



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

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Tuesday, 4 June 2019

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Questions without notice
Electricity—feed-in tariff

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability. Minister, how much extra have Canberrans had to pay for electricity as a result of Evoenergy's mistakes in administering the feed-in tariff?

MR RATTENBURY: As Mr Coe I am sure is aware, the ACT government has commissioned an audit of this matter. I am not able to answer Mr Coe's question at this point in time because that audit is currently underway. What I can tell the chamber is that the directorate has identified concerns with data that Evoenergy has provided over a number of years. We have raised those concerns with Evoenergy.

Evoenergy has now made an investment in new IT capability to improve their record keeping, and that is now in a much better situation. We are expecting accurate data going forward, and part of the audit process at the moment is to make sure that the new IT system is doing the job that it needs to do.

In terms of the specifics about how much this will cost, we do not know at this point in time. It will depend on the outcomes of the audit. I might say that my anticipation is that it will be a very minor adjustment, if any at all.

MR COE: Minister, when did you first become aware of the data problems, and what was the catalyst that sparked your audit in March of this year?

MR RATTENBURY: Just to avoid the subsequent questions, I will take the first part of the question on notice, so that I can give Mr Coe an exact date. The thing that catalysed the start of the audit was to make sure that we had an accurate system going forward. I think the Canberra community are very supportive of the policies the government have put in place; equally they expect us to ensure they are being administered properly. I should say that Evoenergy have an equal commitment. I have spoken to the new CEO of Evoenergy, John Knox; we have had a very clear conversation about this. They are cooperating fully with the government. They want this to be right as well. For me, a key catalyst is assuring the community that they can have confidence in the data management that is going on here.

Mr Coe: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, Mr Rattenbury. Mr Coe on a point of order.

Mr Coe: On relevance, Madam Speaker, I asked what the catalyst was: not the rationale or the reason for the audit but the catalyst that sparked the audit in March of this year.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not believe there is a point of order. I think Mr Rattenbury is explaining the reasons why he has initiated the audit.

MR RATTENBURY: It is a fine line, isn't it, between a rationale and a catalyst? To be perfectly clear, so that Mr Coe is happy with the answer I have provided, the

catalyst was advice from the directorate that they wanted to make sure that the data was absolutely accurate. That is why we initiated the audit.

MS LAWDER: Minister, could you provide to the Assembly by the close of business today the scope, the time line, who is undertaking the audit and how much it will cost?

MR RATTENBURY: I will see what I can provide. Of course, the reason people know about this is that we published a notifiable instrument indicating we were doing it. So the government has not sought to hide this. I will see what information is available in response to Ms Lawder's question.

Environment—fauna

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the minister for the environment. It relates to the news in the *Canberra Times* of 24 May that Canberra's grassland earless dragon is one of four distinct species and therefore totally unique. Minister, how will this news increase the government's efforts to save our local grassland earless dragon?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Le Couteur for her interest, particularly in the environment. The grassland earless dragon, as we know, is an endangered species. We have been working very hard to support that species to continue by ensuring that we have the proper environment for it to thrive in.

We have also been using some new available technologies to provide enough data to see the issues involved with the grassland earless dragon and, of course, the threats to its habitat and the way that it lives in the ACT. As we know, with the warming climate, there is more pressure on endangered species as the climate changes. We have been working with the directorate, with other scientific bodies as well as particular environmental champions to ensure that we can continue to support the grassland earless dragon and other threatened species in the ACT.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, what advice have you or your directorate given to the Transport Canberra directorate about the potential impacts of the proposal to chop off a chunk of earless dragon habitat near Hume for an alternative alignment option for the Monaro Highway upgrade?

MR GENTLEMAN: TCCS and EPSDD work closely together when it comes to these sorts of works. I do not have the detail of that in front of me but I am happy to take that part of the question on notice.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what advice have you been provided with about the impact of the widespread nature of African lovegrass on the earless dragon?

MR GENTLEMAN: We know that African lovegrass is spreading across the ACT. We are trying our best to contain it as best we can. With regard to its impact on the earless dragon, there are usually incursions around the edges of where the habitat is for the earless dragon. We can manage the incursions of African lovegrass in their native habitat by careful consideration of burning and weed control. I will get some more detail from the directorate and come back to Ms Lawder with a more detailed

answer.

Mental health—gaming disorder

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. Minister, the World Health Organisation have just recognised gaming disorder as a mental health illness by adding it to the International Classification of Diseases. Gaming disorder is defined as a pattern of digital or video gaming behaviour characterised by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences. Minister, are you aware of this classification, and, if so, what steps have you taken to not only recognise the issue but support Canberrans suffering from this disorder?

MR RATTENBURY: I have not been specifically briefed on that matter by my directorate, but as the minister I am not generally fully briefed on each disorder that is being addressed by our staff. Nonetheless it is a very interesting and important topic and one that, having now had it drawn to my attention by Mrs Kikkert, I will seek further information on. What I can say is that the government employs expert staff who are trained in both existing disorders and emerging disorders to make sure that when people come forward and seek help in the ACT we have a system that is capable of responding to them. We know that with the stigma around mental health gradually being broken down, people are more willing to come forward and seek support. We need to make sure that as they do and as new issues emerge, we are capable of providing a response for them.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, what mental health services are available in the ACT to support someone who is suffering from gaming disorder?

MR RATTENBURY: If somebody did come forward with those conditions—they possibly would not know it themselves in the first instance—our mental health services generally would be available to them. They would perhaps make an appointment with a community mental health team to seek support for the manifestation of the condition they were experiencing and they would be taken in to the community mental health team. They would be assigned somebody to assess them and they would be given a treatment plan from there.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what is being done proactively to inform the community, and particularly parents, of this issue—how to prevent it and how to support someone who is struggling with gaming disorder?

MR RATTENBURY: Mrs Dunne raises a very interesting point. I imagine that this is not first being picked up by the health system; I imagine it is being identified in the education system by teachers, who are often very aware of changes in their students, and of course parents. As with many issues, we need to continue to have this discussion with our community. We need to be open about talking about the mental health challenges that people face.

Things like eating disorders are another example in that space, and which perhaps, while better known, are poorly understood. The community has a very specific view

of what an eating disorder is and probably thinks that teenage females are the primary group who experience that, whereas we are seeing increasing numbers of young males experiencing disorders. Right across the board, we need to continue to raise the issue of mental health in discussions in our community. We need to be open about talking about them and not be judgemental. The government's response, particularly, is to make sure that we have a service system that can cope with that, as people do come forward.

