QUESTION TIME

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Thursday, 26 September 2019

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MR COE: The question I have is for the Attorney-General. Attorney, in passing the cannabis legislation yesterday your government stated that this area of law is uncertain and carries risk. Attorney, why has the government knowingly and wilfully passed legislation that poses uncertainty and risk?

MR RAMSAY: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question and for the opportunity to reaffirm why we did what we did yesterday and what we have done and have not done.

It has been very clear in the media and some of the commentary from the Canberra Liberals over the past 24 hours that they are ramping up scaring the community on what is occurring. But what happened yesterday was a natural evolution of long-term policies of this government and of previous governments to ensure that Canberrans are well supported.

Our drug law reform is based on harm minimisation. The reason we have done that—why we did what we did yesterday—is that we seek to govern according to the values of people who live here in Canberra. They have made very clear over the years that their understanding of the way that drug law has worked over the years is that it has not been effective, nor has it been achieving what it was meant to achieve.

Therefore, we have taken another step, which is to seek to ensure that people who are using small amounts of cannabis for personal use are treated through a health approach rather than engaging in the criminal justice system. We believe that is upholding the values of Canberra very well and we are very proud to have done that.

MR COE: Attorney, is it responsible and fair that you have put the onus on citizens to sort out the confusion that you have created, and to sort out the uncertainty and risk as a result of this legislation?

MR RAMSAY: I note that the commonwealth legislation has not changed, so the circumstances between ACT legislation and commonwealth legislation are as they have been, that is, there is a provision under the ACT legislation for things to be dealt with in a particular way. That is also what has happened. It is reasonable and fair for us to ensure that the values of Canberrans are upheld. Also, as was the case yesterday, the Minister for Health has indicated that there will be educational materials and an education program that will take effect before the legislation commences. That is one of the numerous reasons why the legislation does not take effect on notification; this will occur at some stage in the future, when it is commenced by the Minister for Health. We currently anticipate that that will probably be at around the end of January next year. But as part of that there will be an education campaign for the broader community.

As was made very clear in speeches yesterday, and as I made very clear in speeches yesterday, there is some ambiguity at the moment, and people in the ACT do need to be aware of the risks. However, we do not anticipate that there will be a new
crackdown. The CPO has been very clear on that, and I welcome his statements over the past 24 hours as well. We will continue to ensure that people are dealt with in the manner of a health approach for these small amounts of personal-use of cannabis.

**MR HANSON:** Attorney-General, what is the risk that was described by the government in its response to the committee inquiry, described as risks arising from interactions between territory and commonwealth law?

**MR RAMSAY:** I refer Mr Hanson to my statements in the chamber yesterday as part of the debate on the legislation, that there is still the commonwealth legislation that is in place. However, as I have said both in this place before and again today, and I have said it publicly beyond the chamber as well, it is a matter of ensuring that people are able to be supported in their particular life choices and that when they are choices to engage with drugs in some form of personal use, as is the case here, that they are responded to from a health perspective so that we ensure that we approach this from a harm minimisation point of view, not from a scaremongering, not from a sort of ramping things up in the way that—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson on a point of order. Resume your seat, minister.

Mr Hanson: My question referred to the risks identified in the government response to the committee inquiry, which are legal risks. I asked the Attorney-General for an explanation of the legal risks of the interactions between territory and commonwealth law. I would ask him to get to that point and be directly relevant.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister Ramsay, in the time you have left; we are aware of the health support aspect of this.

MR RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am happy in the time I have left to go back to what I said in the first place, which is that the risk is that the commonwealth legislation still remains as was the case before this particular piece of legislation went through. There is the chance that people may be arrested, may be prosecuted, may be taken to court. I mentioned that in my speech yesterday. We do not anticipate that being the case and neither, from his statements yesterday and today, does the Chief Police Officer.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, members!

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

Housing—strategy

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My question is the Minister for Housing and Suburban development and relates to the government’s plan for review and evaluation of the
housing strategy. Minister, will the housing strategy be subject to one or more publicly available reviews or evaluations?

