



Debates

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Legislative Assembly for the ACT

TENTH ASSEMBLY

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Tuesday, 5 April 2022

MADAM SPEAKER (Ms Burch) (10.00): Members:

Dhawura nguna, dhawura Ngunnawal.
Yanggu ngalawiri, dhunimanyin Ngunnawalwari dhawurawari.
Nginggada Dindi dhawura Ngunnaawalbun yindjumaralidjinyin.

The words I have just spoken are in the language of the traditional custodians and translate to:

This is Ngunnawal Country.
Today we are gathering on Ngunnawal country.
We always pay respect to Elders, female and male, and Ngunnawal country.

Members, I ask you to stand in silence and pray or reflect on our responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Petitions

The following petitions were lodged for presentation:

Roads—Kambah speed limits—petition 50-21

By Dr Paterson, from 206 residents:

To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

The following residents of the ACT draw to the attention of the Assembly:

Speeding is an ongoing concern for the residents of Kambah. Streets that are of particular concern are Mannheim Street, Inkster Street, Marconi Crescent, Summerland Crescent, and Livingston Avenue.

Drivers from Drakeford Drive, Sulwood Drive, and Athllon Drive enter the major roads in Kambah without the recognition that they are entering a residential area from roads with speed limits up to 80km/h due to a lack for signage, or despite the signs, continue to drive in a dangerous manner.

The importance of the health, safety and wellbeing of residents and visitors around these roads is paramount. With various schools and shops in the area, the Government must ensure, for the safety of the community, that those driving in the area are doing so in accordance with speed limits and the law.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call upon the Government to:

- Undertake a traffic study on Mannheim Street, Inkster, Marconi Crescent, Summerland Crescent, and Livingston Avenue to identify dangerous driving behaviours on these roads.

- Take any necessary action, such as the installation of traffic calming measures, to address any roads identified as being an area of dangerous driving by the traffic study.
- Investigate the lack of signage, road markings and other traffic calming measures when transitioning from high-speed zones along Drakeford Drive, Sulwood Drive, and Athllon Drive to residential low-speed zones.
- Provide feedback to Kambah community regarding the findings of the traffic study and any actions taken to address the findings.

Vehicle registration—transfer—petition 10-22

By Ms Clay, from 9 residents:

To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

The following residents of the ACT draw to the attention of the Assembly: unfortunately, there is no easy way to transfer registration of a vehicle to another family member unless they pay stamp duty and go through some arduous paperwork.

A family member (such as a parent or guardian) in the ACT may fund or partially fund a vehicle for a family member (such as a son or daughter) and then put it in their name.

This can lead to a parent/guardian/family member getting a traffic offence fine in the mail box in their name, instead of the person driving. There are ways to change who gets a fine in this instance but it is an unnecessary inconvenience. Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to: make it easy to change vehicle ownership between family members through Access Canberra.

Convenience and reduced cost of living is only one side of the benefits of vehicle transfer between family members. It can also allow more independence for someone who got the vehicle from a family member as a minor and as an adult wants to have vehicle ownership transferred to the vehicle as they drive. It is a symbolic and practical step for that person to become independent.

Having some else have legal ownership of the car also makes it more likely that this can be used to control someone, financially or otherwise.

Vehicle transfer between family members is available in Victoria and the ACT should follow suit.

Housing—tenants wellbeing—petition 4-22

By Mr Braddock, from 60 residents:

To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory

The following residents of the ACT draw to the attention of the Assembly:

Tenants are particularly vulnerable to social pressures exacerbated by the pandemic. They face increased rents, uncertain employment opportunities, financial exploitation, and the threat of homelessness.

Landlords and agencies are not obliged to consider the well-being of tenants. Current protections for those renting, as shown during COVID-19, do not adequately protect the dignity and life opportunities of tenants.

Owners and agencies need to consider the well-being of their tenants. The ACT should have laws which safeguard the dignity, life opportunities and carer responsibilities of tenants.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to:

Amend the Residential Tenancies Act to include the “Well being clause”:

The actions of lessors or agencies may not:

- place their tenant/s at reasonable risk of homelessness;
- disrupt the employment opportunities of the tenants;
- impose unreasonable and/or avoidable moving costs on their tenant/s;
- negatively impact on any carer responsibilities that a tenant may have; or unreasonably disrupt the education of dependent children

Without:

- providing compensation to the tenant/s equal to four weeks’ rent for heightened risk of homelessness due to lessor actions;
- providing compensation to the tenant/s equal to two weeks’ rent for disruption of employment (or income) due to lessor actions;
- providing compensation to the tenant/s equal to two weeks’ rent for tenant/s reasonable moving costs;
- providing compensation to the tenants/s equal to four weeks’ rent if carer responsibilities and/or the education of dependent children are unreasonably impacted by lessor actions.

The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petitions would be recorded in Hansard and referred to the appropriate ministers for response pursuant to standing order 100, the petitions were received.

Motion to take note of petitions

MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to standing order 98A, I propose the question:

That the petitions so lodged be noted.

Roads—Kambah speed limits—petition 50-21

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.02): As a local member for Murrumbidgee, I am pleased to support this e-petition from residents of Kambah and throughout the ACT who travel on and have concerns about Kambah roads. The petitioners who signed the traffic calming measures in Kambah e-petition are calling on the ACT government to undertake a traffic study of several roads in the Murrumbidgee area of Kambah and to take any necessary action to ensure community safety.

The e-petition was signed by 205 community members, with signatories noting that, with various schools and shops in the area, the government must ensure, for the safety of the community, that those driving in the area are doing so in accordance with speed limits and the law. The petitioners request the ACT government to undertake a traffic study, investigate signage, take any necessary action and provide feedback to the Kambah community.

From drivers to pedestrians to cyclists, no matter how we all choose to use the roads, road safety is of great importance. The Road Transport Legislation Amendment Act passed in this Assembly during the last sitting period is testament to this. With the various local shops, schools, businesses and residents in the area of Kambah, appropriate traffic measures are needed to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of the community.

Road conditions and traffic calming measures have a significant impact on the safety and lifestyle of the Canberra community. Having the right measures in place supports the use of public transport and active travel, priorities of this government, including in its ambitions to cut net emissions to zero by 2045. Signage and road markings also play a vital role in achieving intended driver behaviour outcomes and, in turn, safety. By making sure that the necessary signage, road markings, features and structure of the roads reflect the design and safety intent, we make a significant contribution to all those who use the road network.

I note and support the ACT government's commitment to Vision Zero. Vision Zero acknowledges that injuries and deaths on our roads, particularly those of vulnerable road users, are avoidable and preventable. Vision Zero means no deaths or injuries on Canberra roads. Road safety is everyone's responsibility—the government, the community and individuals. By ensuring that the road restrictions and conditions are well suited and adhered to, the ACT government is bringing Canberra closer to vision zero.