Mental health—computer use

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, I refer to the World Health Organisation having, as Mrs Kikkert said earlier, recognised gaming disorder as a mental health issue. ACT government schools have been rolling out laptops to every high school student for the last couple of years, and digital devices have become common items in classrooms. Minister, what policies are in place within schools to moderate the use of devices provided to students?

MS BERRY: Devices provided to students privately by their families are monitored by their families. The ACT government committed to provide Chromebooks to every secondary student and year 11 and 12 student in public schools in the ACT. It has already shown itself to be a really great equity measure, in that every child now has access to technology-based education that might have been a challenge for some families to be able to afford.

Building on the responses that Mr Rattenbury gave with regard to gaming and the recent media around issues around addiction and issues faced by young people, particularly, playing games outside school hours, the eSafety Commissioner and the Education Directorate work very closely together to provide supports and information to families.

Of course, this is not an emerging war; it is pretty much here now for the country. It is an issue that this country is going to need to deal with. This new addiction that has been recognised by the World Health Organisation around gaming and the kinds of supports that are provided will need to be expanded to take that into account. In our schools we have social supports and welfare officers as well as school psychologists who can support students and families as these issues arise. Importantly, the eSafety Commissioner is providing advice to parents about how they talk to children and young people about how they use devices, how they use gaming, the amount of time they are spending on gaming and how it affects their life.

There is a lot to do in this space. There is no doubt it is a challenging issue for our country. It is one of the issues that Education Council ministers have discussed as well, so there will be more happening in this space, I am sure.

MR PARTON: Minister, what training or information is provided—and I understand that you have in part answered that but I would like you to expand—to teachers to not only moderate the use of devices in school but also to identify mental health disorders that may be developing as a result of excessive screen time?

MS BERRY: This is one of those issues that we hope will be resolved through the implementation of positive behaviours for learning across our schools where teachers and school leaders will be working more closely with student cohorts in understanding the needs of those students not only within the school but also within their families.

In regard to the supports for schools around internet use, particularly around gaming issues, which, as I said, is an issue that has come to this country, we will have to put better supports in place as a country for how we deal with this. This will not be a situation or an issue that the ACT on its own will have to deal with. Certainly, I would be keen to work with the Minister for Mental Health and you, Mr Parton, if you are interested in progressing this issue, to see how we can support young people better in this space.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, what resources are schools providing to parents to ensure they are informed about recommendations relating to screen time and about known risks to both physical and mental health?

MS BERRY: When students begin their school year, students and families are invited to attend training sessions within school communities about internet use and technology-enabled learning and the use of ICT in schools. I do not think there is an issue with using ICT in schools. We all have a couple of devices on our desks in front of us right now; there is no point in excluding that from children. That is going to be part of their lives now and well into the future.

How we teach and support our children and young people to use those devices responsibly is part of the work of the education system—that is for sure—but part of it is also about advising parents and families about how they can support children and young people in this space, which is what I was referring to, about the conversations and how to open those conversations with children and young people about the time that they are spending on online gaming. A lot of that information is available on the internet through the eSafety Commissioner. I know that that is shared around regularly at public schools in the ACT.

There is no doubt that more work needs to happen in this place as a country. I know that it is an issue, as I said, that state and territory education ministers and the federal education minister have discussed. It will become more of a priority for ministers to attend to as well.

Budget—education

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, what initiatives so far announced in the 2019 budget respond to the growing number of Canberra families choosing our high quality public education system?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the question. This week I was happy to continue with the government's commitment to provide high quality public education by announcing new, expanded schools and funding for feasibility and planning work. It is clear from the most recent ACT school census that Canberrans trust the excellent

learning opportunity provided through our government schools. A growing proportion of students attend government schools, and government school enrolments are already up by nearly 10 per cent over last year.

In Gungahlin, which, as we know, is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia, population projections indicate that the suburbs of Moncrieff, Taylor, Jacka, Kenny and Throsby will see more than 2,300 new births by 2028. The 2019 ACT budget is responding by providing two high quality government schools and expert teachers and staff to make sure that those students and young people have a place at a school close to their home.

The government will deliver a new primary school in Throsby through the allocation of \$47 million in the budget and will begin work on a new high school for Kenny, with \$2 million set aside for planning and design. The government is also continuing its commitment to expand Franklin Early Childhood School, with \$29.5 million allocated to construct permanent buildings as the school grows, to accommodate students from kindergarten to year 6.

Additionally, the government has allocated funding for school expansions and upgrades across Gungahlin, Belconnen and the inner north, as well as planning and feasibility studies for schools right across the city.

MS CHEYNE: How do these budget-funded initiatives meet the needs of families in Gungahlin, given it is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia?

MS BERRY: Thank you for the supplementary, Ms Cheyne. In Throsby, the new primary school, which will be opened by 2022, will cater to 450 students from kindergarten to year 6 and up to 132 preschool students, with space for future growth. High quality learning environments incorporating both indoor and outdoor learning spaces, as well as integrated spaces to support students with specialised needs, will be provided at this modern and sustainable facility. Members will know from the announcements that I have made that the government is leading by example by delivering carbon neutral, environmentally sustainable educational facilities.

In Kenny, the new high school will cater to around 800 students from years 7 to 10, with room for temporary expansion to accommodate more places if they are required. It is planned to open in the 2023 school year. The government has not only funded planning and design for the school but also made a capital provision so that we are ready to fund construction as the project advances. At Franklin Early Childhood School, the government is growing its capacity to 600 students from kindergarten to year 6, in addition to existing early childhood offerings, delivering on its election commitment.

We will also increase the capacity of Gold Creek School senior campus, delivering 200 extra places by the beginning of the 2022 year. The government is also investing in flexible, high quality transportable buildings that can be moved to where they are needed most. Gungahlin College will also benefit from 200 additional places alongside upgraded facilities to accommodate more staff and deliver new specialist science teaching facilities.

MS CODY: Minister, how do these initiatives demonstrate a clear plan for the future in other growth areas of our city?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary question. As I announced this week, the government is doing the work and making the required investments to plan for increasing need for government schools. As suburbs move through their life cycle, student numbers tend to rise and fall. New schools are built with the ability to be scaled up and later scaled down. We will deliver new and expanded schools where and when they are required. A bit like a baby bear's porridge, the government will do it efficiently, delivering the right mix of permanent and temporary accommodation at the right time.

