



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

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Wednesday, 31 October 2018

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Questions without notice

Taxation—commercial property rates

MR COE: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, I refer to an opinion piece by David Rolfe, the dealer principal of Slaven Mazda, published in the *CityNews* of 11 October. The rates bill for that site on Melrose Drive in Philip increased by \$100,000 in the 2017-18 financial year. This year it has increased by a further \$107,000. Why are car dealers in Philip expected to absorb increases like this when they are constrained by manufacturers' pricing edicts and juggling increased costs in wages, rents, electricity and other factors?

MR BARR: There are obviously some factors in relation to the value of land in that particular precinct. Clearly there have been increases in the value of that land over time. It is not inconsistent with what we have seen in other parts of Canberra. As demand for particular pieces of land grows stronger, there are a range of alternative uses. For example, motor vehicle dealerships do find that the land they sit on has greater value over time as cities develop. That is not uncommon here in Canberra, as it is not uncommon in other parts of Australia or indeed around the world.

In relation to those specific blocks, I will seek some further advice from the Revenue Office as to whether there have been any specific factors that relate to those blocks, any recent revaluations and the like. That would no doubt provide some further insight into those particular issues as they pertain to the examples the Leader of the Opposition has given.

MR COE: Treasurer, how are businesses in Philip expected to cope with such high levels of rates and high increases in rates when they are competing with online businesses and also interstate businesses?

MR BARR: Online and interstate businesses also face business costs. Those would include, amongst other things, very high stamp duties and insurance taxes that would apply in other jurisdictions and that do not apply in the ACT.

MR WALL: Treasurer, how many businesses have to relocate or close down due to the high level of rates and charges imposed by your government? What impact will this have on consumers across Canberra, but particularly the Woden community, with respect to the dealerships?

MR BARR: There are now 27,500 businesses whose main place of operation is the ACT. That has grown by 2,000 in the past three years. What we are seeing is considerable growth in business activity in the ACT. I think the—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: outgoing CEO of the Canberra Business Chamber, Robyn Hendry, described Canberra's economic conditions as booming and as a boom time for businesses. There has been a very positive reaction to the abolition of—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe and Mr Wall!

MR BARR: There has been a very positive reaction to the abolition of commercial stamp duty for small and medium-sized businesses on properties up to \$1.5 million. That is a particular benefit for those who are looking to establish business in the ACT—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members!

MR BARR: and there has been quite a significant amount of interest in new investment in the ACT. We do, of course, have the fastest growing economy in Australia—

Ms Stephen-Smith: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Chief Minister, can you please resume your seat. There is a point of order.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I did have a point of order about the interruptions but—

MADAM SPEAKER: You heard silence; so you thought you would sit down. Chief Minister.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, we do have the fastest rate of economic growth in Australia. We have very low unemployment and we have a very significant flow of new investment into the territory. We have more businesses operating now than we did three years ago.

Public housing—renewal program

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the minister for housing and relates to the commitment to renew 1,000 homes. Minister, can you confirm that there will be the same sort of disposal of larger sites as has been done by the public housing renewal task force to date? If so, how will the government decide which properties it intends to sell and where the replacement properties will be located?

MS BERRY: No, it will not be exactly the same as the current renewal program, because the current renewal program is continuing, and it was designed, with the asset recycling initiative, to provide a funding boost to the ACT to deliver on its infrastructure project, specifically, light rail, which is coming along very well. The process for a future renewal program will be considered based on—

Ms Le Couteur: A point of order: could you please tell me something about the current program, which was the question?

MS BERRY: That was not the question.

Ms Le Couteur: No, the question was about—

MADAM SPEAKER: The point of order is about being relevant to the question.

MS BERRY: I did; I just said—

Members interjecting—

MS BERRY: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, the question was whether I could confirm this. I said no, I would not, because the current program was running in a particular way.

Ms Le Couteur: Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat. A point of order? Stop the clock, thank you.

Ms Le Couteur: I said: how will the government decide which properties it intends to sell and where will the replacement properties be located? Could the minister please address the question?

MS BERRY: On the point of order, I answered the first part of the question. With regard to the second part of the question, those decisions will be considered by cabinet.

MS LE COUTEUR: What is the net cost expected to the government of this program, and what is the time frame for the renewal?

MS BERRY: The strategy is very clear. It announced a \$100 million commitment for 1,000 homes to be renewed and an additional 200 new properties to be delivered.

