



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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Wednesday, 21 August 2019

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Questions without notice

Centenary Hospital for Women and Children—planning

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Health. How much of the expenditure on expanding the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children is due to the fact that the ACT government did not plan for it properly in the first place?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The expenditure on the expansion of the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children is an investment in the future of Centenary hospital. It has nothing to do with its previous development.

MR COE: Minister, why did the government build the Centenary hospital with fewer beds than the building it replaced?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Coe for the question. I am not going to take the premise of the question as read, given the record of the opposition's accuracy in asking its questions. What I can say is that the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children is an excellent service and its expansion will be welcomed by the community.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what lessons has ACT Health learnt from the problems with the maternity hospital, and how can they apply that to planning future projects?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Dunne for the supplementary. Obviously, Health Services are learning lessons all the time about the delivery of their complex services. I am not entirely sure what aspect of the delivery of maternity services Mrs Dunne is referring to, but Canberra Health Services is learning lessons all the time about delivery of services in a wide range of ways. Of course, there is a maternity services inquiry currently underway, which we have welcomed. We have certainly welcomed people sharing their experiences with that inquiry. Canberra Health Services and I appeared before that inquiry, and we await the recommendations with much interest, acknowledging that health services are learning organisations. They are organisations that are constantly seeking to improve.

Transport—safety

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the minister for transport. When was the last women's safety or disability access audit undertaken for any of Canberra's public transport infrastructure such as bus interchanges or bus stops?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Le Couteur for her question and I am happy to come back to her on notice with the detail and the exact timings of any audits that might have been undertaken of the transport system. I am certainly aware, as a result of the ABC segment last night, that the Women's Centre for Health Matters is currently conducting a survey of women around Canberra in relation to transport and I am looking forward to seeing the outcomes of that survey and any feedback that can help us to plan for transport infrastructure in the future.

Of course, as we continue work on bringing light rail stage 2 down to Woden from the city, I think that there is a real opportunity to engage in relation to the design, particularly at a stationary level: how we make sure that connections to the station are good for people who are walking and cycling and also with regard to different cohorts in our community, making sure that those environments and stops are safe for people to use.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, what is the government doing to ensure that the journey from the bus stop, the bus interchange or the railhead to home is safe, particularly noting that under network 19 some people are walking further than they did before?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. There is a range of things that we look at. Some stops, particularly for light rail, have things like CCTV installed, and there are cameras on board light rail as well, and other elements. I am happy to provide a list of those to the Assembly on notice. It is capital improvements but also on public transport it is how the staff operate. I will provide that on notice.

Ms Le Couteur: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order. I specifically asked about getting home from the bus stop or the light rail stop. The minister's answer has not dealt with any of that.

MADAM SPEAKER: The minister did say he would get some information on notice. Maybe we can clarify. Would that information would include a response to that, Minister?

MR STEEL: I am happy to provide some information about that. There is a significant number of bus stops across the ACT. We will consider those issues. I am happy to provide some information about the outcomes of any audits that might have been undertaken. Of course the government is also undertaking work in relation to new interchanges. New interchanges have been completed in places like Dickson and Gungahlin but we are looking at building a new Woden interchange. The design of that will, I hope, deliver a much safer experience for those who are using public transport. It is currently tucked away at the north-eastern side of the centre. There might be opportunities through the design to improve that location, for example, which is obviously a major centre for people who are transitioning between different modes of transport and for pedestrians throughout Woden town centre using that space.

MR COE: Minister, what security and risk assessments were undertaken by Transport Canberra with regard to closure of the 750 bus stops and also the cancellation of many school services?

MR STEEL: I am happy to come back with some detail in relation to that. We continue to work with school communities in particular around bus arrangements, and we have undertaken around 100 tweaks to the network, some of which have been designed to improve accessibility, particularly around schools. We are certainly taking each of those things in. With a change of this magnitude, with network 19, there are things that we need to continue, now that the network has rolled out, to improve over time. Some of that requires consideration of capital upgrades; some of it requires

tweaks to the network itself. We are open to receiving feedback, and I am looking forward to receiving feedback particularly from the Women's Centre for Health Matters.

Mr Coe: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe.

Mr Coe: Just on relevance, I wonder whether the minister could clarify whether he is taking that on notice.

Mr Steel: I am.

Health—emergency department bypass policy

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, in June this year the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine issued a position statement on hospital bypass. The college said that it does not support the use of hospital bypass as a measure to manage access block and overcrowding in emergency departments as, it says, this is a symptom of mismatching hospital inpatient service capacity with increasing patient demand. Minister, with three bypass incidents so far this year at the Canberra Hospital, what are you doing to reduce the likelihood and severity of hospital bypass incidents or are you just happy to go back to sleep when they happen?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Dunne for the question. I have spoken a number of times in this place about the investment that we are making in the expansion of capacity both in the Canberra Hospital and of course in the Calvary emergency department. I emphasise again that Canberra Hospital has processes in place to manage surges in demand. It is rare that we go to ambulance bypass but it is part of a broader strategy.