An additional 350 places through transportable classrooms will become available across the city, with buildings initially being provided for Lyneham High School and Hawker primary school, as well as Gungahlin College. Transportable learning spaces today are open, spacious, comfortable and exciting learning environments. They are modern, fully insulated and designed to meet current energy targets, with all the same comforts and technical IT infrastructure as a permanent learning space. As well as looking great on the inside, they are located in areas to blend into the overall design and landscaping of the school.

Through the budget, the government has invested \$6.5 million on feasibility studies and planning to support detailed mapping of future student demand in residential growth areas in west Belconnen, the Molonglo Valley, south-east Canberra and the Belconnen and Woden town centre areas. This work will also address capacity within existing schools in the city and gateway area and consider the need for additional college places for the inner north and Gungahlin.

ACTION bus service—wheelchair accessible buses

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Transport. A Canberra bus user shared the following experience: "I am a wheelchair user. Having to use two buses to get to my destination is difficult and time consuming. Also not all buses are wheelchair accessible. It now takes me up to 1 hour to travel from O'Connor to Belconnen. Previously it was one bus route that I travelled from home to Canberra Hospital and Belconnen." Minister, why is this Canberran who is in a wheelchair now forced to take more buses on a longer journey to get around our city?

MS FITZHARRIS: I am not aware of where this particular user lives in O'Connor. If Miss Burch could provide further information, perhaps I can assist outside question time with the specific requirements of someone who needs to travel to a variety of locations across Canberra. It is the case that the new public transport network is servicing more people right across the city more often with more frequent buses. We have a number of supplementary services, of which Miss Burch is aware. Perhaps if those particular details can be forwarded to Transport Canberra, to my office, we can assist further.

As I am sure the opposition is aware, we make investments each year to ensure that our entire Transport Canberra fleet meets accessibility requirements over the next coming years, and we are doing very well on that measure.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, when can bus users such as this O'Connor resident expect their services to improve and to be better connected?

MS FITZHARRIS: Services are better connected. I refer Miss Burch to my previous answer.

MRS KIKKERT: Why are all bus services not wheelchair and pram accessible?

MS FITZHARRIS: Many are. I do not have the precise figure with me but it is in the high 80 or low 90 per cent. As I indicated in my previous answer, we do very well on the accessibility of our public transport fleet. I can take the specific question on notice and also refer Mrs Kikkert to my previous answer where I indicated we continue to make investments in this area to ensure that we have a universally accessible public transport fleet.

Transport—Mitchell

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, amongst the many stories received on the new bus network, one that stands out is from Hank, who lives in Palmerston. Hank wanted to catch public transport from Mitchell to Palmerston after he had dropped his car off for a service. Despite this being a distance of less than seven kilometres, the bus options available meant it would take Hank almost an hour to return home. Minister, is this the new era for public transport in Canberra that you keep referring to when residents cannot make basic trips around their suburbs?

MS FITZHARRIS: Residents can make basic trips around their suburbs.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, with only one bus—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please! Mr Milligan, start again.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, with only one bus and no light rail stop for a commercial and industrial precinct such as Mitchell, isn't Hank's experience only going to become more common?

MS FITZHARRIS: I certainly hope that Mitchell continues to thrive as a busy commercial hub on the north side of Canberra. As Mr Milligan is aware, having been previously opposed to any form of light rail servicing the north of Canberra, we are now undertaking plans to construct a stop for light rail in Mitchell.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, Miss Burch has the floor.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, what do you say to the businesses in Mitchell who are going to be impacted by this lack of connection and longer travel times?

MS FITZHARRIS: We have had many discussions about the current public transport patronage to Mitchell. There remains public transport patronage to Mitchell. I look forward to joining the Mitchell Traders Association very soon for a morning tea to discuss the government's investments in the north of Canberra and in particular in Mitchell.

Health—infrastructure

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, how will the recently announced funding of the SPIRE centre help address the growing demand for health services in Canberra and the surrounding region?

Mrs Dunne interjecting—

MS FITZHARRIS: I note Mrs Dunne's continual negative comments about the Canberra public health system. I thank Ms Cody for the question. As we all know, Canberra Hospital is a critical part of the ACT and region's healthcare system. It is the region's largest public hospital and has the territory's largest emergency department and operating theatre complex.

The ACT Labor government is making record investments in new and expanded health infrastructure, responding to increases in health service demand and the growing population through the building health services program that is charting the course for future proofing our public health system. As part of this program the government has committed to the delivery of the SPIRE centre located at Canberra Hospital and in this budget, as has been previously announced, we have increased the scope of SPIRE to make sure that the facility will keep pace with growing acute healthcare demand.

The new SPIRE centre will include 22 state-of-the-art operating theatres; 114 emergency department treatment spaces, 39 more than currently available; 60 intensive care beds, doubling the current capacity; a new and expanded coronary care unit; a family-friendly zone for families with children in the ICU; and a rehabilitation gymnasium to assist ICU patients in their recovery.

The new and expanded acute and critical care services to be delivered through SPIRE will have an impact on reducing waiting times, treating more critical-care patients locally and attracting and retaining clinical staff to our community. We look forward to progressing investments in SPIRE and also to continuing to invest in Canberra Hospital campus as a whole.

MS CODY: Minister, what other measures has the government announced to tackle growing demand on health services?

MS FITZHARRIS: In addition to the significant SPIRE project, this Labor government is investing in a range of other healthcare services and facilities to meet the growing and changing healthcare needs of our community.

The government is expanding the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, which will see a doubling of the number of postnatal beds, a new adolescent mental health unit and an increase in the hospital's capacity to care for ill or premature newborn babies.

Our walk-in centres are more popular than ever, with existing centres in Belconnen and Tuggeranong seeing over 22½ thousand presentations each year; and in its first six months of operation, our latest centre, in Gungahlin, seeing over 14,000. This week we announced the Dickson location and funding for a new inner north walk-in centre, the fifth to be established in suburbs across Canberra. The walk-in centre will complement existing services provided at the community health centre, including maternal and child health services. Members will also be aware that the Weston Creek walk-in centre opens later this year. Walk-in centres have been very positively received by the Canberra community.

In addition, in Belconnen we have allocated an additional \$40.5 million over four years to improve facilities at Calvary hospital. This builds on significant investments last year and the expansion of the emergency department. The \$40.5 million provides funding for new doctors and nurses at the emergency department as well as investments to expand urology services at Calvary Public Hospital and to open more operating theatres at Calvary Public Hospital.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how has the government worked with clinicians and other stakeholders in developing its health infrastructure initiatives?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary question. ACT Health, together with Canberra Health Services, has undertaken considerable clinical and stakeholder engagement to inform the planning and business case development for major health infrastructure projects.

