



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

**HANSARD**

Edited proof transcript

Wednesday, 14 August 2019

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## **Questions without notice**

### **Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate—health unit**

**MR COE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Minister, your directorate had a health unit looking at prevention and innovation. Does this unit still exist, and what were the key achievements of this unit?

**MR BARR:** Yes, this particular area did coordinate some whole-of-government activities across multiple agencies. It was reported on in the annual report for the relevant year. Some of its work has been informing the wellbeing indicators project.

**MR COE:** Why was this unit located in your directorate rather than in one of the two health agencies? Does this health prevention unit still exist by that name?

**MR BARR:** As I said, it was in fact coordinating a whole-of-government response to healthy and active living that incorporated work across a number of different directorates, sport and recreation, for example, and health prevention. I do not believe that it does currently exist under that title and, as I have indicated, a lot of its work has informed the work on the wellbeing indicators.

**MRS DUNNE:** Chief Minister, what is the total annual cost of running this unit, and have any of the staff been transferred out of this unit into the Health Directorate or vice versa?

**MR BARR:** I will take that question on notice.

### **Disability—access**

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My question is to the Minister for Disability and relates to disability access. What mechanisms will the government use to incorporate lived experience from people with disability needs into transport and urban planning to address disability access issues?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Ms Le Couteur for the question but I think that, given that it is very specific to transport and city services, it is actually a question for the Minister for Transport and City Services. Nevertheless, I can give an answer in relation to the mechanisms that the government has in place.

Of course a major mechanism is the disability reference group which has a majority of people with disability, carers and family members. That brings the lived experience of people with disability into government policy across the board. The disability reference group establishes its own priority areas in which it works year on year in terms of its work plan but is also available for government to seek advice on and it determines its input into various consultations across the whole of the government.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** What is the actual role of the disability reference group, and how often does it provide advice on access issues relating to transport and urban planning?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Ms Le Couteur for the supplementary. The disability reference group, as I have indicated, sets its own work plan. It determines the areas where it would like to provide advice to government on specific matters. At the moment those have been focused on health and employment. It provides feedback to the government in relation to the implementation of the national disability insurance scheme. The reference group meets regularly. I went to their most recent meeting last week and sat down and talked to them about a wide range of issues and had questions and feedback.

I will have to take on notice the question about when they most recently provided specific advice in relation to transport and city services issues. I do know that members of the disability reference group attended, for example, the light rail—I cannot remember exactly what it is called—“come and try” day that was specifically around ensuring that the service would be appropriate for people with disability, that people with disability understood how to use the service, and that people who were supporting patrons on the light rail had the experience of working with people with disability to understand how they are best supported. Members of the disability reference group were engaged in that process.

### **Municipal services—tree removal**

**MR WALL:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Recently the owners of the Calwell shopping centre discovered that trees located adjacent to the shopping centre on territory-owned land were causing structural damage to their property and significant damage to the paving outside the premises, causing not only a safety hazard to patrons but also concern around the structural properties of the building. Minister, your directorate approved the removal of the trees but informed the owners that they were responsible for the cost as well as arranging the removal of the trees themselves, despite the trees being located on territory land. Why do business owners who already pay exorbitant rates have to pay to have trees removed that are on government property?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for his question. I acknowledge that trees, while being a fantastic part of our urban lifestyle, can damage properties, particularly if they are inappropriate for the urban setting. We try to make sure that they comply with the guidelines for municipal infrastructure so that they are appropriate. In circumstances where they are not we look at what opportunities there are to have them removed if they are causing issues in relation to safety and so forth.

In relation to the specifics of Mr Wall’s question I am very happy to take that on notice and get back to him; I am not aware of the specific details.

**MR WALL:** I will give the minister a second chance. Minister, why is it that Calwell businesses are paying in excess of \$50,000 a year in rates yet have to fund the removal of trees that are on government land causing damage to their property?

**MR STEEL:** As I just mentioned, I am not aware of the exact specifics of this case. I am happy to look into it and provide some information back to the Assembly.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, perhaps more broadly, what is your plan to assess and remediate damage caused to private property by ACT-owned trees?

**MR STEEL:** In certain circumstances it is appropriate for the territory to provide compensation in relation to damage. That is assessed on an individual case-by-case basis. I am not aware of the specifics in relation to this case. I will assess those, have a look, get some advice from the department in relation to what is happening there, and come back to the Assembly.

### **Government—support for environment groups**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the Minister for Environment and Heritage. Minister, what support has the government recently provided to environment groups in the ACT?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Ms Orr for her interest in the environment. It was good to see her at the Holder wetlands on the weekend for the celebration of Landcare. We are fortunate to live in Australia's bush capital, with environmental assets ranging from the snow-capped Brindabellas to the critically endangered natural temperate grasslands. Within this setting, the ACT government recognises the wonderful contribution of ACT environmental groups and what they have achieved in protecting our environment.

With the commonwealth government discontinuing its previous funding arrangements for the ongoing operation of community and environment groups, the ACT government responded in 2018-19 by providing \$352,000 to assist Ginninderra, Molonglo and southern ACT catchment groups respectively to explore business models aimed at sustainable and diverse funding avenues.

The ACT government is also contributing towards the ongoing funding of the award winning citizen science programs, Waterwatch and Frogwatch. The Waterwatch program develops an annual catchment condition report that includes contributions of 200 volunteers conducting 1,861 water quality surveys, 199 water bug surveys and 210 riparian condition surveys. These are all good numbers.

