



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

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Wednesday, 5 June 2019

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Wednesday, 5 June 2019

Questions without notice:

Public housing—relocations	1
Government—land sales	1
Public housing—relocations	2
Budget—fiscal strategy	3
Public housing—relocations	4
Public housing—safety	5
Public housing—safety	7
Canberra—community facilities	7
Schools—violence	9
Hospitals—emergency department waiting times	10
Health—nurse-led walk-in centres	12
Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate—logistical challenges	13
Municipal services—cemeteries	15
Hospitals—waiting times	15
Budget—disability services	16

Questions without notice

Public housing—relocations

MR COE: The question I have is for the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, I understand that residents in a particular public housing complex in Canberra will be transferred out with the assistance of Housing ACT because of extreme violence, criminal behaviour as well as severe antisocial behaviour. We do not wish to name the particular site in the chamber but I understand that you are aware of the site in question. Minister, have more than a dozen residents of that particular complex been offered assistance to relocate to other Housing ACT properties?

MS BERRY: Yes, I am aware of the issues that have been raised by the Leader of the Opposition and the Canberra Liberals today. I do not have the exact figure but I am aware that some tenants have been supported by Housing ACT to move to different accommodation.

MR COE: Whilst I note that you do not have the exact number, do you know roughly how many tenants we are talking about? Are we talking about a couple or are we talking about dozens? And when will these transfers be complete?

MS BERRY: The last time I discussed this with Housing ACT I was not aware that it was dozens. It was initially a very small number that were being moved to new housing accommodation. This has been something on which Housing ACT has been working with the tenants very closely, as well as with ACT Policing, the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and Minister Shane Rattenbury, so that we can make sure that people are safe and happy in their accommodation. I have not been briefed more recently on the numbers that the opposition is referring to. If that information has changed, I can bring that back to the Assembly and make that known to members.

MR PARTON: Minister, for how long have the tenants in question been seeking transfers?

MS BERRY: Given that I am unclear on the numbers as well, I will have to check that information and see what information I can provide to the Assembly.

Government—land sales

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Minister for Urban Renewal and relates to the failed sales process for Northbourne flats. Minister, given that the community often complains about the quality of infill, why was the ACT government not able to sell the land to what was reported to be the best development tender on offer?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Le Couteur for her question. This was a two-stage process, which considered the design outcomes. There was quite a clear and specific directive around design and the financial contribution. In this process the CEO of the Suburban Land Agency has been fairly clear. There was a lengthy negotiation with the preferred tenderer out of the three organisations that put in a tender, around the fact that they had a quality design and whether they could meet the market value to enable SLA

to sell them that land. That was not able to be achieved. Under the SLA's legal requirements, they are not able to sell that land below the market value. This was not able to be achieved. That is why the sale could not go ahead.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, how will the next sales process for the Northbourne flats sites, or in fact anywhere else, be changed so that high quality developments are ruled in, not ruled out?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: It is certainly not the case that high quality development here was ruled out. The Suburban Land Agency and the City Renewal Authority, who jointly managed this process, are working through the lessons learnt from this process and the lessons learnt from the sales of the other sites in Griffith and Narrabundah, which both also have a requirement for good design and good urban renewal outcomes but had a different sales process involved.

There will be a conversation between the CRA, SLA and relevant ministers around how we take that process forward. Those conversations have just started. But we will certainly not be sacrificing good design in the urban renewal corridor, in the Northbourne Avenue corridor; it is absolutely imperative. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity with the renewal of the Northbourne corridor. Getting a good quality development and good urban design outcomes are absolutely a priority for the government in that space.

Public housing—relocations

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, I refer again to the public housing complex transfers raised in the question from the opposition leader. In his question the opposition leader suggested that these transfers were being made because of extreme violence and criminal and antisocial behaviour. Is his characterisation consistent with your assessment of the reasons for providing transfers for multiple residents at one time? If not, what are the reasons?

MS BERRY: Transfers occur in a number of situations, including housing not meeting the needs of a particular group that live in a particular area. There are probably a number of reasons why tenants have asked for transfers, which include concerns around safety or feelings of safety within a particular place. In this circumstance the accommodation may not have been suitable for more reasons than just the reasons that have been identified by the opposition leader today.

MR PARTON: How many residents in the complex reported or complained about illicit drug dealing or being threatened by other residents in possession of lethal and illegal weapons?

MS BERRY: I am aware of concerns raised by members of the community, in particular, and some tenants, but I am not aware of the actual number. Given the questions that have been asked today about the numbers of tenants that the opposition have asked me to confirm around transfers, I will need to check that number and bring it back to the Assembly if it is available. I am also mindful of not wanting to identify any individuals. I will check and get some advice on what information I can disclose

safely; then I will provide that, if that is the best way to go forward.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, what other measures have you taken to curb illegal and violent behaviours in this particular complex?

