



QUESTION TIME
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FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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Tuesday, 9 February 2021

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Questions without notice

Hospitals—emergency department performance

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Health. In January the latest *Report on Government Services* was released, showing that just 48 per cent of emergency department patients were seen on time in ACT hospitals, the worst result in Australia. In response, you told the ABC:

... our target—and the national target—is 70 per cent. We are nowhere near that at this point in time. We want to get to that target within nine months.

Minister, if by the end of October 2021 the target of 70 per cent of all ED patients seen on time is not met, what will be the consequences for you and your government, and, more importantly, the Canberra public?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. She is, as some in the media have done, conflating two issues. The 70 per cent target that I was talking about is what is called the NEAT—the number of people who are seen within the emergency department and either admitted to the hospital or discharged to home within four hours. It is one of the national measurements in relation to the performance of emergency departments.

Of course, there is a relationship between the people who are seen and have their treatments started within clinically recommended times and the speed with which people are seen in the emergency department and either then discharged to home or admitted into the hospital.

With that clarification, I have been having a lot of conversations with Canberra Health Services, as I have talked about in this place many times over the last 18 months, about how we improve the emergency department performance. Part of that has been about the rest of the hospital, and how we improve the flow through the emergency department into the hospital. That is the timely care strategy that we have talked about a number of times.

I also acknowledged on radio—and this goes to the exact question by the Leader of the Opposition—in my interview, which was a 10-minute sit-down interview with a journalist, of which, as you are aware, Madam Speaker, a very short amount was played, that we are trying to deliver change in a very busy, 24/7 environment. It is not just at Canberra Hospital; it is also at Calvary. Canberra Hospital has one of the busiest emergency departments in the country. It sees a lot of different types of activity. We then need to change processes within that 24/7 environment. We will continue to work to do that. We have a range of strategies in place. If October comes around and we have not, I guess we will see what happens.

MS LEE: Minister, given that your government has failed to meet these targets for several years now, what is different this time?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: As I was saying, we have taken a very whole-of-hospital and whole-of-system approach to this. We have focused, within the rest of the

hospital, outside the emergency department, on ensuring that people can be discharged in a timely way. The red-to-green strategy identifies barriers to discharge and gets patients discharged from the hospital in a timely way, to free up those beds in the rest of the hospital for the emergency department, to address what is commonly known as bed block. There are still some issues when we have high levels of mental health patients, but across the rest of the hospital that strategy is now working extremely well.

To connect the emergency department to the rest of the hospital, we have established a process in both Calvary and Canberra hospitals so that they are now doing direct admissions into wards. That enables people within the emergency department to admit onto a hospital ward rather than having to wait for a consultant to come down from the rest of the hospital to agree to that admission.

There is rapid assessment by senior clinicians to improve the flow through the emergency department and identify when people do need to be admitted. There is increased sharing of information, looking at what other jurisdictions are doing in their emergency departments, so that we can learn from where other jurisdictions have had success within the emergency department.

A range of things have been considered within the emergency department itself, from the beginning of triage right through to the fast-track process, and having senior clinicians in charge of ensuring that people get through the process where they are going to be discharged from the emergency department to home, and having someone at the back end who is really in charge of making sure that those people who are going to be admitted are being admitted in a timely way. So it really is a whole-of-hospital at Canberra Hospital and a whole-of-system with Calvary approach to addressing this issue.

MRS JONES: Minister, given that you are already walking back your commitment, is this an early admission that you do not expect to be able to achieve it?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I reject the premise of the question.

Hospitals—emergency department performance

MRS JONES: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Health. I refer to the latest *Report on Government Services*, showing that the ACT had the worst performing emergency department in Australia by the statistics. In your response to the media you said:

It is something that we talk about every single week at my catch-up with Canberra Health Services.

Minister, apart from talking about it every single week, what are you and your government doing to fix the worst emergency department results in the country?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Jones for her question. I do note, and I have said before, that our emergency department outcomes and timeliness are not where we want them to be. But I also note, for the record, that interjurisdictional comparisons

are not really an apples-to-apples comparison when you compare the whole of the ACT to other jurisdictions around the country.

I have already talked in my previous answers about a number of the things that we are doing to address this. One thing that I have not had an opportunity to speak about is what we do at the front end to try to ensure that people who do not need to be at the emergency department are not presenting to the emergency department.

That includes our incredibly popular and successful nurse-led walk-in centres, which are able to treat minor injuries and illnesses closer to home for people, with our really excellent advanced practice nurses and nurse practitioners providing that treatment to people. We have a commitment now to expanding the Weston Creek walk-in centre with a new imaging service that has been announced and will be included in the budget that is being brought down today. That will enable people to get those imaging services outside of the hospital as well.

It also includes the Geriatric Rapid Acute Care Evaluation service, or GRACE, which is run out of Calvary Public Hospital but is now covering all residential aged-care facilities across the city and is working with Canberra Hospital now as well. The trial of that program saw a reduction, if memory serves correctly, in the number of people coming into hospital through the emergency department of about 25 per cent of residential aged-care residents. It is better for them and better for the hospital system if they do not have to come to hospital unnecessarily because they can be treated at home. They are just a couple of examples of the things that we are doing.

MRS JONES: Minister, given the history of these statistics and what has not been achieved by your government, what will be different from now on that will actually achieve an outcome in the statistical profile that we have?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Jones for the supplementary. Some of the things that we had started in February last year did get disrupted by COVID. I do not want to use that as an excuse, because I know that, as Mrs Jones has said, this has been an issue in the ACT system for some time. But we did have quite a clear set of priorities in place in February last year, which, obviously, it was going to be difficult to implement in the COVID environment, although we saw improved outcomes with fewer presentations at our emergency departments in the first half of last year.