There are also 20 volunteer ParkCare groups operating on national park estate in the ACT and 34 urban Landcare groups operating within our urban reserves. We can support the environment because of sensible economic management showing that you can grow the economy while protecting the environment. Pursuing the efficiency agenda of those opposite means cuts and threatens the bush capital.

**MS ORR:** Minister, was there any support for groups or projects in my electorate of Yerrabi?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** That is an excellent question from a member who is passionate about their local environment and nature. The Ginninderra Creek weaves its way through the Gungahlin region, via the Kaleen and Giralang suburbs, to Ginninderra Falls, then into the Murrumbidgee River. Within this landscape the Ginninderra Catchment Group's main goal is to improve the health and sustainability of the catchment.

The government-funded Waterwatch and Frogwatch programs have a strong presence in the Gungahlin and Belconnen regions and have been running for 24 and 15 years respectively. The Gungahlin and Belconnen areas currently have volunteers monitoring over 35 Waterwatch sites and 50 Frogwatch sites, providing a comprehensive picture of water quality and aquatic diversity. Both programs also conduct activities in local schools, teaching students the importance of water bugs and measuring water quality and how to identify different frog calls.

Recent project highlights include a cultural burn conducted by the ACT government at Gubur Dhaura, the ochre procurement site in Franklin. The Giralang Landcare Group had a recent successful tree planting event in collaboration with the Ginninderra Catchment Group.

In the recently announced environmental grants, The Giralang-Kaleen Men's Shed will install nest boxes within urban open space at Yerrabi pond. I understand Ms Orr worked closely with the group to develop that proposal, an example of the dedication and service that members on this side provide to their community.

**MS CHEYNE:** Minister, what support was provided for projects in Ginninderra?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** That is another great question, from a hardworking member, who works tirelessly for Belconnen residents. Local Belconnen environment groups participate in annual ACT environment grants. This initiative, since 1996, funds community projects supporting environmental activities consistent with the ACT government's policies and priorities. For example, in the last three grant rounds over \$613,000 has been provided across 32 projects.

In Belconnen the Frogwatch program received an environment grant to deliver Frogphone monitoring trials. The aim of the project is to test this new, innovative monitoring technology to improve the efficacy and accuracy of collecting data on wildlife populations in the ACT. In the recently announced environment grants, Greening Australia, based in Aranda, were funded to create a cultural resource garden bed, which will showcase diverse native plant species and cultural practices of our traditional custodians.

There is a strong, healthy partnership between government and the community in sharing the load to improve our most valued environment. This has come about because of the sensible economic management by the government. But there is a threat. It is clear that those opposite are copying the Tony Abbott playbook, a playbook that favours Liberal mates, cuts essential services and hits the environment.

### **Budget—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Minister, as part of last year's budget, there was \$50,000 allocated to scope out and re-profile the stalled, outdated and inadequate building from which our leading Aboriginal youth service, Gugan Gulwan, operates in Erindale. Minister, why has this funding been rolled over into the 2019-20 budget?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mr Milligan for the question and note that it was \$150,000 that was allocated to this project. I thought that Mr Milligan said \$50,000; I just want to clarify that for members of the Assembly.

This project is very important, but we have also been engaging in another important project with Gugan Gulwan in the past financial year: the establishment of the functional family therapy child welfare pilot program which Gugan Gulwan is undertaking in partnership with OzChild to deliver intensive family support services for families who are at risk of having children enter the child protection system. Obviously, the work to undertake the feasibility study with Gugan Gulwan must be done in partnership with them. It is a small organisation and there have been some capacity issues around being able to engage in that work while at the same time establishing the functional family therapy work, which has been very important.

I am pleased to say that that work, in terms of the feasibility study, is underway. It is a very important piece of work; it is a priority for us; and we will get that work completed as quickly as we can.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, is it fair to expect Gugan to keep delivering services and programs when you will not even deliver them the options report for upgrades at the current facility?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mr Milligan for the supplementary. I am not quite sure what he is referring to in relation to an options report. In terms of the delivery of expanded services, of course the government has entered into arrangements with Gugan Gulwan for additional facilities for them to deliver those services. We continue to work on a proactive basis with Gugan Gulwan to ensure that they have sufficient facilities to deliver their services while at the same time undertaking this very important feasibility work to understand their needs into the future and to plan for how we will deliver those.

**MR COE:** Minister, when will the work be complete so Gugan will finally get the facilities they deserve?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I will take the question on notice in terms of when exactly we expect this work to be completed, but it is underway and it will be completed as quickly as possible. Of course, it absolutely needs to be done in partnership with Gugan Gulwan and to be led by them to determine exactly their needs but also in partnership with other ACT government agencies, including Property Group. I have taken the question on notice already, Mr Coe, in terms of the detail of that.

### **Light rail—certification**

**MISS C BURCH:** My question is to the minister for transport. Minister, my question relates to an answer you gave two weeks ago concerning the Specialist Electrical Engineering Group, the original certifier for the electrical work done on the light rail construction. Although the Canberra Metro consortium were responsible for this part of the project, when I asked about a different certifier being enlisted to finalise the project, you mentioned that the matter was in relation to SEEG's "capacity to deliver certification on the project". Minister, why did the Canberra Metro consortium

appoint SEEG to provide certification if certification of the project was outside their capacity to deliver?