MS BERRY: Illegal and violent behaviours are generally criminal matters and are usually managed by the police. However, the police and Housing ACT work closely together to ensure that tenants meet—they are obliged to meet—their obligations as tenants of Housing ACT. Primarily, criminal behaviour is not something that Housing ACT is responsible for; it is a Policing matter because it is a criminal matter. But Housing ACT has an MOU with Policing and we work closely together to resolve those issues where we can.

Budget—fiscal strategy

MS ORR: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, how is the ACT government building for Canberra's future through the 2019-20 ACT budget?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Orr for the question. There are a number of very important investments contained in this year's budget, particularly investments in people: early intervention and services to tackle disadvantage; a significant boost for services for Canberrans with disability, by transition to the full scheme NDIS; major funding increases in the Justice and Community Safety portfolio, including additional resources for ACT Policing; and a new approach to reducing family and domestic violence.

On the infrastructure side, there is clearly a very big program of health and healthcare investment; investment in schools; transport infrastructure investment; and investment at a suburban level, with a range of upgrades for local shops, new playgrounds, road and intersection upgrades, and better community centres right across the city. We also have a very significant commitment to continue growing and renewing public housing. This takes up a very significant proportion of the budget's new capital spend.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, what is the outlook for Canberra's local economy, according to the 2019-20 ACT budget?

MR BARR: The outlook is very positive. It builds on the last three years, when we have seen combined economic growth of 12 per cent, supporting the creation of over 3,200 new businesses in Canberra and more than 16,000 jobs. Our economy, as measured by the gross state product, has now reached \$40 billion. It is larger than Tasmania's—as a point of interest. It has been boosted by significant increases in service exports, particularly in higher education and tourism.

The budget contains a continued investment in economic development and industry diversification. A pleasing figure to see is that there are now 142,000 Canberrans employed in the private sector. They are working in a growing range of industries, including research and innovation, defence, space, cybersecurity, construction, tourism and hospitality, social services and retail. That is 62 per cent of the workforce now.

As we project forward, the budget is forecasting economic growth to be at around 3.3 per cent over the next four years, which consolidates our recent rapid growth. Ongoing

population growth, a strong pipeline of both public and private sector investment and continued demand for our territory's education and tourism exports are all anticipated to continue making a positive contribution to the territory's economy.

MR PETTERSSON: Chief Minister, what is the ACT government's fiscal strategy and how does the 2019-20 ACT budget deliver on this?

MR BARR: There are three core objectives of the strategy: to strengthen the local economy, with a particular focus on the creation of good jobs and the continued delivery of high quality services; to invest in infrastructure projects and assets that generate economic growth and projects that protect Canberra's livability as our city grows; and to maintain a strong operating balance over the medium term.

Over the last three years we have seen a cumulative surplus of around \$100 million. Over the coming four years we are projecting a cumulative surplus of around \$400 million—a cumulative surplus of around \$500 million over the six-year period of last year, the current fiscal year and the next four. The application of our fiscal strategy in this year's budget will see us make a further significant investment in health care, in education, in transport and in community infrastructure. This will be funded through small deficits in the near term which are more than offset by the surpluses delivered in the last two years and those projected over the forward estimates period. We are delivering today and we are building for a strong Canberra into the 2020s.

Public housing—relocations

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, I refer again to the public housing complex matter raised in previous questions. Minister, what will be done with the vacant dwellings arising from these relocations?

MS BERRY: We are not closing down this public housing dwelling. We will assess the situation that is occurring. It is being investigated. Some of the issues are being investigated by the police at the moment. Once all of these issues are resolved, Housing ACT will make assessments about their properties and whether they are appropriate to be tenanted by other tenants.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, will these dwellings be reallocated to public housing residents from other locations or to some of the 2,000-odd people on the public housing waiting list?

MS BERRY: It could be a combination of both. That will be a decision for Housing ACT through the processes that it takes in allocating housing to people who have applied for it. It starts at the priority list. Priorities are also placed around different individuals on the list. I have provided information to Mr Parton in the past on how allocations are made but I can go through that again, if that provides some assistance to the Assembly. Housing ACT goes through processes in making sure that those people most in need get allocated housing first.

MR PARTON: Minister, what will be the basis of choosing tenants to move into this particular complex given that you have indicated in this chamber already that personal

safety is the main reason for moving people out? If the current residents are not safe, how can new residents be safe?

MS BERRY: I did not. I actually said that it was one of the reasons for tenants being moved out of particular housing. This housing is built for a particular purpose and there are a number of community partners involved in tenancing some of these properties. It does have a number of programs through it at the moment. There are some issues that have been identified by the community that police are investigating and Housing ACT is well involved in, as is the Justice and Community Safety Directorate. Without jumping to any conclusions or making decisions yet, I will allow those officials and others to get on with their work in ensuring that people are safe where they live and providing supports to those people who most need it. We can then go on to the next stage: if there are vacant properties, that they are allocated appropriately.