We are also implementing the timely care strategy which I have also spoken about in this place before. Again, several initiatives under that strategy have already been implemented, including daily multi-disciplinary staff ward huddles, hospital-wide flow management meetings, strategies to reduce barriers to discharge and discharging patients appropriately.

Part of the strategy that I have not particularly spoken about in relation to this is the establishment of the all-care discharge unit which opened on 11 July. It provides a broader model of care than the current discharge lounge, enabling non-ambulant patients to access this service. It is an important element of the timely care strategy that is being implemented across TCH to improve patient flow and ensure that our valuable hospital beds are being used as efficiently as possible.

Again, when Mrs Dunne gets around to being briefed on this in October, she will hear all about it.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what is your government's response to the position statement of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine? Are you aware of it? Will you create a formal response to the position statement?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am happy to have a look at the position statement and consider whether a formal response is required. Again, taking into account the factual inaccuracies that have riddled the opposition's questions over the past few weeks, I would want to be sure that they are talking about a situation like the ACT, where we have two hospitals that work very closely together to manage demand in a territory-wide service system. I will come back to the Assembly if I have more to add.

MR WALL: Minister, are you mismatching hospital inpatient service capacity with increased patient demand in our services?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I do not believe so.

Building—reforms

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Building Quality Improvement. Can the minister update the Assembly on the progress of the ACT's building reforms and the outcomes of the recent building ministers forum?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Orr for her question and her interest in the quality of building across the ACT. This government is committed to reforming our building regulatory system to ensure that we have the highest quality buildings in Australia. That is why we are rolling out a series of reforms to achieve this.

I am happy to advise the Assembly that we have now completed 28 of the 43 reforms, meeting the commitments that I made in this Assembly. We have finalised the certifiers code of practice, so that certifiers are clear on what is expected of them. We have expanded our builders licensing exams so that we have the toughest licensing in the country. We have continued to roll out reforms to make a real difference in the industry here.

As many in this place will be aware, I attended the building ministers forum last month. It was an incredibly productive meeting where all states, territories and the commonwealth agreed on the further action to be taken at a national level to improve building quality.

All the states and territories have agreed to fund a new implementation team within the Australian Building Codes Board to develop an amendment to the national construction code to specifically address the design, construction and certification of complex buildings. This will give further guidance to the industry on how we expect these buildings to be built and specify the extra steps that will be expected to ensure that they are built well.

At the meeting a number of states also approached the ACT to find out about our nation-leading builder and surveyor codes of practice, including asking to come and speak further with us about how they can be implemented in their jurisdictions.

MS ORR: Can the minister outline how these reforms will help the regulator improve the quality of building in the city and ensure that the building industry is held to account?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. Our reform program is designed to give the regulator the tools that he needs to better enforce building quality standards here in the ACT. Our certifiers code of practice makes clear what we expect of them. Our minimum documentation guidelines set out what we expect in building plans so that more thought goes into the design of buildings early on and so that builders are not left guessing.

All of this is linked to the builder's and the certifier's licences. If they do not follow the rules, they risk their ability to work in the sector. We have introduced builders licence exams to check that those entering the industry have sufficient skills and sufficient knowledge to do the work. We are re-testing those who renew their licence who have a history of non-compliance or who let their licence lapse. We will not allow people whose skills and knowledge are not up to scratch to work in this industry.

We have created a mandatory course for certifiers so that they understand their responsibilities. We have made changes to the licencing system so that those who phoenix are unable to shift their licence to a new company. We call on the federal government to reform the corporations act to better target those who do engage in phoenixing.

We have expanded statutory warranties to cover buildings over three storeys to 10 years, so that builders remain responsible for their work regardless of building height. We have delineated agency agreements from building contracts so that consumers are more aware of when they are appointing a certifier. Our reforms are nation-leading. They are meaningful. They will have a positive impact on the building industry and they will hold to account industry participants.

MR PETTERSSON: Can the minister outline what is next on the agenda for the ACT's building reforms?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Pettersson for the important question because these reforms are ongoing and we are focusing on finalising our building reform program. We will finalise our builders code of practice shortly and that will mirror the code of practice for surveyors and it will be linked to the licences of builders. We will be creating new dispute resolution pathways which will make it easier for consumers to get builders to fix defects. We will also be ensuring the security of payment for subcontractors, to ensure that they get paid for their work.

I note that this ongoing work stands in contrast to those opposite. As we have heard stated over the past couple of days, Mr Parton seems to want industry to reform industry. Also yesterday we learned that Mr Parton wants to take responsibility for the problem. If we look to the problems that exist around the privatisation of certifiers, let us look to see who it was that brought in those particular features. It was in 1998 under the Carnell government. So I assume it is the case that Mr Parton expects taxpayers to pick up the tab for the work of dodgy builders, because I would not like to think that Mr Parton is loose and careless with his words when we put him in front of the media.