**MR STEEL:** Given that the member has asked about Capital Metro, I am very happy to take that on notice and provide some details, rather than speaking on their behalf here today.

**MISS C BURCH:** Minister, did the government become aware that SEEG had been replaced before or after they announced they would not sign off on the project?

**MR STEEL:** Again, I am happy to take the question on notice and provide as much detail as I can.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, when did the government become aware that SEEG lacked the capacity to deliver certification on the project?

**MR STEEL:** As Mrs Jones will appreciate, I was not the minister at the time. It is a very specific question. I am happy to come back with the specifics on notice.

### **Arts—government investment**

**MS CHEYNE:** My question is to the Minister for the Arts and Cultural Events. Can the minister please update the Assembly on the ACT government's investment in arts and artists in the territory through the latest round of arts activities grants?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Ms Cheyne for the question and for her dedicated history in matters of the arts in the ACT. I was please in May to announce the outcomes of the latest round of arts activities funding for the ACT and the region. Fifteen recipients will share over \$300,000 to create works in a variety of genres and disciplines, including visual arts, literature, music, theatre and dance. This brings the number of arts activities funding recipients in 2018-19 to 31. Combined with the 59 successful applicants for our smaller grants category of under \$5,000 and our six screen arts grants, that means that we have expended over \$911,000 in arts grants in 2018-19, which is well above our annual commitment of a minimum of \$775,000, and we have funded a total of 96 artists for their work in the past year.

The arts are integral to Canberra's social fabric and economic development. Art strengthens our community and is an essential part of our identity as a vibrant, culturally rich and diverse city. Through this year's project funding, all Canberrans will benefit from opportunities to experience and engage with local arts and artists. I can advise the Assembly that there is a full list of the project funding recipients on the artsACT website.

**MS CHEYNE:** Can the minister advise what further investment in the arts in the ACT is in our budget for this year?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary question. The arts portfolio includes several high profile heritage-listed buildings. In this year's budget, the government is investing in the future of some of our most iconic arts facilities, improving the roofing at Strathnairn and Watson arts centres, and site safety and

accessibility at Ainslie Arts Centre and Gorman House Arts Centre.

We are working towards celebrating a major milestone for Canberra's arts and cultural heritage in 2025 when Gorman House will turn 100. This means that we are investing now in design works to ensure the building's ongoing success as an arts and artists' venue. We are also working with Strathnairn Arts Centre to plan for ongoing vehicle and pedestrian access requirements, given the adjacent development of Ginninderry. I am pleased to see the ongoing close and productive relationship between the arts centre and the Riverview development company.

We are also implementing a package of works at the historic Lanyon precinct to install new water infrastructure, to undertake building stabilisation measures and to upgrade the security infrastructure. This will be one of the largest investments ever made in ACT historic places. It will ensure that Lanyon is safe and secure for staff, for volunteers, for visitors and for tenants, and it will protect the precinct's heritage status into the future.

We will also be improving facilities at the Canberra Theatre with a further program of upgrades to enhance security infrastructure, safety and building management. These initiatives further demonstrate the government's commitment to enhancing the cultural life of our community, further cementing Canberra's status as a creative capital.

## Visitors

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Pettersson, before I give you the call, I bring to the attention of members that we have in the chamber the 13th Australian Political Exchange Council delegation from the Philippines. Welcome to Canberra and welcome to the ACT Assembly.

## Questions without notice

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the government's overall investment in the arts and artists in the ACT?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary question. The ACT government has a strong commitment to the arts, demonstrated through the annual arts budget of over \$10 million, which is the largest such expenditure in the history of self-government. The government also provides funding of \$9 million annually for the operations of the Cultural Facilities Corporation, which runs CMAG, the Canberra Theatre Centre and ACT Historic Places.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, please! Humour aside, the minister has the floor.

**MR RAMSAY:** In addition to our election commitment of \$15 million to build stage 2 of the Belconnen Arts Centre, we have injected \$700,000 over two years into the BAC for operational support for the extended centre.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR RAMSAY:** We have funded the creation of new—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Resume your seat, minister. Stop the clock. Members, for the benefit of our delegation, allow the minister to be heard.

**MR RAMSAY:** We are pleased to have created a new position in artsACT for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-identified arts officer.

We have also funded a range of capacity building opportunities for artists and arts organisations, at \$100,000, and we have funded MusicACT to the tune of \$108,000 for capacity building programs specifically for the live music sector, in line with the government's election commitment to strengthen live music.

We are also providing \$270,000 for the delivery of pop-up community arts events and activities in Gungahlin and Woden, and over \$330,000 for a one-off funding round for community arts outreach activities. This is in addition to the more than \$1 million that we provide for community outreach programs to the ANU, the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, BAC and the Tuggeranong Arts Centre.