Public housing—safety

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, it has been reported that contractors have refused to undertake work orders at the complex referred to in previous questions, due to antisocial and violent behaviours. It is also reported that residents will not leave their units at night due to the intimidatory and unsafe environment. Minister, have Housing ACT contractors been threatened or actually assaulted at the particular complex in question?

MS BERRY: I have not been advised and I am not able to respond to Mr Wall's question with regard to the actual numbers that Mr Wall has asked about. I am aware—

Mr Wall: No, I said “have any”.

MS BERRY: This is a pretty serious matter. I am trying to be very careful about not identifying any individuals or others. I think everybody understands that there is a situation that is being investigated by the police. Directorates and experts in this place are all involved in resolving this issue and getting to some point where people feel safe again. So let us just let those people get on with the work. I am happy to answer questions where I can, but it is under police investigation. All the officials and experts in resolving these issues are involved. It is best for them to get on with their work; then we can work out a way forward for these individuals and others. Housing ACT works closely with all of these organisations, as well as program facilities management, in addressing issues around safety and security.

Mr Coe: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order on relevance. The specific question that Mr Wall asked was about Housing ACT contractors. I ask that the minister be directly relevant. I am sure she can be without naming any contractor.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Coe. Minister, I think that at the beginning of the answer you were saying you were unsure of the numbers and did not have that information to hand, so I do not think there is a point of order. You have 10 seconds left to continue.

MS BERRY: No, thank you.

MR WALL: Minister, have you or your department failed in the duty of care to provide a safe environment for either contractors visiting the complex or the residents living in this complex by failing to address the issues of violence occurring?

Mr Ramsay: On a point of order, the question is specifically asking for a legal opinion on whether someone has failed in a duty of care. There is very clear evidence—

MR WALL: Let me rephrase the question, please, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, have you failed to ensure there is a safe environment for either contractors working at that facility or the residents that are forced to live in that property as a result of the violence occurring?

MS BERRY: Did you say “forced”?

Mr Wall: They are forced to live there. That is the home they have got.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no discussion across the floor.

MS BERRY: I was seeking clarification. I beg your pardon, Madam Speaker; I was curious about the language regarding people being forced to live in public housing. Housing ACT supports people who often have complex issues and complicated things going on in their lives, and they need additional support. Sometimes people need extra support in learning how to live back in the community in a safe way. But Housing ACT is not responsible for ensuring that criminal investigations are carried out by Housing ACT staff. That is a matter for the police.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, we do not need your commentary.

MS BERRY: However, Housing ACT works very closely with policing where issues of a criminal nature are being investigated. As I said before, if there are breaches of the Residential Tenancies Act then Housing ACT makes sure that they take the appropriate action that is required. Criminal matters are investigated by the police. Housing ACT matters are matters for Housing ACT, which includes making sure that we work with the different community organisations, as well as the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and their minister, to make sure that people who need that extra support, who have complicated lives, are supported appropriately.

MR PARTON: Minister, what have you done to ensure the safety of contractors in such a hostile environment?

MS BERRY: I have not, as I said in response to an earlier question, been advised around the numbers of individuals who are contracted to maintain the public housing in this particular circumstance. Housing ACT works very closely with all of these organisations, including project facilities management, to ensure that if there are safety and security issues on any public housing site, they are addressed.

Public housing—safety

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development.

Ms Berry: Not more on the same thing.

MRS JONES: It is pretty important.

Ms Berry: It is an important topic. I just thought I'd responded to everything.

MRS JONES: It is your turn today, minister. Minister, I refer once again to the disturbing level of violence at the complex referred to in previous questions. What assistance is given, in particular, to victims of shooting or stabbing incidents or other violent activities that occur in this housing complex?

MS BERRY: I cannot comment on what Mrs Jones said might have occurred at this place. I do not have advice that any of that behaviour has occurred. It is a criminal investigation. I think that, in the first instance, we should let the police get on with their job.

MRS JONES: When incidents like this occur, what assistance is given to residents in a complex where there are a number of Housing ACT properties on the same plot?

MS BERRY: If they continue to be Housing ACT tenants, Housing ACT would, through their client support services, make sure that Housing ACT residents get the supports that they need. Through the police investigations, police will have victim support available for people who may need that additional support. That would happen across the board, not just for public housing tenants, as I would understand it.

MR PARTON: Minister, have you been to Jerilderie Court this year, and is it true that there was a major police raid there this morning?

MS BERRY: Have I been there this morning? No, I have not.

Mr Parton: The question was about this year.

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, if the minister needs the member to repeat the question, she will ask. If not, let her conclude her answer.