We are acutely aware that clinicians, staff, patients and community stakeholders have a great deal of value to add to planning for health infrastructure, and we cannot do this without them. Territory-wide health services planning processes have also been key to planning for our major health infrastructure projects. This has seen ACT public health services come together to incorporate expertise from ACT Health, Canberra Health Services and Calvary, as well as the Capital Health Network.

The formal clinical engagement process for SPIRE expansion has included senior clinicians from Canberra and Calvary hospitals, healthcare consumer group representatives, and executives from both Canberra Health Services and ACT Health, to ensure that their valuable feedback informs the building design and core components each step of the way. I look forward very much to that close clinical engagement continuing.

For the Centenary Hospital expansion, planning and design are further advanced, with clinical user design groups for each specialty area, including neonatology, adolescent mental health and maternity services completing three workshops each to confirm project scope and design.

Broad-reaching clinical, consumer and community engagement will continue throughout the design and build phases of these major health infrastructure projects to ensure that our health facilities best meet the needs of our staff, patients and the community.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—reintegration centre

MRS JONES: My question is to the minister for corrections. Minister, I refer to your announcement of \$35 million for a low-security reintegration centre to be built outside the walls of the Alexander Maconochie Centre. Inside the walls of the AMC drug abuse is a problem; we see assaults; there is no daily routine; and the remandees are housed in the same cells as convicted criminals. Minister, why are you building a facility outside the prison walls when there are still problems with properly managing what is inside?

MR RATTENBURY: As Mrs Jones knows, the government has made a commitment to a justice reinvestment strategy tagged “building communities not prisons”. We want to break the cycle of repeat offending in the ACT, help people put their lives back on track, and make our community safer by reducing the rates of recidivism in this territory. To do that, we know we need to do things differently.

We also know that the AMC is under population pressure regarding capacity. That is a well-known fact. Part of our strategy is to do two things: one is to make the long-term investment in programs that will help people break that cycle of offending, as I have spoken of; the other is to have some additional capacity at the AMC.

We know that the AMC is essentially a complete maximum security prison. Because there is only one facility, and we do have maximum security detainees, the entire facility is built to that standard. But not everybody in the AMC needs to have that level of security.

In New South Wales we see sites like prison farms, where people are at a much lower level of security as that matches their individual assessment, their point in the rehabilitation process and the like. We see an opportunity here in the ACT to become more nuanced in the type of prison classifications that we have: to have people in a classification that matches their needs. Not everybody needs to be at maximum security. This will give us some additional capacity.

In a way, it is about helping people to rehabilitate, and to get their lives back on track. We know that just about everybody in that jail will come back into our community at some point in time. Very few people will be there for the duration of their natural life. We need to think very carefully about how we give those people skills and capabilities so that when they come back out they do not fall back into their old ways but become thriving members of our community. That is what we are seeking to do through this facility.

MRS JONES: Minister, how is it reasonable to state that you will be able to deliver a reduction in our higher recidivism rates when you cannot manage the facility that we already have?

MR RATTENBURY: I think the best way we can help people to get out of that cycle of offending is to actually work with them on the underlying issues in their lives that lead to criminal behaviour, whether that is a mental health problem, an acquired brain injury, drug and alcohol addiction—the various things that we see in people. We know that the vast cohort of people in the ACT are coming along with those sorts of issues.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare recently released data. Admittedly, it was a small sample, but in that small sample of people coming into the AMC more than 80 per cent self-identified that they had taken illicit drugs in the period before their admission to the AMC. That is why, if we want to make the community safer and actually break that cycle, to reduce recidivism we need to intervene in ways that address the underlying behaviours and issues that people have in their lives and that lead them to be involved in the criminal justice system. That is how we will reduce the recidivism rate. The alternative approach is to just keep building bigger and bigger jails.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: One should never respond to interjections but the obvious ludicrousness of the interjections require it. We have expanded the AMC before, in 2013, 2014 and 2015. We took a decision then that the jail was not big enough for the population of the ACT. But we have now decided that we can also not just keep ever-expanding, because we know what will happen. In particular, if we keep expanding, more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will end up in jail. That is the reality of the system, and that is why we are taking a decision to invest in more community programs, to try and break people's criminal cycles.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I go to the supplementary question, I remind members that when somebody is on the floor answering the question they should be heard in silence.

MR WALL: Minister, why is your justice reinvestment strategy failing, given that this is the second time the prison has had to be expanded under your tenure as minister and that the prison population is now double what it was when you became the corrections minister?

MR RATTENBURY: We have been very up-front about the fact that this justice reinvestment strategy would include the reintegration centre. We said that right at the beginning. If the opposition think they have come up with some great expose here—we were very clear up-front that we would need some capacity in the medium term, because these justice reinvestment approaches are long-term commitments. We have taken the decision to change direction and put a greater—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please! Do you have anything to add, Minister Rattenbury?

MR RATTENBURY: I cannot see the point, Madam Speaker.

Mrs Jones interjecting—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Mr Hanson and Mrs Jones, that is enough.

Justice—parole conditions

MR HANSON: My question is to the minister for corrections. Minister, is it standard practice for parolees to not be allowed to leave the ACT as part of their parole conditions; if so, why?

MR RATTENBURY: That would be a matter for the independent Sentence Administration Board here in the ACT, who are the ones who determine the conditions that a detainee is given parole on. They make a range of decisions.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: I am not exactly sure—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, the minister is on his feet.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: You are warned, Mr Hanson. I have really had enough.

MR RATTENBURY: As I was explaining, Mr Hanson, it is a matter for the Sentence Administration Board. It is my understanding that most people who are given parole are given some sort of condition about where they should reside. That might be in a different jurisdiction, but it would be a matter for the applicant to make a case to the Sentence Administration Board as to why it would be in a different jurisdiction.

Generally, in the ACT people who are given parole do reside here and they are given a series of conditions which involve reporting to ACT Corrective Services, amongst other things. That is part of the ongoing supervision process about seeing people through their parole period and making sure they are complying with their conditions as determined by the Sentence Administration Board.

MR HANSON: Minister, how does restricting parolees from leaving the ACT affect their ability to gain accommodation, work and a life beyond prison?

MR RATTENBURY: I think that Mr Hanson is well into the realm of hypothetical here. Each person that goes before the Sentence Administration Board makes the case as to, firstly, why they should be given parole and, secondly, the circumstances in which they should be given parole.