The real focus that the leadership of Canberra Health Services and Calvary have put on this issue, and the message that they are sending to our hospitals, is that this is a whole-of-hospital responsibility: that everybody has a role to play in ensuring that patient flow is working appropriately, that patients can be admitted when they need to be admitted, and also that there are things we can do within the emergency department to improve this outcome. This is a continuous focus. It is a challenge. It is about delivering change in a busy 24/7 environment—one of the busiest emergency departments in the country at Canberra Hospital and a very busy emergency department also at Calvary. So it absolutely is a challenge, but we are very focused on meeting this challenge.

MS LEE: Minister, if you are confident in being able to fix the emergency department wait times within the next nine months, why have you not done it sooner?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the supplementary question. As I mentioned in one of my earlier answers, there were quite a number of strategies in place from February last year that could not be implemented for various reasons, including the disruption around COVID. But what has been implemented and what is now working well across the hospital is that whole-of-hospital approach, improving the capacity to discharge patients in a timely fashion—things like the all-care discharge lounge. People can be discharged into the discharge lounge even if they need some ongoing support because they are going to be returned to a residential aged-care facility or a home-based environment where they require some ongoing support.

There is still more work to do in terms of collaboration with Hospital in the Home. There are a range of strategies that we need to put in place. But, as I have said, one of the key challenges is that we are trying to deliver change in a busy 24/7 environment where people have a lot of things being thrown at them all day every day. We cannot take everybody off site and have a bit of a yak about it, have a bit of a brainstorm and then come back and practise for two days what our new arrangements are going to look like. We actually need to deliver change in a 24/7 environment. That is our key challenge, but we are very focused on achieving that.

Schools—hazardous materials

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, more than 69 schools are affected by lead paint or asbestos. Some \$15 million has been allocated to address this issue and an Assembly inquiry has recently been established. During the last sitting's question time you were asked about these schools, and you have not addressed which schools they are. You have not listed them. That information is yet to be provided, and teachers and parents remain in the dark. Minister, why will you not tell parents if their child's school is affected by hazardous materials and advise parents what is being done in each school to ensure that their children are not exposed?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. Mr Hanson knows, and I have repeatedly said, that the number of schools that have hazardous materials—and that includes lead paint—is 73. Those schools have hazardous material plans and fact sheets at the front office. All those school communities can access those fact sheets at any time, and that is the best way to get the most informed information about what is going on in an individual school.

I would rather not have individual schools notified or have fingers pointed at them or a scaremongering project conducted by the Liberal Party on an issue that is being dealt with, based on advice from the experts. I absolutely cannot agree with the question that parents and school communities are not aware. They can be aware; they can go to their schools and they can access that information.

MR HANSON: Minister, will you provide that information to parents so that they are aware of what is affected in their school and what is being done to address it, rather than requiring them to all go to the front desk and dig for that information?

MS BERRY: I think I have answered the question already: the information is available. They do not need to dig for it; they need to just ask for it from the front office.

MR PARTON: Minister, when will the hazardous materials be removed and remediated from these 70-odd schools, and at what cost?

MS BERRY: The ACT government takes its advice on the management of lead paint in our schools from the experts. The experts will guide the work that the ACT government has committed to, with the \$15 million, which will be prioritised across schools that need that remediation done more immediately.

The experts tell us that the best way to manage lead paint in schools is to encapsulate it with non-lead paint. That ensures that it is safe for students, teachers and the school community to occupy those school environments. The ACT government always acts on the advice of experts. In this case we have set up a task force within the Education Directorate and we have set up an expert panel to guide us and guide the task force in managing lead paint in our schools, as is appropriate, based on expert advice.

Gungahlin—swimming pool

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, the Gungahlin pool tiles first started falling off in June 2020, causing the closure of this much loved and utilised pool. Can you please provide an update to the Assembly on the government's management of this issue.

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Braddock for his question. I know that the Gungahlin community and the members for Yerrabi have been very disappointed and frustrated at the closure of Gungahlin pool, in June. It is incredibly frustrating, and I share the community's frustration. I understand that the issues that are occurring at the pool are based on the tiles falling off and that there will be repairs done to the pool to remediate the membrane and the tiles in the pool. That will be publicised in about hour by the Chief Minister, in the budget.

MS BERRY: I understand the concern of the community, so as soon as I have information about how that incident occurred at the pool I will provide that to the Assembly.

Mr Hanson: We do not have to go to the front desk for that!

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, that is enough.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, when is the pool scheduled to be ready for use by Gungahlin residents?

MS BERRY: I really do not have an answer on that at the moment. I know that that will be frustrating for the community as well. As soon as I have some advice on the extent of the repairs, the cost of the repairs and the length of the time that the pool will be closed to do those repairs, I will make sure that I provide that detail to the Assembly and to the community. I just do not have that information—

Mr Hanson: Why don't we get all this information—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, please!

MS BERRY: I just do not have that information to hand at the moment. Again, the government is taking the advice of experts on the repairs that need to be made at the pool, and when we have that advice in full detail I will provide that information.

Mr Hanson: They are pretty sensitive about their dorothy dixers from last time.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, that is three times I have called you to order; do not make it four.

MS CLAY: Minister, given that the pool was built just six years ago, will ratepayers be required to pay for the repairs?

MS BERRY: I refer the member to my previous answers. As soon as I have some more information that I can provide to the Assembly and the community, I will.

Schools—infrastructure projects

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, last week was an exciting week for students, the first week of the 2020-21 school year. How did students settle back into school?

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: It's the start of the year for the Assembly as well, so we're all excited about it.

MS BERRY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a really great question because it is always an exciting but sometimes nervous time for students and teachers, and families as well. Mrs Jones and I were just talking this morning about our own children settling—

Opposition members interjecting—

MS BERRY: Well, I did ask her how her kids were going, returning to school, because it can be an interesting time for everybody. It is mostly an exciting time and a time that most families will remember and enjoy for many years. I was happy to be there at Evelyn Scott School, our 89th public school, at Denman Prospect in Dr Paterson's electorate. It was so wonderful to be down there and share that experience with young people and their families.

It was exciting to walk through a brand-new school that built that culture from the start. I know that the school principal, Jackie Vaughan, was really keen to make sure that the students and the school community were part of building that culture from the very start. I cannot wait to see how that school grows, how it develops and how its culture develops. I know that the Denman Prospect community were so excited to

have that school ready to go from the start of this year.