**MS BERRY:** As I have said before in this places, the ACT government, in the development of a housing strategy, had a housing advisory group made up of a number of different organisations and representation from different parts of the sector, including ACT Property Group, architects, real estate agents, public housing tenants and community service organisations. That group will continue and will continue to review and assess the strategy as it is rolled out in the ACT.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Minister, given that, to the best of my knowledge, that group has so far worked primarily on the development, what work is it currently doing on looking at the implementation and when will there be a public evaluation, presumably conducted by that group, of the implementation of the strategy?

**MS BERRY:** I will update the Assembly on the implementation of the strategy as required. That group is going through a stage right now of reviewing its role given that that role has changed. The strategy has been developed and now the implementation is occurring.

**Government—cannabis legislation**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the minister for police. I refer to the front page of today’s *Daily Telegraph* with the headline “The joint’s gone mad”. The article states:

> … there are now fears among NSW Police that the new laws could fuel our state’s spiralling drug crisis by making it easier for criminal gangs to transfer their massive pot crops up the Hume Hwy to Sydney.

Minister, what communication did you or your directorate have with New South Wales police about the implications of legalised cannabis in the ACT?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Mr Hanson for the question. I did not have any direct conversations with New South Wales police but certainly the Chief Police Officer did, and that helped inform his position in regard to the cannabis bill debated yesterday.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, what steps is the government taking to prevent trafficking of cannabis from legal growing in Canberra to illegal markets in Sydney, as has been highlighted by New South Wales Police?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** We are investing in our police force to disrupt crime in the ACT. In each of the budget years, last year and this year, there have been larger resources, investments, put into ACT Policing to disrupt criminal activities, and it is working. ACT police have done a fantastic job of not only crime disruption but also of arresting and prosecuting people who do unlawful things in the ACT, including unlawfully growing marijuana.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, what calculations have you made of the extra cost or extra resources needed to prevent the trafficking of cannabis from legal growing in Canberra to illegal markets in Sydney?
MR GENTLEMAN: We invest in our local police force and they calculate the resources they need to combat crime in the territory, unlike those opposite who voted against those resources in the last two budgets.

Policing—cannabis

MRS JONES: My question is to the minister for police. I refer to the front page of today’s *Daily Telegraph* with the headline “The joint’s gone mad”. The article states:

ACT chief police officer Ray Johnson previously warned the laws would make the territory “more attractive to organised crime groups as a place to grow cannabis for both internal and external markets” as well as removing the risk to “crop sitters” who grow weed for outlaw motorcycle gangs.

Minister, what particular resources have been made available to monitor and prevent crop-sitters for organised crime operating in the ACT under the new laws?

MR GENTLEMAN: I do not believe that that is what the CPO did say. In fact, trafficking still remains a crime.

MRS JONES: Minister, what communication or advice have you received from Taskforce Nemesis about the implications of these laws?

MR GENTLEMAN: I not only have had communications with Taskforce Nemesis on their ongoing work to combat crime in the ACT but I spent a morning with them at Winchester Police Centre going over the operations they have been conducting in the past 12 months. Thanks to the investment that this government has made in Taskforce Nemesis over a number of years there have been quite successful operations across the ACT disrupting crime, arresting criminals and charging them.

MR HANSON: Minister, how do these laws or other pertinent laws prevent persons from being crop sitters for outlaw motorcycle gangs or other organised crime gangs?

MR GENTLEMAN: The particular debate yesterday was not about laws on criminal activity; it was about the health implications regarding the harm minimisation approach that this government has to drug use in our community. We do not condone the personal use of cannabis. We know that there are health risks to individuals that use that. Those amendments will reduce the harm for individuals who are already using cannabis, acknowledging that the outright prohibition can bring people into contact with—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, a point of order on relevance.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, minister.

Mr Hanson: The question was very specific; it was about what laws are available, and what provisions under the laws passed yesterday would prevent crop sitters. It is not about harm minimisation; it is about the issue of crop sitters, as raised by the CPO.
MADAM SPEAKER: I think the minister has made reference to the fact that illegal activity remains illegal activity, but—

Mr Hanson: It is not; that is the point. It’s now legal, isn’t it, Madam Speaker?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, one more and you will be warned. I call the minister, in the time he has left.

MR GENTLEMAN: We did not change the Crimes Act yesterday at all, and trafficking remains unlawful.