I commend the ACT government on its continued commitment to the safety, maintenance and upkeep of Canberra's roads to ensure that they are safe and that lifestyle choices, including those who use public transport and active travel, are promoted and facilitated, and that the ACT is well on its way towards vision zero. I also encourage anyone who sees antisocial driving behaviour to report it to Crime Stoppers if you witness the act, or to ACT Policing.

I am pleased to have sponsored this petition on behalf of 206 community members about a traffic study in Kambah. I appreciate and thank everyone who took the time to sign the petition. I look forward to the minister's response and thank him in advance for his consideration and his constant commitment to achieve positive road safety outcomes for Murrumbidgee and the Canberra community.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Nomination of Assistant Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to the provisions of standing order 8, I have nominated Ms Orr to act as an Assistant Speaker. I present the following paper:

Assistant Speaker—Warrant of nomination—Ms Orr, dated 4 April 2022.

COVID-19 pandemic response—update Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (10.06): I rise to provide an update to the Assembly on the COVID-19 situation in the ACT and the actions taken by the government to protect the health and wellbeing of Canberrans. Because it is only a short time since my last update, I will take this opportunity to talk about how our teams are supporting people who are diagnosed with COVID-19 and need specific health care as a result.

Since my last update to the Assembly on 22 March, the COVID-19 situation in the ACT has remained relatively stable. There has been an uptick in cases in the past week, but this has come down again over the past couple of days. The ACT government continues to closely monitor the situation, particularly as we head into the cooler months, where we expect to see an increase in cases as people move indoors.

I would again like to take the opportunity to thank all Canberrans for doing their bit for the community by practising COVID-smart behaviours. Our community's response to the emergence of Omicron has been incredible and has allowed the ACT to transition to living with COVID-19.

Like the ACT, the COVID-19 situation across Australia remains fairly stable, with most states recording a manageable increase in daily cases. Most jurisdictions are operating under eased public health restrictions as we continue to move through the national plan to transition Australia's national COVID-19 response. There is, however, a need to remain cautious as we approach the winter season, noting the challenges that may come from the expected influenza season, in conjunction with the potential of new or re-emerging variants of COVID-19.

Here in the ACT, as at 8 pm on 3 April, there have been a total of 80,964 cases since the start of the pandemic in March 2020. There are 5,716 active cases, with 45 COVID-19 patients admitted to hospital, four of whom are in intensive care and two requiring ventilation. Sadly, there have been 42 deaths since the start of the pandemic and the ACT government expresses its condolences to the families and loved ones of these people. As at 9 am on 4 April, the ACT has conducted 942,864 negative tests and there are 2,216 close contacts in quarantine in the ACT being supported by ACT Health.

On Friday, 1 April, ACT Health published more detailed COVID-19 health surveillance information on the government's COVID-19 website. This information expands on the daily and weekly information updates and the monthly Chief Health Officer reports that are tabled in this place and available on the Chief Health Officer website. The new epidemiological report includes more detailed information on age groups of positive cases, hospitalisation information, vaccination status of inpatients and the geographic spread of cases across the ACT.

This more detailed epidemiology report will continue to be updated and released on a weekly basis. This week's report will also include the vaccination status of people who have died with COVID-19. This was not included in last Friday's report due to the need to clarify the information. Overall, the report reinstates the reporting of relevant data that was included in the daily dashboard up to 8 November 2021, when the notifiable diseases management system changed over, and adds some additional information, such as subvariant prevalence.

In releasing this more detailed information on a daily and weekly basis, ACT Health continues to balance the importance of transparency with its legal and ethical obligations to maintain the confidentiality of the personal health information of individuals. This can usually be achieved through the release of deidentified information, but it can be particularly difficult in the ACT due to the territory's population size and a smaller number of deaths and hospitalisations relative to larger jurisdictions. ACT Health will continue to report information through datasets of a sufficient size so as not to inadvertently identify individuals. As an example of the guidelines applied in data reporting, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare generally does not report data when fewer than five people are included in the dataset for a small jurisdiction.

More than two years into the global pandemic, the ACT government's COVID-19 public health response, guided by the advice of the Chief Health Officer, is based on whole-of-population health statistics and trends, not on individual case information. Often, the most relevant information will come from jurisdictions and studies where the numbers are sufficient to support statistically valid conclusions regarding trends, correlation and causation.

Madam Speaker, it is understandable in these uncertain times that people may be interested in knowing the vaccination status and comorbidities of individual patients in ICU and those who have, sadly, lost their lives. However, the release of this individual information without consent cannot usually be justified on public health grounds, when balanced against the fact that this information may be able to be linked to an individual, and may therefore constitute a breach of the Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997 and the principles that underpin the act.

Officials in the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services are diligent in ensuring that the information they provide to the media and the public is accurate. This sometimes means providing context rather than simply numbers. Sometimes it involves clarifying data that has been cleansed, or quality assured, if a number provided on one day is slightly different to the number provided a few days earlier. This is a sign of people doing their best to respond with accuracy in an evolving environment. Sometimes it involves robust discussions. This is healthy. It is a sign of people working together with respect for one another's expertise, so that all considerations can be understood and balanced. Ultimately, whenever the media has sought data and it could be provided accurately and in a genuinely deidentified way, it has been.

With COVID-19 now circulating widely in our community, it is not surprising that Canberra families are worried about what might happen if their loved ones, and children in particular, contract the disease. We have seen that most children who test positive for COVID-19 have only mild symptoms, such as a runny nose and fever, and recover within a couple of days. Others have no symptoms at all. Very few children experience severe illness requiring medical intervention or hospitalisation. Our hospitals have seen some children present with respiratory and abdominal symptoms. However, they have not experienced very unwell children in the inpatient wards.

The paediatric COVID Care@Home program was established as part of our response to the evolving COVID situation in Canberra and is run in conjunction with the Canberra Health Services' COVID Care@Home program for adults. The paediatric COVID Care@Home program is staffed by experienced paediatric nurses and a paediatrician who provide telehealth virtual clinics to the children and families to assess their clinical condition. All low-risk children are called every three days. All children who are deemed moderate risk or high risk are called daily. The paediatrician will review every high-risk child daily and treatment plans are made accordingly. Each family is given a phone number as a single point of contact to call if they are concerned.

In addition, the paediatric COVID Care@Home program provides families with information packs on how to manage their symptoms such as dehydration, fever or sore throat. It also includes a thermometer and some paracetamol and Hydralyte. These packs are delivered to the family home.

The program also has a clear escalation pathway for clinical deterioration in a paediatric patient. The patients, as well as the COVID Care@Home team nurses, are supported by a COVID Care@Home team paediatrician in-hours and the paediatrician on-call after hours. The paediatric COVID Care@Home program has promoted community engagement and trust in the paediatric services of Canberra Health Services. It has also promoted teamwork and collaboration within the organisation.

New oral treatments for the early management of COVID-19 have been made available to the territory through the national medical stockpile. These treatments can significantly reduce the severity of symptoms and the likelihood of hospitalisation and death if given in the first five days after a person becomes symptomatic.