On this side we do not think we can trust industry to fix itself. We know that industry

has shown that certain players cannot be trusted. We know that industry associations are not working hard enough to remove them. So this will be our focus. We will continue to roll out reforms to hold them to account. We will continue to resource our regulator to enforce this. We will continue to change the industry and we will continue to root out those who do the wrong things, unlike those opposite who would like industry to reform industry and who are too concerned about what they think might be red tape and not interested in ensuring that Canberrans' buildings are well built. *(Time expired.)*

Mrs Dunne: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: during his answer Mr Ramsay said words to the effect that Mr Parton was free with his language and the truth. I think that is unparliamentary and should be withdrawn.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not believe—

Mr Ramsay: Madam Speaker, on the point of order: I said specifically that I would not like to think that that Mr Parton is loose with his words.

Mrs Dunne: Madam Speaker, the minister has just confirmed that he made the imputation and he should withdraw it.

MADAM SPEAKER: If I draw everybody's attention to what comes out from your benches—

Mrs Dunne: Madam Speaker, I took a point of order, and it is up to anyone in this place at any time to take a point of order. What Mr Ramsay has said—and he confirmed what he said—is an imputation on Mr Parton and it should be withdrawn.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not believe so, Mrs Dunne.

Canberra Hospital—master plan

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, I refer to reports in the media of 14 August of a tender for a master planning process for the Canberra Hospital campus which will not finish until late next year. Minister, will the master plan be completed before the government selects a tender to build SPIRE?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Parton for the question. Yes, the ACT Health Directorate has commenced work on a Canberra Hospital master plan. SAFM Solutions has been contracted to carry out the first phase of the master planning project, which will take place in two phases. The first phase will include a comprehensive review of all previous planning documentation, utilising this existing information, and also set out the visions and principles that will underpin the master plan. The second phase of the project will be undertaking the development of the actual master plan, which at this stage is expected to be finalised in late 2020.

The master plan will help to structure future infrastructure at the campus. It complements the work that is already underway looking at the expansion of hospital services on the north side and also the planning for the SPIRE project. It takes into account the fact that planning for a number of major infrastructure projects at the

hospital campus is already underway, including the SPIRE project and the expansion of the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. As a result of these projects it was considered that there was a need to look at the bigger picture for health infrastructure across the campus.

Taking that time frame into account, to come specifically to Mr Parton's question, I do not expect that the master plan will be finalised before tenders are entered into in relation to the development of SPIRE. The master plan will take into account the planning for SPIRE, which is well underway.

MR PARTON: Minister, when will you turn the first sod for construction on SPIRE?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Parton for the question but I do not think that anyone in this Assembly could expect that I could provide a level of specificity about what date the first sod is going to be turned on any project.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, why didn't the government develop a master plan to refurbish the Canberra Hospital campus some years ago, before it started work on individual projects?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Dunne for the supplementary question. As I mentioned earlier, the first phase of the master planning process will include a review of all previous planning documentation, and utilise this existing information. So it should not be seen by anybody that the development of a master plan now is an indication that there has not previously been planning. As I said the planning for the SPIRE project is well underway. Everybody in this place knows that there was a change in the proposed location of SPIRE. That was part of this planning work. That planning is well underway, and I look forward to making some further announcements about that in due course.

Government—election commitments

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, what does the passage of the 2019-20 budget mean for the government's election commitments to the Canberra community?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. We went to the last election with around 200 commitments across nearly every aspect of service delivery and infrastructure for the city. I am pleased to say that, with the passage of the budget yesterday, we have now funded or started work on nearly 200 initiatives. This includes delivering new walk-in centres, recruiting more school psychologists, planting new trees, building a second Common Ground and undertaking a range of transport infrastructure improvements.

The passing of the budget delivers a range of further commitments that we undertook at the 2016 election. Light rail is up and running, the green bin rollout has taken place across the territory, education is more equitable, walk-in centres have been opened in Gungahlin, and work is underway on the new facility in Weston Creek.

We have made a series of commitments during this parliamentary term and we work

progressively on their delivery.

MR PETTERSSON: How has the government approached funding its election commitments through successive budgets since 2016?

MR BARR: Through a determined, steady and responsible delivery of those commitments. We have prioritised the delivery of key commitments over the past three years. We have been able to significantly expand services and facilities available to Canberrans. We are very alert to the importance of delivering what we said we would deliver. That remains our focus over the balance of this parliamentary term.

MS CODY: Chief Minister, what are the government's next priorities for investment, with election commitments now funded and underway?

MR BARR: We know that our city's population will continue to grow rapidly and we need to look ahead to our city's needs in the next decade and beyond. Shortly we will be releasing a forward infrastructure plan for the territory that will take a detailed look at how Canberra is growing and changing and how future infrastructure investments can ensure that we remain the world's most liveable city.

The infrastructure plan will of course look beyond a budget cycle to a pipeline of projects that will need to be prioritised for government investment over the coming decades. It will take into account factors like our growing population, the changing geography and demography of our city and the urgent need to increase our resilience to the effects of harmful climate change. It will set out clear priorities for investment so that we can work with industry, stakeholder groups and the wider community to effectively design and deliver the infrastructure that our city needs as we continue to grow towards half a million people.

