



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

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Wednesday, 10 February 2021

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Questions without notice
ACT public service—integrity

MS LEE: My question is to the Chief Minister. I refer to the ACT Integrity Commission's 2019-20 annual report, which identified "conflicts of interest", "records management" and "undeclared relationships and associations" as potential corruption trends within the ACT public service. The report found that public servants involved in major procurement decisions were "rarely required" to declare that they did not have a conflict of interest, and that conflicts of interest were "poorly understood and regularly mismanaged". Chief Minister, to combat these potential corruption trends, will you order your directorate and agencies to make conflict of interest declarations a mandatory component of any key decision-making process?

MR BARR: I have no problem with that in principle. There is already a process within the ACT public service, and obviously part of the role of the Integrity Commission that we all supported was an educative process. I am pleased that the commission has drawn this matter to the attention of the Assembly and I have no problem with the direction of action that it outlined. I believe it is already largely in place, but if we need to do more, I am happy to do so.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, what action will you take to ensure that conflicts of interest are no longer "poorly understood and regularly mismanaged"?

MR BARR: We put in place the Integrity Commission, voted for it, provided resources for it and continue a process of it supporting agencies to undertake their tasks on behalf of the people of Canberra with the utmost integrity. Every member of this place is obliged by personal leadership to focus on integrity. We have members of this place who are on the committee that provides oversight. We have standards. We have a very extensive process. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for raising it. We are very happy to do what more we can to stamp out any corruption in the ACT public sector.

MRS JONES: Chief Minister, what exactly was missing that created the situation in which conflicts of interest under your watch have been "poorly understood and regularly mismanaged"?

MR BARR: I do not believe that is necessarily the case, but, as I indicated in my response to the previous questions, I have no problem with taking on board the advice of the Integrity Commission. That is why they were established and why one of their fundamental roles was around education. It was not just about phone taps and all that sort of stuff; it was about education and improving processes throughout the ACT public sector. I draw this to the attention of the Assembly. I am very happy to pursue it.

ACT public service—integrity

MRS JONES: My question is to the Chief Minister. I refer to the ACT Integrity Commission's 2019-20 annual report, which states that the commission has identified current and emerging corruption vulnerabilities and how that might manifest in

corrupt conduct. Chief Minister, what action will you take to address both these current and emerging corruption vulnerabilities?

MR BARR: The actions that have already been undertaken within the public sector, within this place, including many areas of reform.

Mrs Jones: What?

MR BARR: Well, we have a Commissioner for Standards, as we found out this week. I take these matters seriously, and we will act on the areas that the Integrity Commission has highlighted. But also, importantly, as I mentioned in response to the previous questions, a key part of its role—and what I hope to be the number one part of its role—is education and engagement with public sector agencies to prevent corruption in the first place.

MRS JONES: Why are there current and emerging corruption vulnerabilities? What exactly has been done since this report to change that circumstance?

MR BARR: Presumably there will always be emerging corruption possibilities. It is a constantly evolving area. World history would demonstrate that, going back to the formation of any communities with some form of governance structure. We will continue to work closely with the Integrity Commission and respond to issues as they emerge. Technology clearly plays a part here in preventing corruption and also, potentially, in allowing that to occur. We will need to pay close attention to that.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, why have you and your predecessors failed to adequately address current and emerging corruption vulnerabilities within your government? Is your admission that it may always exist an admission that you are not capable of getting it stamped out?

MR BARR: No and no. What an absurd question.

Drugs—pill testing

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Minister for Health and relates to the proposed fixed site pill testing pilot. Noting the government's commitment in the last Assembly to open a static pill testing site, Minister, can you give an update to the Assembly on where this important initiative is up to?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Davis for his question. We did, indeed, in response to a motion in the Assembly, make a commitment that we would explore the establishment of a trial static pill testing site in the city. We continue to support an evidence-based harm minimisation approach to drug policy. Pill testing has been shown to be an effective tool in reducing the possible harms associated with drug taking.

The government has been exploring establishing a pill testing facility pilot in the city entertainment area during this summer and re-established the pill testing working group in order to do so. Following the initial work by the pill testing working group, which got to work pretty quickly after the Assembly resolution, it was clear that there

were a range of logistical and legal issues that had to be worked through prior to the establishment of any pilot.

