problem and are probably making it worse.

Through work on the strategy, it has become clear that there is an opportunity for the ACT to make radical progress, most significantly through providing free, universal, quality early childhood education for three-year-old children. The ACT government has set a goal of 15 hours per week, 600 hours per year, of free, universal, quality early childhood education for three-year-old children as a key part of the ACT's early childhood strategy.

**MS ORR:** How would this build on access to preschool already available to families in the ACT?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. Over the coming months I will have a conversation with parents, the early childhood education sector, schools and the wider community about how and when the government will be able to make this vital educational opportunity universally available. The policy objective clearly comes with a financial cost and its incremental implementation will require careful design of a model that is affordable, sustainable but, more importantly, keeps the right focus.

I will be drawing on expertise from outside the government. I will also be ensuring that the conversation on and design of the model will be founded in some important principles that will keep the focus on child outcomes and make sure government investment has the greatest possible impact. Through this process the government will be able to make decisions about funding and other resource constraints so that progressively every three-year-old child in the ACT will have access to free, high quality early childhood education.

Importantly, just as with school education, early childhood education needs to be focused on helping each child to gain a strong start, with government funding flowing to the greatest extent to achieve learning and development. For this reason the government will be shaping the design of this policy around a non-commercial model in the same way we approach school education.

Additionally, a key issue of providing high quality early education is the skill and professionalism of the workforce. Early childhood educators take on enormous responsibility for helping children learn things like the alphabet and how to count, and help children develop important physical, social and emotional skills. The government will be looking at how it can make sure the important work of educators is better valued.

### **Canberra Hospital—radiology department**

**MRS KIKKERT:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. I refer to media reports on 23 July 2018 about the poor accreditation report for the Canberra Hospital radiology department. The report found:

There is the feeling that the internal political issues make working in the department difficult and cause low morale amongst staff ...

It added that there was a “poor working relationship” between senior staff in the radiology department.

Why are internal political issues making working in the radiology department of the Canberra Hospital difficult and causing low morale amongst staff?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I note the opposition’s series of questions on this and urge them to be precise about training accreditation in the radiology department. It is a serious matter. Those matters are being attended to.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, why is there a poor working relationship between senior

staff in the radiology department, and how is this affecting the performance of the department?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** It is the responsibility of all staff to work constructively together. There are clearly issues relating to some senior staff, as has been outlined, in the radiology department. They are being taken seriously and addressed. The radiology and imaging areas of the hospital are actually performing very well. These issues have been outlined by me previously in the chamber and in other forums.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, when did you first become aware of the cultural issues in the radiology department and the poor morale that has underpinned the adverse accreditation of the training processes in the radiology department?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I cannot recall the specific date. I will take the question on notice.

### **Health Directorate—proposed organisational changes**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, I refer to your answer to question on notice 1495 from Mrs Dunne regarding the restructure of ACT Health. You confirmed that the decision to restructure ACT Health was based on a brief from the Head of Service on 15 March 2018. You also advised that you were not informed of the resignation of the Director-General of ACT Health until 19 March 2018. Was the brief prepared by the Head of Service and signed off by you to keep the former Director-General of ACT Health in the dark about the government's plans to abolish her position?

**MR BARR:** No.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Chief Minister, why is it that you were not advised of the resignation of the Director-General of ACT Health until 19 March, three days after it occurred?

**MR BARR:** Madam Speaker, I am checking whether there was in fact a weekend in between those days. Yes, there was, in fact.

**Mrs Dunne:** Went on the Thursday.

**MR BARR:** Yes, the 15th. Yes, there was a weekend, and I was advised a matter of one business day later.

**MRS DUNNE:** Why is it that you did not consider the implications of your decision on the accreditation of the Canberra Hospital, given that the inspection was due to occur on the week beginning 19 March, the day after the weekend?

**MR BARR:** I do not accept the premise of the question.

### **Light rail—operations**

**MISS C BURCH:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, when will stage 1 of the light rail carry its first fare-paying passengers?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I know that that is something that many Canberrans are looking forward to with terrific excitement. Of course, it will be interesting to see whether the opposition starts to enjoy rides on Canberra's wonderful light rail system. Certainly in terms of the data completion, we are looking at December this year. We are working through with Canberra Metro the most appropriate time to receive the first fee-paying passengers on light rail—

*Mr Wall interjecting—*

**MS FITZHARRIS:** but that will not be determined for another few months yet. But the project remains on track to be completed—

**Mr Wall:** Are you getting an unearned windfall gain on your property because of this, Andrew?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Wall! Hush now, please.