Health—flu season preparedness

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, why has your flu season plan for 2019 failed?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Again, without accepting the premise of Mr Wall's question, I have no idea on what basis he determines that the flu season plan has failed. What I can say in relation to the winter strategy is that a number of measures to support seasonal demand were implemented prior to 11 July 2019. This included the introduction of strategies to improve discharge planning, removing barriers to discharge, increasing access to pathology, rapid testing to enable early diagnosis of influenza, and commencement of additional recruitment to address this seasonal demand.

A targeted external communication strategy also commenced in June to promote the utilisation of walk-in centres and to help Canberrans better understand the difference between a cold and the flu. The opening of an additional 16 winter beds at the Canberra Hospital and the all-care discharge unit that I spoke about earlier in question time commenced on 11 July. Twelve additional beds have been progressively opened at the University of Canberra Hospital since June 2019 to provide additional capacity into the system.

I spoke earlier about the all-care discharge unit, which provides a broader model of care than the previous discharge lounge, enabling non-ambulant patients to access this service, an important part of the timely care strategy. The commencement of both the additional beds at TCH and the all-care discharge unit were aligned to the completion of critical infrastructure works across the campus.

Unfortunately, a flu season does not give advance notice of the fact that it is going to arrive earlier than it has in any year over the past 10 years, but Canberra Health Services responded and is managing the situation.

MR WALL: Minister, will you be sharing ACT data and analysis with other jurisdictions and discussing with them how all jurisdictions can be better prepared in 2020? If so, what arrangements have been entered into?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Wall for the supplementary question. Of course, all jurisdictions share this kind of information routinely. The management of flu seasons is done at both the national and local levels and people share that information. I cannot provide the precise timing, but every year Canberra Health Services reviews the winter strategy and what happened in the flu season, and works towards the next winter season. They do that in sharing information with other jurisdictions.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, when did you expect the flu season to start this year? Did you have any contingencies for an early start to the flu season?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I had no particular expectations about the start of the flu season myself.

Mr Coe: Yet you said you were surprised.

Ms Stephen-Smith: No, I said it does not provide notice.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, Mr Hanson has the floor.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am sorry; it is—

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, please.

MR HANSON: So rude.

MADAM SPEAKER: To the question.

Legal Aid Commission—domestic violence service

MR HANSON: My question is to the Attorney-General. Yesterday Julie Tongs, the CEO of Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services, made a statement:

... the ACT Labor/Greens Government had moved to deny almost all Aboriginal and working class women and women otherwise from low income households ...

access to legal advice and assistance when they are seeking to protect themselves and their children from violence.

She continued:

It is inevitable, if the Legal Aid Commission domestic violence service is not maintained, that there will be a dramatic and frightening increase in the number of women and children having no access to legal assistance and protection and who will, as a consequence remain in violent and abusive relationships.

Attorney-General, why are you denying almost all Aboriginal and working class women access to legal advice and assistance by making these cuts?

MS BERRY: I am responding as Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. I understand the question from Mr Hanson refers to the change in the way the family safety levy will fund services in the ACT, including funding for legal aid. As has been said in this place a number of times, including during estimates, the family safety levy will stop funding legal aid services from next year.

It is the intention of the government that those services will continue and the government will work very closely with legal aid and the Legal Aid Commission to ensure that those services continue. The government takes very seriously making sure that people who are experiencing domestic and family violence—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, a number of times during answers to a number of questions that have been asked today Mr Hanson has constantly interrupted. He might not like the answer that he is being given but he is getting an answer. It is the same and consistent answer that has been provided to him through this place and through estimates hearings.

I can assure the legal aid community that the government, including the Attorney-General and me, will continue to work with that organisation as well as providing services for all women in the ACT, particularly through the family safety levy.

MR HANSON: Minister, what specific steps are you taking within your department to deal with, as Julie Tongs says, the inevitable, dramatic and frightening increase in the number of women and children who will face remaining in violent and abusive relationships?

MS BERRY: There are a number of steps that the ACT has taken, particularly with asking the community to contribute to the work towards addressing this complex and often very complicated issue across our community but particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, who we know are particularly affected by this issue.

Mr Hanson: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, minister.

Mr Hanson: I have asked what the specific steps are. The minister said there are steps, but she has not explained what they are. I ask her to explain what those specific steps are.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, you have a minute and a half left if you could target that area.

MS BERRY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My very first part of responding to that question was with regard to the family safety levy and implementing—

Opposition members interjecting—

MS BERRY: Pardon me?

MADAM SPEAKER: Do not respond to interjections.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, allow the minister to respond to the question. Minister.

MS BERRY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The levy is about making sure that the government, working very closely with front-line services, looks at new and innovative ways to address issues that people in our community are facing. One of those programs, which has been talked about in detail in this place, is the room for change program, which not only ensures that women and children can stay safely in their home but ensures that perpetrators can also get support to change their behaviour so that they can move back safely with their family and that the domestic and family violence ends. That is again a measured, nation-leading project that the ACT government is working on through the family safety levy, through co-design, working very closely with the domestic and family violence crisis service to make sure that there is a program that can keep women and children safe in their homes but also looking at how perpetrator change programs can support everybody to get on with their lives. *(Time expired.)*

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why was the funding for this service not locked in and legislated as promised?