Housing—Taylor

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. It is in relation to the building of affordable housing in Taylor. Minister, why are tenderers for the Taylor affordable housing expression of interest being required to pay market price for land designated as affordable housing?

MS BERRY: The land that is provided for affordable housing purchase and build in Taylor falls within the ACT government’s policy of providing that land for builders who meet the expression of interest requirements. There have been a number of meetings and consultations with builders and others who are interested in purchasing land to build affordable homes across the ACT, but particularly more recently in Taylor. As far as I am aware, I have not had any advice from those briefings with those builders that there were issues with that process or with the government’s requirements around affordable land purchase and build of homes by those organisations.

MR WALL: Minister, how can a quality building be constructed and sold as an affordable home when the market average block price in Taylor is already above the government’s price ceiling for affordable housing?

MS BERRY: As I said, there have been a number of briefings with builders and others who are interested in building affordable homes in the ACT for the community. That is the agreement that is made through the expression of interest process.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, will there be any requirement that the purchasers of this land actually build affordable houses and then, if they do, any obligations around resale to eligible people?

MS BERRY: Yes, there are a number of requirements on builders regarding the sale of these dwellings, once they have been completed, to ensure that they meet the affordable housing policy of the ACT government. I would like to make sure that I get the right information to the Assembly. I will check the detail on the actual requirements that are in place for those builders and developers who build these homes for sale to make sure that they are going to families who need them.

Government—LGBTIQ+ inclusion strategy

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, as the
Minister for Social Inclusion and Equality, can you tell us what is the ACT government’s strategy for promoting the inclusion of the LGBTIQ+ community in Canberra?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. We have launched the capital of equality strategy, which is the territory government’s first all-encompassing LGBTIQ+ strategy and, I believe, now the most all-encompassing of any state or territory in the nation. The strategy outlines how we are stepping up support for the community, and sets out the principles to ensure that LGBTIQ+ people, their families and communities are visible, valued and respected and that they have access to inclusive and supportive services.

The four-year strategy was developed in close collaboration with the ministerial advisory council and the broader community. It provides a road map to increasing wellbeing and acceptance by reforming laws, enhancing services, supporting peer-led organisations and, importantly, opening doors for participation in all areas of life for this marginalised section of our community. The strategy forms part of the government’s broader vision for a more inclusive Canberra.

MR PETTERSSON: Chief Minister, how is the strategy going to be implemented?

MR BARR: It will be through targeted, measurable and specific actions. Most importantly, getting it right is vital to improve the lives of LGBTIQ+ community members in the territory. The office of LGBTIQ affairs is engaging closely with the ministerial advisory council and right across all ACT government directorates to develop the first action plan for implementation over the coming 12 months.

This plan will be released in coming weeks and will include specific reforms and practical improvements to assist some of the most vulnerable individuals in our community, such as those undergoing gender transition and those born with variations in sex characteristics.

We will work closely with the private sector and with peer-led community organisations on implementing the actions, and ACT government directorates will be responsible for implementing initiatives as part of their core business.

Progress on implementing the actions will be monitored in consultation with the advisory council and through the ACT government’s own reporting mechanisms. Following the implementation of the first action plan the government will again work closely with the ministerial advisory council to develop subsequent action plans to deliver on the strategy.

MS CHEYNE: Chief Minister, how can we support LGBTIQ+ Canberrans to use facilities that suit their gender identities?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Cheyne for that very topical question. The answer is that those members of the community should use the facilities, including bathrooms and change rooms, that they feel most comfortable using.

Planning—Ginninderra Estate
MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, the EIS for the 330,000 volt powerline currently being constructed east of Ginninderra Estate in Holt states that, “It has been assumed that any future residents should be aware of the proposed transmission line construction.” In response, stakeholders warned that future residents were being kept in the dark and, as you know, several Canberrans did buy blocks and even built houses in this estate without any clue that you had approved 49-metre high steel towers to go up behind their homes. Minister, when you used your call-in powers to approve this project, what evidence did you have in your possession that future residents would know about the towers you had approved or the impacts listed in the EIS, such as reduced property values?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mrs Kikkert for the question. It is an important one. Of course, this work started back in 2014 in looking at the proposed commencement consultation with landholders and other relevant stakeholders. Then, of course, the environmental impact work was set with the developer for the work that is happening and the residential construction that is occurring at Holt. It was their responsibility to advise future purchasers of the proposal for the powerlines in their purchase place.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, after having been warned, why did you not include a condition that future residents must have full disclosure of this project and its environmental and economic impacts when it was in your power to do so?