This government is strongly committed to supporting the arts sector through funding arts organisations, artists and community arts and events so that Canberrans can enjoy the very best in arts and culture. *(Time expired.)*

### **Transport Canberra—weekend bus services**

**MR PARTON:** My question is to the minister for transport. I refer to the *Canberra Times* article titled “Bus cancellations could continue for a year, union warns”. In the article the secretary for the ACT TWU suggested that the problem of weekend bus cancellations lies in the lack of drivers available on weekends. You have mentioned that 34 trainee bus drivers will be ready in three months. Minister, when did the government become aware that the new weekend bus services would not be properly serviced?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for his question. In fact, we have 10 bus drivers graduating from their training course this Friday. We are going through an ongoing recruitment process to make sure that we can deliver reliable services on the weekend. The government has been upfront in acknowledging that the reliability on the weekend has not been as high as we would like, and that is why we are focusing on the solution: recruiting more bus drivers so they can make themselves available on the weekends and deliver the 70 per cent more services we have provided under network 19.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, why did the government implement a new weekend bus network despite being warned that there were too few drivers to service it? Can the minister advise us which routes those 10 new drivers will be covering on the weekend?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Mr Parton for his multiple questions. The reality is that we

could not have known exactly how many people would put up their hand for delivering the weekend services until the new network started. Now that the new network has started, with a lot more people—27 per cent more journeys being taken on the weekend, which is fantastic—we are working through some of the teething issues with weekend reliability. The focus is on increasing driver numbers overall, so that we can continue to deliver more services more often on the weekend.

**MISS C BURCH:** Minister, when did the government become aware that the new weekend services would not be serviced and why did the government not address these issues before implementing network 19?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for her question. As I said, since the new network started we have been looking at the issues that are coming out, some of the teething issues, and we have seen a great response from the community: more people taking up weekend bus services than under the previous network. We are monitoring the data on a weekly basis and each week since I became transport minister, which was only just after the new network started, I have been looking at that data on a weekly basis. We will look at what improvements we can make to make sure that the reliability of services is there on the weekend—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, enough!

**MR STEEL:** so that we can match the expectation of the community in relation to reliability.

**Ms Cheyne:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, Mr Hanson intimated during his interjections that the minister was lying. I ask him to withdraw.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I did not hear that but there was a lot of noise. Was there any reference to the minister—

**Mr Hanson:** On the specifics, I think what Ms Cheyne is referring to is: the minister said “the community is happy”. I said, “Is that true, Chris?”

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Resume your seat, Mr Hanson, please. Mr Coe, a point of order for something that is unparliamentary is not a joking matter. I did not hear it. I am happy to go back to *Hansard*. It was unlikely to be picked up because it is just a rabble coming from the opposition benches at the moment. I will call questions without notice and I will be very mindful of the language being used.

**Mr Gentleman:** Madam Speaker, just before you conclude on the point of order, if we could, it is highly unparliamentary to call ministers in this place by their first name, whether it is in an interjection or not. They should be given the name of the ministerial portfolio.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes, that is an accepted practice in this place.

**Ms Lawder:** On the point of order, Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree with your ruling and I point out that Mr Gentleman spoke about the “Tony Abbott handbook” earlier, instead of referring to him by the title Mr Abbott or former Prime Minister Abbott. I think a lot of this is: what’s sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Mr Gentleman, instead of making his point, could do it as well.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I was just saying it is an accepted practice. When it is brought to my attention I will bring it—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You are warned, Mr Hanson.

### **Municipal services—footpaths**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to the minister for city services. Minister, how many complaints have you had about the state of footpaths in the ACT since your appointment to the city services portfolio?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for her question. It is a very specific question. I am happy to provide that level of specificity in an answer on notice.

**Mr Coe:** Kevin Rudd.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The joke goes both ways. Your colleague made quite a stand a moment ago, with reference to that sort of speak, Mr Coe.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You are on a warning, Mr Hanson.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, what is the average time between a complaint and a completed repair of footpath damage in the ACT?

**MR STEEL:** Again, I am happy to provide that level of specificity in an answer on notice, but I am informed there are currently 600 requests on the community path priority list. While those are not complaints—they are often simple requests for maintenance—they go on to a list and are assessed by a city services team as to whether they are a priority and some are dealt with more quickly than others depending on what priority they are given.

**MR WALL:** Minister, why is it that there are over 600 identified issues with footpaths in the ACT, and why is it that so many footpaths are in such poor repair?

**MR STEEL:** I thank the member for his question. The government continues to invest more in city services across the city. We have over 3,000 kilometres of footpaths in the ACT, which is a substantial number, and we are building more in our town centres, in areas where we know that we have missing connections in particular. It is a substantial network and we continue to maintain it and respond to requests to us

to deal with identified issues.

### **Chief Minister—award grants**

**MR PETTERSSON:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you outline which community organisations are benefiting from the first round of grant awards from the Chief Minister's fund and what important services they will deliver with this funding?

**MR BARR:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. I can advise the Assembly that through the first round of grants from the charitable fund 29 local organisations will share in almost \$400,000 of grants to deliver a range of important community support services and to complement a range of existing government services. Grants will help groups such the Canberra PCYC, OzHarvest, Parentline ACT, CatholicCare, PANDSI and many others. The programs that they will run with this funding go directly to supporting Canberrans who need help, for example in the areas of parenting advice for people from diverse backgrounds, people wanting to develop work skills to get a job, transitional housing for those at risk of homelessness, and young people who are struggling to connect with their family and peers. It is fantastic to see our thriving non-profit and community support sector working closely with the territory government to deliver on our shared goals of an inclusive and connected Canberra community.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Chief Minister, how has the fund helped to leverage private contributions?