MRS JONES: Minister, with regard to a public housing program, will you meet with the Darwinia Park Action Group once more before soil is turned on that property development?

MS BERRY: Mrs Jones may not be aware, but the Darwinia Park group is still in ACAT—I do not think there is a decision yet.

Mrs Jones: No, it's finished.

MS BERRY: It is finished?

Mrs Jones: It's done. Finished. Will you meet with them one more time?

MS BERRY: I will get some advice about where that project is up to.

Mrs Jones: You don't know if you can meet with them?

MS BERRY: But I had not met with the Darwinia Park group for some time—

Mrs Jones: Well, will you meet with them?

MS BERRY: Giulia—

Mrs Jones: Sorry, it's very important to them.

MS BERRY: I know it is important to you and important to them; just give me a chance to answer. I will find out where it is up to and when the actual development will take place. Of course we will continue to work with the Darwinia Park group, the same way we have worked with Monash group and the Calder group—

Mrs Jones: But will you meet with them? It's actually a very important question.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! If you have a point of order, you stand. Let the minister answer; it is not a conversation.

Mrs Jones: Well, this is an important question for the people whom we represent in this place, and I don't think it should become a joke.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones! Quiet please! Do you have anything further to add, minister?

MS BERRY: No.

Housing—affordability

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, your ACT housing strategy says that you will “set an annual target to increase affordable home purchase opportunities”. What will the target for affordable home ownership opportunities be?

MS BERRY: Those targets are set during the indicative land release programs, which are available online. The 2018-19 program is available online. Older targets that were delivered under the affordable housing strategy were around 400. This target, by introducing the 15 per cent, will deliver approximately 630 social and affordable dwellings each year.

MR PARTON: Minister, when will those targets in the forward estimates years be announced?

MS BERRY: They will be announced the same way the indicative land release programs are announced each year.

MR COE: Minister, do you accept that the government's land release policy has had a detrimental impact on housing affordability in Canberra?

MS BERRY: No, I do not accept that.

Domestic and family violence—services

MS CODY: My question is to the Deputy Chief Minister. Minister, can you please provide an update on funding support available for families who are escaping or impacted by domestic and family violence?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cody for her interest in family safety. I want to inform the Assembly that in 2016, when we launched our \$21.42 million package to fund our response to domestic and family violence, we also announced a new safer families grant assistance program to support people who had been impacted by family violence. The grants program was facilitated through the rental bond scheme. We have supported many women with funding assistance for such things as moving house, buying furniture and whitegoods and paying utilities and rent.

Over recent months, the program has been reviewed to make sure that it is working as well as it can and supporting the right people at the right time. Changes have been made to the program to allow easier access to grants of up to \$2,000, with a total of \$406,000 in funding committed over the next four years.

Under the new arrangements, a person no longer has to apply for a rental bond loan to be eligible. The range of assistance that a person can apply for includes legal costs, pet care, mortgage and rental payments and other costs associated with establishing or sustaining a family home. The revised program also expands the referral pathways to now include private, community, government and social, health and justice sector agencies that work with people to address the impact of family violence, as well as the Domestic Violence Crisis Service.

MS CODY: Minister, what else is the government doing to provide early support to families who may be impacted by family violence?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary question. The insights gathered through the co-design for the family safety hub have prompted the government to think differently about the role of the hub in the ACT, which was officially launched on 11 May this year. The family safety hub is a network for collaboration and innovation for lasting change. It brings the right people together to work through a series of challenges, an exploration of what might be possible, each challenge aiming to see how we can provide better help earlier. The hub fosters sharing understanding, builds capability, delivers new or improved pathways and ensures system cohesion.

The family safety hub has now undertaken its first challenge around how we might prevent and intervene early in domestic and family violence for pregnant women and new parents. Nearly 60 ideas were developed by the community sector. The Coordinator-General for Family Safety and the family safety hub are actively exploring two of these ideas to see whether they have the potential to address the challenge. The best of these solutions will be piloted and improved. Effective pilots may be scaled up and embedded across the service system. I am happy to say that we are just weeks away from launching our first pilot, which will partner with a range of government and non-government organisations to assist new parents and pregnant women who may be facing violence and need help.

MS ORR: Minister, why is sustained, real investment by government in these types

of services so important?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary. We can see the benefits that the additional \$21 million is providing to our community. We have more front-line service provision, more new services and greater thinking around solutions.