MS BERRY: I have responded to that question. I can refer members opposite to the numerous responses that both I and the Attorney-General have provided around funding for legal aid and the purpose of the family safety levy.

Government—support for emergency services

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, what update can you provide on the construction of a fire station in my electorate of Murrumbidgee?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cody for her interest in protecting the Canberra

community. The Molonglo Valley region is a growing area of the ACT that includes the suburbs of Wright, Coombs, Denman Prospect and the future suburb of Whitlam. It is anticipated that by 2030 the population of this region will be approximately 35,000.

As part of the 2019-20 ACT budget, the ACT government announced funding of \$456,000 so that work can commence on the due diligence and preliminary design for the new combined ACT Ambulance Service and ACT Fire & Rescue station in the Molonglo Valley. The due diligence investigation and preliminary design for a Molonglo Valley station will include site identification, confirmation of the station requirements, specification development, consultation, station design, approval requirements, and construction cost estimates. I look forward to working with Ms Cody as this project progresses. This is just one example of the support we are providing to our firefighters, paramedics and other emergency services.

Before concluding, I want to congratulate Georgeina Whelan on becoming the first woman to be the ACT's Emergency Services Commissioner. She brings tremendous experience to this role, and I am delighted at the example she will set for women across our services, showing that there is no job that women cannot do. I look forward to talking about this more, and about her achievements, in this place in the near future.

MS CODY: How else is the government supporting firefighters across Murrumbidgee and the ACT?

MR GENTLEMAN: In 2018, work was completed to upgrade the existing Molonglo Rural Fire Service shed. The project was funded as part of the natural disaster resilience program funding in the 2016-17 ACT budget. The project included both internal works to male and female locker rooms and ablutions and external works to the vehicle storage bays. The work on the locker rooms and ablutions were in line with the ESA's women in emergency services strategy and assists in the recruitment and retention of female firefighters.

Also I recently attended a meeting with community fire unit (CFU) volunteers, where I was made aware of the establishment of CFUs in the Denman Prospect area. CFUs provide an invaluable service to communities in high bushfire risk areas on the urban edges of the ACT such as Denman Prospect. CFU volunteers complement the work done by ACT Fire & Rescue and the ACT Rural Fire Service, where the whole community can contribute towards maintaining a safe and secure city. I want to acknowledge the positive response from the residents of Denman Prospect and want to thank Capital Estate Developments as well, who arranged to donate two CFU trailers to support the Denman Prospect community.

While the ACT government continues to provide support and infrastructure for growing areas of the ACT like Molonglo, the government also continues to invest in established areas like the Woden Valley. The ACT Fire & Rescue station, ambulance station and ACT State Emergency Service unit, all located in Phillip, have ensured the safety of Woden residents over many decades. Like all Canberrans, the people of the Molonglo and Woden valleys will benefit from the ACT government's recent announcements about providing additional front-line firefighters and paramedics to meet the increasing demands of a growing city.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what help is being provided to other emergency services?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cheyne for her interest in safety across the city as well. While the government has a proven record of increased investment in its emergency facilities and services, it is also keen to invest in its emergency services personnel. Examples include the women in emergency services strategy, through which we have implemented a variety of activities such as come & try day, boot camp for ACT Fire & Rescue, and the tool time workshop. This allows a hands-on approach to understanding the practicalities of being an ACT firefighter.

There is the empowering and diversity program. Three ESA staff members were recently provided an opportunity to attend the national police, defence and emergency services women's leadership summit, which resulted in this program. It brings together volunteers and staff across ACT government directorates to share experiences, build networks, learn how to get the most out of career development and gain the tools to be a leader at any rank. The everyday leaders program, a ground-up initiative led by a number of junior operational staff in ACT Fire & Rescue, is happening as well.

It is important that we respect our first responders. I must call out the outrageous attack from Mr Parton on social media last week in which he likened members of ACT Policing to thugs. I table Mr Parton's Facebook post for the benefit of all members. The imputation against ACT police officers is there to see. The shadow minister for police must apologise for the slur from the Canberra Liberals. It is very clear that it is only this side of the house that backs our first responders and invests in them. Those opposite do not believe in public service.

Legal Aid Commission—domestic violence service

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Minister, what efforts did you make to represent the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children in relation to the funding cuts to the Legal Aid Commission domestic violence service?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Milligan for the question and I understand that the Attorney-General has on a number of occasions assured members of the Assembly, including, I believe, in the estimates hearings, that the funding that will be moved as part of the redesign in relation to the family safety levy will in fact be replaced from another bucket of money from 1 July 2020. I am assured by the attorney that he has told members of the Assembly that before and that that is the case.