MS BERRY: What I can say is that the matter is being investigated by police, and in the first instance we should let that continue in these circumstances.

Canberra—community facilities

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Community Services and Facilities. Minister, how is the ACT government boosting community infrastructure for

our growing city?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. As our city continues to grow, our government is investing in the infrastructure and services that our community needs. One of the priorities, as outlined by the Treasurer yesterday, is providing more community facilities and community infrastructure in our suburbs.

We know that community centres are hubs of activity and are essential parts of our town centres across Canberra. To ensure that our community centres continue to provide for Canberrans, we will be repairing and refurbishing Belconnen community centre, which has been providing excellent services to our community since 1987.

Mount Rogers Community Centre, Spence Children's Cottage, the Maitland centre and Tuggeranong Community Centre will also receive upgrades ranging from roof repairs and heating and ventilation upgrades to improving the environment for staff and community groups. Families and children also benefit from our government's investments in new playgrounds for our city to support children's physical health and wellbeing.

Every region in Canberra will see the construction of new and upgraded playgrounds: Richardson and Kambah in Tuggeranong, Waramanga in Weston Creek, Torrens in Woden Valley, Narrabundah in central Canberra, Higgins in Belconnen, and Yerrabi Pond in Gungahlin. All of these suburbs will see new and upgraded playgrounds with a better mix of equipment and activities that cater for more ages, abilities and play styles.

Some of these playgrounds will be based on designs done in consultation with the community as part of last year's play space reviews that are currently underway. Kambah and Gungahlin will benefit from new nature play spaces, which will provide creative and imaginative experiences for children using natural elements like logs, rocks and dry waterbeds to encourage children to climb, jump and explore.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how will the government make it easier for Canberrans to access community facilities in our suburbs?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary. The government understands the importance of making it easier for Canberrans to move around our city and to access services. As we build more community facilities and infrastructure and as our city continues to grow, it is natural to see pressure on car parking at our local shops, particularly at major group centres.

Gungahlin is a growing region. I have heard from Mr Pettersson that many residents and shop owners at Palmerston want more parking at the local shopping centre so that people can access the range of services provided there. Following Mr Pettersson's advocacy, I was very pleased to announce that an additional 25 sealed car parks will be constructed at the Palmerston shops, in front of the Palmerston community centre, which we expect to deliver in the next financial year.

Molonglo Valley is another growing region of our city, but the planned Molonglo group centre is still some time away from being built. That is why in the meantime our government will provide funding to construct an additional 150 car parks at Cooleman

Court on the block of land at Brierly Street and Parkinson Street. It is well known on the south side that parking at Cooleman Court is the number one issue for many Weston Creek residents. Certainly, Ms Cody has been advocating on this issue on behalf of residents for some time. These new car parks will be located directly next to the new rapid bus stops at Cooleman Court, providing better connections to our public transport network in Weston Creek, making it easier to access the local shops at Cooleman Court and also providing access to the brand-new Weston Creek walk-in centre, which will open later this year.

MS CODY: Minister, is the government providing more community facilities for Woden?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Cody for her question. The population of Woden is growing and will continue to grow as more and more people come to live and work in the town centre. Since becoming a member of this place and since talking with the community and listening to their concerns about community facilities in the town centre, I am really delighted that the government, in the budget yesterday, is backing the Woden community centre project, which is a priority of the Woden community, with an investment of \$1.75 million to fund the design of a new community centre to meet the growing needs of the Woden area. This will provide a dedicated, fit-for-purpose community centre for the growing needs of our community and the growing number of community services offered by particularly Woden Community Service. The new centre will provide a new home for Woden Community Service to deliver its range of integrated services. It will provide a large community space for activities and events as well as the arts. The design and service offerings will be informed by ongoing engagement with the Woden community.

The government will also invest half a million dollars in upgrading and refurbishing the Woden library, including upgrading spaces for use by the community. Community spaces and exhibition spaces will be delivered on the mezzanine level of Woden library. We will also be upgrading the downstairs meeting room to make it available for use and access after hours, with security installed and a partition added to the toilets.

This is a significant investment for the south side, and I am very proud to be part of a government that is delivering better community infrastructure for our city.

Schools—violence

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, in an answer published yesterday to questions on notice 2448 to 2485 directed to the Chief Minister seeking the total number of occupational violence incidents in each directorate, he reported that for the period 1 July 2018 to 10 April 2019 the Education Directorate had the highest number of occupational violence reports and the highest number of physical injuries arising from those reports. In October last year the Education Directorate was issued with an enforceable undertaking by WorkSafe ACT, including a \$2 million occupational violence policy and management plan. Given these statistics cover the majority of the period since introduction of that plan and investment, what evidence do you have that the plan is having an impact?