Of course, the ACT cannot do this work alone. Earlier this year, a national consultation kicked off to develop the fourth action plan for reducing violence against women. The ACT government has been working in partnership with the commonwealth in facilitating local consultations with our sector over July and August.

In early October I led an ACT delegation of government, community service and persons with lived experience of violence to the COAG reducing violence against women summit in Adelaide. The summit provided the opportunity for all jurisdictions to come together to consider the approach and priorities for inclusion in the fourth action plan.

When I met with women's safety ministers at this event, it was clear that the critical issue facing all jurisdictions right now was the looming end to federal funding for vital services. In the ACT, members may recall that whilst we did not receive a great deal of funding from the commonwealth's third action plan, we did get money for the Women's Legal Centre to establish a domestic violence program to provide women with legal representation and holistic wraparound support. This service and this funding are crucial. It means that the centre has been able to extend their services to meet the growing needs of women who are experiencing domestic and family violence. Previously, this service was limited to just providing initial advice.

The service faces a funding cliff on 30 June. I am very hopeful that the federal government will see the importance of this matter and make an announcement about new funding for this program very soon, and many others like it across the country.

Public housing—renewal program

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, in your response to Ms Cheyne's question yesterday, you said that the government would provide \$100 million in additional funding for new public housing over the next five years. Minister, how much of this figure will be spent on replacement of current public housing dwellings in each year?

MS BERRY: The \$100 million announcement that was made during the strategy's launch on Monday is for 1,000 properties to be renewed over the next five years and 200 new public housing properties to be developed. Ongoing work as usual that occurs within Housing ACT will continue.

MS LAWDER: Minister, again in relation to the \$100 million, how much in each year will be spent on additional public housing and additional assistance to community housing providers?

MS BERRY: At the launch of the housing strategy on Monday I also announced that an additional 151 properties would go to community housing providers to assist in

improving and increasing the amount of stock that those organisations have. That 151 is more than any of the community housing providers in the ACT can deliver in four years, and we are delivering them in one.

MR PARTON: Minister, how many actual additional residences will be built each year with this \$100 million?

MS BERRY: As I said at the launch of the housing strategy, at least 200 dwellings. It will depend on the makeup of those dwellings, but at least 200 dwellings have been committed to as part of the \$100 million.

Ginninderry—environmental impact statement

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Environment and Heritage. Minister, the *Canberra Times* today reports that you have exempted the Ginninderry development from an EIS process despite objections from the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, local community groups and submissions made about protection of the little eagle nesting places, golden sun moths and the pink-tailed worm-lizard. The ACT government has a 50 per cent stake in the Ginninderry development. Minister, what actions have you taken to ensure that you did not have a conflict of interest in waiving the EIS for this project?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Lee for the question. I will give some background first. On 9 March 2018 Riverview projects formally lodged an application for the environmental impact statement exemption under section 211 of the Planning and Development Act 2007 for the urban development of Ginninderry stage 2 and subsequent stages as well. In October I granted the EIS exemption—as Ms Lee noted was in the newspaper today—to the Ginninderry project as I am satisfied that the expected environmental impact of the proposal has been sufficiently addressed through recent studies. I did that after looking at recent studies and advice from EPSDD. I am the minister for planning and, therefore, had the opportunity under that title and under the act to provide that exemption.

But I will say that an EIS exemption is not an approval process. It is a recognition of the work that has already occurred. Of course members would be aware that we made changes due to the then recent studies in the area way back in 2016 about protection for the little eagle and for buffer zones there. There is no conflict of interest.

MS LEE: Minister, did any minister, including the Chief Minister and Treasurer or the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, approach or write to you urging the waiver of the EIS?

MR GENTLEMAN: There is no waiver. This is in regard to an exemption for an EIS in recognition of the work that has already been done.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR GENTLEMAN: We are hearing from the shadow minister against the environment in this case. It is pretty interesting to see her on this side of the chamber talking about this particular aspect.

It is important, of course, that work is done when we see development applications come through to ensure that they stand by the conditions that are put forward in any EIS exemption. That would be the next process when a DA comes forward.

Ms Lee: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the minister did not answer the question. The question clearly was: did any minister, including the Chief Minister and Treasurer or the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, approach him urging him on this process? He has failed to answer that question.

MADAM SPEAKER: Did you have anything further to add?