**MR BARR:** It has been pleasing to see that the fund has generated significant interest by and coordination with private philanthropy in Canberra. There are some very practical examples of this, such as the Snow Foundation's support for Orange Sky Australia to run its social impact washing program. The John James Foundation is supporting the Humour Foundation to run a clown doctors program at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. The Achilles Running Club Canberra and Sharing Places supported projects supported by the John James Foundation. GIVIT and the Master Builders Association are providing further in-kind support to grant recipients, including the Shepherd Centre. The government, through the office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, is supporting projects put forward by Toora Women Inc, A Gender Agenda and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service.

I thank these private philanthropic groups for joining with the charitable fund to coordinate their activities and funding to provide a better outcome for Canberrans.

**MR GUPTA:** Chief Minister, how are these grants complementing the government's delivery of essential services?

**MR BARR:** The fund complements essential government service delivery by funding a range of grassroots projects in many of the government's key priority areas.

Just one example that I will highlight today, Mental Illness Education ACT receives ACT government funding to design, assure and deliver its mental health 101 for youth program, which is delivered through face-to-face sessions with ACT school students.

Through a grant from the charitable fund, this group will now be able to build a digital program to complement its traditional delivery methods.

Another example, Construction Charitable Works, will now be able to provide targeted counselling, case management and referral services to construction industry workers and their families.

These grants are designed to allow those working in the community to focus on what they do best: providing innovative responses to meet community need.

### **Children and young people—care and protection**

**MRS DUNNE:** My question is to the Minister for Children, Youth and Families. Minister, all children and young people up to age 14 in out of home care are to have a health passport that goes with them and allows carers to know their complete health history. In 2016, 73 per cent of those entering care for the first time were issued with a health passport. By 2017, that number had declined to 60 per cent and last year it was less than 50 per cent. Minister, how long have you been aware that this government was placing more and more kids into care without an important document such as the health passport?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mrs Dunne for the question. Obviously, this issue has arisen in light of the mid-term evaluation of A step up for our kids. That data has become available and I tabled it in the last sitting week. This is an issue that I have been discussing with the directorate around how we ensure that children and young people have health passports as they are coming into care and as they are in care.

I note that one of the issues that the directorate is now looking at is in relation to the my health record that will be created for most of those children and young people and how that can be used in place of the health passport. So there is considerable work going into this both to ensure that children and young people have that health passport and that carers have access to that but also—

**Ms Lawder:** You have not been answering her question. How long have you known?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I have already answered that question—what the future looks like in terms of ensuring that everyone who needs to have access does have good access to information about children's health but in a secure way.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, what specific steps have you taken to ensure that health passports or equivalent information are available to children in out of home care and that the standard returns to at least what it was before you became the responsible minister?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** At this point I have sought advice on the steps that the directorate will take; I personally cannot distribute health passports to people. I have sought advice and I have made it very clear to the directorate that we need to improve this outcome. I have asked for data, and I note that the mid-strategy evaluation included data only up to the end of June last year. I have sought further advice on the current situation and what is being done to ensure that children who need health

passports have them and what the next steps are in relation to future arrangements.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, how are carers, including residential youth workers, supposed to make informed health decisions for vulnerable young people if this government has not provided them with the promised documents?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mrs Kikkert for the question. Carers of course do have a very important role to play in supporting children and young people in our out of home care system, and that includes supporting their health needs. As I have said, I have asked for further advice in relation to this matter. I am happy to come back to the Assembly in relation to that on notice.

### **Children and young people—care and protection**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Children, Youth and Families: on 20 February this year you said you could absolutely assure the chamber that this government is providing a therapeutic trauma-informed response to young people in residential care. On 11 August the *Canberra Times* reported on a young person in residential care who was exposed to drug use and threatened by his housemates, including one incident where another boy broke in to his room with a knife. He became so frightened to leave his bedroom that he started urinating into a bottle. Minister, was this young person's experience in residential care the therapeutic trauma-informed response you promised us back in February? If not, why is this therapeutic trauma-informed response failing?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mr Hanson for the question, but I think he is conflating a couple of issues. Clearly the young people in residential care are some of the most complex young people we have in out of home care. Their circumstances are all different, but the behaviour Mr Hanson describes is the behaviour of a housemate within a residential care facility; it is not the behaviour of staff and does not speak to either the trauma-informed support that the staff at Premier Youthworks have been providing or the therapeutic supports that the Australian Childhood Foundation has been supporting in partnership with those staff.

I have heard directly from young people who have had an experience of residential care or who are in residential care that yes, there are difficult circumstances. I hear those things directly from the young people themselves. Yes, one of the things that sometimes makes young people feel unsafe in residential care is the behaviour of their housemates. That is absolutely true. These are complex young people. But one of the things that makes them feel safe is the support of the workers and the Australian Childhood Foundation.

Indeed, at the launch of the CREATE report earlier this year we heard directly from a young person about the change he had experienced over the course of a year in working with their Australian Childhood Foundation worker and their case managers. The difference in that young person's going from feeling unsafe to feeling safe and having a positive view and outlook for his future was astonishing. That is the work these workers perform, and I will support them every day in doing that.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, is drug use accompanied by threats of physical violence in

out of home care sufficient grounds for government intervention on behalf of a young person?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Madam Speaker, I am not quite sure what Mr Hanson means by “government intervention on behalf of a young person”. There is significant oversight of residential care in the ACT. The official visitors for children and young people visit all residential care homes on a regular basis. Because of the consortium arrangements that we have in place, there are multiple agencies working with children and young people in residential care, including, as I mentioned earlier, the Australian Childhood Foundation. Our own child and youth protection services senior management regularly visit residential care facilities, and there are meetings of the senior leadership that review the cases of individual children and young people. So there are multiple avenues for concerns to be raised, and when concerns are raised about the experience of children and young people in residential care, those concerns are always taken very seriously.