MS BERRY: The evidence we have is that there is now a culture of reporting within

Education that did not exist before. The high incidence of reporting, which has resulted from a number of incidents occurring, has also shown us that whilst there is a high number of reports, which is good because then we know what is going on and we can work with the schools to resolve those issues, there is also not a high number of work days lost as a result of injuries within schools. That is also good information to have, because it shows that we are addressing issues and providing supports to teachers and staff within school communities to ensure that they can continue at work.

This is an issue that we are facing as a community, and schools are not immune to that. We all have a role to play in resolving issues around bullying and violence within our community. Within our schools we have a plan and a process in place—nation leading, the first in the country to do something like this, confirmed and backed up by the Work Safety Commissioner—where we are taking action. But it will require significant change across our community to address the issues that are occurring in our schools. These are sometimes complex and complicated issues but the Education Directorate is absolutely committed, as is the ACT government, to addressing these issues, along with the involvement of staff, learning professionals, parents, students and the union.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, have you hosted the forum with other jurisdictions on occupational violence in education settings which was part of the enforceable undertaking? If not, when will you do so? If so, what were the outcomes of that forum?

MS BERRY: Yes, that forum has been held. It was very positively received by other state and territory representatives who attended. The communique on that forum is available on the Education website.

MR WALL: Minister, why has the Education Directorate continued to have a higher incidence of workplace injury than the police, the emergency services or the Health Directorate?

MS BERRY: This is a matter that I have been working on with the Australian Education Union since my appointment as education minister. It is about ensuring a significant change in culture which requires reporting of every incident. We are working through that culture change of reporting through Education so that we can make sure that we know what the problems and the issues are and so that we can work within our school communities to resolve them.

I am confident that some of the issues raised have been as a result of some complex issues within our school communities that we will get more information on as that reporting culture continues to evolve. It also points to the fact that some of these incidents are repeat incidents, not just one incident on one particular occasion.

There is a lot of information coming to the Education Directorate, which is important so that we can go some way towards making sure that the plans and policies we have developed with the Australian Education Union can be put to good use and we can resolve these issues.

Hospitals—emergency department waiting times

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. In 2018-19

the public health service had as a target seeing 75 per cent of urgent emergency department presentations within 30 minutes. However, the expected outcome is that only one-third of urgent patients will have been seen within the clinically appropriate time. Minister, why does the government continue to put two-thirds of urgent presentations in the emergency department at risk of serious health outcomes by their not being seen within the clinically approved times?

MS FITZHARRIS: It does not. Across both public hospitals there are very busy emergency departments. I note that we are now facing a flu season slightly earlier than we might normally face it. It is the case that, as I have stated publicly on many occasions, part of our challenge is in managing growing presentations. What we are seeing, in addition to increased presentations to both our emergency departments, are investments from the government, significantly expanding the Calvary emergency department and expanding and upgrading the Canberra Hospital emergency department, as well as providing additional staffing resources—nurses and doctors—for both emergency departments.

As the opposition is aware, the new CEO of Canberra Health Services, almost immediately upon her commencement in the role, implemented a timely care strategy which is looking at patient flows throughout the whole of Canberra Hospital. That work continues with a whole of organisation effort. The effort is in making sure that there can be good patient flows across the hospital.

It is certainly the case that, with increasing presentations, the category 3 patients are the lowest performing category. Much effort is being made to improve that. I would note that there has been a significant decrease in our category 4 and 5 presentations to the hospitals. That means people with more minor illnesses and ailments are going to alternative service providers. That may be their GP, but we are seeing increasing presentations to our nurse walk-in centres, which the opposition do not like. We will continue to work very much on providing timely care to patients throughout our public health system and in particular in our busy emergency departments.

MRS DUNNE: I note that the minister did not answer the question as to why only a third of category 2 patients are seen on time. Minister, why does the ACT health system continue to have amongst the worst emergency department wait times in the country?

MS FITZHARRIS: I refer Mrs Dunne to my previous answer on significant effort in terms of the timely care strategy at Canberra Hospital and efforts at Calvary Public Hospital, as well as our investments in Calvary and Canberra hospitals' emergency departments.

MRS JONES: Minister, why, despite these efforts, does the government continue to have two-thirds of urgent presentations not seen on time?

MS FITZHARRIS: Of course, as minister I am responsible, but I note that the opposition say that the government is not seeing these patients on time. What they are saying is that the staff, who work very hard in our emergency departments, are not doing their jobs.

Mrs Jones: A point of order, Madam Speaker: I am not sure the minister understood

the question, which was why two-thirds of urgent presentations are not seen on time, not whether the government sees them.

MADAM SPEAKER: The minister has a minute and a half to get to the answer.

MS FITZHARRIS: I have nothing further to add.

Health—nurse-led walk-in centres

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, can you please provide an update to the Assembly on the Weston Creek walk-in centre?