**Mr Barr:** Madam Speaker, that was—

**Mr Wall:** I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Have you withdrawn?

**Mr Barr:** He has, yes.

**Mr Wall:** Yes.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Can we can get to the end of question time without any more interruptions? Miss Burch.

**MISS C BURCH:** Minister, has cabinet approved any budget cost overruns to be borne by the ACT government? If so, how much and for what?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Miss Burch might like to clarify: “cost overruns” and “for what”.

**MR WALL:** Minister, are there any further variations or changes to the cost-time overruns expected or being considered by the government? If so, what are they and what is their extent?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Could Mr Wall please repeat the question?

**MR WALL:** Minister, are there any further variations, cost or time overruns expected or being considered by the government? If so, what are they and what is the extent of them?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** As I assumed the opposition would know, but each question that they ask indicates that they do not, with respect to the nature of the contract that the ACT government has with Canberra Metro, it is a significant contract. It is the largest single piece of infrastructure that the ACT government has delivered. It will provide

the equivalent level of benefit to the ACT community. There will be variations in a contract of any nature for an infrastructure project, and there are a number of variations. We will comply with all the necessary requirements in terms of outlining those variations to the contract. I expect those to continue between now and the end of the contract. The government looks forward to providing a summary when construction is completed.

### **Royal Commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse—redress scheme**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the Attorney-General. Can the minister provide an update on the national redress scheme?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Ms Orr for the question on such an important area. The redress scheme has begun taking applications from 1 July this year and it will run for 10 years. It is now truly a national scheme, with all jurisdictions having announced that they will be participating. In addition to that, the Catholic Church, Scouts Australia, the YMCA, the Salvation Army, the Uniting Church and the Anglican Church have all announced they will also be participating in the scheme. That means that we can expect that over 90 per cent of anticipated people who claim will be covered by the scheme.

The ACT government is working hard to contribute to developing a scheme that is inclusive and that implements the royal commission's recommendations. Our position is that all survivors should be treated equally under the scheme. Survivors who have criminal records are also survivors who have endured horrible abuse themselves and there should not be two classes of survivor.

As a human rights jurisdiction, the ACT must consider equal treatment and fairness in all its decisions. That is why the scheme now allows for the ACT government to extend redress to all survivors in the territory. The final redress scheme is one that we joined, confident that human rights in the territory will be respected and confident that real assistance for survivors of child sexual abuse will be helped to rebuild their lives, and that will be provided universally.

**MS ORR:** What services is the ACT government providing to support people who apply for redress?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. This government has been at the forefront of resourcing services that will support people who apply for redress and ensuring that our services are ready to engage with the national scheme.

This budget contains over \$400,000 for counselling and support services that will be provided locally. The ACT has committed to fund lifetime counselling for all survivors under the scheme. We have also provided the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre with \$120,000 in funding to assist people who are seeking redress. In addition, the Community Services Directorate and the Victims of Crime Commissioner are being provided with additional staff to support local implementation of the scheme.

These resources are part of the almost \$14 million that the government has committed

over the next four years to fund redress. Over the 10-year lifetime of the scheme, the government estimates that up to \$30 million will be provided to help survivors rebuild their lives and to ensure that institutions take responsibility for their failings. Survivors will have access to legal advice, to counselling and to administrative help in working through the redress process.

**MR PETTERSSON:** How will police, prosecutors and the courts be supported to respond to people who come forward after seeking redress?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary question. The Royal Commission and the brave survivors who have come forward during the process have brought to light failings that will be addressed through the redress scheme but also will be addressed through the justice system. We can expect that more people will come forward and seek to hold abusers accountable for their actions. People who apply for redress will also be supported through resourcing for criminal cases and through changes to support people throughout the court process.