Mr Coe: I have a point of order on relevance. Mr Milligan's question was specifically about "what efforts did you make"? That is, what efforts did the minister make? She has gone on to try to describe what Mr Ramsay did in estimates but we are yet to hear what efforts she actually made.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Obviously, I spoke to Minister Ramsay, the Attorney-General, in relation to this matter to seek assurance in relation to it. I also worked very closely with Minister Berry in relation to the development of the

response and the commitment to respond to the *We don't shoot our wounded* report, a report received by the ACT government in, I think, 2009 from the best of my recollection. It is a long time ago. What we learned from talking to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and listening to the community was that it was an ongoing sore for the community that the government had never provided a formal response to that report. So Minister Berry has committed to doing that and I have been part of those conversations with her, with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and the Domestic Violence Prevention Council. I have been actively part of those conversations and part of that commitment.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why have you failed, then, to convince your colleagues to retain the funding for the domestic violence service?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Milligan for the question and refer him to my previous answer.

MR HANSON: Yes or no: will the job cuts be restored at Legal Aid, or not?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Hanson and refer him to the comments that the Attorney-General, I believe, has previously made in relation to this matter.

Health—adult mental health unit

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. Minister, what is the national capacity benchmark for adult mental health units, and at what level will the ACT operate through the 2019-20 financial year?

MR RATTENBURY: I will provide that significant level of detail to Miss Burch on notice.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, how do you know that patients will not continue to be, at worst, turned away or, at best, held in the emergency department for unacceptable lengths of time during 2019-20?

MR RATTENBURY: I do not accept the premise of Miss Burch's question, but what I can say is that we are working very hard to ensure that Canberra residents who present with mental health concerns get the service they need. That will be in a range of places. Some will be through the emergency department; some will be through their local GP; some will be through our community mental health centres.

Last year we implemented a new model of care for the adult community mental health centres. That has reduced the waiting times and seen a significant improvement in morale for our staff as well because they are able to see their patients in a more effective way. They feel less stressed by the reduction in pressure through that system. This is an example of the sorts of measures that Canberra Health Services and the ACT Health Directorate are putting in place to ensure that we provide the services the community expects.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, will work to remove ligature points in the adult mental health unit continue to create bed availability problems during this financial year and,

if so, for how long and why could you not provide Miss Burch with two simple figures?

MR RATTENBURY: The ligature work is currently well underway and the completion will be over the coming months. I am pleased to be able to inform the Assembly that there has actually been some spare bed capacity at the adult mental health unit in recent times. The concerns that Mrs Dunne is raising have not been a significant issue for us.

Municipal services—dog management

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the minister for city services. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the implementation of the Canberra model for dog management?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question. The Canberra model for dog management outlines the government's vision for best practice dog management in the ACT. Our new model for dog management is based on three key principles: a safe community, responsible dog ownership and animal welfare.

The government is well underway with implementing the six objectives that will lead to best practice dog management for Canberra. One is that all dog owners are responsible for their dog. We have had one free microchipping day, at the million paws walk, and we are planning more events in the year and beyond. We are encouraging productive partnerships with organisations like the RSPCA, vets and pet businesses. We have begun building education and awareness of being a responsible dog owner across the territory with a new campaign: "own a dog, own the responsibility".

We are ensuring that compliance has enforcement to keep the community safe from dangerous dogs, supported by our new six-member compliance team, which has joined our existing team of domestic animal rangers, to improve community safety and to better educate dog owners. We are ensuring that the rules are clear, so that dog owners know their responsibilities and obligations. We have recently released changes to off-leash dog areas, which are available online.

Also, we are ensuring that responsible dog owners are rewarded. As part of that aspect, we are providing dog bags and bins at all dog parks across the ACT and at other locations that are highly frequented by dogs and their owners.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what changes have been made to these off-leash areas?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Cheyne for her interest in this area. We are making common-sense changes to off-lead areas in the ACT. By default, if you have your dog out in public in Canberra it must be on a lead unless otherwise specified. Apart from Canberra's seven dedicated dog parks, there are numerous areas that have been made designated off-leash areas as part of the changes, including ovals when formalised sporting events are not on and some schools when classes are not in session. Importantly, almost all Canberra households are within 800 metres of an off-leash dog area.

Even in designated off-leash areas, owners must retain effective control of their dog at all times, meaning that the dog can be prevented from approaching other animals or people and can return to the owner at their command. This makes it easier for dog owners to do the right thing and also improves community safety for non dog owners.

Maps are available to view via the “Recreation with my dog” page on the TCCS website in PDF format and on ACTmapi. We will continue to make changes to the maps as required. I have previously flagged a review of the lakes heading into summer to ensure that there are adequate areas for dogs to have a swim.

MR GUPTA: Minister, what have been the initial results of the compliance team announced as part of the Canberra model for dog management?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Gupta for his supplementary. The government’s new six-member compliance team has been out since the end of June helping to educate the community about responsible dog ownership and taking compliance action as necessary. Since 1 July, the compliance team has been undertaking engagements with the community across the entirety of Canberra, including all dog parks, sportsgrounds and suburban streets. So far, 133 engagements related to dog matters have been taken with the community.

Overwhelmingly, Canberrans are doing the right thing. Most of these engagements were about educating dog owners on their responsibilities. The initial focus of this compliance team will be on education as part of the compliance approach. Of the 133 engagements, only a handful, three, resulted in compliance being enforced, with one dog found roaming in public, one dog that was not desexed and one dog found off leash in an on-lead area. For most other members of the community, where issues were identified, copies of the new Canberra dog model were handed out to educate the community in the first instance. Members of the compliance team will continue to receive training from other experienced rangers at DAS. We will be examining the success of the new team at the end of the six-month trial.