MR GENTLEMAN: As I mentioned, it was up to the developer to provide that information to future purchasers.

MR WALL: Minister, how do potential purchasers learn whether you have approved a major infrastructure project that will drive down the value of land or homes they are considering if the developer is not doing so adequately?

MR GENTLEMAN: There is no evidence that this particular development in regard to power lines will drive down any house prices at all. Of course review contracts are available as well and we ask them to review their contracts.

Planning—Ginninderra Estate

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. In response to the EIS for the 330,000 volt powerline currently being constructed east of Ginninderra Estate in Holt one representation noted that photographs were misleading and that therefore “no accurate or objective impression can be gained that might lead the minister to reach a reasonable conclusion with regard to the impact of the proposed powerlines on the estate”. Moreover, the EIS admits that potential social or economic impacts associated with the project were considered only through a desktop review without anyone actually visiting the site. Minister, why did you ignore warnings about misleading images designed to minimise potential impacts when you used your call-in powers to approve this project?

MR GENTLEMAN: I considered all of the evidence put to me by the experts in that decision.
MISS C BURCH: Minister, did you instruct anyone from the Planning and Land Authority to visit the site to verify the accuracy of the images in the EIS before you approved this project? If not, why not?

MR GENTLEMAN: No, as I said, I took the evidence provided by the experts and made my decision based on that evidence.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, will you now visit Ginninderra Estate to observe the impact that the 49-metre-high steel towers are having on those who leased blocks and built homes there after you approved this project? If not, why not?

MR GENTLEMAN: I have visited the estate on several occasions.

Housing—Common Ground

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the delivery of Canberra’s second Common Ground, in Dickson?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the question on the delivery of this important election commitment. Recently I was joined by the Common Ground board and Minister Stephen-Smith, as well as residents and management of the first Common Ground, in Gungahlin, to release the concept designs and begin the pre-DA consultation for the second Common Ground, which is being built on the former Downer Club site in Dickson.

The concept designs carefully consider the community and stakeholder feedback gathered throughout 2018 as part of broader consultation around section 72. The design includes 40 class C adaptable units, with a mix of one, two and three-bedroom dwellings, and a flexible space on the ground floor with a range of potential uses, including community use.

To allow for all of these features to be built on the site, a variation to the Territory Plan is required, which is also currently open for public comment. Following the eight-week pre-DA community engagement period, Housing ACT will consider the feedback received and finalise the design documentation, with the intention to lodge a development application with the Planning and Land Authority by the end of the year.

The construction of Common Ground Dickson is expected to take between 12 and 18 months, and the first tenants are expected to move into their new homes by the end of 2021. The ACT government is delivering more social and affordable housing for Canberrans who need it, and Common Ground Dickson will provide long-term, secure and affordable housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, how will this development build on the success of the first Common Ground in Gungahlin?

MS BERRY: Canberra’s first Common Ground, in Gungahlin, which opened in 2015 with 40 one-bedroom units with both social and affordable homes and onsite
support, has been an outstanding success. Since it opened, many residents have furthered their education, gone on to buy a property from the private market and experienced significant improvement in both their mental and general health. The latest data shows that 50 per cent of the social housing tenants engaged in employment and 25 per cent undertook training or education.

At the launch, I met with Greg, who is a tenant of Common Ground in Gungahlin. He was the second person to move into the Gungahlin Common Ground. He told me about how he used to constantly move between group homes before moving into Common Ground. Common Ground gave him the stability and the space he needed to work on his mental health and he has even returned now to his studies at CIT.

Common Ground Dickson will be a little bit different from the first Common Ground, being designed for, and providing services specific for, women, children and families. Addressing the needs of these cohorts is a key action of the ACT housing strategy, as new and emerging groups of vulnerable and homeless individuals.