MR GENTLEMAN: I cannot recall any correspondence to me in regard to this matter, but I will take that on notice and have a look at the records.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what advice have you sought or been given about potential conflicts of interest where an exemption to an EIS is sought for an ACT government project, or a project where the ACT government has a significant stake?

MR GENTLEMAN: Legal advice is provided to ministers on a regular basis about their decision-making. That is the advice that we receive.

Ginninderry—environmental impact statement

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to Mr Rattenbury as Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability. Minister, today's *Canberra Times* reports that the government has exempted the Ginninderry development from an EIS process, even though there were numerous objections from the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, local community groups and environmental experts that suggested that insufficient protections had been offered to the vulnerable little eagle for their nesting areas as well as concerns about the impact the development would have on the critically endangered golden sun moth and the vulnerable pink-tailed worm-lizard. As Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, have you been consulted on this development?

MR RATTENBURY: No, not formally.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, did you oppose or otherwise lodge objections to this development at any stage?

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, this question is directly in relation to the environment. I am the minister for the environment. I will take the question. Of course we take all aspects of the environment very seriously, and all stakeholders in the environment groups very seriously as well, in relation to making decisions about future environmental issues. Indeed, we have to make sure that we are in line with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, the commonwealth act. We have to ensure that we align with that as well.

MS LEE: Minister Rattenbury, have you made any representations from any environmental groups to the minister for the environment about their concerns in relation to the environmental sustainability of the development?

MR RATTENBURY: There is a whole range of issues when it comes to the sustainability of the development. I have certainly been involved in active discussions about the proposal to not provide gas in that area. That is certainly an area in which, because of my climate change responsibilities, I am particularly taking an interest. We have received representations that gas not have to be provided. As members may be aware, under the legislation at the moment it is mandatory to provide gas into these suburbs. That is certainly an issue that I have been involved in. I have had discussions with the Conservation Council about these issues, and I am aware of various other public comments by other groups.

Roads—resurfacing

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Roads: could you please provide an update to the Assembly on the ACT government's annual road resurfacing program?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Orr for her question. Earlier this month I announced the start of the ACT government's annual road resurfacing program. Road resurfacing is an important part of the maintenance of Canberra's roads. It involves sealing small cracks and imperfections. This improves road safety and extends the overall life of the underlying road pavement in the ACT road network.

Our \$16 million road resurfacing program will see approximately 230 kilometres or one million square metres of roads resurfaced across the ACT road network. This represents a size comparable to 140 football fields. The road resurfacing will take place across the ACT, with more extensive works taking place in Garran, Kambah, Phillip, Red Hill, Campbell, Charnwood, Higgins, Holt, Latham, Macgregor, Melba, Page, Scullin and Turner.

In addition to road resurfacing, works will include 100,000 square metres of other resurfacing works, such as asphalt overlays and micro surfacing. This year's road resurfacing will trial an exciting new material, Plastiphalt, which uses recycled material and ensures that the equivalent of 800 plastic bags, 252 glass bottles and 18 used printer toner cartridges do not end up in our landfills. The Plastiphalt trial will take place on existing sections of Horse Park Drive and Gundaroo Drive. The road resurfacing program began in suburbs around Tuggeranong and will be completed by April 2019.

MS ORR: Minister, could you please explain this year's trial of Plastiphalt?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary. In this year's annual road resurfacing program, I am very pleased that the ACT government is trialling the exciting innovation of Plastiphalt. Plastiphalt is a material composed of recycled glass and soft plastics. It is a cutting-edge technology that repurposes plastic into road material and reduces plastic pollution.

Every tonne of Plastiphalt, as I have mentioned, uses around 800 plastic bags and also glass from 252 glass bottles. For every tonne of Plastiphalt laid, this is material that will not go into landfill, which is an initiative that will reduce waste and promote the sustainable use of waste. Further to that, 300 kilograms of recycled asphalt is also

used for every tonne of Plastiphalt.

The trial will take place on the existing sections of the roads that I mentioned. I look forward to seeing the outcome of the trial.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how will the work impact on commuters?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary and for his interest in roads. The ACT government wants to ensure that there is minimal impact on Canberrans in their daily commutes to work or home. That is why works will be carried out during off-peak times and at night to reduce the impact on road users. You may have already seen some workers working on the road resurfacing at night time on your streets.

Signage will also be put up well in advance and affected residents and businesses will be advised by a letterbox drop at least two days in advance of road resurfacing in their street starting. Works are set to be completed by June 2019. Overall, these works will positively impact commuters by ensuring that investment in maintaining our roads is done in advance and in a systematic fashion, causing the least amount of disruption.