Clearly, the Sentence Administration Board has a keen interest in people on parole having a successful reintegration into the community. That may be about where they reside. It may be about their access to employment and the like. The intent very much is to make sure that people can get on with their lives but at the same time retain the responsibility for supervision of people to make sure they are meeting their parole conditions.

If, embedded in Mr Hanson's question, he has specific concerns over a particular case or particular cases he is aware of, I am very happy to receive that information. But I remind members of the Assembly that the Sentence Administration Board operates at arms-length from government and makes its decisions on parole based on the rules set out in the legislation.

MRS JONES: Minister, are you doing anything to address this issue and how these people and the conditions have contributed to any increase in recidivism if they are not able to leave the ACT?

MR RATTENBURY: Mrs Jones has not listened to my previous answers. People can leave the ACT if they seek that condition approval from the Sentence Administration Board. If somebody says, "I've got family connections in northern New South Wales; they'll provide me with somewhere to live and a job in the family business," for example, I imagine the Sentence Administration Board would look very positively on that sort of representation, because they would see that as a very positive opportunity for that detainee to take up. Similarly, I am aware of other cases where people have talked about possibly leaving the territory and going back interstate to be with family. I am aware that the Sentence Administration Board looks kindly on that. These are matters that are taken into account in the decision-making process. If Mrs Jones or Mr Hanson have specific concerns, I would be very happy to receive them.

Budget—ACT Policing

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, are you able to provide details about the government's announcement last week concerning ACT Policing?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Pettersson for his timely and very important question. Despite what others in this place may wish to spin, Canberra is a very safe city and we are fortunate to live in an inclusive city with a fantastic police force.

The job of ACT Policing members is not just reacting to crime. It is more than that. It is about engaging with Canberrans and the many communities that make up our wonderful city. I am reminded of a recent event where Aunty Violet was stranded because her car had broken down. She called ACT Policing, who helped her get to the event in time. This is just one example of the service that the men and women of ACT Policing provide—how they work to build trust within the community. However, the current model for policing does not reflect this.

A few years back the previous Chief Police Officer embarked on a project to change the policing model. This was taken up by the current CPO on his appointment late last year. Under their combined leadership, ACT Policing has been diligently working

towards what has been called police futures. I was pleased last week to announce funding to support the implementation of this work.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what will this additional investment achieve?

MR GENTLEMAN: Police futures is a project that we will begin to roll out in the coming years. It will not be an overnight change. As the former CPO made clear over the last few years, she would work on the futures model and then seek resources to support this. This work has been completed and our government has committed almost \$34 million in an initial investment to help ACT Policing shift to futures. ACT Policing's leadership will now broaden their discussion with the membership, taking the troops along on the journey. ACT Policing will work with the community as well, helping to broaden the understanding of what police officers do now and what futures will mean for the community.

Futures recognises that the job is very different from what it was decades ago—even different from the beginning of this century. Now is the right time to make this investment in a new model. As our city grows, so will the nature of policing in the city. What will not change is our commitment to working with ACT Policing to protect Canberrans and ensure Canberra remains a very safe city as we grow.

MS ORR: Minister, is this the biggest investment in recent times?

MR GENTLEMAN: This government is committed to providing the resources for our front-line services' needs. Unlike those opposite, we will not bluster; we will work collaboratively with our services. This government, under the leadership of the Chief Minister, has delivered one of the biggest-ever investments for staff and resources for ACT Policing.

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms Stephen-Smith: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I literally cannot hear Mr Gentleman.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, thank you.

Mrs Jones: But you already know what he is saying.

MADAM SPEAKER: Many others in the room do not, Mrs Jones. I will seek for you to be silent.

MR GENTLEMAN: Almost \$34 million is being provided to help recruit more operational staff to ACT Policing. We will have 69 more members of ACT Policing. Canberrans will see more police working in more connected and effective ways to disrupt crime. By moving to a proactive prevention model, we are working to lower crime rates and divert more people away from the justice system.

This government's investment will mean more ACT Policing members on our streets. It will see more engagement with our community—building relationships. This year's investment builds on those made in the most recent budget and those before it. We are

making investments now and preparing for the future. We are putting more ACT police members on the streets and delivering new technology to help them keep our community safe.

Education—phonics checks

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, the ACT uses performance indicators in primary schools—commonly referred to as PIPS—testing to assess early literacy and numeracy, despite increasing criticism from parents that it is not capturing early learning difficulties in year 1 students. Given the successful adoption of phonics checks in other states and increasing evidence of its success in schools across the United Kingdom and elsewhere, will phonics checks be used or considered for use in ACT primary schools to identify students who are at risk of falling behind in literacy?

MS BERRY: No, they will not. The PIPS assessments that are rolling out in our schools are proving to be successful in conjunction with literacy education through expertise from people like Christine Topfer, who has been able to work with Canberra schools to improve not only the teaching experience but also the learning experience of children, particularly children who learn differently and have different learning challenges that are identified through the PIPS program.

No, I have not been convinced that the phonics test is an appropriate way to identify students who need extra support in the classroom; nor do I agree with a national My School kind of reporting of a test for children who are five or six years old who have an identified learning disability such as dyslexia.

MR WALL: Minister, what prevents teachers in ACT government schools from using phonics checks as a diagnostic tool? If there is nothing stopping them from using them, why are they not?

MS BERRY: I have not stopped teachers using phonics checks in schools, but not as a phonics test that is being recommended by the federal government. Teachers use a number of tools. I support their professional judgement when they are diagnosing a child's need within their classroom. They are best placed to be able to diagnose, just like a doctor would with a medical condition, and identify a need within a child, whether that is for additional learning or whether that is support with their family or more support in the school environment.

MR COE: Minister, what assessment have you done of the value and use of phonics checks in year 1 school education that has informed your decision?

MS BERRY: This has been a conversation that ministers have had at ministers council. I understand that it had been rolled out in South Australia as a phonics test and that they were happy, within their school environments where it was being rolled out, with the process. I have been convinced by the reports that I have had from the teaching profession here in the ACT and from the improvements in children's literacy and English as a result of the work through the PIPS program; also with the rolling out of a specific literacy program within schools that supports individual students that need that extra support and that supports teachers in being able to identify these needs

of different students who learn differently.