It is a sad fact that the children and young people in residential care are often some of the most complex and traumatised young people in our community. Do they face challenges? Yes, they do. Do some of them have drug and alcohol issues? Yes, they do. We manage those as best we possibly can in a trauma-informed and therapeutic way. But will it create challenges occasionally for other young people? Yes, it will. And when those arise, they are addressed.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, what is your responsibility when it comes to guaranteeing that oversight of the territory’s residential care homes is rigorous enough?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mrs Kikkert for the supplementary question. I would not say I receive a regular briefing—it is not regular as in a set time frame—but I am often briefed on what the current status of the children and young people in residential care is.

The official visitors for children and young people that I mentioned earlier visit residential care homes monthly. I receive a quarterly report from those official visitors. They all are aware that they can contact me or my office if they have concerns. They also can contact the Human Rights Commission if they have concerns that they think should be investigated, or the senior practitioner if they have concerns about the use of restrictive practices in those facilities. As I mentioned earlier, child and youth protection services senior management also pays close attention to residential care. Whenever complaints are received, these are taken very seriously.

I take my responsibility as Minister for Children, Youth and Families very seriously. I am often briefed on individual client matters and I pay close attention particularly to those children and young people who are in residential care, some of the most complex and traumatised children and young people in our system. I take that responsibility very seriously, but I am absolutely confident that, with the oversight we have in place with the Public Advocate, the Children and Young People Commissioner, official visitors and the attention that we all pay to residential care, there is a lot of oversight of this system.

## **Children and young people—care and protection**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Minister for Children, Youth and Families. Minister, youth workers previously employed in the ACT's residential care system have shared with us a long list of concerns, including lack of training, understaffing, long waits for therapeutic plans, unsuitable placements, unsafe environments and difficulty in accessing counselling for children. You recently said that the departure of the current provider is an opportunity to “build in some more innovative approaches to how we deliver residential care” and make sure that children and young people are “in the best spot they can be”. Minister, over the past 2½ years you have been responsible. Why have you not previously made sure that young people in residential care are in the best spot possible?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mrs Jones for the question and ignore the imputation. I think it is a fair question. Children and young people in residential care obviously have case management across Barnados, OzChild and child and youth protection services. As I said, there has been significant oversight. I have paid a lot of attention to this since I have become minister, and over the past couple of years there has been significant oversight in the way that residential care is being delivered. But the departure of Premier Youthworks does provide an opportunity for us to look at some of the models that are being delivered by other providers in other jurisdictions and how we can work to deliver the most effective and appropriate models that meet the individual needs of children and young people in residential care.

One of the challenges we face in our community is that we are a relatively small jurisdiction with a relatively small number of children and young people, who are not able to live in home-based environments or in foster or kinship care, and developing specialist services for a very small number of children and young people is quite a challenge. But we are committed to doing that. This is an opportunity, and child and youth protection services has taken the opportunity, to look very closely at the circumstances of each of these children and young people and to try to work out with Barnados what the best solution for each of those children and young people is going forward.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, what specific innovative approaches or improvements have you discovered that you will be building into how this government delivers residential care to vulnerable children and young people?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mrs Jones for her supplementary question. As members would be aware, last year I went on a study tour to England, Scotland and Ireland. One of the places that we visited there—Mrs Kikkert has talked about it before—was a specific purpose-built residential facility in Scotland that had up to six children and young people in a residential unit at any one time. This is not the way that we have been delivering residential care here in the ACT, where it tends to be a maximum of three, maybe four, but generally two or three young people together.

I think there are opportunities. I was recently in Melbourne visiting a specific therapeutic residential care home where again there were four young people in that home. I think we have an opportunity to consider some specific purpose-built residential facilities that would house more young people together, which has not been

Premier Youthworks' preferred model but which does provide the opportunity for staffing ratios that allow more staff to be in the home at any one time without actually increasing the staff-to-resident ratio.

In terms of the therapeutic partnerships that we visited in Melbourne with specialist therapeutic providers, we do, of course, already have the Australian Childhood Foundation as a partner in ACT Together here. But in terms of specialist therapeutic care including from university specialists and the provision of support from VACCA, the Victorian Aboriginal community controlled childcare organisation and the partnership that they have, obviously we do not have an Aboriginal community controlled childcare organisation here in the ACT yet. That is something that has obviously been a recommendation of the Our Booris, Our Way review.

There is a range of partnership models that we would consider and a range of specific support models that we could consider. One of the other ones that we visited in Victoria was specifically focused on supporting girls and young women who had experienced sexual exploitation which, sadly, is also something that we know exists in our community. That was a very specific service response for those girls and young women.

Those are the kinds of things we want to do. We want to draw on the expertise of the non-government sector and our academic partners in this space. We do not have any specific models in mind that we are committed to right now because we are still working through that.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, what else are you proactively doing to make sure that the partnership model and the specific model that you just mentioned are going to be implemented in the child and youth protection service system?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mrs Kikkert for the supplementary. There is a lot of work going on within child and youth protection services and with Barnardos to understand what the opportunities are in terms of another provider coming into the ACT Together consortium, what they might offer and how that will fit with our existing service systems. It is bit of a "how long is a piece of string" question but that is a key focus of the work that is going on at the moment.