MS FITZHARRIS: I am delighted to provide an update on the Weston Creek walk-in centre, in Ms Cody's electorate of Murrumbidgee. I am pleased to advise that Weston Creek, adjacent to Cooleman Court, is not only getting new car parks but a walk-in centre opening later this year. The work there is progressing very well indeed. The main construction works are on track to be completed in November this year, and the walk-in centre is scheduled to be open before Christmas. I know, through overwhelmingly positive local feedback, that local residents in Weston Creek, Molonglo Valley and the Woden region are eagerly awaiting the arrival of a nurse-led walk-in centre.

Preliminary sketch plans are progressing well and the development of the initial design will continue to be informed by clinician and stakeholder engagement, including staff from Canberra Health Services and the Health Care Consumers Association. Very soon Canberra Health Services will also be providing a community information session to the Woden Valley Community Council. The existing maternal and child health services located at the community health centre have been temporarily relocated and will soon be moving back into a refurbished facility to continue providing important health services to the local community.

The new walk-in centre at Weston Creek will improve access to quality health care for those living and working in the Woden, Weston Creek and Molonglo areas.

MS CODY: Minister, as has been the case for the residents of Belconnen, Tuggeranong and Gungahlin, what benefits will this provide to the people in Weston Creek and the Molonglo?

MS FITZHARRIS: Our walk-in centres are more popular every week, with the existing centres in Belconnen and Tuggeranong now seeing over 22½ thousand presentations a year. Since the new Gungahlin centre opened six months ago, it has already seen over 10,000 presentations. With walk-in centres opening seven days a week between 7.30 am and 10 pm, we can expect to see similar levels of patronage in the Weston Creek walk-in centre.

All walk-in centres are led by a team of highly skilled advanced practice nurses and nurse practitioners with extensive experience in treating people with minor injuries and illnesses. Walk-in centres also collaborate across primary and community-based healthcare services to link in with, for example, a patient's regular GP and other health professionals as necessary.

All members of our community are now also able to access real-time data on estimated waiting times at ACT public health services, including our walk-in centres, as well as estimated door-to-door travel times to assist patients to access timely care. Anyone can join the over 4,000 other Canberrans who are already using the ACT Health app, available for download now.

Walk-in centres have been highly successful in contributing to the broad range of ACT public health services offered by the government, meeting increasing demand for health services closer to home when and where people need them.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what further updates can the government provide on the network of walk-in centres serving the Canberra community?

MS FITZHARRIS: In addition to the three existing walk-in centres—and the Weston Creek walk-in centre that I have mentioned—we are also building a new walk-in centre in Dickson to provide faster access to free health care for minor injury and illness for people living and working particularly in Canberra’s inner north.

The new walk-in centre will be located close to the Dickson group centre and the new light rail and transport routes, making it easy and convenient to access. It will also help to upgrade the existing Dickson community health centre, with four treatment rooms added for the new walk-in centre within the building’s existing footprint. The Dickson walk-in centre will complement existing services provided at the community health centre, including maternal and child health services. It will start taking patients in late 2020.

With the location now decided for the new inner north walk-in centre at Dickson, the \$9.8 million ACT budget investment for the inner north walk-in centre is also a key element of this term’s parliamentary agreement. It fully delivers on our 2016 election commitment to grow the network of walk-in centres across Canberra to five: across Gungahlin, Weston Creek, Belconnen, Tuggeranong and now Dickson. Of course, by delivering more great community healthcare facilities through the recent budget, we are growing the services and infrastructure Canberrans will need for better health and wellbeing in the years to come.

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate—logistical challenges

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, in January this year the *Canberra Times* reported that up to 250 tonnes of potentially recyclable material was dumped into landfill. To quote the directorate, this occurred as a result of “logistical challenges”. Minister, why has the directorate suffered from logistical challenges?

MR STEEL: The reason is that we have a national waste crisis at the moment as a result of the China sword policy, which has seen significant restrictions placed on waste being exported from overseas. That has affected markets for waste resources nationally. As a result of that, the MRF in particular has also been seeing very significant effects here in the ACT.

That did not impact us until the crunch period during December-January this year. This

is a particularly busy period, the holiday period, for the MRF. As a result there was a significant amount of material on site. The government's WorkSafe went in and closed the facility for a few days. We then stockpiled material at the Mugga Lane landfill. Unfortunately, it got to a point where we could not stockpile that material any further, and one day's worth of recycling material had to be put into landfill. Importantly, that was not material from the container deposit scheme. The container deposit scheme has been working to make sure that we can better access the markets domestically by providing a waste stream that is freer from contamination.