These treatments are currently dispensed through the Canberra Hospital pharmacy. Pharmacists work closely with the COVID Care@Home program and speak to consumers by telephone to take medical histories to ensure there are no significant drug interactions with the proposed COVID treatment. Patients are advised on the correct administration of the medicines and possible side effects. Treatments have been made available to patients seven days a week via several avenues to maximise convenience and safety, including drive-through collection and home delivery. Canberra Health Services is also engaging with community GPs to further expand oral treatment prescribing.

The ACT is well-positioned in terms of access to COVID-19 treatments and holds an extensive stock of oral, pre-emptive treatments, as well as sufficient antibody therapy to meet demand. The ACT also has a strong supply of anti-inflammatory agents used to treat moderate to severe infection. In addition, a small quantity of Evusheld, a new pre-infection antibody therapy, has recently arrived in the territory and may prevent infection in patients with significant immune deficiencies who would benefit from further protection in addition to their vaccine.

GPs are integral to providing patient care and supporting COVID-19 patients in the community. With the escalation of the Omicron outbreak in the ACT, the need to quickly share clinical knowledge with and amongst GPs was identified as a priority. To address this need, the GP liaison unit at Canberra Health Services developed the GP COVID Care@Home huddle, a forum for sharing of clinical knowledge and discussion to quickly inform and upskill GPs on the evolving COVID environment.

Topics discussed at the GP huddles included overview of COVID variants and therapeutic options; referral and escalation pathways; overview of oral antivirals and referral processes to obtain medications; paediatric COVID updates; the detection, management and referral of post-acute COVID syndrome, or long COVID; and management of COVID in residential aged-care facilities. The huddle format was short and sharp, with a rapidly developed program and flexible agenda. Presentations were a maximum of 15 minutes, allowing the majority of the time to be spent in conversation, better addressing the learning needs of GPs.

The huddles have successfully improved GP knowledge in relation to the management of COVID-positive patients in the community and have reduced the number of COVID-related inquiries directed to the Canberra Health Services GP liaison unit. The huddles were well-attended by approximately 50 attendees, and GPs reported high satisfaction with the relevance, content and format of these meetings. Due to the success of the huddles, CHS is continuing to facilitate them on an as-needed basis.

COVID-19 infection impacts people in many different ways, and we know that some people continue to feel the after-effects of COVID-19 for a significant time after they are no longer considered to have COVID-19. A new clinic has commenced at the University of Canberra Hospital to help people who are struggling to return their normal activities after having COVID-19.

The post-COVID-19 clinic is managed by a multidisciplinary team of rehabilitation specialists and allied health professionals who will help long-COVID patients to recover. Patients over 16 can be referred to the clinic by their GP and will undergo an initial assessment by the clinic to understand what rehabilitation activities are suitable for their individual needs. Rehabilitation services may be delivered via education and self-management, in group settings or individual sessions, depending on the needs of the patient.

Madam Speaker, on 10 January 2022, the ACT government opened a dedicated clinic to provide health care for people who have tested positive for COVID-19. The Garran COVID-19 clinic operates a drop-in service seven days a week, including public

holidays, from 7.30 am to 10 pm, providing a rapid assessment and primary healthcare service for patients with an active infection of COVID-19.

People can access treatment for non-urgent illness or injury unrelated to COVID-19 or care for COVID-19 related respiratory symptoms. Non-urgent care of illness and injury such as cuts and abrasions, strains and sprains, infections and wound care is provided in line with the walk-in centre treatment protocols. The clinic also provides care for consumers who may not be able to access care in the primary health sector as a result of being a close contact of someone with COVID-19.

As at the end of March, 1,443 presentations had been seen at the COVID-19 clinic, including 311 children. The clinic, which works closely with the COVID Care@Home team, has also provided 93 infusions of antivirals. The clinic works collaboratively with teams from across Canberra Health Services, for example to provide care and support for children under two years of age and to women requiring maternal care such as during pregnancy. The clinic is actively promoted through our COVID-19 Care@Home team, the ACT government COVID-19 website and through social media platforms.

Patients who require urgent or time-specific care, such as cancer patients requiring radiation therapy, and who are under COVID-19 quarantine can access timely care through our clinical services. The clinical teams work with patients to ensure they can access treatment while following well-considered protocols to keep both our consumers and staff at low risk of transmission. Patients with booked outpatient appointments who may not be able to attend face-to-face appointments because of COVID-19 are able to access these services through telehealth appointments. This means patients are still able to be reviewed by their treating teams to ensure continued care and treatment of their conditions.

The ACT's COVID-19 vaccination program continues to be world leading. I am pleased to report that in the ACT more than 80 per cent of five- to 11-year-olds have now received a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, and now more than half are up to date with their vaccination, having received a second dose. More than 98 per cent of all Canberrans aged five years and older have now completed their primary vaccination course, and almost three out of four eligible Canberrans have now received a booster or third dose.

Our vaccination coverage is an exceptional achievement that has put the ACT public health system in a strong position as we move towards potential surges in winter. Our achievement represents a strong partnership between the ACT government, primary care providers and a range of community partners, as well as the commonwealth government. I want to thank everyone who has contributed to the vaccination program and every Canberran who has come forward to be vaccinated.

Madam Speaker, following my last update to the Assembly, the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, or ATAGI, has recommended an additional COVID-19 vaccine for some members of the community, in what we anticipate will be a challenging winter season. Medical experts have warned that this year we will see an increase in respiratory viruses due to influenza and COVID-19. With

international borders open, Canberrans may be vulnerable to a resurgence of influenza. This concern is exacerbated due to the prevalence of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in the ACT community.

People aged 65 years and older, those who live in aged-care and disability accommodation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 years and older, and anyone over the age of 16 who is severely immunocompromised is eligible for an additional dose. ATAGI recommends these people come forward to receive a winter booster four months after their last booster dose. Pleasingly, Canberrans have already begun making appointments to receive their winter dose vaccination which has been made available through ACT government clinics, GPs and pharmacies across Canberra since 4 April.

ATAGI advise that co-administration of influenza and COVID-19 vaccines is safe and offers community members the best protection against serious respiratory illness during winter. In the coming weeks, the ACT government will make further announcements about access to flu vaccines for vulnerable Canberrans. In the meantime, I encourage all Canberrans stay up to date with their COVID-19 vaccination and to access a flu vaccine as soon as you are able.

The ACT government's equity to access program continues to make a vital contribution to our vaccination program. The program ensures that every member of our community can be vaccinated and protected against COVID-19, regardless of their personal circumstances. The ACT Health Directorate has continued to work with community sector partners and healthcare providers to identify areas of the community where targeted programs and assistance are needed.