DR PATERSON: Thank you, Minister. I was wondering if you could please give the Assembly some more information on the Evelyn Scott School and how it will serve the community of Denman Prospect.

MS BERRY: The 89th public school, Evelyn Scott, enjoyed the experiences of 187 students who enrolled in that school and started their first school day on Monday or Tuesday of last week. There were many excited parents and children attending on the day. The approach to learning at the Evelyn Scott School is based on the foundation principles of the future of education strategy, and that is around equity and inclusion. You will see that in everything that that school does with regard to teaching and learning, and in how its facilities are open and available for the Denman Prospect community as well.

That school is a zero emissions school, purpose-built for future-focused learning—something that the school principal is absolutely dedicated to do for those young people at that school. There will be 600 places available for students at that school, with a purpose-built gymnasium being available for use from May this year. The high school is under construction and it will open in the first week of term 1 in 2023. I know, just from that visit to the Evelyn Scott School last week, how proud those families in Denman Prospect are of their new school being brought to life by very talented teachers.

MS ORR: Minister, now that Evelyn Scott School has opened, what are the next school infrastructure projects to cater for our growing city?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Orr for the question. Last week the Chief Minister and I announced \$27.4 million in the budget to progress work to build new schools and expand existing schools in Gungahlin. The funding will go to design and preparation work for a new high school in Taylor and the expansion of Margaret Hendry School in Taylor as well. It will also go towards supporting road infrastructure for the new suburb of Kenny and enabling works for a new high school there.

Margaret Hendry School will be expanded to cater for up to 600 additional primary school students, ready for the 2023 year. The new high school in Kenny will be available for 800 students, in time for the 2023 school year. The new high school in Taylor will have capacity for 800 students and will be open in time for 2024. But before then, Canberra will also see expansions to Gold Creek senior school and Amaroo School, as well the new primary school in Throsby, which will be opening in the 2022 school year.

Health—nurse-led walk-in centres

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Health and it relates to the proposed west Belconnen walk-in centre. Minister, with the recent closure of the National Health Co-op in Charnwood, when will the residents of Charnwood and west Belconnen be able to access affordable and timely care at a walk-in centre in west Belconnen?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Clay for the question. The National Health Co-op is an important model of health care and we were all disappointed with the closure of the Charnwood clinic. That was bad news for many people and a very real example of the wide-ranging impacts of COVID-19 last year. I was pleased at the time that the National Health Co-op was able to relocate its clinicians to clinics in Macquarie and Higgins to provide continuity of care for its patients in Belconnen. Indeed, Belconnen and west Belconnen are some of the best-served parts of Canberra when it comes to accessible GP bulk-billing. There is another bulk-billing practice in Charnwood. From that point of view, the people of Belconnen are relatively well served, considering it is the ACT, when it comes to general practice bulk-billing and primary care.

In relation to our commitment to a new walk-in health centre in west Belconnen, it is important first to understand that this model of care will not be the same as the current walk-in centres. This will provide both immediate care and also ongoing care coordination and preventive health care for the people of the local region.

The budget that the Chief Minister will bring down shortly includes \$2 million for feasibility for the four new walk-in health centres in west Belconnen, north Gungahlin, south Tuggeranong and the inner south. That will start the conversation with the community about exactly what is needed, where it is needed and where it could go within the west Belconnen region. Through that work, we will determine the order in which those four new walk-in health centres will be delivered and what exactly they will deliver for local communities, delivering exceptional health care closer to home.

MS CLAY: Minister, when will the government announce the location for the new walk-in centre in west Belconnen, and will it include mental health and dental health?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Clay for the supplementary question. We will be doing this feasibility work, and part of that will be determining the order in which the four new walk-in health centres will be delivered. As I just said, there will be work with the community as well as with clinicians and others, as part of our territory-wide health services planning, to determine which services will go into those centres. Belconnen is already served with a walk-in centre in Belconnen town centre and a community health centre in Belconnen. The services in Belconnen have recently been expanded to include an opioid replacement therapy service in the north part of Canberra, which is a really significant expansion of that service, so that people do not need to travel to Canberra Hospital to access that service.

We continue to deliver improved services right across the city. Belconnen Community Health Centre includes mental health services. That will be part of the conversation with the community: exactly what will go into that new centre.

MR DAVIS: Minister, did the government consider assisting the National Health Co-op to retain its Charnwood location?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: We were informed of the National Health Co-op's decision to close its Charnwood clinic and we were advised that there was not anything that the ACT government could do. We have, of course, over time, invested considerable

amounts in boosting GP bulk-billing across the ACT. As I mentioned earlier, Belconnen, particularly west Belconnen, is one of the best-served parts of the ACT when it comes to bulk-billing, and Charnwood itself does have a family owned and operated practice that offers bulk-billing to all patients with a valid Medicare card.

As I said earlier, those patients who had attended the Charnwood National Health Co-op were able to continue to access services at other National Health Co-op clinics. Patients who have seen a GP from the National Health Co-op in the last 12 months are also able to have a telehealth appointment with the Health Co-op. And, as part of our response to COVID-19, the ACT government has worked with Carers ACT to undertake a project to identify and address barriers to accessing and taking up telehealth opportunities for individuals. We know that is not going to be accessible for everybody, but we will continue to work with the National Health Co-op as well in the delivery of the new walk-in health centre in Molonglo, which is going to be collocated with the National Health Co-op there, delivering outstanding ACT public health services, particularly in maternal and child and family health, alongside and integrated with general practice services.

Schools—hazardous materials

MR COE: I have a question for the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Last week it was revealed that lead contamination at eight times the acceptable level had been found at Richardson Primary School. Minister, at that school, prior to the remediation, how many children and staff were exposed to the paint?

MS BERRY: The lead dust that was found at Richardson Primary School was found in the HVAC system, not across the school classrooms, so there was no exposure to anybody that made it unsafe.