As a result of that, we have been working with the MRF on a regular basis to make sure that they address safety issues. They now have a full-time safety officer employed on the site. We have been working with a logistics expert to deal with the material on site as well. We have just announced in the budget that we will be undertaking a review into the future needs of the materials recovery facility.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what impact have these logistical challenges had on the environment, and will you apologise to the Canberra community for allowing this to happen?

MR STEEL: This is a MRF operated by a third party. We continue to work with them to make sure that they responsibly manage the waste resources that go to the MRF. We will continue to do that to make sure we reach our target of reducing the amount of waste going to landfill by 90 per cent by 2025. This is an important piece of work because we want to build a circular economy, using these waste resources as many times as possible in the economy and creating jobs along the way.

This stands in stark contrast to the approach of those opposite, who have opposed the container deposit scheme and opposed more recycling, including our green bin waste service. Our government will always invest in increasing the rates of recycling in our city. That is the approach we take. Under the Liberals you will see more material go to landfill, including more plastics. They also oppose the work we are doing to phase out single-use plastics. That is in stark contrast to their colleagues in the commonwealth, where a dedicated minister for reducing waste has now been appointed. It would be fantastic if the Canberra Liberals took the same approach.

MR PARTON: Minister, how can Canberrans be confident there will not be any more logistical challenges within your directorate that derail your forecast outcomes?

MR STEEL: Because we have been working with logistics experts to deal with the amount of waste that is coming into our landfill. In the budget yesterday we funded a new hard stand that will be built to take the baled recycled material at the MRF and expand the service. We are undertaking a review of the materials recovery facility and we have been working very closely with the MRF operator, Re.Group, to address the safety issues. As a result the MRF has been operating very efficiently. We will continue to work with them as this national waste crisis continues.

What we have seen in Victoria is much more of a problem than in other states around the country, where local governments have been land filling recycled material—massive amounts of it—because they simply cannot find a market for that material. Here in the ACT we have been finding those markets quite successfully, and we will

continue to make sure that we grow our container deposit scheme so that we have cleaner waste streams and we can access good markets.

We are recycling that material. We are trialling the use of that material in our road base, and I announced to Roads Australia that we will be looking to include that material in all of our roads in the ACT. We are looking at how we can procure that at the moment. The community can be very confident that our government is getting on with the responsible management of waste in the ACT.

Municipal services—cemeteries

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for City Services. In January the *Canberra Times* reported that you had instructed the city services directorate to investigate the Norwood Park Crematorium and the ACT cemeteries authority after a number of cremated ashes had gone missing. How can Canberrans be confident in laying their loved ones to rest in our city when their remains go missing?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Hanson for his question. The regulator of cemeteries has been investigating the matter of the missing ashes at the privately operated Norwood crematorium. The report is currently being finalised in consultation with both Norwood Park and the affected families involved. I look forward to the regulator releasing that report tomorrow.

MR HANSON: Minister, will the report that is released be made available to members of the Assembly?

MR STEEL: Yes, it will be.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, how many other missing cremated remains do you know of?

MR STEEL: I am not going to pre-empt the report being released tomorrow. That will certainly be outlined in the detailed report that the regulator will make.

Hospitals—waiting times

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Canberra has Australia's most expensive hospitals but also Australia's worst hospital waiting times and the worst scores for quick treatment of urgent patients. It was reported last week that Canberra mothers leave hospital quicker than those in any other jurisdiction. Minister, why do Canberrans pay so much more for their hospitals and receive poor performance in return?

MS FITZHARRIS: I reject that they do.

MS LAWDER: Minister, when will performance improve so that we have better waiting times, have better scores for quick treatment of urgent patients and address the concerns of mothers leaving hospital more quickly than those in any other jurisdiction?

MS FITZHARRIS: Our staff right across our public health system work extremely

hard. I note that all we ever hear from the opposition is relentless criticism. There is significant work underway in terms of investment right across our public health system, whether in supporting staff for a variety of significantly funded new initiatives; investing in increasing, expanding and upgrading our infrastructure; investing in new nurses, new doctors and new allied health staff; or investing in medical and health research.

On the opposition's reference to the length of stay of women birthing in our public hospitals, there are a variety of views around that particular issue. It certainly is the case that some women seek to return home as quickly as possible. A number of women who have low-risk births seek to return home as soon as possible. There is a lot more in that story than the opposition have asserted.

We particularly look forward to, in the very near future, publicly releasing the final outcome from our extensive consultations on our new approach to delivering maternity services, which was funded in yesterday's budget. There is a lot of excitement and optimism around this particular service. It is the first time a territory-wide maternity service will be provided. It provides a significantly improved approach to new mums, in particular, accessing maternity services right across our territory and builds on our significant investments in Centenary hospital as well as the significant investment in expanding Calvary public maternity ward last year.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what responsibility do you take, as the minister for health, for the 18 years of increasing costs and decreasing services in Canberra's public hospitals?