The recent cohort study identified the support and accommodation requirements of people with high and complex needs, which helped inform the best housing model for Common Ground Dickson. Common Ground Dickson will build on the success of Common Ground Gungahlin and will provide social and affordable housing and the supports for a new cohort of women and families who need the assistance.

MR COE: Minister, what is the plan for the remainder of the government-owned blocks at section 72?

MS BERRY: I will have to take that question on notice. That is within the portfolio responsibilities of Rachel Stephen-Smith and I just do not have that information in front of me.

What I can say about the Common Ground in Dickson is that it will be important for the community and businesses to get involved. It will be a project that has, like Gungahlin Common Ground, received generous support and contributions across Canberra to give tenants the best start in their new homes. More information on how businesses and builders can get involved will be outlined later this year.

Mr Coe: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order. Minister, resume your seat.

Mr Coe: As important as this is, perhaps the minister could be directly relevant to the question, or be more relevant, by saying what would assist those in the proposed Common Ground to be adjacent to them in the other government-owned blocks.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no point of order. She said at the very beginning that she would take the specifics of the question on notice. She was referring to the policy area of Common Ground.

MS BERRY: Over the next eight weeks, Housing ACT will be out in the community to talk in more detail about Common Ground Dickson, with concept designs and how
to get involved. More details are currently available on the your say website.

I hope to see greater interest from businesses and the community in the development of Canberra’s second Common Ground. I have seen the impact that the Common Ground model has had on residents and the success achieved by tenants over the long term. The ACT government is delivering on its election commitment to build a second Common Ground, in Dickson. I cannot wait for construction to begin next year.

Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, it has occurred to me that I neglected at the beginning of question time to observe that Minister Stephen-Smith is absent. I understand that that was well known, but I apologise. I will take questions in her portfolios.

Questions without notice

Municipal services—littering

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for City Services. When was the decision made to remove the option to report littering or illegal dumping from the fix my street online portal, and why did the government make this decision?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I am happy to come back to her with some information. I believe it is still possible to report that type of activity. I will provide some information to the Assembly about that.

MS LAWDER: Minister, has the rate of littering or illegal dumping reporting decreased since the online reporting option was removed and, if so, by what margin or level has the rate of reporting decreased?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Lawder for her very detailed question. I will come back with the specifics. But, more generally speaking, we have been out there very visibly in the community, particularly with the compliance targeting team which has been targeting both illegal dumping and littering in the community, and that has led to a significant number of engagements and also quite significant fines being issued in relation to illegal dumping.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, how do you reconcile the removal of this reporting option with your stated aim to support a cleaner Canberra by reducing the amount of litter in our streets?

MR STEEL: I refer the member to my first answer.

Sport—GIO Stadium parking

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Transport and Minister for City Services. Minister, as you would be aware, the Canberra Raiders and Rabbitohs preliminary final on Friday night has been sold out, with 20,000 fans expected to watch this blockbuster game at GIO Stadium. Minister, with only 3,000 car spaces at the venue what arrangements have you made to ensure that there are enough public transport options to get Canberrans to and from the stadium?
MR BARR: The arrangements for this match of course sit with Venues Canberra. There is free public transport provision for all ticket holders to the event. Additional buses have been put on to accommodate a crowd of that size. It is anticipated to be around 28,200, give or take five or ten people either way, with additional standing room capacity for around 1,200 made available. There is extra provision and there will be additional staff on to manage access to and from the venue before and after the match.

MR MILLIGAN: Chief Minister, will you target NRL fans with parking infringements once again this Friday night, noting your failure to provide adequate parking and public transport?

MR BARR: Firstly, the government and individual ministers are not targeting anyone. I need to make that very clear. Parking operations will seek to ensure that people park safely and legally. The last thing we want is, at the encouragement of the shadow minister, someone to be hit by a car or injured at the event. Particularly as this event will start and finish in darkness, we do not want there to be any illegal parking or unsafe parking at this event. There are more than enough additional buses being provided, with free transport.