ACT Health—public interest disclosure

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. I refer to reports in the media today that ACT Health has taken disciplinary action against doctors in the Canberra Hospital radiology department who made public interest disclosures, and the contract of one doctor has been discontinued. You stated in a letter to me on 22 October that ACT health services are “aware of the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012, protecting those who make a public interest disclosure, and those protections are, and will continue to be respected”. Minister, what actions have you taken to ensure that Canberra Health Services or ACT Health have not breached the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012, consistent with the sentiments you expressed in your letter of 22 October 2018?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mrs Dunne for the question. I have sought and received assurances that ACT Health, and indeed the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, are handling public interest disclosure matters in strict accordance with the law. They are also making sure that any other issues that are raised in regard to workplace behaviour are being followed in accordance with policy, procedure and law.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, when did you first become aware that ACT Health or Canberra Health Services had taken disciplinary action against doctors who lodged public interest disclosures?

MS FITZHARRIS: I note that the matters relating to public interest disclosures and other matters raised by staff are the subject of some legal proceedings. I have been advised not to answer questions on this matter because a number of them are subject to legal proceedings, as Mrs Dunne is well aware.

MR COE: Minister, what actions have you taken or will you take to ensure that your directorate does not take disciplinary action against people who make submissions to

the review of ACT Health culture?

MS FITZHARRIS: Certainly it is very clear in my statements on the conduct of the independent review, and as has been made patently clear by the independent panel members themselves, all members of the panel and all members of the secretariat supporting the panel are subject to very clear and longstanding legislation in the ACT which includes the health information act, the health records act, the Public Sector Management Act, the Privacy Act. And it has been made very clear by me to the panel and by the panel to anyone and everyone who wishes to make a submission to them that their highest order priority is to maintain confidentiality and also, of course, to abide by the law. I trust them very much to do that and know how seriously they take these matters.

Mental health—occupational violence

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Corrections and Justice Health. I refer to an answer to Mrs Dunne's question on notice 1567 regarding assaults on staff. Minister, you advised that there were 129 assaults on staff in mental health, corrections health and alcohol and drug services between 1 January 2017 and 30 June 2018. What actions have you taken in order to reduce the high number of assaults on staff in your areas of ministerial responsibility?

MR RATTENBURY: As I have canvassed in response to previous questions on this matter, I had a conversation with the Chief Nurse who is developing the nurse safety strategy. As I have told this chamber before, I have emphasised to her my expectation that that strategy will address the needs of staff in the mental health space because, as we have discussed, they face particular risks due to the patients they are working with who can be prone to behavioural issues and potentially violent outbursts, as we have witnessed through a number of recent incidents. That has been the primary focus.

Obviously the senior executives are party to those discussions, and I have made it clear that I expect these matters to be dealt with. I am awaiting the final nurse safety strategy, which I believe is quite close to being finished.

MRS JONES: Minister, what response have you given to calls by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation for better violence management training of staff working in these areas?

MR RATTENBURY: I have met a number of times recently with the ANMF and I have personally said to them that I agree with them that people should not be subject to violence in the workplace, as I discussed this morning. They have raised a number of ideas with me about how that can be addressed. There is now a situation set up whereby the CEO of Canberra Health Services has a fortnightly meeting with the head of the ANMF. Certainly, one of the key agenda items in those discussions is the issue of occupational violence. I have asked the CEO to take on board the suggestions from the ANMF and give me advice on how elements of that will be progressed.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, has security for staff working in high-risk areas such as Dhulwa been reduced in recent times and, if so, why?

MR RATTENBURY: I have had no reports to that effect. There has been a discussion about whether the number of security staff should be increased. I have, in a number of conversations with the nurses federation and with senior executives, canvassed this issue. The difficult question is to find the right number of security staff. These are meant to be therapeutic environments. We do not want an over-presence of security staff and a sense that it is more of a correctional facility. At the same time we need enough security staff that our health staff are adequately supported. That is the difficult discussion. In some of these incidents the security staff are present and available but they occur so quickly that the security staff are not able to intervene before injuries are inflicted. This is a challenging operational discussion that we need to continue to work through.