Recent changes have improved and strengthened our laws for prosecuting child sex abuse cases. In February 2018 this Assembly passed legislation to ensure that repeated occasions of child sexual abuse could be charged and tried effectively. Those changes were a direct result of the response to the findings of the Royal Commission. Canberra has been a leader in adopting new legislation to ensure fairness for survivors of sexual assault in the court process. The ACT introduced the use of pre-recorded interviews for child witnesses to a sexual offence in 2008. In May 2017 the use of pre-recorded witness interviews as evidence in chief was expanded to all sexual offences. The ACT will keep working hard to ensure that court processes stay oriented around supporting survivors and securing a just outcome for them.

### **Government—community organisations support**

**MR PETTERSSON:** My question is to the Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on what the government is doing to support community organisations to become more effective and efficient.

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. I am delighted to update the Assembly on how the ACT government is supporting community organisations to become more effective and efficient. Our government is committed to enhancing the strength of our city as an inclusive and connected place where all people can reach their full potential and contribute positively to the life of the broader ACT community.

Community organisations play a key role in this, connecting those experiencing disadvantage with appropriate support services. They also provide social infrastructure, enabling those who wish to volunteer or help those in need to develop their skills and experience and participate in the civic life of the ACT.

An excellent example of the ACT government supporting community organisations to become more effective and efficient is the annual community support and infrastructure grants. The grants are awarded under the following three categories:

community support and capacity; non-fixed infrastructure and equipment; and minor capital works and fixed infrastructure.

In June I was pleased to announce a total of \$230,000 in funding for 48 successful organisations, allowing them to update their infrastructure, buy necessary equipment and offset other costs. Successful projects included \$7,700 for wireless headset microphones for performers at the Tuggeranong community theatre and \$6,000 for Burrunju Aboriginal Corporation's purchase of equipment for the art gallery. Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services, MARSS, also received over \$8,700 for a digital technology upgrade.

All three of these organisations have for many years provided support to ensure that all Canberrans can access services and programs to ensure full social inclusion in the community. This additional funding will further strengthen these efforts, and I congratulate all of the successful recipients.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, how is the government assisting community organisations to improve their digital capacity?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary question. The government, of course, acknowledges that digital technology is an integral part of our modern lives. Using mobile phones, computers and tablets and accessing various information and services online is now how we communicate and transact in many spheres of life.

As most Canberrans turn to online portals and websites to get information about services and events, the ACT government recognises the importance of ensuring that community organisations can also publicise their activities and inform Canberrans about what they do. However, we know that adopting or updating technology can be a costly exercise for many organisations.

With this in mind, the ACT government is proud to support community organisations through the participation (digital communities) grant program. The program was designed to enhance the capacity of community organisations to effectively engage their communities and clients to participate fully in the life of Canberra through the use of digital technology.

Last month I was pleased to announce the outcomes of the latest funding round, with 31 community organisations receiving funding of more than \$100,000 for a range of initiatives. An example was \$4,900 for the Molonglo Catchment Group's web-based biodiversity data management interface. Funding under this round was also provided to Prisoners Aid ACT Inc, which received \$4,072 to update its computer and phone hardware to improve communication with clients. A final example of how grants can support technical improvements was the provision of \$2,406 to Woden Seniors Inc in this grant round to purchase a data projector and a laptop.

I look forward to seeing how these funded initiatives will make a difference to these community organisations and the ACT community they serve.

**MS CODY:** Minister, can you update the Assembly on current and upcoming grant

opportunities that help build a stronger and more inclusive community?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary question. Of course, the ACT government makes a number of grants available to support organisations that provide vital services and connection to thousands of Canberrans. One example is the disability inclusion grants. Now in their second year, the grants provide one-off funding of up to \$20,000 for community groups, not-for-profit organisations and small businesses in the ACT to become more inclusive and accessible for people with disability and to remove barriers to participation.

In the recent budget, the government doubled the funding available in the annual grant round from \$50,000 to \$100,000. The latest round of grants will close on Thursday. I thank members who have promoted the grants to their constituents.

Following on from the disability inclusion grants, the I-Day grants will soon open. These grants provide funding of up to \$5,000 to individuals and organisations to help mark the International Day of People with Disability in December each year.

I am also delighted to advise the Assembly that the annual participation (multicultural) grant program will open in October 2018. These are just some examples of the large number of ways that this government supports community organisations across the ACT.

**Mr Barr:** I ask that further question be placed on the notice paper.