### **Municipal services—community facilities**

**MR GUPTA:** My question is to the Minister for Community Services and Facilities. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the upgrades to community facilities provided for in the 2019-20 ACT budget?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Mr Gupta for his question. Through the 2019-20 budget the ACT government has been investing in the community infrastructure that provides many community organisations with a home to deliver vital services to the Canberra community.

I can confirm that the ACT government will be undertaking upgrades of at least 17 community facilities across the territory. This investment includes more than \$1.3 million worth of work to the roof, window frames, floor coverings and insulation

at Maitland House in Hackett, and new lifts and floor coverings at the Belconnen Community Centre.

The Mount Rogers Community Centre will receive improvements to its heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system, as will the Tuggeranong Community Centre. Community groups in Woden Valley will see half a million dollars worth of upgrades to the Pearce Community Centre, to the roof and floor in particular. Early childhood services in the territory are also benefiting from upgrades, with the Spence Children's Cottage seeing a facelift, with improvements to wet areas.

These facilities are an integral part of the life of many Canberrans. They are places that provide vital services to the community, and the government is investing in them through the budget.

**MR GUPTA:** Minister, how will these works improve accessibility and comfort for Canberrans using these facilities?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Mr Gupta for his supplementary question. The ACT government recognises that our community centres provide key hubs for people to come together to form connections with one another and find meaning in their lives as well as to access vital services. The ACT government is committed to ensuring that these facilities not only are kept in good condition but are fit for purpose and accessible for the community to use. That is why many of the upgrades that were funded through the budget are aimed at ensuring that our community facilities are easy to use, easy to access and safe.

Across the 17 community facilities that are being upgraded, we are funding \$1.2 million of improvements to safety and removing hazardous materials from buildings that are in the ACT Property Group's portfolio. We are making improvements to heating, ventilation and air conditioning, ensuring that spaces are comfortable all year round and improving environmental efficiency. One particular example, the Civic Youth Centre, will be receiving a roof restoration to help repair the ceiling and keep the centre dry, while the Hall community precinct will have potentially dangerous materials removed.

I look forward to these upgrades being completed and the community continuing to enjoy the community facilities that are available to them across the territory.

**MS CODY:** Minister, what benefits do facilities like these across the territory provide to everyday Canberrans looking to engage with their local community?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Ms Cody for her supplementary. Our community facilities provide a safe and affordable space for community programs and initiatives to take place and are highly valued by Canberrans. Organisation like the Men's Shed regularly use venues across the ACT and provide invaluable support to men in the community and also allow them to give back to the community by the work that they do. That is why we committed to building the Hughes Men's Shed, a further investment which was made through this year's budget.

The Yarralumla Woolshed and Albert Hall are well known to most Canberrans and

are historic and significant venues in our city that are available for hire for large gatherings and events. We will continue to invest in those types of heritage buildings which have been the venue for many significant events throughout the years in the territory, and many significant weddings as well that I have attended.

Through the 2019-20 budget, ACT Property Group are also investing in the maintenance of and repairs to a range of facilities. That will also have a focus on the heritage buildings that we have so that those building can be enjoyed by generations to come. Whether large or small, the benefits that these facilities provide for all of us are important, and I am very proud that our ACT government has been able to deliver further investment in these facilities through the budget.

### **Children and young people—care and protection**

**MRS KIKKERT:** My question is to the Minister for Children, Youth and Families. Minister, the KPMG mid-strategy evaluation found that the percentage of kids who have a therapeutic plan within six weeks of entering care and protection declined from 64 per cent in 2016 to only 45 per cent in 2017 and then dropped even further to 22 per cent last year, even though this plan is meant to inform a child's placement and the supports she or he receives. Minister, when did you first learn that fewer than one-quarter of all children and young people entering the territory's care were receiving a therapeutic plan in the recommended time frame, and when did you first take steps to fix this problem?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mrs Kikkert for the question. Of course, there is a lag in the data coming out, so I am not able to answer the question about the specific data in terms of when I first became aware, because I do not necessarily have a record of that. What I can say is that we have been aware for some time that there was a challenge in providing those therapeutic assessments. That was in part a staffing and retention challenge.

The Community Services Directorate acted well before the mid-term evaluation was released. We remain committed to ensuring that all children and young people in out of home care do have an initial therapeutic assessment. The Community Services Directorate has engaged the Australian Childhood Trauma Group to facilitate the completion of approximately 270 therapeutic assessments by June 2020. There were 110 therapeutic assessments completed in 2017-18 and 229 in 2018-19.

This is a challenge that the Community Services Directorate was aware of, and certainly made me aware of, well before the completion of the mid-term evaluation report, and has acted to address it. The work of the Australian Childhood Trauma Group will, as I said, facilitate the completion of approximately 270 therapeutic assessments by June next year.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, why did you allow this significant backlog of important therapeutic plans to occur during your first 18 months as minister?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mrs Kikkert for the supplementary. In terms of the challenges that are faced in recruitment and retention of specialist staff in this area, the first attempt was to try to ensure that we recruited and retained appropriate staff.