Taxis—licences

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Minister, in your statement of 18 September you said that holders of perpetual taxi plate licences continue to maintain their incomes from leasing those licences. Until recently, plate owners had been able to lease their plates for up to \$20,000 per annum. How can plate owners continue to maintain their income if the ACT government reduces the market rate by leasing plates at \$5,000 a year?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Wall for the question. Certainly, as we continue with our ongoing evaluation and ongoing reforms in on-demand transport, we are looking at the impacts on the market. We have done that very carefully. What we will continue to do, as we continue to roll out the reforms, is ensure that there is appropriate support. We have provided the information quite publicly to people and we are very convinced that the reforms that we are doing have a clear focus on ensuring good consumer access to transport. We will continue with that.

MR WALL: Minister, what will be the financial impact on people who bought taxi plates to fund their retirement, as a result of the government's decision to reduce the market rate for leasing a plate to \$5,000 a year?

MR RAMSAY: In relation to the perpetual taxi licences, one of the things, again, that we have been doing is noting the impact and linking quite closely with the Taxi Plate Owners Association in relation to this. As part of that, we have been looking at the appropriate support for people who have had long-term investments, as they have, with these particular investments. The focus for this government is on ensuring that people who are seeking to have transport around Canberra are supported with that, with all of the options. As part of that—

Mr Wall interjecting—

MR RAMSAY: As part of that, what we have been doing is linking with the Taxi Plate Owners Association and have made it very clear to them that if there is—

Mr Wall interjecting—

Mr Gentleman: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall, you asked the question. Allow the minister to answer.

MR RAMSAY: That we are providing the appropriate forms of counselling and financial advice in the area. We will continue to do that, provide that appropriate support. We do know that there has been—

Mr Wall interjecting—

MR RAMSAY: We do know—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall! Enough, Mr Wall.

Mr Gentleman: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop the clock, thanks.

Mr Gentleman: The opposition continue to interject even after your instruction. It is difficult to hear the minister answer. I would ask that you ask them to stop interjecting.

MADAM SPEAKER: Gentlemen on my left, Mr Wall in particular: can the minister answer in a level of silence. Thank you. Minister, please continue.

MR RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The government has learnt significantly in relation to the changes that have been taking place, and we have been connecting with the key taxi plate organisations as well. We can refer people—and we have—to the support that is available through Woden Community Service. If there are any inquiries they would like to make, I put on record that the phone number for them to contact is 6282 2644.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, what will be the financial impact of reducing the market rate for plate leasing to \$5,000 a year on people who have mortgaged their homes to buy perpetual taxi plate licences and who are relying on leasing income to make those mortgage payments?

MR RAMSAY: We have continued to link with the organisation. There has been a range of views expressed. What we will continue to do, as we roll out the reforms that we committed to in 2015, and that we have evaluated on the basis of very clear evidence, is to make sure that there is appropriate counselling support for people who are involved.

Mr Wall: How many lives?

Ms Berry: Madam Speaker, that interjection from Mr Wall was completely inappropriate, suggesting that Mr Ramsay has had any effect on people's lives with regard to—

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms Berry: The implication was there, Madam Speaker. It is unparliamentary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, can we go back to the principles of (1) not interjecting and (2) having a level of respect with regard to comments to other members.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—police engagement

MR PETTERSSON: I have a question for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, why is it so important for ACT Policing to engage and work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank the member for his question and his interest in our community—

Mr Parton: And roads.

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, Madam Speaker. I thank the member for his interest in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community as well. They are sometimes disproportionately represented in our criminal statistics and this can occur for a number of reasons. When incidents occur, too often some in our community believe that the solution is to lock people up and throw away the keys. This is often detrimental to the individual, their family and our broader community.

It is important that we understand the diversity in Canberra and engage with all the communities that make up our fantastic city. We must work with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and a good police force will develop relationships with this part of our Canberra community.

As police minister I have been pleased to see the efforts that our force has made regarding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. ACT Policing has a strong commitment to working with stakeholders and government agencies to protect vulnerable members of the community, including through diversion programs. This commitment was recently affirmed by the incoming Chief Police Officer, Ray Johnson.

In his first media appearance after being appointed, Assistant Commissioner Johnson publicly said he wanted to continue to focus on vulnerable communities, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, who are over-represented as both victims and offenders in the justice system. My colleagues and I look forward to working with the new CPO in this important endeavour.

MR PETTERSSON: Can the minister provide an update on how ACT police have been engaging with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community?