The government continues to work towards the introduction of a pilot fixed site pill testing service in 2021, building on the Australia-first success of the pill testing sites at trials at the Groovin the Moo festivals in 2018 and 2019. The ACT Health Directorate is working with relevant stakeholders, including ACT Policing and the ACT Government Analytical Laboratory to work through those logistical and legal issues prior to the commencement of any service.

I would note that ACT Policing has consistently shown a commitment to harm minimisation initiatives and has always actively engaged with the government and other stakeholders on pill testing measures. While there are a number of legal considerations to work through, ACT Policing is actively participating in these discussions about a potential pill testing facility in the city. The government is also working with Pill Testing Australia, who obviously are experts in this field and strong advocates. They are working to provide technical and logistical advice regarding the establishment of the pilot as soon as possible.

MR DAVIS: Minister, specifically what date, at the latest, can Canberrans expect the pilot project to commence?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Davis for the supplementary, but of course I am not able to provide a specific date because we do need to work through some of those logistical and legal issues—which, I would say, were flagged at the time that the Assembly passed its resolution. The commitment on the government’s part was to work to see if we could establish a trial of a fixed site pill testing facility over summer. That has not been possible, but the work is ongoing across government, with the collaboration of ACT Policing and with the collaboration of and close working relationship with Pill Testing Australia. We will continue that work to seek to get this facility up and running in 2021, but I cannot give Mr Davis a specific date in relation to that at this point in time.

All members in this place are very welcome to seek further briefing from officials in relation to any matter. Should Mr Davis want to get a briefing from officials about the detail of the work that is happening through the pill testing working group, I would welcome an approach from him to my office for that briefing.

MS CLAY: Minister, which organisations are you working with to ensure that this important pilot is underway as soon as possible?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Clay for the question and refer her to my previous answers.

Schools—modular learning centres

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, the budget for the Education Directorate for 2020-21 has approximately \$17 million in infrastructure spending for modular learning centres. Minister, can you explain exactly what a modular learning centre is and how many modular learning

centres this \$17 million represents?

MS BERRY: For Mr Hanson's information, and to advise the Assembly, modular learning centres are transportable classrooms that have about a 15 to 20-year life. They are highly modern, sustainable and environmentally friendly classrooms. They are double-glazed and have heating and cooling. They provide additional support to schools for classes to be conducted in when school capacities increase. Transportable classrooms are an efficient way to provide extra space to schools as demographics in various areas change. Because they are transportable, they can be used on more than one site. Once a site's situation changes, they can be used at other schools. There are approximately 17 transportable classrooms.

MR HANSON: Minister, how many students across the ACT are already being taught in modular learning centres?

MS BERRY: I will have to get some advice on that and bring that back.

MR CAIN: Minister, will the modular learning centres be temporary or permanent?

MS BERRY: They are generally temporary, as I have just described. But these are not a new thing. Modular or transportable classrooms have been used across the ACT and across the country for longer than this government has been here in the ACT. I recall older primary schools, when I was a child, where transportable classrooms were used when demographics changed and schools needed to expand for a while. Those transportable classrooms could then be used elsewhere. Occasionally, they do need to be more permanent. They are built to be transportable, but, because of the high-quality build of these classrooms, they can be semi-permanent classrooms in schools as well.

Public housing—disruptive behaviour

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services. Minister, Monday's *Canberra Times* reported the ongoing an terrible living situation at the Condamine Court public housing complex in Turner. Residents have reported that the complex has become littered with blood, used syringes, squatters and threatening graffiti over the past year. Residents have also documented almost daily instances of verbal abuse and physical violence. Minister, will you direct Housing ACT resources to immediately address the situation at Condamine Court for the safety of all its tenants?

MS VASSAROTTI: Thank you, Mr Parton, for the question. Managing antisocial and illegal activity across the ACT is a process that occurs across the community. It is not only a public housing issue, but we are aware of some challenges in some public housing complexes. I am aware of an alleged assault that happened on the grounds of a Housing ACT complex recently.

Unfortunately, I am unable to make comments on the individual circumstances. What I can say is that incidents such as this fall within the jurisdiction of ACT Policing, and in cases where there is an issue of safety to a public housing tenant and they are at risk, Housing ACT will take appropriate action.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, a point of order on relevance, my understanding of Mr Parton's question is that he was asking specifically whether additional resources would be allocated to Condamine Court. I ask the minister to be directly relevant to that issue.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The question also included conditions in housing services, and the minister is on the policy area. You have time left, Ms Vassarotti.