Throughout March, the program has administered 315 vaccine doses, primarily boosters, at locations including specialist schools, Commonwealth Park, during Canberra Day celebrations, Boomanulla Oval, Kambah, Turner and Gungahlin. Clinics will continue throughout April and locations will be promoted on ACT Health social media pages in advance. These clinics play an important role in making vaccination accessible to people who find it difficult to travel to the AIS or other vaccination clinics. Canberra Health Services also continues to offer in-reach vaccination to patients in settings such as hospitals, mental health units, dialysis centres, adult incarceration centres, disability hubs and methadone clinics. As I have said before, equity is a core value of this government, and this program is well and truly delivering that.

Madam Speaker, a review of public health social measures and test, trace, isolate and quarantine has recently been undertaken by the Acting Chief Health Officer to ensure that restrictions remain proportionate to the risk being managed. The Acting Chief Health Officer concluded that most measures in place are proportionate for the current situation. However, some additional changes have been implemented to existing restrictions. These changes seek to implement revised national advice, to streamline administrative processes and to align with New South Wales, where appropriate and necessary.

With effect from 11.59 pm on 4 April, air crew are no longer required to undergo COVID-19 testing if their next flight out of Australia is within 48 hours of entry. In addition, all travellers under the age of 18 years who are not fully vaccinated and arriving with a fully vaccinated traveller or are unaccompanied will be regarded as fully vaccinated and not subject to quarantine requirements. However, testing requirements will still apply.

Fully vaccinated travellers diagnosed with COVID-19 in the 13 weeks prior to their travel to Australia will also no longer need to undergo an arrival test. Changes have also been made to the definition of a recovered COVID-19 case to reflect updated advice from the Communicable Diseases Network Australia. A person who has recovered from COVID-19 is no longer required to comply with quarantine or isolation requirements for a period of 12 weeks following the date of their clearance from isolation. Previously this was eight weeks.

There has also been some streamlining to the administrative processes for seeking an exemption from mandatory vaccination requirements due to medical reasons. Medical practitioners can issue a nationally recognised exemption on the Australian immunisation register, and this will be accepted for the purposes of an exemption from the direction. There is no longer a requirement for individuals to submit a separate form to ACT Health. The processes for seeking an exemption on non-medical grounds remain the same.

The ACT has updated the standing exemption for essential workers under the Public Health (Diagnosed People and Household Contacts) Emergency Direction 2022, with effect from 11.59 pm on 1 April, to include community pharmacy workers. This is in addition to previously exempted food and grocery support, freight and transport workers, and veterinary workers.

Community pharmacy workers include a pharmacist at a community pharmacy or a person who is employed by or engaged by a community pharmacy. Under the current standing exemption, an essential worker is only eligible to return to work if they are employed in an industry specified as essential under the standing exemption, have advised their employer they are a household contact and are approved to return to work, consent to returning to work, are unable to perform their duties from home and the employer has determined their absence from the workplace creates a high risk to critical service delivery, are asymptomatic and have returned a negative COVID-19 test result since becoming aware of their status as a household contact, and continue to undertake daily rapid antigen tests until the end of their quarantine period.

Eligible essential workers who return to work must comply with a set of conditions. They must travel directly between their quarantine premises and place of work, not attend public places other than for work purposes or in an emergency, wear a face mask when leaving their premises in accordance with public health directions, and continue to comply with existing quarantine and testing requirements under the direction when not at work.

In addition to these conditions, employers are required to adhere to their work health and safety obligations and undertake a range of actions if they seek to use the standing exemption to return workers to the workplace. Workers seeking to return to work during their quarantine period as a household contact, who are not covered under the standing exemption, are able to apply for a one-off exemption as an essential worker. Applications can be made directly to the ACT's COVID-19 exemption team and must include supporting documentation from the employer detailing the essential need for the worker to return to work and what risk mitigations will be in place.

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, or AHPPC, recently published its statement on winter season preparedness, following a request by the national cabinet for advice on a number of matters, including advice on quarantine requirements for close contacts of positive cases and a transition away from quarantine requirements appropriate for each jurisdiction.

The statement notes that there has been a significant increase in COVID-19 cases observed in recent weeks due to a number of factors, including the emergence of the more transmissible Omicron BA.2 sub-lineage, relaxation of public health social measures, waning population level protection from vaccines and previous COVID-19 infection and a slowing in the uptake of booster and primary course vaccinations. The statement also notes the current demands for the hospital system in managing the multiple challenges of the existing COVID-19 case load, the usual care of acute medical and surgical activities, the backlog of elective surgery and the health issues associated with delayed health care.

The statement recommends the appropriate time for any changes to be made would be following the anticipated peak of the current BA.2 variant. Making changes too early, including to quarantine requirements, could result in increased transmission in the community at a time when cases are already increasing or are at their peak, resulting in potential further disruption to the health system.

The ACT government will now carefully consider the advice provided by the AHPPC with a view to applying this to the ACT context. The government has been, and will continue to be, focused on supporting the health and wellbeing of our community. The ACT continues to respond well to the challenges presented by COVID-19. However, the challenge is not yet over. While the ACT's public health response is strong, it is anticipated that we will see further increases in cases as we head into winter. I ask all Canberrans to please continue with their incredible efforts over the past two years, adhere to the applicable public health directions and practise COVID-smart behaviours. I present the following paper:

Coronavirus (COVID-19)—ACT Government response—Update—Ministerial statement, 5 April 2022.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028— annual impact statement Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (10.31): I rise today to table and speak to the first ACT joint annual impact statement for the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028—the ACT agreement—and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2020.

I am pleased to table the first ACT annual impact statement, which provides an indication of the territory's progress in relation to both closing the gap targets and priority areas under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028 with the elected body.

This follows the finalisation of the agreement outcomes framework in 2021, which was developed in partnership with the elected body, and the government's commitment to provide an annual statement of performance. This impact statement also forms a critical component of this jurisdiction's reporting requirements under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the ACT implementation plan.

The impact statement is a point-in-time snapshot, which will be complemented by an online dashboard providing more extensive information and an ability to be updated to include new data. We expect that the dashboard will go live in the next week or two. Much of the data reported is already available in publications by the Productivity Commission, the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, to name a few. However, this is the first time that the ACT data has been brought together to provide us with a picture of performance under the 10 focus areas of the ACT agreement.

I want to acknowledge the ACT government's agreement partners, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, as well as the ACT public service and many consultative groups and community partners who have worked together to deliver outcomes under the agreement.

We know that the ACT government has important responsibilities, but we cannot close the gap alone. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic impacting a range of initiatives across the ACT and progress under national agreements during the 2021 reporting period, the impact statement identifies some important progress within ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Some of the highlights reflected in the data include: continued high preschool enrolment for children in the year prior to full-time schooling; steady growth in enrolment of three-year-olds in preschool programs; signs of improved readiness for school reflected in the ACT kindy health check; some small but very encouraging reductions in the number of children and young people entering and also returning to out of home care; a reduction in the rate of people returning to incarceration; more students achieving year 12 certificates; and an increase in both the number of businesses and the budget being contracted by ACT government directorates.