Schools—Miles Franklin

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, what will it cost to fence Miles Franklin School and the adjoining south-west Evatt oval?

MS BERRY: There is no decision to fence Miles Franklin School or the adjacent oval at this time.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, why does the proposal to fence the Miles Franklin School include the south-west Evatt oval?

MS BERRY: That was a proposal put forward by the P&C of the Miles Franklin School.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how will a two-metre high steel spiked fence enhance the environmental amenity currently presented by open green spaces between the school

and the local residents? Will you correct the record because the proposition of the fencing was put forward by the department, not by the school?

MS BERRY: On the second part of Mrs Dunne's question, that is not the advice I have. It is still a proposal. Yes, the directorate is helping with the consultation with the community, but there is a proposal, which everybody is clear about. There has been correspondence to my office about this matter. I understand that there are people who are concerned about a fence around the oval. I am very happy to hear, and encourage people to continue to provide, feedback on the proposed fence.

But at this stage it is just a proposed fence, for a couple of reasons. One is to ensure the safety of the students and staff at the Miles Franklin school. It is also to prevent damage and vandalism that could occur at that school. They are very good reasons. At the end of the day it will be the school community that needs to agree and have the support of the community to have a fence constructed there or on the oval, although it is less likely that the oval will be accepted by the community, judging from the correspondence that I have received and from what I understand the community are saying. So this is not an issue that needs to be used to divide the community. It is a chance—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please.

Mrs Dunne: They are not divided; they are unanimous.

MS BERRY: That is okay because it is just a proposal at the moment. The most mature way for everybody in this place to approach this matter is to encourage people in the community to provide their feedback in a respectful way—

Mr Wall: But you never listen. The government seldom listens.

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, to suggest that I do not listen to members of the community about issues—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members!

MS BERRY: I raise a point of order, Madam Speaker, on the behaviour of those opposite towards ministers who are trying to give honest answers to issues that are affecting our communities jointly—Mrs Dunne's community in her suburb, I might add. It is an opportunity to bring people together, yet all they can do is sit here and make fun of me because I am actually taking this issue seriously, making sure that people have the chance to provide their feedback, providing information about how they can do it; that is what this place is supposed to be about: openness and transparency in governance.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, resume your seat, please.

Mr Hanson: That is not a point of order; that is a rant.

Ms Berry: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, that interjection is a very gendered interjection towards a woman. It might be considered that when I have an issue to raise with those opposite, it is described as a rant. It is completely unacceptable and it should be withdrawn.

Mr Coe: On the point of order, it is worth noting that numerous members opposite, including the Chief Minister and the Minister for Health, laughed.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I remind everybody that the minister has a point, in that the noise and the interjections from members of the opposition are at times loud and sometimes verging on being unparliamentary. I understand that there is theatre and there is the cut and thrust of political debate, but you should all have respect for and be respectful to other people in the chamber.

Crime—property damage

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I refer to an incident which occurred on 25 July 2019, in which a self-confessed drug-affected Labor politician repeatedly kicked in and destroyed a door at a hotel in Kingston. Media reported that the incident was so serious that guests at the hotel were advised to stay away from the area and that multiple ACT police officers attended the scene. Minister, why were no charges brought against this person, given the damage, destruction and violence that was caused in the hotel?

MR GENTLEMAN: That would be a matter for the operational side of ACT Policing. I very much trust their work across the ACT. They are a fantastic group of people that we continue to resource. It is important that they are able to do their job independently from government, but that they are supported by government in a resourcing sense.

Yesterday the opposition voted against the biggest resource appropriation for ACT Policing. We will continue to support ACT Policing. But I will not interfere, as Mrs Jones indicates I should, as she would if she were the police minister in the ACT.

Mrs Jones: Point of order on relevance.

MADAM SPEAKER: The minister is responding to your question. I think he is being relevant to your question. Resume your seat.

Mrs Jones: I would like to make a point.

MADAM SPEAKER: You raised relevance. I believe he is answering.

Mrs Jones: Yes, but I would also like to point out standing order 47. I ask that in this case you consider standing order 47 in relation to being misrepresented. This is a very important point. The minister makes a case that I did something, which I did not. I have been misrepresented.

Mr Rattenbury: Madam Speaker, on the point of order. I think that the opposition regularly reinterprets ministers' comments. If Mrs Jones's point of order is to stand, we will spend a lot of time in this chamber dealing with standing order 47.

Mrs Jones: Madam Speaker, I ask to speak to the point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, resume your seat Mrs Jones. I repeat: resume your seat. Standing order 47 does not apply to this because it goes to a point of a debate. There is no debate; it is question time.

Mrs Jones: Standing order 46?

MADAM SPEAKER: It is 47. For 46 you can stand if you like at the end of question time.

MRS JONES: Minister, when did you first become aware of this incident and what briefing, if any, did you have on the subsequent process?