MS VASSAROTTI: I was just getting to the question in relation to specific work that is happening by Housing ACT. There is a program called the Connecting Communities strategy, which was a pilot project through 2019 and 2020 and is now operating across complexes in the ACT, including the complex that was identified by Mr Parton.

This strategy aims to reduce theft and antisocial behaviour and complaints, creating a sense of community across tenant engagement and participation and ensuring that tenants and local community members have access to support and development in their neighbourhood. We can also confirm that the tenancy manager is regularly on site. *(Time expired)*.

MR PARTON: Minister, even given your short time in the role, how has the government allowed the situation at Condamine Court to deteriorate so badly, especially given the Greens' rhetoric on providing quality—quality—public housing?

MS VASSAROTTI: As I was noting, in terms of the Connecting Communities strategy, it has been operating since 2019 and as an ongoing program since 2020. COVID-19 created some challenges, particularly around being on site, so there were some elements of the project that were reduced, but they are now operating.

Housing ACT is also working really closely on monitoring maintenance around the complex, particularly with program facilities management. We encourage tenants to contact the facilities management for any maintenance issues. If there are issues of safety, it is appropriate that they contact ACT Policing.

MS LEE: Minister, is it still your position that residents are to contact ACT Policing, given that they have indicated a fear of doing so?

MS VASSAROTTI: As a matter of course, absolutely. In terms of ongoing issues tenants should be working with their ACT tenancy manager. In relation to sites that are having significant issues, there is regular engagement on site by those tenancy managers as well.

Budget—climate action

MS ORR: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you outline what the 2020-21 budget investment in climate action programs and policies will mean for Canberra households?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Orr for the question. It is about a \$307 million commitment, with a desire to make a significant difference in terms of emissions reduction and cost of living benefits for households, and to support thousands of jobs in the territory economy. There is \$150 million towards the Sustainable Household Scheme fund to offer zero interest loans for a range of new technologies to assist households in reducing their cost of living and their emissions. The Big Canberra Battery will also allow households to feed in excess generated energy for the community's benefit. It can, of course, serve a number of purposes, including improving grid stability and earning money for the territory.

We are looking to waive registration fees for newly purchased zero emission vehicles for the first two years of registration. That begins in May this year. There is also a \$50 million vulnerable household energy support initiative to improve building efficiency and sustainability for social and public housing, low income owner-occupiers and poorly performing rental properties to reduce energy bills and to make those houses more pleasant and livable for tenants.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, how will these policies help the ACT to reach a zero emissions future?

MR BARR: They are important next steps in the ACT's endeavours to phase out fossil fuel use and achieve zero net emissions by 2045 at the latest. We have also been successful in reaching our 2020 renewable electricity goals of 100 per cent renewable electricity, and we have reduced net emissions by 40 per cent. The purpose here is to target the big emitting sectors, transport and gas use, whilst helping households with the transition.

We also know that the revolution in motoring is coming, and coming quicker than many people would think. Zero emission vehicles will be the only vehicles produced in many of the world's major vehicle manufacturing plants by 2030. We are endeavouring to install 50 additional publicly accessible charging stations across Canberra over the coming years. With the availability of no-interest loans, the registration fee waivers and the installation of charging points, we believe that the ACT will well and truly surpass the commonwealth's woefully low target of having 26 per cent zero emission vehicles as part of total vehicle sales by 2030. The commonwealth's target of 26 per cent of all new vehicle sales by 2030 is incredibly low by global standards. Again, I think it will fall to the states and territories—across the political divide, fortunately, amongst the states and territories—to drive the zero emission vehicle revolution.

MR PETTERSSON: Chief Minister, how will these policies support the creation of jobs for the future here in the territory?

MR BARR: The range of policies that we took to the election that have been funded in the budget are expected to create around 2,000 additional jobs in the territory. That will contribute to the ACT government's objective of growing the territory's employment base to over 250,000 by 2025. By investing in a number of these industries, and by supporting these industries via that investment, we will see significant opportunity to do three things: create jobs; reduce emissions; and reduce household cost of living. They are three very worthy goals for our city—goals that the

government is determined to deliver.

Environment—electric vehicle charging stations

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Climate Action and it relates to EV charging. Chief Minister, I just bought an EV, but I cannot charge it in the government-provided car park in the new government office building because there are not any sockets. Have you got plans to install EV charging in more spaces in the new government office building, and will you ensure that, going forward, all government major projects appropriately accommodate EVs?