MR COE: Minister, what action have you taken to inform the parents of current and past students of the school about the finding of the paint?

MS BERRY: The lead paint at Richardson Primary School is lead paint that is post 1965, so there are very low levels of lead in the paint. The dust particles that come off that have very low levels of lead paint. The schoolteachers and the school principal were advised as soon as those lead particles were discovered, on Friday. The school community and parents were advised on Monday.

MR HANSON: Minister, what are the potential health risks to children if they are exposed to dust from lead paint?

MS BERRY: All of the advice that I get comes from the experts. With respect to the existence of lead paint particles to the thresholds that appear in our schools occasionally, I am advised by the experts that the risk is very low. One of those experts happens to be the Chief Health Officer, who has also expertly led us through an international health pandemic. The ACT government always takes the advice of the experts in circumstances like this, just as we have over the last 12 months with the Chief Health Officer. A Health official is on our panel of experts to advise the Education Directorate on managing lead paint in our schools, as well as ensuring that the communities in those schools can access information about lead paint when that is

required. The ACT government always depends on and works on the advice of the experts, and in this case it is no different.

Sport—facilities

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation and relates to the need for multi-sport facilities in my electorate of Brindabella. Noting ACT Labor's election commitment to build an ice rink in Tuggeranong, has the ACT government considered purchasing and developing the much-loved Fadden multi-sports facility, the Mpowerdome, which has just recently been placed on the market?

MS BERRY: The facility that Mr Davis refers to has been, I understand, on the market for quite some time now. I understand that there were some parties interested in the purchase of that site, but for whatever reason—financial or otherwise—it did not meet the needs of those particular organisations.

The ice sports facility is one facility in Tuggeranong that will be a much-loved facility, and work is happening in that space to get that facility going. But it will be more than an ice sports facility because it will also include a world-class climbing gym for the Tuggeranong community. We are making sure that our facilities are purpose-built but also available to not just one sport alone but many supports.

That is the focus of the ACT government, and that is what we are doing when we are building our school halls as well—making sure that they are accessible to a whole range of different sports. That includes the school gym at Denman Prospect, which will be a facility where sports like roller derby can be enjoyed. I know Emma Davidson is a keen roller derbier, if that is the term that you use, and she will be skating around that gymnasium once it is completed in May.

MR DAVIS: Minister, to ensure economy of scale and best return for ratepayers, can you list a number of other sports that you would consider including in a purpose-built multi-sports facility in Brindabella?

MS BERRY: That might be a question for me to ask Mr Davis, for his views on what a multi-sport facility might entail and which sports might be included in that. Of course, our gymnasiums at schools are available for many, many different sports—basketball, netball, table tennis, roller derby. There are a whole range of different sports that use our gymnasiums in schools as multi-sport facilities. I am sure people would have ideas about what sports facilities would be appropriate in any multi-sport facility.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, does the ACT government have a plan to develop a strategic plan for the funding and development of community sport in Tuggeranong?

MS BERRY: The ACT government has committed to supporting Canberrans to participate in sporting activities all across our community. In Tuggeranong in recent years the government has undergone a number of different works across a range of different sports, including upgrades to Lake Tuggeranong Rowing Club; upgrades to the pavilion at Gowrie district playing fields; upgrades to floodlighting and irrigation

at Calwell district playing fields; upgrade of the pavilion and floodlighting at Kambah district playing fields; and family-friendly upgrades to the pavilion at Wanniasa district playing fields as well as Gordon district playing fields.

Inclusive of that, the upgrade of the pavilion at Kambah DPF is currently in the design stage and is scheduled for completion in mid-2021. That work will likely include the upgrade of facilities to meet the ACT government's objectives for female-friendly facilities guidelines; the upgrade of facilities to ensure the sustainable use of resources such as water-wise devices and LED lights; pavilion refurbishments; the upgrade to accessible facilities; the upgrade of ageing services; the installation of bike racks; external bin enclosures for waste project management; as well as the installation of water refill stations.

Mr Hanson: A question, if I may, Madam Speaker, I notice that the Greens backbencher questions have been notified to the ministers. They have already got their notes ready to go, it would appear. Is there a standing order you might be able to advise me of, or take it on notice: if the Greens backbenchers have already emailed the questions to ministers, do they still constitute questions without notice or would they be questions on notice, if what the Greens are doing is giving a heads-up to the Labor ministers of what the questions are in anticipation of question time?

MADAM SPEAKER: You have asked your question, Mr Hanson; sit down. I've given you far too much time on that. The minister has concluded.

Mrs Jones: On the question from Mr Hanson, does the chair have an answer so that he will be got back to or is that question not to be taken seriously?

MADAM SPEAKER: As far as I am concerned, a backbencher is entitled to ask a minister a question. The minister will answer it. If anyone wants to provide a heads-up—for want of a better word—or not that is entirely a matter for anyone. But if there is no standing order, I am not going to interfere.

Mr Hanson: There you go. All very cosy, isn't it? All very cosy.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: Hold that government to account, guys. Well done.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson! The next time you will be warned.

MS BERRY: I was just going to note that it would have been no surprise that I would be asked questions from Yerrabi members of the Assembly on the Gungahlin pool, because I know there is significant interest in that. It is no surprise to me that Mr Davis would ask about Tuggeranong sports facilities. It's no surprise that Mr Hanson would ask me about education as well. We get all kinds of questions from everyone in this place.

Mr Hanson: Are you saying you didn't get a heads-up?

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please. Can everyone resume their seats and we

will move on with question time.

Mr Hanson: You didn't get a heads-up?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I said you would be warned. You are now warned. There is a new question. Ms Orr has the floor.

Budget—health funding

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister update the Assembly on the ACT government's additional funding to support our public health response to COVID-19?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for her ongoing interest, which I am sure we all have, in the response to COVID-19. To date, with the support of Canberrans and our fantastic health staff, the ACT government has managed an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we are acutely aware that the pandemic has no current end date, and the situation can change quickly, both in the ACT and across the country. That is why, through this year's budget, the government is providing \$39 million in additional funding to ensure that our public health team can continue to respond and protect Canberrans from the risk of COVID-19.