Canberra Hospital—electrical systems

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. I refer to the answer to a question on notice about the replacement of the switchboards in buildings 2 and 12 at the Canberra Hospital, which shows the blowout in cost from a projected \$14 million to now \$42 million, an increase of \$28 million. Minister, what areas have had to be defunded to meet the \$28 million shortfall in the switchboard work, and have any clinical areas lost funding to meet this demand?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will build on the answer to the question on notice I provided to Mrs Dunne on this matter, because these questions were raised in that. I will provide further information. As Mrs Dunne is aware, this full package is around upgrading and maintaining health assets across the territory funded a number of years ago. The original scoping of the project was before there was, in effect, the opportunity to get behind the walls. As that work has proceeded, this project to replace this switchboard will cost more money—

Mrs Dunne: I raise a point of order, Madam Speaker, on relevance. The question was about whether there were areas that have had their funding cut to meet the unexpected \$28 million increase in the project, not a description of the project. I ask that the minister be directly relevant to the question. Have any areas had their funding cut? In particular, have any clinical areas had their funding cut?

MADAM SPEAKER: I ask the minister, who is only 40 seconds into the answer, to perhaps satisfy Mrs Dunne and come to that point.

MS FITZHARRIS: This is a project, and funding has been provided in the existing scoping. This funding was not for the provision of clinical services. So the answer to the second part of the question is no. I will provide a further response to the first part of Mrs Dunne's question on notice.

MRS DUNNE: Have other parts of the UMAHA maintenance project also had significant increases in their budget?

MS FITZHARRIS: I refer Mrs Dunne to the answer provided under the question on notice that she referred to.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, why was the whole project not re-tendered when it was discovered that the scope of the works had changed so much?

MS FITZHARRIS: I believe it absolutely complies with the procurement guidelines on scoping a project. But if I have anything further to add, I will provide that on notice.

Environment—water quality

MS LAWDER: My question is to the minister for the environment. Minister, lakes and waterways in the ACT have long been unusable due to the high levels of

contamination entering our rivers and streams. In 2014 the commonwealth and territory governments committed \$85 million towards improving the water quality of our waterways, ponds and lakes in the ACT. Five years later, why are we still regularly unable to use our lakes because of the threat to human health caused by contaminated water?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Lawder for her question. The healthy waterways project is, as described, a \$93.5 million initiative from the Australian government and us to ensure that we can provide long-term water quality in the ACT, and indeed in the Murrumbidgee River system, by reducing the level of sediment and nutrients entering into the lakes and waterways.

The project is now coming towards its end. It is almost complete. It will then be the work of the environment that we have planted to remove the nutrients in our waterways to ensure that the lakes progress in a manner safe for human activity and, of course, for the nature in the area.

The waterways project remains on track for delivery. We know, from the work we have done with University of Canberra and other scientific groups, that if we are able to remove those nutrients before they enter the waterways, there is less opportunity for blue-green algae to keep growing. That is the program in hand that we are delivering for the ACT.

We are also delivering a very strong communications program to the community to not wash nutrients down the drain—so only rain down the drain—to ensure that we can deal with the build-up of those nutrients that cause blue-green algae in the lakes and waterways.

MS LAWDER: Minister, when will all of those waterways projects—every single one of them—be completed?

MR GENTLEMAN: Under this civil construction 17 assets will be completed at the end of this month, with the remaining three to be completed at the end of this month, June, or very early July, weather permitting. Wetland plants have been planted for the purpose across the sites; landscaping of dryland plants, paths and benches have been added to enhance the amenity of the assets; a two-year establishment period for the aquatic and water quality plantings covering the period July 2019 to June 2021 has been negotiated with the commonwealth and is to be undertaken within the existing budget.

MR PARTON: How can the ACT better fulfil its environmental responsibility to our fellow Australians and the environment in the Murray-Darling Basin downstream of Canberra?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Parton for the question. We have led the way, and it has been recognised at our ministerial council meetings with the Murray-Darling Basin groups, that Canberra has lifted well above its weight in dealing with our environment. We will continue to work with the other jurisdictions in ensuring that we can provide the healthy waterways project that ensures a good water supply to the Murray-Darling Basin. It is important that we do this work in a city that is growing,

and ensure we can look after the environment as best as possible. As I said it is recognised within the Murray-Darling Basin group that Canberra has lifted well above its weight, and that is why we have been working so well with our Murray-Darling Basin counterparts in the other jurisdictions.

I look forward to the next couple of ministerial meetings with the basin council and their groups, and I look forward to working with the federal government on possibly more funding for wetlands in the ACT, ensuring we can do the best possible for not only our residents in the ACT but also the Murray-Darling Basin itself.

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

Appropriation Bill 2019-2020

Mr Barr, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement, a Human Rights Act compatibility statement and the following supplementary papers:

[insert papers list]

Title read by Clerk.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Social Inclusion and Equality, Minister for Tourism and Special Events and Minister for Trade, Industry and Investment) (3.00): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Canberra's direction through the 2020s depends on the decisions and investments we make as a community today.

We see a city with its own distinct character—economically diverse, environmentally sustainable, lively, progressive and inclusive.

A city where good jobs and housing are available no matter what your background.

Where the best free public health care is available where and when you need it, and there is a great local school not far from home.

Where we take care of each other, and of our heritage, environment and neighbourhoods.

Canberra today is a great place to live, work, start a business and raise a family. We want to make sure it keeps getting even better into the coming decade.

That is why we are building for Canberra's future with this Budget.

We are investing today to grow services and infrastructure that can meet our community's needs in the years ahead. Canberra is one of the fastest growing communities in Australia, so we have to invest now to make sure our hospitals and healthcare centres, our schools, our social infrastructure and our transport networks

are ready for the next decade.

If we do not invest now, Canberrans will pay the price with traffic that just keeps building up, longer waits for health services and more crowded classrooms. If we put this off for another day, Canberra risks going the way of every other city that failed to plan for growth—eroding our great livability and the things that make this place so special.

For these reasons, we are building for Canberra's future and using the ACT Budget to do it.

We know a strong community and a livable city are what matter most to Canberrans.

Consolidating steady and sustainable growth—the ACT economy on track

The ACT's economy is strong, growing and more diverse than ever.

Our economic growth has been among the fastest in Australia for the past four years, which has supported the creation of over 3,200 new businesses and more than 16,000 new jobs. Our unemployment rate is consistently one of the lowest in the country, even as our community has been growing by around 8,000 people a year.

The ACT's \$40 billion economy is significantly larger than that of Tasmania or the Northern Territory. We have become Australia's per capita leader on services exports thanks to the strength of our higher education and tourism sectors. More than 60 per cent of Canberrans now work outside the public service, in a wide range of local industries from construction and health care to professional services and innovation.