MR BARR: I understand that there are some power points in that level 1 basement. They would be standard household ones, not the fast charging EV ones. But we will certainly have a look at it. I would say that the biggest priority in terms of the 50 charging points is that they would be publicly accessible for everyone, not just behind the gate for MLAs. So in looking at where an EV charging point or points could be made in that public car park we would probably look outside the MLA compound, frankly. But we will have a look. I am happy to see what can be done there. In relation to your vehicle, Ms Clay, it might be that the shuffling of the car parking spots might see you near a charging point. I do believe that there are some power points down there.

MS CLAY: Will residents be able to access the \$150 million Sustainable Household Scheme to install electric vehicle charging at their residences in standalone homes and in apartment buildings? What we are finding with EVs is that it is great to have public charging, but most people just want to charge it where they park their car, which is going to be at their home or at their work.

MR BARR: That is a pretty sensible suggestion. I am happy to look at that.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, what is your government doing to ensure that all apartment buildings that are built, going forward, will be EV ready, with capability for separately metered electric vehicle charging for residents?

MR BARR: It is a good point. It certainly needs some further work. Part of that is regulatory, on the planning side, and another part, frankly, is the practical reality of the grid and capacity within certain parts of the city. That is something we are going to have to look at in the location of the public charging facilities in terms of what is available, what extra infrastructure may need to be installed. I think it is also relevant in the context of the distributed Big Canberra Battery as to where we may be able to augment the electricity network to align with EV charging opportunities, both private and public.

Land—sales

MR COE: I have a question for the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. What plans does the ACT government have to ensure that there are adequate land supplies to keep pace with demand, particularly in 2022 and 2023?

MS BERRY: The ACT government provides an indicative land release program,

through the minister for planning, to ensure that there is adequate land supply. Adequate land supply has been provided in the ACT for many years now. Last year, during COVID, whilst there was a slight pause, understandably, in housing purchases and housing construction, the land supply program provided opportunities for people to purchase land and have land available across the shelf, which has not been the case for a very long time in the ACT. That is the case now, and that land supply pipeline will continue.

We still have land available in Taylor. There is land to be released again in Whitlam in the middle of this year. Denman Prospect will soon be releasing more land in its project, as a private developer. Kenny will be coming online. Ginninderry also has land available for purchase for public housing, for community housing and for affordable housing.

MR COE: Minister, for this financial year, what portion of SLA land sales have attracted support from the commonwealth government through the HomeBuilder scheme—particularly SLA land, not Ginninderry?

MS BERRY: That is a good question and it is something that I have been asking the SLA to keep me updated on—people who have purchased land, and whether they have purchased land as a result of the ACT government's actions around stamp duty or whether that has been as a result of the federal government's HomeBuilder package.

I do not have the detailed breakdown of that at the moment. As you would understand, people are purchasing and buying blocks and homes every day, so that figure changes. What I can commit to is the number as of today and provide that information to the Assembly. I will break that down to include the number of people who decided to purchase land as a result of the ACT government's changes to stamp duty.

MR PARTON: Minister, can you add to that, for this financial year, what portion of SLA land sales have attracted stamp duty concessions from the ACT government, for this financial year?

MS BERRY: So you want me to wait till July?

MR PARTON: It is the same question as Alistair's but just referring to stamp duty concessions from the ACT government, rather than the commonwealth government through the HomeBuilder scheme. It is the same question for this financial year. What portion of SLA land sales have attracted stamp duty concessions from the ACT government to date?

MS BERRY: Yes, I can do that. Thank you for clarifying.

Health—walk-in centres

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, could you please advise the Assembly what funding is included in the budget for new walk-in health centres?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question and for his interest in future new walk-in health centres across Canberra. Our walk-in health centres continue to build on our commitment to providing health care to Canberrans closer to home, when and where they need it. Walk-in health centres will introduce appointment-based services in the community, alongside access to immediate care. It is really about expanding and coordinating our existing network of five walk-in centres, our network of community health centres and these new centres into an integrated community care set of facilities that will also integrate with primary care.

The 2020-21 budget provides \$2 million to undertake feasibility for four new walk-in health centres over 2020-21 and 2021-22. This feasibility work will assess which appointment-based services would be best suited to each walk-in health centre across south Tuggeranong, north Gungahlin, west Belconnen and the inner south. These services will be focused on providing preventive care and advice, early intervention and the management of chronic illnesses. The new walk-in health centres will also explore better models of integration with primary health and community-based non-government organisations—something that I know our non-government organisations and primary health sector partners have welcomed and are keen to be involved with.