Through this budget the Health Emergency Control Centre, which was established on 29 January 2020, will receive additional resources to manage the ongoing public health emergency. Our clinical resources will also be supported to ensure that we have continued clinical capability at testing centres and hospitals across the ACT.

The budget also supports the ACT's efforts to play our part and bring more vulnerable Australians home, with dedicated resources and funding for our hotel quarantine program and the health services required to support up to six government-facilitated flights to June 2021.

We have seen information spread in the media in the last couple of weeks which has only highlighted how vital it is for our public health messaging and communications to be based on science and evidence to ensure that the public receive factual and accessible information. That is why we are also investing \$1.9 million to support the Public Information Coordination Centre to continue advising the community on critical public health information.

MS ORR: Can the minister update members on the COVID-19 vaccine rollout preparation and planning in the ACT?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am sure we are all interested in progress in relation to the vaccination program. It is indeed fast moving and on a very significant scale across the country and the ACT. Our priority is to deliver a safe, efficient and targeted vaccination program for all Canberrans. The commonwealth government is, of course, leading the vaccination program under the Australian COVID-19 vaccination policy, in partnership with all states and territories.

The ACT is well advanced in preparation to roll out vaccine delivery in time for

anticipated program commencement in late February 2021. The exact commencement date will, of course, be subject to vaccine availability and dependent on the commonwealth supply and distribution processes. However, ACT government preparation is, and has been for some time, well underway.

The government is supporting this mammoth task by providing around \$19 million, plus \$4½ million in capital funding, to ensure that we are well placed to begin rollout of the vaccination program later this month and to run the program through most of this year. The vaccination program will start slowly, with the highest priority population groups that have been identified by the commonwealth government, drawing on advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation.

To support the rollout, we will deliver a local communications campaign to ensure that the community and priority populations for each phase of program rollout are well informed. To inform our communications, we have recently asked Canberrans to respond to a Your Say panel survey and let us know what they would like to know about the vaccination program. Thank you to everyone who has responded to that survey, which will help us to communicate in a clear and targeted way.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how is the government supporting our health system to meet continued growth?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary question. The government is providing record investment in our health system, not just in our response to COVID-19 but in ensuring that we are prepared to meet the health needs of our growing population.

We know that the healthcare needs of our population in Canberra's north are changing. That is why this year's budget includes \$6½ million to enable Calvary Public Hospital Bruce to meet the needs of our growing and ageing population. As our north-side general hospital, Calvary complements and supports Canberra Hospital, the broader ACT health system and the community in the delivery of key hospital and health services. It represents around 40 per cent of emergency department presentations in the territory, 30 per cent of births and 25 per cent of acute admissions.

We are also investing more than \$16½ million to undertake critical building upgrades and refurbishments at the Canberra Hospital as part of our ongoing infrastructure investment. The Building 10 electrical upgrade project will support service delivery for critical pathology services and research activities undertaken in Building 10. These infrastructure projects are central to modernising our facilities for the ongoing delivery of excellent care, and will allow ACT Pathology to continue delivering their critical 24/7 service to support clinical operations at the Canberra Hospital, as well as supporting the ACT government's COVID-19 response. We cannot thank them enough for this essential work.

ACT Corrective Services—ministerial responsibility

MRS KIKKERT: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, on 2 December, when asked about any messes at the AMC left behind by Mr Rattenbury, you said, "I think Mr Rattenbury did a fantastic job as corrections

minister and I hope to follow that up.” Mr Rattenbury’s legacy includes overcrowding, inappropriate accommodation of women, rampant drug abuse, riots, staff shortages, out-of-date policies, distressed and overworked staff, and deaths at the AMC. With this in mind, does the minister still stand by his earlier statement that Mr Rattenbury did a fantastic job?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mrs Kikkert for her question. I refute a number of the allegations that she has made in her question today. Numbers reduced in the AMC in the time that Mr Rattenbury was minister. He introduced quite a number of programs and policies to assist the detainees within the AMC. I think he has a record to be proud of, and I hope to follow that through.

MRS KIKKERT: Should Canberrans, staff and inmates be concerned that you regard Mr Rattenbury’s work in this space as “fantastic” and something “to follow up”?

MR GENTLEMAN: As I said, I am going to continue the work that Mr Rattenbury started. We have announced most recently a number of reviews and inquiries, and support for AMC staff as well.

MRS JONES: Minister, what will you do differently to ensure that a better job is done than Mr Rattenbury did?

MR GENTLEMAN: As I said in my last answer, I have initiated a number of reviews already. I have indicated to staff, on several visits, that I want to support them into the future and will be looking at providing more training for staff, and more assistance to detainees into the future as well, as part of our process to ensure that we can reduce recidivism across the ACT.

ACT Corrective Services—review

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, Mr Rattenbury promised a full review of all correctional services policies and procedures, to be completed by mid-2019. In late 2020 the inspector’s review of the Court Transport Unit found that some policies were woefully out of date and even referenced facilities that closed in 2009. This remains the case. Has this review of all ACT correctional services policies and procedures, promised for mid-2019, been completed yet?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Castley for her question. The review of the CTU was tabled in the Assembly on 3 January 2020. The Court Transport Unit transports, manages and cares for hundreds of people in custody at the ACT law courts every year. The report made 12 findings and 22 recommendations, which the ACT government and ACT Corrective Services take very seriously. While work has begun on many of the issues highlighted in the report, it is of course essential and reassuring that independent oversight identifies and confirms issues that need to be addressed. There were some positive comments by the inspector about the professionalism of the CTU and staff as well. We welcome that report.

Mrs Jones: I raise a point of order, Madam Speaker. The question was not about the Court Transport Unit report but about the things that the report asked to be done,

which included the upgrade of policies and procedures, promised for mid-2019. The minister so far has not referred to the policies and procedures promised to be updated by 2019, and we would really like to know the answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: He is on the policy area, so it is in order. Minister, in the time you have left—

MR GENTLEMAN: There are a number of policies that we are implementing from the correctional inspector's report, which is the report that Ms Castley referred to.