I would remind Mr Milligan that the precinct, the venue, is in fact owned by the Australian government. It is not an ACT government venue. We do not have the capacity to provide car parking for 28,000 cars at the event. It is physically limited by the surrounds of the Australian Sports Commission and the Australian Institute of Sport. This line of questioning is juvenile and irresponsible, and reflects an alarming approach to public safety. Those who argued yesterday about abiding by the law now want to override that for the sake of a cheap headline, the sort of disgusting behaviour that we have come to expect from those opposite.

MS CHEYNE: Chief Minister, how would you recommend that people get to the game?

MR BARR: On free public transport or in their vehicles and park legally and appropriately.

Building—regulation

MR GUPTA: My question is to the Minister for Building Quality Improvement. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the government’s efforts to crack down on dodgy builders?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Gupta for this important question. The government is committed to cracking down on dodgy builders and removing them from the industry. We are committed to giving the regulator the tools that he needs to ensure action against those who are doing the wrong thing. We are committed to resourcing the regulator to do this important work.

That is why we have doubled the size of the building inspectorate in the most recent budget. We have funded eight new inspectors to undertake around an extra
1,000 building inspections per year. This will allow the trial of the rapid regulatory response team to be made a permanent feature of the inspectorate and ensure that building inspectors are on site quickly.

We have also funded four staff to administer the nation-leading builders licensing exams, which multiple other jurisdictions are inquiring about to see how they may be implemented in their states and territories. It is just one of the practical measures that we have implemented to check that those who are seeking to become a builder and those who are renewing their licence have the skills and the abilities we expect in a highly technical, complex and regulated profession.

This government is serious about ensuring the high quality of buildings in Canberra. We will hold builders to account for any poor work that they do. We will soon hold the directors of building companies to account should they seek to avoid doing the right thing. We will seek to remove those from the industry who are building poorly.

MR GUPTA: Minister, can you update the Assembly on the actions the regulator has taken to hold builders to account?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Gupta for the supplementary question. I am pleased that complaints about building quality are reducing. I have been clear, the regulator has been clear, and the government has been clear as well: poor quality and noncompliance with the law will not be tolerated.

Last financial year the rapid regulatory response team finalised 246 cases, referred a further 42 cases to other regulatory areas of government and referred an additional 64 matters for further investigation. So far this financial year the team has closed an additional 23 cases, referred five cases to other regulatory areas of government and referred 18 for further monitoring or investigation.

Last financial year Access Canberra issued demerit points again 50 construction occupations licensees, 11 notices of intention to issue a rectification order, three rectification orders, 10 directions to undertake building work and 29 stop-work notices. In addition, so far this financial year Access Canberra has issued two notices of intention to issue a rectification order, two rectification orders, two emergency rectification orders, two directions to undertake building work, 12 stop-work notices and four controlled activity orders.

Access Canberra’s construction audit team is working to make sure that the industry is held to account and complying with their obligations. In 2018-19 Access Canberra’s construction audit team conducted 402 energy efficiency rating audits, 147 site audits for building approvals, 112 site audits for development approvals, 91 certificates of occupancy audits and 28 cost of work assessment audits.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, can you update the Assembly on why this action is important and what further action the government has planned?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Pettersson for the important supplementary question. There is a reason that we regulate various professions. It is because we think that there should be a barrier to entry to ensure that what work is done is of the highest quality
and that the work meets the needs of the community. That is why we undertook over 23,000 electrical inspections last financial year. It is why we undertook over 13,000 plumbing and over 3,000 gas inspections last financial year.

Canberrans rightly expect that one of the biggest investments that they will make in their lives will be up to scratch. The action that we are taking is vital to ensure that people can buy with the confidence that the product will be of a high quality and that if it is not the builder will be held to account.

This is why we are introducing broader powers for the regulator. They will include the ability to hold directors of building companies to account and make them liable for the rectification of defects should the company be wound up to limit liability. We will be giving the regulator power to enter into court enforceable undertakings with builders to have those issues resolved. It is why we will give the regulator the power to publish stop-work notices so that the community have more information available to them when they are shopping around for a builder.

We are also looking at alternative dispute mechanisms to make it easier for consumers to find solutions to building issues. This government is focused on finding practical solutions to improve the quality of building here in Canberra. We have resolved to ensure that those who seek to work in this regulated profession do what is required of them under their licence which gives them the privilege of doing this work for the benefit of the people of Canberra.

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