MR GENTLEMAN: I think the first time I became aware was from reports in the press. I have not been briefed in specificity by ACT Policing about this particular incident. As I said, it is an operational matter. I have full confidence in ACT Policing resolving the matter and I have full confidence in ACT Policing as a whole. I think they do a fantastic job for the ACT.

Madam Speaker, you would have noticed that crime statistics for the ACT have been dropping across the forward program. That shows that the resources that we are providing for ACT police are taken up and are being used and crime is trending down.

MR PARTON: Minister, have you received any briefing on this matter? Has it been mentioned in any briefing, and is this the standard of behaviour that you accept as the minister in charge of law and order here in the ACT?

MR GENTLEMAN: I am the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. In regard to law and order, I am not sure if I can take that cudgel up. However, I have not received any specific briefing about this matter.

Disability services—justice strategy

MR GUPTA: My question is to the Minister for Disability. Minister, what will the recently released disability justice strategy and action plan mean for Canberrans with disability?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Gupta for the question. The aim of the disability justice strategy for the ACT, of course, is to ensure that all people with disability are treated equally before the law, have equal access to justice and that their rights are upheld.

National and international research shows that people with disability face many barriers to accessing justice, which leads to an increased level of contact with the justice system. The disability justice strategy will address this inequality and increase

the responsiveness of the justice system to the needs of people with disability, which will improve the justice system for everyone.

The disability justice strategy is for people with disability, their families and carers, the justice system and the wider community. The strategy is a 10-year plan and has three primary goals: to ensure that people with disability are safe and their rights are respected; that the ACT has a disability responsive justice system; and that change is achieved and measured.

The disability justice strategy will support a series of action plans and review points. The first action plan released with the strategy describes the first four years of work and the commitments made by stakeholders to ensure that the ACT provides equal access to justice for people with disability. Almost \$4.9 million over four years has specifically been allocated for the implementation of the action plan, with a primary outcome of the development of a community of practice, of disability liaison officers across our justice system, working together to build an understanding of the needs of people with disability within the justice system, and to support people with disability as they interact with a range of justice and legal sector partners. This will, of course, be supported by the establishment of the intermediary scheme announced in the budget.

The disability justice strategy and first action plan deliver on ACT Labor's election commitment, and it is part of our vision for building a more inclusive Canberra.

MR GUPTA: Minister, how were the strategy and action plan developed?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Gupta for the supplementary question. Of course the lived experience of people with disability and their experiences with the justice system were at the core of the consultation work and the development of the strategy.

In May 2018 we held an important public conversation in which criminologist Eileen Baldry, Victims of Crime Commissioner Heidi Yates and advocate Yenn Perkis shared their knowledge and experience of people with disability and accessing justice, at a public forum during Law Week.

Then through June to September 2018 the government asked for feedback through surveys, face-to-face meetings, community events and written submissions to hear directly about the community's views, priorities and experiences. This was continued through a survey on your say. We sought the views of the community on the issues, concerns and responses that could be included in the strategy, focusing on the three central themes of knowing your rights, exercising your rights and your experience of the justice system.

A disability justice reference group was formed to provide advice on key issues and priorities for the strategy to guide the strategy's development and to build relationships across the sector. The reference group's membership is made up of people with disability, lived experience of the justice system and representatives of the community sector and government.

I acknowledge the important and critical role that the reference group, led by Dougie Herd, the co-chair of the disability reference group, and Heidi Yates, played in the development of the strategy. Their commitment to the strategy has delivered us a stronger strategy and action plan that will drive change across the ACT.

As a result of this extensive community engagement and internal consultation with relevant ACT government directorates, the first action plan has been developed with the voice of the community at its heart. I

I particularly want to thank the staff who have been involved in this very important work and been absolutely committed to it over the past couple of years.

MS ORR: Minister, what difference is the strategy already making in the lives of people with disability engaged with the justice system?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. I am pleased to say that the process of developing the disability justice strategy has already raised awareness and brought change in culture and attitude in the ACT.

The strategy's focus areas will guide this work into the future, from small service delivery improvements through to system-wide changes. The focus areas are information and communication; education and guidance; identification, screening and assessment; better service delivery; and data, research and review.

Through the development of the strategy a series of training courses from other states were piloted. Around 100 people attended these courses and now have a much greater awareness of issues facing people with disability and the justice system. They now know what to look for in determining the needs of people with disability. Justice agencies are already making changes in how they communicate with people with disability by using easy English and plain language. These changes make the system more accessible for everyone.

In this financial year we will see the start of a package of training tools developed and delivered by local advocacy agencies: the first in a series of easy English workshops in September 2019; the commencement of the first two of the practice positions in ACT Policing and Legal Aid; and the implementation of a handbook for child protection staff on how best to support people with disability, as well as a whole range of other workshops and activities to ensure that our systems see and respond to the needs of people with disability.

In a recent conversation with the Director of Public Prosecutions he told me that the DPP are already utilising the work of the strategy to assist them to better meet the needs of all people they come into contact with. This just shows how important the strategy is and the real impact it will have on Canberrans with disability and the wider community. Again I thank everybody involved in its development.

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