MS CASTLEY: When can we expect the implementation of the report to be completed?

MR GENTLEMAN: The government response to the report is currently being prepared and is scheduled to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly in the February period.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, why did it take so long for the government to deliver on this promise?

MR GENTLEMAN: The corrections inspector gave his report on 3 December 2020. We will be tabling the response this month.

Planning—Chisholm

MR PARTON: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, I refer to a petition tabled by your colleague Joy Burch MLA in this place in August 2020 relating to the proposed development of a McDonald's in Chisholm village. Minister, given your colleague's strong stance against this proposed development, will you overrule the ACT planning and land authority's decision and stop this development from going ahead or, at the very least, not sign off on the sale of the toilet block?

MR GENTLEMAN: The decision was that of ACAT, not of the planning authority. It resulted in an approval of the development application, subject to a sale of public unleased land attached to the development proposal. I will not be commenting while there is a live proposal in for a sale of public attached land, unleased land.

MR PARTON: Minister, what correspondence or contact, if any, have you had with your colleague Joy Burch MLA about the proposed development?

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, I think the only contact and correspondence I brought to you was the outcome of the ACAT case.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what does it say about your leadership as a minister if your own colleagues cannot get you to listen to them on an issue they personally campaigned on during the recent election?

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, I think that was a question asking for an opinion. That is not within the standing orders.

Planning—territory records

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, can you explain how a series of territory records, which pictured historic architectural plans of Canberra amongst other things, were almost illegally sold off at auction recently?

MR GENTLEMAN: I understand that, in the movement of EPSDD from Dame Pattie Menzies House to the new complex at 420 Northbourne Avenue, a number of—if you like—accessories were put up for sale. Of course, once the directorate understood that this was an inadvertent error, it removed those from sale.

MS LAWDER: Minister, is this what your government calls ensuring the safekeeping and proper preservation of its records, as outlined in the Territory Records Act?

MR GENTLEMAN: As I mentioned in my answer, the products were removed from sale, so they have not been sold.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, how many mistakes will occur before your department starts adhering to the Territory Records Act?

MR GENTLEMAN: None of those accessories were sold. As I said, they identified the items for sale and brought them back into the directorate.

Planning—green space

MR CAIN: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. My question concerns Margaret Timpson Park in Belconnen town centre, a park that is not only popular with locals but also memorialises the important work of an influential leader of the women's movement in Canberra. An article published by *CityNews* on 8 December last year discussed community concerns that part of Margaret Timpson Park may be encroached upon by an adjacent development. Minister, will the government commit to protecting the green space at Margaret Timpson Park and other green spaces in Belconnen?

MR GENTLEMAN: Belconnen has been the subject of master planning that I have been involved with for quite some time. It is important that we protect green spaces in Belconnen, as well as identifying those areas that can be subject to development in the future. We do that with both the master planning process and precinct plans. There is a very strong theme in government and in EPSDD to ensure that we have enough green space across the territory, and we will continue with that action.

MR CAIN: Minister, what plans does the government have in place to maintain the amenity and accessibility of Margaret Timpson Park to ensure that it remains a key green space for the people of Belconnen?

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, it is not being built on. It is, as you have heard, the former health centre. We intend to keep it as a green space.

MRS KIKKERT: What plans does the government have to ensure that green spaces like this across Belconnen are enhanced rather than left to deteriorate, as is currently happening across Canberra?

MR GENTLEMAN: I guess the best way is to keep it as a park and ensure that it does continue as a green space. We have learnt from the people of Belconnen, as we have done the master planning process and precinct plans, what they would like to see for the future. I want to thank them for their comments. We will continue with the theme of ensuring that green space remains across the ACT.

Budget—Parks and Conservation Service

MR PETTERSSON: My question is also to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, what support is the government providing for the Parks and Conservation Service?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question and for his interest in parks and conservation. The government has committed to providing an additional \$2.4 million to incorporate additional knowledge into land management practices through the permanent employment of Ngunnawal rangers. Their work will involve tackling weeds; repairing tracks and trails; and working with the community to educate and promote conservation, nature and culture.

This is building on the success of the temporary Ngunnawal rangers employed as part of the government's COVID-19 response. These positions were part of the Jobs for Canberrans Fund, which provides work opportunities for Canberrans in the casual, semi-skilled workforce who lost their jobs or who were significantly impacted during COVID-19.

The investment builds on significant funding provided to the Parks and Conservation Service in recent budgets and is part of a wider \$4.4 million in funding to enhance the natural environment, including through weed and invasive plant management.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what work have the Ngunnawal rangers been involved in since they were brought on during the COVID-19 public health emergency?

MR GENTLEMAN: Six rangers that were brought on as part of the COVID-19 economic recovery program last year have been making a great contribution to the ACT Parks and Conservation Service. Their work has been essential to our recovery from the Orroral Valley bushfire in 2020, as well as working on projects that are helping our vital catchments.

Their work has also contributed to improving land management practices. We have made improvements in how land managers undertake early monitoring of invasive plants and animals and native species. This also allows us to understand how the landscape responds after a bushfire and will inform best practice management into the future.

I want to thank those who have so far been involved in the program, as well as PCS

staff, who have worked extremely hard this past year looking after our bush capital and surroundings and supporting bushfire recovery.

DR PATERSON: How does the budget fund the work of Parks and Conservation Service staff?

MR GENTLEMAN: The ACT government funding also funds additional invasive species management in our parks and reserves, targeting priority areas across the ACT. That includes a major effort to reduce and manage incursions in the weeds area, such as Coolatai grass and Paterson's curse. The budget includes \$626,000 to implement more invasive species management programs, following significant invasive plant growth and new land management challenges as part of the La Nina weather system. This funding will establish an invasive species rapid response ranger team to tackle new and emerging species and establish long-term control programs, in partnership with land managers and community groups. The budget also provides support for ParkCare groups and three ACT regional catchment management groups to deliver Frogwatch, Waterwatch and other programs to care for our bush capital.