MR GENTLEMAN: One way ACT Policing engages is through the Chief Police Officer's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board. As part of her role on this board, Ngunnawal elder, Aunty Violet Sheridan, noticed that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags were missing from ACT Policing's HQ, the Winchester station in Belconnen. This was promptly rectified and both flags now fly proudly outside Winchester.

Another sign of ACT Policing's commitment to building a stronger relationship with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community was the launch of the two new patrol boats on Lake Burley Griffin, which I was proud to be part of. The names of the two boats comes from the Ngunnawal language and were chosen in consultation with elders. They are named *Ngunnawal* and *Yhuuramulun*. Yhuuramulun means "dreaming" and symbolises the vessel's connection to the local river system or the dreaming path.

ACT Policing also has about 20 Indigenous members. One of them, Matthew Saul, has a talent for Rugby. He was recently selected to play in the Indigenous Australian Invitational Rugby Team, a Rugby Union tour across Canada and the USA. This will enable Matthew to have a cultural exchange with other Indigenous communities.

As Matthew has said, this experience will allow him to bring back knowledge, leadership skills and lessons to his community, and help him to give back and to become a positive influence and role model for the next generation. I want to thank ACT Policing for their hard work.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what role did Chief Police Officer Justine Saunders play in this range of engagement?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question and her considered support for the former Chief Police Officer. Assistant Commissioner Saunders led her troops from the front and is widely respected across the community and this Assembly. She helped make ACT Policing a better force and, I know, will be missed. I worked closely with Assistant Commissioner Saunders from her appointment. Her experience and knowledge during this time were an invaluable support to me. I personally thank her for her assistance.

Among her many achievements was her work with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Through her connected and concerted efforts at engagement, ACT Policing has developed a stronger and better relationship with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. It is clear that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community also appreciated Assistant Commissioner Saunders's efforts. At the launch of the new patrol boats, Aunty Agnes Shea spoke in a very endearing way of the assistant commissioner and of her commitment and passion, and thanked her for helping forge such a strong relationship with her community.

I am proud to have worked with someone as motivated and skilled as Assistant Commissioner Saunders. I thank her for her wonderful service as the Chief Police Officer of the ACT. The government and, I think, all members of this Assembly, and I of course, thank Assistant Commissioner Saunders and wish her all the very best for the future.

Taxis—government assistance

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the minister for regulatory services regarding the mental health of ACT taxi plate owners. Minister, in your statement of 18 September you said that the ACT government will ensure that personal counselling services are

available for those in the on-demand industry who require additional support. Several owners have contacted the service in Woden, only to be told that the service knew nothing of this offer. Minister, how is this possible, and what steps have you taken to ensure that all relevant counselling services are fully equipped to provide this service to affected owners?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Miss Burch for her question. We have linked regularly with Woden Community Service. Woden Community Service are an outstanding community service organisation who have operated for many years, offering high quality counselling and high quality community services more broadly. They were chosen for this on the basis of their expertise and their long history in that regard. We have full confidence in the way that they are continuing to carry out those counselling services for people who may be affected.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, how will counselling services assist taxi plate owners who have had their financial livelihoods destroyed by the policy of your government?

MR RAMSAY: I reject the premise of the question. I note again that there has been a significant evaluation taking place in relation to this and that the evidence is quite clear that there have been a range of ways that people have been affected. The evaluation has indicated—and the government agrees with the evaluation that has been provided to it—that individuals who purchased their licences directly from the government in 1995 or earlier, and who held onto them, have received a full return on their investment.

We do note that there has been a good, sound return on that over a number of times where there has been the limited market and what we will be doing—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Please! Mr Wall, Mr Coe, Mr Barr, please! Minister Ramsay.

MR RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are working to ensure that people who are seeking on-demand transport around Canberra so that they can move around this wonderful city can do so with a range of options, which have been very positively received. We have noted that there has been a sound return on investment for those who have had a very well-protected form of investment over time and at this stage we are also providing counselling support for those who might otherwise be affected.

MR WALL: Minister, is it not insulting to taxi plate owners for your government to be offering mental health counselling to address the unnecessary stress and anguish that you have caused as a result of your government's policies?

MR RAMSAY: No, it is not. It is supportive of those members.

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall, enough.

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall! You are warned.

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall! You know you have been warned.

Transport—MyWay agents

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Transport. We have heard from local businesses that have applied to the government to become a MyWay recharge agent and have felt that they have been given the run-around. They have been told that it is too difficult or expensive to obtain the necessary equipment. Minister, why is the government telling businesses that it is too hard or too expensive to become a MyWay recharge agent?