We are also providing just over \$750,000 to open the first new walk-in health centre in Coombs, to open in July 2021. This centre will pilot an alternative model of care, integrating services with general practice, with a focus on maternal child and family health care—services that we believe will be in demand in the growing area of Molonglo Valley. This will be a theme of all walk-in health centres—providing the services that the community needs, informed by data and working with the community.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, could you please update the Assembly on the introduction of an imaging service to the Weston Creek Walk-in Centre?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary. I am very excited by this announcement of the introduction of an imaging service at Weston Creek Walk-in Centre. As we begin to introduce walk-in health centres to the community, we are also continuing to assess and develop the existing walk-in centres model of care, looking at how we can continue to build on the capability of the current network of five walk-in centres.

In order to expand the scope of walk-in centres, Canberra Health Services has been analysing relevant data, including service activity data, population-based needs and workforce modelling, to support the safe and sustainable expansion of service scope. Based on this work, the 2020-21 budget provides \$10.9 million, which includes \$5.7 million for capital, for a new medical imaging outpatient service at Weston Creek Walk-in Centre. The expanded service will provide community access to commonly required diagnostic medical imaging services, including ultrasound, X-ray and computer tomography, commonly known as CT.

The proposed model of care will provide a service to outpatients in an accessible location separate from Canberra Hospital or Calvary hospital, and will also take referrals from other walk-in centres across Canberra. The project will get underway

shortly, with phased operations expected to commence in 2022. The new imaging service will help to reduce community wait times for outpatient medical imaging, while also enabling more efficient scan times for emergency and inpatients at Canberra Hospital. This will see our community able to access more healthcare services closer to home and, importantly, away from our busy hospital campuses.

DR PATERSON: Minister, how will the walk-in centres improve health outcomes for Canberrans?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. I am always pleased, as I am sure members, at least on this side, are always pleased, to hear people's positive experiences of visiting our existing walk-in centres and our existing community health centres that already provide excellent care to people when and where they need it. The walk-in health centres will further expand our capacity to provide care closer to home in a positive environment, supported by friendly and professional staff.

The role of existing walk-in centres in the community and the new walk-in health centres is one of the key focus areas of the territory-wide health services plan, which will establish a framework for community-based health services in the ACT. Current walk-in centres and health centres will continue to support a shift from hospital-based care to community-based care, providing care closer to home, according to population growth and the health needs of our community.

As highlighted by the Coombs walk-in health centre, which will provide, as I said earlier, maternal, child and family health care, each health centre's services will be guided by which services are most appropriate to each region. That will be determined in consultation with the community. They may provide preventive services, such as healthy eating or oral health. They may focus on providing early intervention and/or integrative care for managing chronic conditions such as arthritis, heart disease or respiratory conditions, alongside and integrated with and supported by our primary care and non-government organisation partners.

I look forward to working with residents of the inner south, south Tuggeranong, west Belconnen and north Gungahlin as we develop each of the distinct models of care for their walk-in health centres.

Municipal services—abandoned vehicles

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. In a media release about abandoned vehicles, from June 2019, you said that “the new provisions will allow for clearly abandoned vehicles to be removed more quickly and more efficiently”. Abandoned vehicles are of great interest and concern to residents when they are abandoned near them. Minister, can you explain why, instead of meeting your 100 per cent target of removing abandoned vehicles on unleased land within nine calendar days, your government achieved a mere 61 per cent, according to the annual report?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Lawder for her question. Yes, she is right: the issue of abandoned vehicles in our community is of concern. It is one of the reasons why we

brought forward the amendments to the Litter Act to see the removal of these vehicles as soon as possible. Of course, there are a range of circumstances that involve abandoned vehicles. Some of those involve the police. I am happy to come back, on notice, with some of the reasons why we have not been able to achieve the target, as Ms Lawder has outlined. One thing I do know is that if there is a police investigation, that vehicle may be used in evidence in relation to that investigation and that may result in a vehicle not being removed until police have been able to deal with the vehicle. If there is a specific circumstance that Ms Lawder is referring to, I am also happy to look into that as well.

MS LAWDER: Minister, is the result of 61 per cent for the removal of abandoned vehicles on unleased land within nine calendar days what you describe as “more quickly and more efficiently”?