When it became clear that that was not going to be the case, the Community Services Directorate took steps to engage an external provider to ensure that those therapeutic assessments could take place. I acknowledge that that resulted in a lag in the process, but I would certainly reject any assertion that either I was not aware of or acting on it or that the Community Services Directorate was not aware of or acting on the issue.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, how are providers able to give kids the right placements or supports when this government provides so few of them with the required therapeutic plan on which those decisions should be based?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mr Parton for the supplementary question but I think it goes to a point around what exactly a therapeutic assessment is. There is quite a lot of misunderstanding around this. It is not that a therapeutic assessment is required before a caseworker can understand the needs of a child or young person. So it would be a mistake to say that without a therapeutic assessment no-one can make any decisions about the right place or choices or programs for children and young people.

**Ms Lawder:** The question was not about the assessment; the question was about a therapeutic plan and only 22 per cent having a plan, not an assessment, and how—

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** They are the same thing!

**Ms Lawder:** Well, how can you make decisions about them if you do not have it?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** There is no need for a conversation across the floor, Ms Lawder.

**Ms Lawder:** Apparently there is.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No there is not.

**Ms Lawder:** She started it.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Ms Lawder, enough.

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I can assure the Assembly that caseworkers in child and youth protection services and Barnardos work very closely with carers and with care teams for children and young people. It is really important, again, to acknowledge that decisions about the care of children and young people are generally made in the context of care teams and that people across those teams have a good understanding of where children and young people are at and what supports they might need. So while a therapeutic assessment or a therapeutic plan is important and we are committed to ensuring that those plans are completed by June 2020 as I have described, and it is unfortunate that there has been this lag, I can say that we are absolutely committed to ensuring that children and young people get the supports they need when they need them.

### **Sport—female participation**

**MS CODY:** My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, what are some of the ways that government is supporting sport participation opportunities for women and girls?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Ms Cody and acknowledge her enthusiastic support for creating more opportunities for women's and girls' participation in sport. On the back of significant government support, the Canberra community has a great opportunity to get behind their elite sportswomen in basketball with the University of Canberra Capitals, in football with Canberra United, and in netball with the Giants. Funding certainty has helped these awesome teams of women to focus on their sport and give back to the Canberra community. And haven't they given back! I am sure all members were excited to see the UC Capitals go big and secure the championship earlier this year.

In all sporting peak bodies, the government has been driving greater gender diversity in leadership and decision-making following my 2016 announcement that by 2020, next year, all peak bodies funded by the ACT government through their triennial agreements were required to achieve 40 per cent representation of women on their boards or risk being ineligible for funding. In 2017, in response to feedback from women and girls about the need to showcase all that is happening in female local sport and recreation, and more broadly in health and wellbeing, the government worked with HerCanberra to establish the HerCanberra active portal.

Another key part of the government's election commitment to pursue gender equity in sport was the development of female friendly guidelines for sporting pavilions, which is being delivered through, for example, upgrades at Dickson and Phillip ovals and GIO Stadium as well as community sports pavilions. Finally, a few weeks ago I was happy to announce the recipients of the government's elite coaching scholarships for women.

**MS CODY:** Minister, how will the government's elite coaching scholarships for women contribute to women's participation in sport?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Ms Cody for that question too. Of the 160 coaches accredited at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games only 15—or nine per cent—were women. That was down from 12 per cent at the 2012 London Olympics. In 2019 not a single head coach of an Australian Football League Women's team is a woman, while only two W-League soccer coaches and less than 40 per cent of head coaches in the Women's National Basketball League are women.

The 2018 women in sport forum held by the ACT government highlighted the unique perspective and value women coaches can bring. There are lots of quality women coaches, and yet despite the continued development and growing profile of women's sporting competitions pathways for women coaches appear more constrained than ever.

Through the government's elite coaching scholarships, 13 women coaches across 12 sports have received up to \$5,000 to help them progress to higher level coaching positions. Women coaches bring a unique perspective and value to all sports. These new scholarships will assist to bridge the current gap in the coaching development

opportunities for female coaches and link participants through their sports to high-level coaching education and resources.

Recipients supported by a state sporting organisation or team will have access to coaching-specific education and training through accreditation courses, mentorships with peak bodies and sports teams as well as coaching equipment and other costs associated with the recipients' coaching programs.

**MS ORR:** Minister, who are some of the recipients of the elite coaching scholarships for women?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Ms Orr for her interest in this important matter. Recipients of the government's elite coaching scholarships come from a range of sports. There are women coaching in Rugby League, swimming, baseball, touch football, Rugby Union, boxing, table tennis, netball, athletics, cricket and basketball.

Among the recipients is Karen Pon, a coach with Table Tennis ACT. Through her scholarship, the government is assisting Karen to regain her accreditation as well as prepare her for the next level of coaching by working with a mentor coach. Karen will be learning from higher level coaches and using that knowledge and experience to support the growth of table tennis in the ACT and the development of athletes and coaches.

Another recipient is Madeleine Fleming, who is head coach with the Woden Valley swim club. The scholarship is assisting Madeleine to continue towards formal coaching accreditation. Members may have read a little of Madeleine's story in HerCanberra. Madeleine shared there the significance of how this scholarship will enable her to formalise her achievements as a coach. Madeleine is one of few female head coaches in the region and leads a team of majority women. She is a great example of women providing leadership in sport.

The government's elite coaching scholarships for women will provide an exciting new pathway for women and builds on the growing momentum that is enhancing sport participation opportunities for women and girls.

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