MS FITZHARRIS: As Mrs Dunne is aware, more recently, this year, we have seen our costs come down. I take absolute responsibility for making sure that we continue to make significant investments in health services, to support our hardworking staff and to invest in hospitals, community health centres, walk-in centres, and medical and health research. I am particularly proud of the announcements we have made in this week's budget, particularly proud of our commitment to our expanded SPIRE proposal that we took to the last election, and particularly proud of the clinical engagement we have done with that. I take responsibility for those significant investments and look forward to the government delivering on all of those for the Canberra community.

Budget—disability services

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Disability. Minister, could you please update the Assembly on the implementation of the NDIS in the ACT?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question. The national disability insurance scheme, NDIS, is the largest social policy reform since the introduction of Medicare. This year's ACT budget invests more than \$716 million over four years to ensure that NDIS participants can access the supports and services they need. This reconfirms the ACT government's long-term commitment to the NDIS and fully funds our share of the scheme, around half of the cost of the scheme in the territory, as set out in the recently signed bilateral agreement with the commonwealth government for the full scheme which starts from 1 July 2019.

In 2013, of course, the ACT was the first state or territory to sign on to the NDIS. The ACT was also the first state or territory to transition all eligible participants into the scheme in 2016-17.

The NDIS has been life changing for many people with disability and their families and carers, enabling them to get the support they need to lead full lives and participate in the community. There are currently more than 6,800 Canberrans receiving funding and support through their individual NDIS plans, including 862 people with psychosocial disability, 1,343 people with intellectual disability and 3,268 children and young people. More than 1,589 providers are now registered with the NDIS compared to 64 providers when the scheme commenced in 2014.

The ACT government recognises that the experience of the NDIS has not been uniformly positive, and that is why we continue to advocate for participants to see improvements in pathways, communication and a better understanding of the lived experience of disability within the agency. This work of stepping up and advocating for Canberrans will continue into the full scheme, just as our commitment to fully fund our share of NDIS will continue.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what is the ACT government doing to ensure people with disability continue to get the services and supports they need?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary. The ACT government knows that most people with disability are not in fact NDIS participants. Some are waiting for a decision on their NDIS eligibility. The NDIS was never intended to be the only answer for people with disability and, even for participants, was never intended to meet every need.

That is why the ACT government is continuing to invest, through the 2019-20 budget, to fund important services, including the integrated service response program established last year. This program ensures that people with high or complex needs are being supported with the services they need, including additional help in navigating mainstream services or the NDIS, particularly when they are in crisis and need that extra support.

Another service that will receive support with this funding in this year's budget is the children and young people's equipment loan program, CAYPELS, which provides specialist paediatric equipment and assistive technology for children with disability through their carers and health professionals.

Other services that will remain accessible through this investment include the child development service, which offers free assessment, referral, information and linkages for children zero to six years where there are concerns relating to their development; the ACT taxi subsidy scheme, a highly valued scheme which supports NDIS participants and other eligible Canberrans with their transport needs by subsidising regular taxi trips; and maintaining support for rehabilitation, aged and community care services that the commonwealth has now determined are no longer considered "in kind" supports under the NDIS.

The ACT government is committed to ensuring that Canberra is the most accessible and inclusive city we can be for all people with disability. That means continuing to fund mainstream and universal services that our community needs in addition to our commitment to fully fund our share of the NDIS.

MS ORR: Minister, what else is the ACT government doing to ensure that people with disability can participate fully in our community and society?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary. By fostering an inclusive and engaged community, people with disability are better able to participate fully in our community and enjoy their rights as citizens.

Work is underway on a disability justice strategy for the ACT. It is well established that people with disability often do not have access to the legal supports and services they need and that the legal system can be particularly difficult to navigate. I am looking forward to the release of the finalised disability justice strategy in coming months, along with the first action plan.

The next round of the disability inclusion grants will open later this month. These grants provide community groups, organisations and small businesses with the opportunity to apply for a grant of up to \$20,000 in order to become more inclusive and accessible for people with disability. The impact will be spread across people's lives in areas of employment, recreation, sporting pursuits and participation in community groups. People with disability are encouraged to get involved by identifying groups, organisations and activities they would like to participate in and to let those organisations and places know how to apply for a disability inclusion grant. I encourage all members who have constituents with disability talking to them about a lack of access to make them aware of the disability inclusion grants program, an ACT Labor election commitment.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the hard work of the Disability Reference Group, which met just yesterday. The DRG, led by its passionate community co-chair, Dougie Herd, provides me and the ACT government with advice on government policies and insights into the issues faced by Canberrans with a disability. I was thrilled to appoint a number of new members to the DRG recently. Alarna Barratt, Michael Bleasdale, Jackson Sievers and Kerry Snell will make the DRG even stronger and further increase its capacity to shape and help deliver a more inclusive Canberra.

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