MR STEEL: These laws enable us to go about removing those vehicles without necessarily having contacted the owner, ensuring that those vehicles are removed. Subsequently the owner could pick up the vehicle, potentially at a charge, once it is impounded. Those laws have only been in place for a short time. There will be a period of bedding down whilst both Transport Canberra and City Services and other relevant agencies work with that legislation to try and improve the rates of removal within the target period.

MR CAIN: Minister, when will the government reach its target of 100 per cent?

MR STEEL: As soon as we can, working with the agencies that we are required to work with, as well as the legislation, and potentially the investigations that are being undertaken with ACT Policing.

Gungahlin—multipurpose centre

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the minister responsible for the community multipurpose centre in Gungahlin. Chief Minister, will community groups and non-government organisations and service providers—for example, the Police Community Youth Club—have the opportunity to be part of this project?

MR BARR: Yes. We intend to consult widely on the needs for the facility.

MR BRADDOCK: When and how will the local community groups and service organisations be able to provide input into this project’s requirements?

MR BARR: I will take the detail on notice in terms of times and dates and various engagement formats, but I would hope that would include a mixture of online and face-to-face engagement and that that can start sooner rather than later.

MR DAVIS: Chief Minister, when, at the latest, can the people of Gungahlin expect the facility to open?

MR BARR: That is a difficult one to answer. It depends, of course, on the results of the consultation and the scoping and design of the facility. I would hope it would be in this parliamentary term, but that requires the successful completion of the engagement

process around the detailed design of the centre; an approved development application, there being no environmental or other issues in relation to the site; the procurement of the project going well and there being a great deal of interest in building it; and then the construction meeting all of its scheduled time frames.

Each of those processes, obviously, will be worked through. All going well—subject to the usual caveats of pandemics, earthquakes, floods, supply line challenges, workforces getting sick and any number of things that can and do happen from time to time—the desire would be to get this project underway this term and get it finished as soon as possible.

Legislative Assembly—women’s caucus

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Women. On 3 December 2020 you formed a women’s caucus across party lines with Labor and Greens women MLAs to provide an opportunity for women with diverse backgrounds and expertise to come together.

Mr Parton: What a great idea.

MRS KIKKERT: Yes. In the media release about the formation of this caucus you welcomed the opportunity to meet with Liberal women MLAs, though they were not invited to join the caucus.

Mr Parton: What?

MRS KIKKERT: Yes. Presumably many women in the ACT voted for Liberal women MLAs because they share more closely their values, beliefs and philosophies. Would, then, the women’s caucus not be more effective and representative with the inclusion of Liberal women MLAs?

MS BERRY: If I can assist Mrs Kikkert to understand, the women’s caucus is a government policy caucus which contains Labor and Greens—

Members interjecting—

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, it might not be interesting for some of the men in this room, but it actually is interesting for women, and I want to provide this advice.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ignore the interjections where you can, Minister.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

MS BERRY: So now we are clear; that is good. Regarding the second part to the question, about women members of the Liberal Party, of course they can engage with me at any time, and I am always open to conversations with the Canberra Liberals about ideas on how we can support women and girls to be anything they want to be, without any barriers in their place.

I congratulate Madam Speaker for forming a parliamentary women's group, which is the very place for members of the Assembly across all political parties to engage in conversations on women and improving the lives of women and girls in our city. The caucus is a government members' caucus for discussing government policy.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, do you, then, recognise the Greens as part of the government and not the crossbench? If not, why were the Liberal women MLAs not invited?

Mr Braddock: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, what is the relevance of that question to the original question about a women's caucus?

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! There is no point of order; it is within the scope of the original question. Ms Berry, you have the floor.

MS BERRY: I was just trying to remember what the question was about, but I think I have got it. Yes, members of the Greens political party signed and are part of the parliamentary and governing agreement, and three members of the Greens party sit in cabinet. So, yes, they are part of the government.

MS LAWDER: Is the women's caucus already failing in its goal of advancing full participation of women and girls in all aspects of our society by excluding Liberal women MLAs?

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Mr Hanson and Mr Barr, you can take your humour outside, please.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members on both sides, we have had our fun. Ms Lawder, you have asked your question. Ms Berry will answer, please.

MS BERRY: I refer the member to my first answer.

Courts—backlogs

MR CAIN: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Attorney-General. Minister, the Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services 2021* identified a backlog of criminal cases in the ACT Supreme Court of 34.9 per cent over the 12-month time frame to 30 June last year, the second highest in Australia. Minister, please explain why Canberra's court clearance rates were so poor.