The impact statement also identifies areas of concern, including increased waiting times for some categories of medical treatment and a slightly higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients who do not wait in our emergency departments but leave without being treated. Reductions in vocational education and training enrolment and completion in 2020 are also of concern. We will continue to analyse this data to better understand what has occurred and discuss with the elected body what response might be most appropriate.

This first ACT annual impact statement focuses on measuring and reporting impact using quantitative data. While it is important to measure and report in this way, we know that data alone does not tell the full story. Data alone does not reflect the considerable commitment that agreement partners have demonstrated and the achievements that have been made by working together on shared priorities.

As some examples of these important actions, informed by our commitments in the national and ACT agreements, the government is working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to: transition the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm to a residential model and community-controlled management; progress the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and other drug residential rehabilitation service, in partnership with Winnunga Nimmitjyah Aboriginal Health and Community Services; establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific standalone suicide prevention, postvention and aftercare service in the ACT; grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce and Canberra Health Services to work with the community to develop “Together, Forward”—its plan to provide better access to health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Canberra region; support to transition Boomanulla Oval and Yarramundi Cultural Centre to sustainable community control; finalise the governance arrangements for our \$20 million Healing and Reconciliation Fund; and partner with Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation to deliver a new, purpose-built facility at its current site.

I also draw the Assembly’s attention to the partnerships and achievements across government highlighted by the Head of Service, Kathy Leigh, in her foreword to the impact statement. As members may recall, previous annual reports on the agreement have been focused on the actions underway across the ACT government in each focus area, including case studies. This aligns with a strengths-based approach that recognises the importance of acting in partnership with the community.

For future reports, we will work to pull together the data and outcomes reporting that are the focus of this impact statement—and which so much work has gone into since the closing the gap targets and indicators were finalised—with the critically important narrative about how we are working with community to close the gap and achieve equitable outcomes for First Nations people in the ACT. In the meantime I encourage members to have a look at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reporting section in each directorate’s annual report. This work is directly related to, and over time will influence, the outcomes data that is the focus of the report I am tabling today.

For example, the work being undertaken in the health portfolio to co-design culturally appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention, intervention,

postvention and aftercare services for the ACT and region will have a transformational impact on the way community members can access support.

The government's commitment of around \$15 million to the construction of a purpose-built facility for Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation will allow this important community-controlled organisation to continue to undertake and expand its critical work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and young people. This work, including the relatively new addition of functional family therapy to Gugan's suite of programs, changes lives and even saves lives.

These are just some examples, and the government looks forward to what we can achieve during the next stage of the ACT agreement, with second action plans to be developed with the new elected body this year.

In line with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, we are also committed to working closely with our agreement partners to strengthen future annual impact statements and to embedding the principles of data sovereignty to improve the way we measure and report on impact.

Thank you and congratulations to the officials who have developed this impact statement and the online dashboard. While these things will remain a work in progress, this is a significant achievement, and I am very pleased to have been able to present it to the Assembly today. I present the following papers:

ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028—ACT Impact Statement 2021.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028 and National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2020—ACT Annual Impact Statement 2021—Ministerial statement, 5 April 2022.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.39): I thank Minister Stephen-Smith for tabling the first annual impact statement for the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement. The ACT agreement and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap are an important demonstration of partnership between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

There is strong alignment between the priorities identified in the new closing the gap agreement and the focus areas of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement. This represents important work that must be done across government agencies, across jurisdictions and across our entire community to address the ongoing harms caused by colonisation and institutional racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The ACT government has established the \$20 million Healing and Reconciliation Fund to be administered in partnership with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander community to deliver on the priorities identified through the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement. The Healing and Reconciliation Fund was a Labor election commitment at the 2020 election, and I am pleased that we are delivering this commitment in government.

As the agreements represent genuine partnership in identifying problems and solutions, the Healing and Reconciliation Fund will represent genuine partnership with the community in driving this work forward. The fund will be administered in partnership with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and will address priorities identified by the community.

Treaty has been identified as one of the priorities of the fund. I was pleased to see the Chief Minister, Minister Stephen-Smith and the United Ngunnawal Elders Council announce the appointment of Professor Kerry Arabena as a facilitator for early treaty conversations.

A treaty process represents an enormous opportunity for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and for our whole community broadly, and I am pleased to see the community taking these first important steps in this process. Treaty supports many of the focus areas of the ACT agreement, including the core areas of cultural integrity and inclusive community, as well as having potential for broad benefits across the areas of economic participation, health and wellbeing, housing and justice.

Treaty will be critical in achieving the trajectory of healing and reconciliation in Australia. Successful partnerships are built on trust. Governments and institutions in Australia cannot take the trust of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for granted. It must be earned and, when won, it must be respected.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart was a momentous expression of reconciliation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I am pleased that Labor is committed to the Uluru statement. In the ACT we have a democratically elected voice to government enshrined in legislation, the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body. The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement is a tangible demonstration of the value that this brings.

As the annual impact statement demonstrates, while we are seeing progress in some areas there is more to be done to close the gap and to support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this healing process, and to heal together as a community. With the early stages of treaty discussions getting underway, the development of the Healing and Reconciliation Fund and a real commitment to doing things differently in our community, I am hopeful of real progress over coming years.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Government—heritage policy

Ministerial statement

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for

Sustainable Building and Construction) (10.43): I rise today to talk about heritage, and why looking back at our city's past is important for our city's future. The impetus for this ministerial statement today is that the Canberra and Region Heritage Festival is back for its 39th year, celebrating the historic, natural, diverse cultural heritage of all people in the ACT and region. The festival is an excellent way to understand how the territory has got to where it is today, and to pause to think about where we are going as a city and community.

We know that a sense of place that heritage provides helps us to know where we have come from, it defines our identity and gives the community a sense of pride and connection contributing to our wellbeing. Reflecting on the past enables us to enter the future with the wisdom of understanding the triumphs and challenges we have faced, and how these prepare us for a future that, while uncertain, provides opportunities and challenges.

With this year's festival theme of "curiosity", the varied and diverse program of more than 150 events on offer helps us to do just that, with something for everyone from all walks of life. Curiosity is a powerful force underpinning our desire for discovery, inquiry and simply our urge to know. I am naturally curious, and have always been driven by my curiosity. Curiosity gets people excited and motivated, leading us to new solutions and collaborations. I believe that it is very important at this moment in our city's history.

Something that I am excited about—and it has become a bit of a joke with some of the younger staff in my team—is getting more people excited about heritage. In that vein, for the first time ever, we have introduced kids week to pique the curiosity of all ages. Running through the school holidays, kids week focuses on family-friendly, fun events that will entertain kids during the holidays and give them an opportunity to learn about Canberra's unique history and heritage.