I know that Canberrans love and value our bush capital and I am pleased that this budget reflects the importance of the Parks and Conservation Service to the ACT.

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

Appropriation Bill 2020-2021

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

Budget Paper 1: Speech
Budget Paper 2: Budget Outlook
Budget Statements A – I
Budget Statements A – ACT Executive | ACT Integrity Commissioner | Auditor-General | Electoral Commissioner | Office of the Legislative Assembly
Budget Statements B - Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate together with associated agencies
Budget Statements C – ACT Health Directorate | Canberra Health Services | ACT Local Hospital Network
Budget Statements D – Justice and Community Safety Directorate | Legal Aid Commission (ACT) | Public Trustee for the ACT
Budget Statements E – Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate | City Renewal Authority | Suburban Land Agency
Budget Statements F – Education Directorate
Budget Statements G – Community Services Directorate | Housing ACT
Budget Statements H – Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate | Transport Canberra Operations | The Cemeteries and Crematoria Authority
Budget Statements I – Major Projects Canberra

Statements of Intent:
Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority
Long Service Leave Authority

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-21 - Departures from Recommended Appropriations

Title read by Clerk.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (3.05): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Introduction

Today's budget continues the fiscal and economic response delivered by the government during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

It is a budget delivered under difficult circumstances, but one which has a simple purpose: to deliver what we promised the people of Canberra and to drive Canberra's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

This budget sets out how we will help grow the ACT's employment base with investments to support existing industries and grow new ones.

We will fund a strong infrastructure program with significant investments in health,

transport, education and training.

We will continue our response to the pandemic with funding for public health management and the vaccine rollout.

We will begin initial works to further expand our walk-in health centre network, used by thousands of Canberrans every month.

We are funding new schools and upgrading existing ones.

And, after meeting our 2020 renewable energy goals, including 100 per cent renewable electricity and reducing net emissions by 40 per cent, we are taking the next steps towards a zero net emissions future.

Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed the greatest economic and health challenge to the territory in our self-governing history. Within weeks of the start of the pandemic in Australia, over 10,000 jobs were lost in the territory.

The impact of this crisis has not been evenly distributed, with the effects being felt more intensely across hospitality, tourism and higher education—some of the ACT's biggest employment sectors.

The government was there to quickly bolster our health system and support the ACT economy with a series of economic survival measures throughout calendar year 2020—measures that protected thousands of local jobs.

We have acted on expert advice to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread; and, when it was safe to do so, we carefully reopened our economy. Our investment totals \$4.9 billion—providing relief to households and businesses, protecting jobs and supporting our public health system.

I state absolutely categorically that this spending and the hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue forgone was absolutely necessary.

The government is determined to invest now to avoid an even bigger loss of economic output and jobs in the future.

Government financing costs have never been lower, so now is the time to invest in the social and economic infrastructure that will prepare our city for the future.

Never has the role of government been clearer: to respond quickly, to invest, to support our most vulnerable, and to protect and shape our local economy through the recovery period.

Economic and fiscal projections for the ACT

Madam Speaker, the ACT has, throughout this, maintained the lowest unemployment rate and one of the highest rates of economic growth in the nation.

In August of last year we were the first Australian jurisdiction to provide our estimated fiscal position over the full forward estimates.

Today I can update these figures and confirm that the ACT's fiscal position has improved by nearly \$600 million over the coming four years, including a \$300 million improvement in this fiscal year.

We also forecast economic growth at an average of 2.7 per cent a year over the next four years, reflecting our jurisdiction's strong economic position.

Properly funding essential government services is only possible through a stable tax revenue stream, which is why in 2012 we started a nation-leading tax reform program.

A stable tax system reduces potential revenue shocks and the flow-on risk to services. Our tax reform program is now well advanced.

We have abolished insurance duty, cut stamp duty to zero for around 80 per cent of commercial property transactions, and raised the payroll tax threshold so that around 90 per cent of Canberra's businesses no longer pay payroll tax.

We will continue to cut stamp duty and support prospective owner-occupiers to buy an affordable home.

Low population growth, due to low estimates for migration flows into Australia over the next four years, will place constraints on national and local economic growth.

However, the latest data shows that the ACT's strong response to the pandemic, principally driven by our success in controlling the virus, and the delivery of significant fiscal support where needed, has resulted in a strong recovery in the territory's labour market, with employment growth even higher than expected.

Employment growth is now forecast to continue across the budget and forward estimates at an average of 1.7 per cent.

Beyond these economic metrics, it is measures such as social equality, community safety, emissions reductions and the ability to participate in community life that go to the overall quality of life for Canberrans.

That is why we are embedding the Wellbeing Framework in our policy design and decision-making as we move into the next budget, a little over six months away, for fiscal year 2021-22.

The framework will be the guiding platform by which new policies, new programs and initiatives, and future budget decisions, will be developed and assessed.

Keeping Canberrans healthy

Over the past year, the government's focus has been to keep Canberra safe from COVID-19 and to protect local jobs.

Everything is predicated on the strength of our health response—a response that has, to date, worked exceptionally well.

With vaccines becoming available, this budget will deliver the additional funding necessary to support a successful and effective rollout across the territory.

It will be a major logistical and operational exercise, in partnership with the commonwealth government.

In addition to the vaccine rollout, we must continue to have the capability to respond quickly if the need arises. Therefore, the government is increasing funding for the Chief Health Officer and her team, and for our COVID-19 testing facilities. This includes funding for continued staffing and operational costs for case investigation, contact tracing, medical and public health specialists, and quarantine processes.

The government will continue the construction of the Canberra Hospital expansion, which will increase our health capacity and deliver more services for Canberrans.

Upgrades are also set to continue at Canberra Hospital to support the territory's COVID-19 response, with work to keep pathology running 24 hours a day, seven days a week, during the public health emergency.