MR RATTENBURY: There are a number of factors and these are included in discussions I have been having, as the incoming Attorney-General, with both the Chief Justice and the Chief Magistrate to make sure that we are having cases heard in

our courts as efficiently as possible. Of course, we have gone through 2020, which, as in most jurisdictions, had some delaying impact, although I think our courts did extremely well in continuing to work during that period. But there are pressures there. I will continue to work with the judiciary to ensure that they are running our cases as efficiently as possible.

MR CAIN: Minister, COVID had an effect on only four out of the 12 months of the reporting period. Please explain why court clearance rates were so poor over the first eight months of the financial year.

MR RATTENBURY: Clearly, the courts were very busy; that is why they had a lot of—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, your colleague is on her feet.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, you are warned!

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what measures is the government taking to improve the court clearance rates for Canberrans?

MR RATTENBURY: As indicated in my first answer, I am having a discussion with the judiciary about these matters. The government has recently—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

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

Mrs Jones: That was yesterday, wasn't it?

MADAM SPEAKER: No. No-one heard because he was too busy gibbering when Ms Castley was on her feet, trying to ask the question.

Mr Hanson: I did not hear it; I apologise.

Mr Parton: Does the siren count if no-one heard it?

MADAM SPEAKER: You are warned now.

MR RATTENBURY: Sorry, Madam Speaker; I have forgotten Ms Castley's specific question.

Mrs Jones: What measures?

MR RATTENBURY: What measures, yes.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, you may think this is funny, but it is question time, when you are supposed to hold the government to account. You have asked a quite serious question about criminal cases and a slow court performance. I would have thought that did not need to be laughed at.

Mrs Jones: That was not being laughed at.

MADAM SPEAKER: Now you can join the warned list, Mrs Jones. Mr Rattenbury, do you choose to answer?

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I was interjected on, I was indicating that, having become the Attorney-General quite recently, I have spoken to the leaders of the judiciary about these matters. The government has undertaken to look at additional resources for the courts, including, for example, appointing a full-time coroner. These are the matters that I am considering now and that I will look at through the budget process. There has also been the recent appointment of a magistrate to fill the vacancy created by Magistrate Bernadette Boss taking up a national role. I am very pleased that she has taken up that role.

We are working with the courts to make sure that they have adequate resources to do the job they need to do. The government has also spent significant money on building a new court building in recent years. Members will be well aware of that. *(Time expired.)*

Gungahlin—swimming pool

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, yesterday's budget referred to "repairing Gungahlin Leisure Centre", which opened just six years ago and cost \$28 million but has been closed for almost one year. The budget did not reveal how much it would cost to fix the pool, and there was no time line about when that would be done. Canberra Swimming Club's membership is down 25 per cent and their 200 squad swimmers have lost their home pool and are crammed into the Olympic pool. Minister, why won't your Labor-Greens government tell the community how much of their money you will take to fix this mess?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Castley for the question. I know and understand the frustration of the Gungahlin community and members in this place about the closure of Gungahlin pool. There are significant issues around the tiling and membrane which need to be repaired.

But of course making sure that the tender process has appropriate governance around it—making sure that the price is not put out there, so that the tender process can be conducted appropriately—is the best way to ensure that the tender meets the needs of the community and resolves the issues at the Gungahlin pool as soon as possible. Part of that tender process will be about time frames. As soon as the time frames are known then we can let the community and members of the Assembly know.

I have to say I am as frustrated as anyone else in this place, and the Gungahlin community, about the pool closure. I have asked the directorate on a number of occasions, almost weekly, about getting this pool opened as soon as possible. I will

have advice and more details about the pool by Monday next week, which I am happy to share with the members in this place.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, do you agree the Gungahlin pool is a “state-of-the-art facility”, as hailed by then sports minister Barr six years ago, or would the description “a white elephant” be more apt?

MS BERRY: It is a state-of-the-art facility, but it does need some repair work done. That is being addressed by the ACT government.

MR COE: Minister, will the pool reopen this year? Will you provide to the Assembly a time line of work that has taken place already regarding assessing the damage and any rectification that has taken place since the pool was closed?

MS BERRY: I will check on the last part of the question, on the time frame and on what information I can provide to the Assembly. I will get some advice on that. I wish I could, today, give a date for when the pool will be reopened, but I just do not have that information with me and I will not know that until after the tender process.