Another thing I have endless curiosity about and passion for is Ngunnawal heritage, because when we think about the heritage in this region, we must recognise that this heritage stretches back millennia. The stories of the Ngunnawal people are the first stories of our region, and we have much to learn from these about how we respect and care for this beautiful country that we get to call home. Opening our minds and our hearts to understanding the journey of our First Nations people is an important step in our journey of healing of a nation, and a vital part of the truth telling that we must undertake down the path to treaty.

I am really proud that, this year, we have tripled our First Nations heritage events, with 21 opportunities for Canberrans to explore the rich Ngunnawal history in the territory. There is still time for you to join the Winanggaay Ngunnawal Language Aboriginal Corporation to learn Ngunnawal greetings and children's songs, learn how to make and throw spears and boomerangs with our Aboriginal rangers, or visit the oldest heritage site in the ACT, the Birrigai rock shelter.

There has been greater co-design and collaboration with the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee, resulting in the festival's incorporation of Ngunnawal artwork—a beautiful piece by Lynnice Church—and a foreword in the program by

Elder and Heritage Council member Caroline Hughes. This is such important work and, while we have a long way to go, and further to go, I am committed to walking this journey in recognising, celebrating and protecting our First Nations heritage.

As we engage with First Nations heritage, we must confront the reality that colonisation has triggered a process of dispossession, of destruction of cultural connection and of systemic discrimination that continues to this day. We must ensure that our engagement with heritage does not continue the process of denial of the experience of our First Nations people but works to contribute to the healing process, rather than reinforce intergenerational trauma.

This means working with groups such as the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee to ensure our heritage laws and approach appropriately recognise the role of traditional custodians and ensure that understanding and responding to First Nations cultural heritage are front and centre in our approach. It means working with traditional owners to ensure that our cultural heritage protections reflect contemporary understanding and are a positive contribution to our reconciliation journey.

While this journey is long, we have knowledge and progress that we can share. As one example, I was proud to see that the draft planning bill in the ACT substantively elevates the traditional owners of this country we meet on, the Ngunnawal people.

We are not alone; change is happening across the country. Last week I participated in a national ministerial roundtable on improving protections for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, which was co-chaired by the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance. Initiated by the tragedy which occurred nearly two years ago—the destruction by Rio Tinto of Juukan Gorge, a vital piece of living heritage of the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura people and 46,000-year-old evidence of the link between all Australians and this land—this meeting brought together people from across the country to progress discussions to modernise and strengthen First Nations cultural heritage protections. It was heartening to see the unified commitment to this work from all ministers and jurisdictions across Australia, and the ACT will continue to engage in this important work.

Going back to the Heritage Festival, another thing that gets me excited is its potential to leverage significant tourism and economic benefits. Events such as this help visitors and locals to understand and appreciate others' cultural heritage. I recently learned that research conducted by Tourism Australia found that “rich history and heritage” was the fourth most important factor for the domestic market when choosing a holiday destination, and the sixth most important for international markets.

The festival provides a platform for small businesses—for example, Endangered Heritage, Localjinni and other tour operators—and community groups to prosper. Awareness of services and products as well as gaining new members to community groups are positive legacies.

Last year the ACT government brought on the heritage-listed Mercure hotel, established in 1927, as a partner. As the accommodation sector continues to recover,

the festival has provided an apt opportunity for this heritage-listed hotel to regain business as the economy opens up.

The pandemic has seen the world experience a temporary but possibly long-term process of de-globalisation as a result of travel restrictions and nervousness about holidaying overseas. Promoting our local, distinctive region to this domestic market, made unique by our heritage, is vital for tourism and hospitality to again be viable.

Heritage is about looking back, but it is also about looking forward. I would like now to talk about the emerging and critical job that we have ahead of us in climate-proofing our heritage assets. While we need to “conserve” our history, we do not necessarily want to “preserve” it, especially if it means we place unnecessary constraints on our ability to improve the sustainability of our heritage buildings. It would be a perverse outcome if we indeed preserved older heritage buildings so that they were adversely affected through very high energy bills, poor occupant comfort, and poor resilience in the face of a changing Canberra climate. A balance must be struck so that these buildings can retain their character and other attributes that heritage listing seeks to preserve, while being able to be adapted to suit the needs of present and future occupants.

No building is kept in its original form or use forever and, to spark your curiosity, I would like to share with you a fine example of adaptive re-use from the UK. The Tower of London was built 900 years ago. Over that time it has been used as a royal residence, as home to the Royal Mint, a menagerie, a records office, an armoury and a prison. This process has not needed to be costly or onerous, but it does require sensible reflection of how we can support building owners and the community to ensure that heritage is valued and celebrated, while ensuring that we continue to work to ensure that our built fabric is climate wise.

This may include enabling building owners to contribute to the ACT’s effort to cut greenhouse emissions from the built environment and reduce energy use. It may include enabling public heritage-listed buildings to meet community expectations with respect to sustainability; for example, by generating onsite solar power or being all-electric. It may include helping to truly conserve historic buildings by making them sustainable over the long term. In fact, this could extend their life by preventing them from becoming unfit for purpose; for example, by having unacceptably high energy costs. It may also include creating niche business opportunities in the skilled field of retrofitting historic buildings. For example, custom-window manufacturers can make high-performance windows that retain the appearance of the original windows.

It is important, of course, that any measures would be applied in sensible and sensitive ways to preserve our shared heritage values, while meeting the shared goals we are working towards within the parliamentary and governing agreement to shift to world’s best practice on climate-ready and environmentally sustainable buildings and net zero emissions for the ACT. It is early days in relation to these discussions, and I look forward to many conversations with my government colleagues and others around the room, as well as valued community partners, to bring this vision to life.

Our past tells us about where we have come from and it provides signposts to how we may deal with our future challenges. It can delight us, it can challenge us, it can surprise us and sometimes it can confront us. It connects us with those whose shoulders we stand on, and binds us to those who are contributing to the life of this city and region. The Irish poet James Stephens reminds us about the power of curiosity—that it will conquer fear even more than bravery will. So let's get excited, let's get curious, and let's discover how our past can enrich our shared future story. I present the following paper:

Heritage in Canberra—looking back to shape our future—Ministerial statement,
5 April 2022.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mental health services—bilateral agreement Ministerial statement

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health, Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (10.55): I rise to speak about the progress that the ACT government has made in securing significant investment in mental health services for the ACT.

The past two or three years have pushed us all in different ways, and most people's mental health has been affected in some way at some point. It has also highlighted to all of us how important economic security and feeling socially connected are for people's mental health and wellbeing.

We all know that the mental health implications of the COVID pandemic will be long-lasting. The ACT government is determined to ensure that we support the mental health of the community. On 27 March we announced an investment of more than \$38 million in mental health and suicide prevention services in the ACT over the next five years, through the signing of a landmark bilateral agreement between the commonwealth and ACT governments. This bilateral agreement builds on a number of key policy and service priorities.