We will continue to build on the success of our nurse-led walk-in centres and work with local communities by commencing work on four new walk-in health centres and opening the centre in Coombs—as the Minister for Health discussed at length in question time today.

As the pandemic unfolded there was also an increase in Canberrans, particularly young Canberrans, seeking mental health support. This budget will increase spending on mental health services, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and the Adolescent Mobile Outreach Service.

Climate action—ACT will keep leading the nation

The government has a proud track record of implementing science-based action to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Over the next four years Canberra will continue to be the renewable energy capital of the nation.

In the first half of this year we will support more Canberra home owners to access the benefits of cheaper and sustainable energy through our \$150 million Sustainable Household Scheme.

Offering zero interest loans for rooftop solar panels, household battery storage, zero emissions vehicles and energy efficient electric appliances, it will mean more households can make the right investments in their home. Canberrans can immediately start saving hundreds of dollars each year from lower energy bills, without having to meet the up-front costs of the installation of the new technology.

This fund will be one of the most significant investments in clean energy ever in the ACT, reducing the cost of living and creating hundreds and hundreds of jobs for Canberrans into the future.

To make sure that all Canberrans benefit from our sustainable infrastructure program, we will establish a \$50 million five-year program to improve building efficiency and sustainability for social and public housing for lower income owner occupiers and the lowest performing rental properties in our city.

This budget also sets aside \$100 million over the next five years to deliver the Big Canberra Battery. Canberrans will generate a significant amount of renewable energy through the Sustainable Household Scheme and existing renewable generators. The battery will allow us to store that energy and provide it back into the grid.

The global battery storage market is predicted to be worth \$400 billion by 2030, and the ACT is an ideal launching pad for those wanting to invest in this rapidly emerging industry.

We will partner with the community and the private sector to deliver the Big Canberra Battery, which, when operational, will be one of the biggest renewable battery storage systems in Australia.

This investment will generate new revenue opportunities for the territory and improve the resilience of our distribution network.

These investments, along with our participation in research and pilot projects, will cement the ACT's status as a nation-leading hub for renewables innovation.

Building Australia's best schools

Our city's strength lies in the lifelong education of its residents, from our youngest Canberrans through to the teaching and research conducted by our world-leading higher education institutions.

Canberra is the nation's Knowledge Capital, and the government recognises that one of the best investments we can make, for both our economy and our community, is in early childhood education and care.

That is why we are increasing the number of weeks offered to priority families accessing early childhood learning for three-year-olds, from 40 to 48 weeks per year. I commend the work of the Deputy Chief Minister in leading this initiative.

We are catering to population growth in our new regions by commencing works in preparation for a new high school in Taylor, to deliver an 800-place school by 2024. We will expand the Margaret Hendry School and deliver a new high school in east Gungahlin to open for the 2023 school year.

The government will fund 50 full-time Master of Education (Teacher Librarian) scholarships over the next five years.

One of the major achievements in the last term of government was the very successful rollout of Chromebooks, ensuring that every high school and college student had equality of digital access.

We will continue this important rollout as students enter high school and college every year.

We will begin rolling out the Digital Education Equity program to provide free internet to households that need it, to ensure that students continue to have access to the resources they need.

Transport investment for our city's future

The government is focused on building the major infrastructure that our growing city needs.

Light rail stage 1 was successfully delivered, and we will build on that success.

This budget funds the design work and planning approvals for the raising of London Circuit and the next step in the extension of light rail.

Federal environmental approval for the next stage of our city-wide light rail network is welcomed, and a recognition of the importance of this project to the future shape of the nation's capital.

Alongside this city-defining project, the government is working closely with the commonwealth to deliver a range of infrastructure improvements, including major road and cycleway improvements. This includes the construction of the John Gorton Drive extension, including a major bridge across the Molonglo River, continued work on upgrades of the Monaro Highway, and identifying future improvements to Canberra's south-western transport corridor.

Supporting our vulnerable Canberrans

Our city, and the government, should be judged on how we treat our most vulnerable citizens.

This budget sets out a plan to expand social housing and improve housing affordability over the next four years.

We will strengthen our homelessness and housing services, including expanding the Early Morning Centre to a seven-day-a-week service, increasing emergency accommodation, and improving specialist homelessness service capacity.

We will establish, in close partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled housing organisation.

We will keep working to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families

have access to quality services and support that meet their cultural needs, by funding early works for the new accommodation for the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation.

Conclusion

Madam Speaker, this is a defining moment in the territory's history.

Our actions now will determine the speed and confidence of our city's social and economic recovery from this global pandemic.

Our plan for the territory, so strongly endorsed by voters last October, is set for immediate delivery: protecting Canberrans' health, rolling out the COVID-19 vaccines, taking action on climate change, protecting jobs, and supporting new industries.

In this budget, the first of five budgets in this parliamentary term, the government delivers what we said we would do. The budgets that follow in this parliamentary term will continue this approach.

As I noted, it is a simple purpose at a difficult time, but one that will ensure that Canberrans can have confidence that this city will emerge from the pandemic stronger than before.

I commend the appropriation bills to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Lee**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021

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

[Take in text from minutes]

Title read by Clerk.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (3.23): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I present the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021 to the Assembly. The bill is straightforward. It contains appropriations of \$21.983 million to the Office of the Legislative Assembly, \$3.546 million to the Auditor-General, \$5.227 million to the ACT Integrity Commissioner, and \$13.664 million to the Electoral Commissioner.

The amount in the bill appropriated to the Office of the Legislative Assembly is a departure, Madam Speaker, from the amount that you requested. I provide the following statement of reasons regarding this departure, as is required under section 20AA of the Financial Management Act 1996. Budgeting in action, colleagues!

The Speaker recommended recurrent funding to permanently fill the position of an assistant technical officer that was established in 2019-20 on a temporary basis. As there has not been a reduction in funding from 2019-20 to 2020-21, the government considers it is appropriate for the Office of the Legislative Assembly to maintain the assistant technical officer position from within existing resources. Harsh but fair.

I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Lee**) adjourned to the next sitting.