The 2019-20 Territory Budget forecasts economic growth to steady at an average of 3.3 per cent a year over the next four years, consolidating our recent rapid growth at a more sustainable level.

We expect to see continued jobs growth and a stable housing market as ongoing population growth, low interest rates—including this afternoon's cut—and an accommodative Australian dollar support ongoing growth in our local industries.

Our tax reform program is nearing the halfway mark. So far we have fully phased out insurance duty, cut stamp duty to zero for around 70 per cent of commercial property transactions and raised the payroll tax-free threshold so that about 90 per cent of Canberra's small and medium businesses do not pay any payroll tax.

From 1 July this year we will go further by fully abolishing stamp duty for eligible first home buyers—making it easier for young people and those on low incomes to enter the housing market.

We understand that some households are feeling the impact of tax reform through their rates bills, which is why I want to reassure Canberrans that the heaviest lifting of this reform has been achieved.

Over these forward estimates, the rate of growth in rates will slow as we move

towards the next five-year phase of the tax reform program.

This year's Budget also limits growth in government fees and charges for households to no more than the wage price index because we understand cost-of-living pressures are a concern for some Canberra families.

The indicators all suggest Canberra's economic outlook remains very positive. But Canberra is more than an economy—it is a community where we aim for everyone to share in the benefits of a good life.

There is a lot more to a good life than what is in your bank account. Our wellbeing is also determined by things like our environment, our connections to place and others, the quality of our services and institutions, how inclusive we are towards others, and how prepared we are to contend with future challenges and to grasp opportunities.

That is why the Government has started work on developing a broader set of indicators that can also track our community's wellbeing over time.

From next year's Budget we will report against both economic metrics and a set of wellbeing indicators that will be developed with the Canberra community to track how we are doing in other important areas—like improving access to housing, strengthening family cohesion and growing the social inclusion of older Canberrans.

Economic growth is one tool for improving wellbeing across our community, but there are many others.

Having a set of wellbeing indicators will help us zero in on where we need to invest more of our time, energy and creativity to make a real difference for those Canberrans who currently are not sharing in the benefits of our economic prosperity.

Building today to keep delivering for Canberrans in the years ahead

The 2019-20 Budget delivers Canberra's biggest program of infrastructure investment ever.

Over the next four years we will invest more than \$3 billion to futureproof our hospitals, build new schools for our growing regions, continue making our transport networks faster, safer and cleaner, and grow and renew public housing.

We will deliver the new SPIRE Centre, expand the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children and invest in Calvary Public Hospital's emergency department and surgical theatres, to meet our region's healthcare needs into the coming decade.

The SPIRE Centre was one of our most significant commitments at the 2016 election and will be the single largest investment in our healthcare system since self-government. We are getting on with delivering it because we understand how important it is to be building now to meet Canberra's healthcare needs into the future.

At the same time as we get these major new builds underway, we will continue expanding our network of walk-in centres with a new clinic at Dickson, and will

significantly boost specialist health care in areas like rheumatology, urology, dermatology and childhood and gestational diabetes to help cut waiting lists and reduce out-of-pocket costs for people with chronic health conditions.

This Budget maps out the next major phase of investment in our local schools, the schools that will be built in our city's growth areas. We will start work on a new primary school in Throsby, a new high school for Kenny, and significant expansions for the Franklin Early Childhood School and Gungahlin College.

We will also add capacity at Hawker Primary School and Lyneham High School, as well as undertaking detailed planning for future school needs in the city and gateway region so that we are ready as more people move into our renewed city centre.

To ensure that all Canberra school students are supported by active and engaged teachers, we will hire the equivalent of 92 teachers and learning support assistants to respond to the growth in student numbers for 2019-20 and beyond. This will also see a boost to the supports available for students with diverse needs, including those with disability.

With stage 1 of light rail to Gungahlin successfully up and running, we are turning our focus to delivering stage 2 to Woden. Canberra needs a clean, fast and accessible public transport network to help keep our city moving as we grow, and stage 2 will provide the southern spine for our integrated transport network.

Around 270,000 people will live, work or study within 800 metres of the city to Woden corridor by 2036. So this is an important investment we need to get on with now to deliver faster and better public transport in the future.

Through this year's Budget we will progress detailed design, planning and enabling works for stage 2 of light rail from the city to Woden.

This will include starting work on a new Woden bus interchange to integrate with light rail, to ensure the project keeps moving ahead while we continue to engage with the Commonwealth Government and the Australian Parliament on the detailed route and approvals.

We will also progressively deliver 84 modern and fuel-efficient buses over the coming years to improve accessibility and passenger comfort on our new bus network.

And we will make it easier and safer to move around in the suburbs by upgrading key intersections across Canberra, duplicating the major arterial road between Belconnen and Gungahlin, upgrading the Monaro Highway and continuing our work planning to complete the duplication of Athllon Drive.

We are delivering our promised investment in a second Common Ground community housing complex in Dickson, building on the success of our city's first Common Ground in Gungahlin.

The Dickson project will provide 40 housing units, as well as communal facilities and space for social enterprises. The Common Ground model provides intensive support

to people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness, as well as providing affordable rental accommodation for Canberrans on low incomes.

This sees us continue to build on the next stage of investment in public housing across our city. Through this Budget we will invest \$100 million in a five-year program to deliver at least 200 more homes and renew another 1,000 properties across the city.

This investment will commence following completion of our major public housing renewal program by the middle of this year, which has seen 1,288 ageing public housing properties replaced with modern and energy efficient homes that better meet the diverse needs of our tenants.

We continue to invest in the arts. We are investing in a new cultural hub for our city, with the creation of the Kingston Arts Precinct. The precinct will add to the vibrancy of the Kingston Foreshore, with many of Canberra's leading visual arts organisations to be based in this new facility that will be purpose-built for creating, exhibiting, teaching and running community events.

Our creative industries are a key source of Canberra's vibrancy and one of our strong suits in attracting more people to visit our great city. So we are investing in a new hub to showcase our arts and cultural scene and make it more accessible.

Investing in people for a brighter future

Investing in our people is just as important as investing in our city's infrastructure and services. We are a prosperous city, but some people are still falling behind.

That is why we are stepping up our investment in early intervention to improve social connectedness, strengthen families and help end the stubborn disadvantage that persists through generations.

We will continue to grow our investment in support for Canberrans with disability, with the full scheme arrangements for the NDIS in place from 1 July 2019.

Over 6,800 Canberrans are now accessing tailored support through the NDIS, and our shared investment with the Commonwealth Government is projected to see another 500 Canberrans join the scheme over the next four years.