Under the terms of the bilateral, the commonwealth will invest \$25.2 million and the ACT will invest \$12.9 million to expand existing services that are helping people in need and to establish new services where we know that there are gaps. The funding includes \$8.3 million to continue Head to Health adult mental health services across the ACT to address gaps in the mental health system, providing more integrated, seamless care for adults and older Australians. This will continue funding for the existing Head to Health service that opened in October 2021.

There is \$9 million to enhance child and family mental health initiatives to improve access to multidisciplinary team care to children, in line with the national Head to Health kids hub model. These enhancements will support more than 2,500 children and their families each year. There is \$9.5 million to enhance the existing headspace centre to increase access to multidisciplinary youth mental health services in the ACT and to establish a multidisciplinary early intervention service to support young people at risk of developing mental health concerns.

There is \$6 million to establish universal aftercare services in the ACT and to support people following a suicide attempt or experiencing a suicidal crisis. There is \$2.8 million to improve perinatal mental health screening and enhance the capture and reporting of nationally consistent perinatal mental health data. And there is \$1.9 million to deliver a community-based early intervention service for eating disorders to promote help-seeking behaviour and early intervention treatment for people in the early stages of developing an eating disorder and those with an eating disorder of low to moderate severity.

In addition to these initiatives, the commonwealth and ACT governments will substantially deepen their partnership in the mental health and suicide prevention system, through greater data-sharing and evaluation of services, closer integration of referral pathways, and working together on the regional planning and commissioning of services. The bilateral agreement will also build and support the mental health and suicide prevention workforce, including the peer workforce. This agreement considers, and acts upon, key mental health reports and inquiries, including recommendations from the Productivity Commission's inquiry into mental health and the National Suicide Prevention Adviser's final advice.

I would like to provide a little more detail about some of the important initiatives in this bilateral agreement. As I mentioned earlier, the agreement includes \$9.5 million for increased access to multidisciplinary youth mental health services in the ACT through headspace centres, and to establish a multidisciplinary early intervention service to support young people at risk of developing mental health concerns.

The 2020 *Review of children and young people in the ACT*, the children and young people in the missing middle report of 2022, the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs inquiry into youth mental health in the ACT of 2020, and the *Review of the service system and implementation requirements for raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility in the ACT* final report of 2021 detail the importance of earlier support, the need to make services more accessible and integrated, and the current gaps in services for the 12- to 18-year-old age group in the ACT.

A six-month scoping project undertaken in 2021 provided detailed advice on an evidence-based response to meet the needs of young people identified in these reports. This scoping work included an environmental scan, evidence review and broad consultation across more than 70 ACT agencies.

In response, the ACT government will develop a youth at risk program to deliver a territory-wide multidisciplinary response to trauma and fully coordinated responses to young people at risk of developing enduring mental illness. The service will support young people facing different challenges within our community as early as possible to ensure they are provided with the skills, care and support required to enable them to grow, learn and lead a meaningful and fulfilling life.

A key element of this program is an evidence-guided therapeutic approach that delivers integrated care through a new adolescent trauma service. The service will build sector partnerships and enhance flexible outreach. It will be delivered by multidisciplinary clinicians and engagement teams in both government and non-government agencies, in partnership with young people, carers and families.

I would also like to provide some additional information about the \$6 million investment under this bilateral agreement in universal aftercare services in the ACT to support people following a suicide attempt or experiencing a suicidal crisis. We know that the largest single factor indicating future suicide risk is a previous attempt, and we know that the loss of life to suicide has devastating impacts throughout our community.

The ACT government established the Way Back Aftercare Service in 2016 and have increased funding to the service over recent years in response to increasing referrals to the service. Despite this additional investment, referral demand continues to grow beyond service capacity. This investment will enable the service to be made available to more people who need it and will expand the service to provide assistance at an earlier stage for people who are experiencing a suicidal crisis or suicidal ideation.

This bilateral agreement investment reflects ACT government commitments to support our community when people are experiencing crisis, and is in addition to the ACT government's investment in the last budget for a culturally appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention program to deliver community-based suicide prevention, intervention, postvention and aftercare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans.

This service is currently being commissioned by ACT Health and will be designed and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I would like to thank our public servants who have worked so hard on this agreement and have done such a good job for the ACT community.

The ACT government has been able to secure this funding for vital services, delivered across the government and community sectors, that we know from a strong evidence base will meet existing and emerging needs. This has been possible because of the years of research, policy development and relationships built across directorates, clinical services and NGOs by the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing.

In acknowledging the work of the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing, I would also like to acknowledge the foresight of my colleague Minister Rattenbury, the former Minister for Mental Health, in establishing the office. We can see now that this decision is paying dividends.

This research and policy development has crucially and consistently included the voices of people with lived experience, making sure that we have a deeper understanding of how the decisions we make about service funding will impact on people's lives. There is still much more work to do in supporting people's mental health and wellbeing and continuing the focus on early intervention and prevention.

The bilateral is a landmark investment in our future, but it is not the only thing we have been working on. I look forward to talking in more detail in coming months about how we support and grow our diverse mental health workforce, the delivery of mental health services such as those for eating disorders, and strategies for the mental health and wellbeing of older people in Canberra. I present the following paper:

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention—Bilateral Agreement—Ministerial statement, 5 April 2022.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Standing orders—suspension

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.04): I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent Assembly business, order of the day No 1, relating to a proposed amendment to standing order 113A, being called on and debated forthwith.

For those that are not intimately aware of what that one is, it is a pretty simple amendment to standing orders. It is:

That standing order 113A be amended by omitting “all non-Executive Members seeking to speak have asked at least one question” and substituting “nine original questions have been asked by any Opposition Member, and other non-Executive Members seeking to speak have asked at least one question”.

Members would be aware that, during COVID, because we wanted to restrict the number of members in this place, we basically said that the number of questions allocated to the opposition could be asked by any member of the opposition. We did not all have to have a turn, in essence. So Ms Lee could ask six questions or I could ask four questions and so on. It is the way that we did it during COVID. It worked very satisfactorily and it is the way it is done in every parliament in Australia. We think that it is the way we should be doing business.

The reason for that is that, for example, today, as you would expect, there will be a number of questions on Calwell High School. I foreshadow that. One would expect that. But I will only be able to ask one question, so we will have to have Mr Cain or Ms Castley or someone asking a question in my portfolio area that I cannot ask. It is a

bit like saying, “We have questions on health, but the health minister can only answer one question.” It is nonsense.

It has worked quite effectively through the COVID period. I am not actually litigating the argument; I am just trying to explain what it is. The opposition have been wanting to do this for some time and have been stymied. We came into this place frustrated last September and said, “Look, we want to make this change.” It was adjourned, and the argument for adjourning it was: “We are going to go off and do this holus-bolus review of the standing orders and we will come back and let you know down the track.” That was last September. Last September you adjourned it, saying, “We are going to do this review.” That review has not even started!