Mr Coe: Point of order. Just for clarification, the first part of the question was about work that has already been done to assess the damage and any rectification work that has already taken place, as opposed to prospective work. Take it on notice.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think Mr Coe was clarifying what you are taking on notice, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Yes.

Light rail—stage 2A

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, can you please outline what this government is doing to progress light rail?

MR STEEL: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. It certainly comes at a very exciting time for the light rail project. In the ACT budget yesterday, the ACT government delivered on what we said we would do at the election. We are investing in the infrastructure needed to build a better public transport system by extending the light rail line to Woden.

In the budget, we delivered the funding needed to get on with the design to raise London Circuit. This is changing the current overpass-underpass configuration of the road to create an upgraded intersection of Commonwealth Avenue and London Circuit to support the light rail stage 2A tracks transitioning onto the road and providing improved pedestrian and cycle connections in the southern part of the CBD. We have also committed funding for a feasibility study to investigate the extension of light rail through to Mawson and to assess peak express services, which was part of the parliamentary and governing agreement.

Members would also be aware that the commonwealth government last week provided environmental approval for light rail stage 2A, from the city to

Commonwealth Park—a very welcome sign of support for this project from the commonwealth. We are getting on with the detailed design work for stage 2A and we will soon seek formal works approval from the National Capital Authority, and subsequently through the ACT planning and land authority.

The light rail stop in Mitchell is under construction as well, immediately south of the Sandford Street intersection with Flemington Road. The first works were commenced by Canberra Metro on 6 December last year. The new stop is expected to become operational in the second half of this year. We are also continuing to progress the important design and environmental work on light rail stage 2B, from Commonwealth Park to Woden. We are working with the National Capital Authority to ensure that their recently announced Commonwealth Avenue Bridge project is complementary. We are identifying opportunities to minimise disruption. *(Time expired.)*

DR PATERSON: Minister, could you please detail what the benefits of stage 2A are?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her supplementary question. The stage 2A project will deliver extensive benefits for our city, as the first part of an extension of the light rail line from the city to Woden, and as an extension of stage 1 of light rail as well. The line extension will add 1.7 kilometres of track, with three stops added to the light rail network.

Early estimations suggest that patronage of light rail stage 2A will bring an additional 2,500 to 3,000 passengers per day within the first operating year. The Edinburgh Avenue stop is expected to immediately be one of the most popular stops in the system, providing access to the Australian National University, the courts precinct, and commercial areas on London Circuit and in New Acton.

Stage 2A will bring significant employment opportunities to the territory. Light rail stage 2A and raising London Circuit are together expected to generate more than 1,000 jobs in the construction sector, and many more indirect jobs in other sectors of the ACT economy. This follows the outstanding ACT employment figures from earlier in the week, which are the best in the nation.

Delivering stage 2A is a key part of achieving the ACT's transport strategy, which will help to build a safer, less congested and more sustainable city. This project will build on the success of light rail stage 1.

Aside from being delivered ahead of time and under budget, we have seen sustained popularity through the patronage figures on that project. Canberrans love light rail. I am pleased to announce that new survey results show that 43 per cent of people using light rail never used public transport in the ACT before, showing the power of light rail mass transit in shifting people onto public transport. By extending the line, we want to extend these benefits to other parts of the city and grow public transport patronage further.

MS ORR: Minister, what are the next steps for the stage 2A project?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary and her interest in light rail and the benefits that it has been providing to the Gungahlin region. This is an important

project for our city, but from an approvals point of view light rail stage 2 is one of the most complex in the nation's history. As I have previously outlined, stage 2A has been assessed and approved by the commonwealth through the preliminary documentation referral pathway under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. The next steps are to obtain the required planning approvals, including territory development approval and National Capital Authority works approval, and then commence the procurement and construction of the project. Design and procurement planning activities are continuing, with the focus being given to some more complex areas of the alignment.

The first major physical works to be undertaken on the light rail project will involve raising London Circuit. The ACT government is working towards construction starting as early as this year or early 2022. This is entirely dependent on commonwealth planning approval processes and procurement.

We will continue to engage closely with the community, especially those who will be most impacted during construction. Major Projects Canberra will be seeking input on matters such as construction programs and local industry participation opportunities. This will be done through ACT government portals like the Your Say page, digital media and face-to-face pop-up events. Of course, the government is continuing to progress the design of light rail stage 2B, including the environmental and heritage assessments, through the environmental impact statement consultation with the community over the next 18 months.

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