At the same time as we are growing our contribution to the NDIS, we will maintain existing disability services that are not eligible to be considered as in-kind contributions to the scheme from 2019 on.

This will ensure services like the Child Development Service, the Integrated Service Response Program and the Rehabilitation, Aged and Community Care supports remain free and accessible for Canberrans with disability who are not currently receiving an individual support package through the NDIS.

We introduced the Safer Families Levy in 2016 as part of our community-wide effort to tackle family and domestic violence. As the initial four-year programs reach completion, we are updating our approach in this Budget to continue the focus on

front-line services whilst providing start-up funding for government agencies to test and demonstrate the practical potential of innovative new services.

New initiatives to be funded under this pilot approach in 2019 will focus on delivering family-centred responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families impacted by family violence; reducing the risk of deaths from family violence; supporting pregnant women at risk of domestic and family violence; extending the Room4Change program, which works with men who want to stop their use of violence and build healthy relationships; and training ACT Government front-line workers to respond to family violence.

The ACT Government has responded strongly to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse by creating laws that make it the responsibility of every adult to make a report to authorities if they believe a child is subject to abuse.

Through this year's Budget we will now introduce an intermediary scheme which will help vulnerable witnesses, including children and people with disability, to overcome the challenges they face being heard by the criminal justice system.

We are also working to reduce recidivism by providing real alternatives to prison and helping more detainees onto a better path for themselves, their family and the community, after leaving a custodial sentence.

This year's Budget invests in a Justice Housing Service that will provide accommodation for women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans to support them to live free of crime. At the same time, we are making a major investment in more police and a new approach to policing that will focus on crime prevention and disruption, helping to deliver on our goal of reducing recidivism by 25 per cent by 2025.

And we are strengthening our city's emergency services by recruiting 36 new firefighters, and starting work on new combined fire and ambulance stations in the city and the Molonglo Valley.

These investments will help keep the ACT's emergency response times some of the best in the country as our city continues to grow.

Investing in our environment and neighbourhoods

The ACT is Australia's leader in tackling climate change and transitioning to a zero emissions future.

We are on track to be powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity within the next 12 months and we have set the ambitious target of achieving zero net emissions by 2045.

Through investments in the 2019 Budget, we will continue to support the achievement of our renewable electricity and emissions reductions targets and increase Canberra's resilience to the impacts of climate change.

In the coming months we will release our new Climate Change and Living Infrastructure plans, mapping out the next phase of action to 2025.

Our first tranche of investment through these plans focuses on transport, reducing natural gas use and mitigating the heat island effect by increasing the tree canopy and other living infrastructure.

In particular, through this Budget, we are getting work underway to plant over 17,000 more trees in our city over the next four years, renewing Canberra's urban forest and boosting our city's green canopy.

The decisions we make now about our city's development, our energy supply and how people move around Canberra will make a big difference to our sustainability in the decades to come. So we understand the urgency of working with our community today to drive change.

Our city's parks, playgrounds and local community centres are hubs for Canberrans to come together, spend time with family and friends or just enjoy being outdoors. As our city grows, we want to make sure that people in new suburbs and urban renewal areas have access to this great kind of great infrastructure, while also ensuring that facilities in more established suburbs are maintained to a high standard.

Through investments in this Budget, we will deliver a dedicated Home of Football at Throsby, which will include football pitches and an indoor futsal facility. The ovals will also be available for informal community use.

We are also undertaking early design and planning for the Stromlo Forest Park District Playing Fields, as part of our efforts to ensure local infrastructure grows alongside the new communities in the Molonglo Valley.

And we will start work on delivering a new community centre in the Woden Town Centre. The centre will provide a new home for Woden Community Service to deliver a range of integrated services, as well as space for community use.

Buying a house or apartment is a big commitment, and Canberrans want to know that their new home is going to last. Good quality building is important to ensure new homes are livable, safe, environmentally efficient and do not end up with expensive defects.

In response to feedback from the community, we will continue working to improve building quality across our suburbs and town centres by boosting resources for the ACT's building regulator.

We will hire 16 more staff for Access Canberra to undertake more monitoring and compliance activity, as well as provide more information to industry and homebuyers about their rights and obligations when carrying out building work. These staff will also deliver more examinations for builders' licences, ensuring local builders have the right knowledge and skills to do quality work.

Through this Budget we are investing in Canberra's infrastructure, people, environment and neighbourhoods, to make sure that this place—our home and our community—keeps getting better in the years to come.

Making smart and sustainable use of our balance sheet

Building for the future means investing today.

The investments we are making through this Budget will benefit Canberrans for years to come. So we are not going to ask the community to pay for these up front through higher taxes or more fees and charges.

Instead, we will use the Budget to get on with this important work because it needs to happen now.

Under the federal Coalition Government, we have had to do the heavy lifting of delivering infrastructure and services for Canberrans for the past six years.

Despite the ACT's steady and ongoing growth, we have received far less than our fair share of national infrastructure investment. Public service job cuts, decentralisation and unequal funding deals in key areas like health and education have underlined the federal Government's disregard for Canberra.

In the past, we have used the Territory Budget to offset the effects of the Mr Fluffy crisis and keep our economy growing in the face of cuts in Commonwealth spending from 2014-15 to 2016-17. We have since delivered consecutive budget surpluses.

Following the re-election of the Coalition Government federally, we have again determined to step up our investment in Canberra to ensure that services and infrastructure do not fall behind as our city continues to grow.

Our fiscal strategy remains consistent: a balanced fiscal position across the forward estimates.

Including the estimated outcome for this current fiscal year, 2018-19, over the last three years we have seen a cumulative surplus of around \$100 million.

Over the coming four years from 2019-20, we are projecting a cumulative surplus of around \$400 million.

We would, of course, welcome a further contribution from the Commonwealth towards the important initiatives delivered through this Territory Budget. But we simply cannot afford to wait and see if any new investment will be forthcoming.

Canberrans need their government to be delivering today and building for tomorrow, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Conclusion

This Budget takes us into a new decade. We are building today for Canberra's future.

Canberra in the 2020s can be a place that is even more livable, sustainable and inclusive than it is today.

It can be one of the few cities in this country that gets growth right, and a community that leads the way in balancing care for our environment with caring for people's futures.

It can be a place where our wellbeing matches our prosperity, and everyone shares in that.

That is the Canberra we see in the 2020s, and that is what this Budget invests to deliver. I commend it to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Coe**) adjourned to the next sitting.