MS FITZHARRIS: I am not aware that they are. I am not aware of the precise nature of those conversations. I will seek some further advice.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, does the ACT government in any way limit the number of MyWay recharge agents and, if so, why?

MS FITZHARRIS: Certainly Transport Canberra has a very considered approach to the allocation of MyWay agents, and there are some issues around that. But certainly it is also the case that we are in the process of procuring a new ticketing system. What is exciting about that is that from funding in a recent budget we have now seen top-up machines being placed on platforms across the city. I expect they will be operational in just a few weeks.

I am pleased that they have now appeared on a number of the platforms at interchanges around the city. That will mean passengers will have a much easier way to top up their MyWay cards, which I know has been very frustrating for MyWay users for many years. We look forward to those starting and also to further updates on the integration of light rail and bus ticketing as well as the process of procuring a new ticketing system for the ACT.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, why is the ACT government imposing an arbitrary restriction on local businesses who would like to provide ACT government services?

MS FITZHARRIS: I do not believe that we are.

Gambling—harm minimisation measures

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, can you tell the Assembly about the outcomes of the most recent gambling harm minimisation round table?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the question. I chaired the latest gambling harm minimisation round table on 29 September this year. I was very pleased with the

level of engagement and the cooperation from all of the participants—industry, community advocates, unions and people with lived experience of gambling harm—who came together and worked together on concrete proposals for change.

Out of the round table we built a shared sense of commitment to new and stronger rules for identifying and responding to signs of gambling harm. We explored ways to help make our protections, like self-exclusion, stronger and more consistent across various clubs. We also explored the need for updated and more consistent training, particularly to ensure that club workers know their responsibilities and their rights and that they are supported in enforcing harm minimisation rules.

It is clear that there are leaders in our clubs industry who welcome engagement with the government and the community to develop stronger gambling harm protections and to enable clubs to serve their members even better. It is also clear that our community expects more and stronger harm minimisation regulations. This government is clearly of the view that we can have both stronger rules for gambling harm minimisation and a stronger and more diverse clubs sector. The round table was an example of everyone who was affected working together to achieve these goals.

MS CHEYNE: Attorney, how will these initiatives deliver stronger protections for individuals, families, and our whole community?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary question. This government's policy on gaming machines is person-centred. It is mindful of the social value that our clubs offer and also the impacts beyond the individuals who are directly affected by gambling harm. That is how, in our discussion in relation to new regulations, we move those ahead to ensure that there is minimised harm. That is why we have a point of starting with the lived experience of individuals.

We heard at the round table about how a strong self-exclusion system can help people who are looking for support to stay safe and prevent gambling harm. We also heard about how relationships and interactions with staff at clubs are important not only for gambling harm prevention but also for building a sense of community at our local clubs. That is why we devoted part of the meeting to talking about how it is that we might craft the right training, and who it is that needs that training, to empower staff to take action.

Better rules to guide clubs to identify and respond to gambling harm by offering support and better training to make those rules effective will make individual club patrons, their families and their whole community safer from gambling harm. And our recognition of the importance of relationships in that work is why we also support clubs to be more sustainable, more diverse and more community focused.

MS ORR: Minister, can you tell us how gambling harm prevention sits within the government's work to support our local clubs?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. The value of our clubs as, primarily, places for people to connect and not just places to gamble is a cornerstone of our government's policy on gaming machines. Reducing gambling harm is a goal that our clubs have clearly and openly expressed their support to

achieve.

This government's view is that reliance on gaming machines as a primary source of revenue is not sustainable. Many clubs themselves recognise this—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe, that is enough.

MR RAMSAY: and are engaging with the government right now to take up incentives that will promote new business models and reduce gaming machine numbers at the same time.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe, not another word, thank you, or you will be warned too.

MR RAMSAY: Over the course of this term we have focused on supporting small and medium clubs. We recognise the cultural, sporting and social values that these clubs offer. And that is why additional incentives are in our pathway to 4,000 machines for small and medium clubs. That is also why we provided a 50 per cent tax rebate and a \$10,000 grant for these clubs beginning last financial year.

We can achieve a reduction in the number of our gaming machine authorisations as well as stronger harm minimisation and also a stronger club sector at the same time. And we will continue to work closely with the industry, with workers and with the community to deliver on our commitments.

Mr Barr: I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.