So the opposition is in limbo. We are arguing for a very simple change, a change that has been working very effectively, cooperatively, through COVID. You adjourn that motion, saying, “We are going to do a review,” and you never even start the review. Admin and procedures has not even started that review. We still sit here saying, “Why can’t we make that change?” Nobody has come to the opposition and explained why we cannot do it, other than to say, “Oh, we want to do a big review that we have never even started.” We do not get to find out why we cannot do that.

Something that is done in every other parliament in Australia, that worked extremely effectively through COVID and that makes eminent sense if you actually want to have a good effective question time, you lot adjourned because you said it needs to be part of a whole review and then you do not even do that whole review! When will that be done, Mr Deputy Speaker? Maybe you know. No-one can tell me when that is going to happen. So what I want to do is bring it on for debate. At least have the debate; at least tell me in this place why you are not supporting it. Do not just say, “Oh, we are going to do it off in a review,” again and then not explain why you will not support it.

It is a very simple change; it is a change that worked eminently successfully throughout COVID. We will have this bizarre situation if we continue, where I will be wanting to ask questions today of the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs about a very serious matter that has happened in this town and I will not be allowed to. I will be able to ask one question and then I will have to write a question for somebody else to read. How does that aid democracy? How is that being open and accountable, like you lot say?

If your answer to this motion today is: “We are not even going to debate it; we are not going to allow you to have the debate; we are going to put it off to this review that is on the never-never and has not even started yet,” and you come back supporting it, this is the irony because there is no argument against it. You are going to delay it—there will be some grand review of standing orders in the never-never—and then come back and say, “Yes, that was okay. Not sure why we did not support that.”

So what I am arguing here for today is: at least have the debate about that change to standing orders. You cannot, again, say, “We are going to send it off to this review that never happens.” At least have the debate. At least somebody in this place tell me why you will not support it. At least do that. Do not just say, “No, we are not going to allow you to have the debate. We are going to put it off to review but we are never

going to do that review and maybe in August 2024 we will come back to you and say, ‘Oh, that was always a good idea. Sorry we did not do it earlier.’”

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (11.09): Probably unsurprisingly to Mr Hanson, we will not be supporting the motion today.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS ORR: When it was adjourned, the motion was sent off to the admin and procedure committee as part of the larger review that we do of the standing orders. That time line was communicated to Mr Hanson. He was a member of that committee. It was discussed, and that time line is still consistent. I ask that Mr Hanson reflect on his comments about not knowing what the time line is and when that review will be coming on. I feel that that has been made quite clear to him and he knows what it is.

Mr Hanson: When is it?

MS ORR: It has always been said that it will be in the same part of the term as every other term when it has been held, which is towards the end of this year, when admin and procedure intends to undertake a larger review of all the standing orders, as happens in every single term of parliament. It has been made quite clear to Mr Hanson on numerous occasions that this change, along with a whole heap of changes, will be considered as part of that review. It has full support to be considered as part of that review.

We will not be supporting this today, because this is Mr Hanson going before the Assembly and putting forward some facts that are a little bit too cute and that do not actually get to the crux of the issue. We have said clearly that we will consider it in admin and procedure, as part of the standing orders review. That is when it will be done. Mr Hanson can bring it on as much as he wants, but he should respect the processes of this place.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (11.11): Well, that was a very colourful speech by Mr Hanson. We will not be supporting the suspension of standing orders today not because of the merits of the issue but because we actually had no idea that this discussion was coming on today. Mr Hanson had not conveyed to us that he wanted to resolve this issue today, and that is quite unhelpful. We have not had a chance to fully consult with our party room on this, so we will not be supporting the suspension of standing orders.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: If Mr Hanson wants to urgently progress this matter, he should let us know. We will get ready for the next sitting and we will be prepared to, potentially, come and have that conversation. The fact that nobody knew that this was happening today and Mr Hanson went down the suspension of standing orders path is, I think, a really unhelpful contribution.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: He has been interjecting the whole time through the debate. This is clearly designed for show, not for the substance of the issue. We are very happy to work with Mr Hanson to have this substantive discussion at a later point in time.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: He is continuing to heckle me right through this conversation. He was heckling the Greens throughout Ms Orr’s remarks. I do not think this is a genuine discussion about the topic at hand. It is some stunt from Mr Hanson which is, I think, not in the spirit of parliament working together on procedural issues, which is the way this place generally works.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.12), in reply: Mr Rattenbury just said he would be happy to have the debate. I guess that is my problem: he is not. I have tried a couple of times now. I have tried to get it through admin and procedures to get it on the notice paper. Mr Rattenbury says, “We are happy to have a debate about it.” Well, the subject of this whole motion is to have a debate about it. I cannot get it through admin and procedures to get it on the notice paper, the review has not happened and no-one has come back to us on this, and Mr Rattenbury says he is happy to have the debate but then says he is not going to support a motion that is actually about having the debate. So is Mr Rattenbury going to make a commitment that, if I bring this back next sitting week, we will have the debate? Is that what he is saying? I think that is what he said, but it is all a bit confusing.

The Greens used to support this sort of stuff. The Greens used to be about Latimer House principles and all that. Remember, Mr Rattenbury? You used to talk about Latimer House principles and so on. The opposition just wants to institute the practices of question time that occur in every other parliament in Australia, which are eminently reasonable and worked effectively through COVID. The government—the Labor Party and the Greens—will not even have the debate about it. They do not even have the decency to have the debate about it. Somehow it has got to be put off to this review that has not even started yet!

What is going to happen is that that review will happen at some stage in the future, and we will find out about it probably in the last year of the term. So it is a bit of a sell-out, I would have to say, from the Greens. I am not surprised that the government, the Labor Party, do not want more effective questions asked of them. But for the Greens to sell out quite as they have, I must say is very disappointing. Whether they agree with this motion or not, to not even allow the debate, I think, is a poor step for this Assembly. I do not think it reflects well on the Greens, in particular, to refuse to even have the debate.

Question resolved in the negative.

Committees—amendment to resolution

MS BURCH (Brindabella) (11.15): I seek leave to move a motion concerning an amendment to the resolution of the establishment of committees in relation to matters referred to Assembly committees.

Leave granted.

Mr Hanson: I am tempted not to, I would have to say.

MS BURCH: Members, I move:

That the resolution of the Assembly of 2 December 2020, last amended on 10 February 2022, which establishes the Assembly's—

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Madam Speaker, if I can just interrupt? My understanding is that we need only one voice in the chamber to not give leave for leave not to be granted. I am not sure where we go from there, because we definitely did hear a voice saying no, of leave not being granted.

MS BURCH: Sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker; I did not hear the no.

Mr Hanson: I did not actually say no, to clarify. I said, "I am tempted not to." But I will grant leave. We will do the right thing—even if they will not.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay.

MS BURCH: I move:

That the resolution of the Assembly of 2 December 2020, last amended on 10 February 2022, which establishes the Assembly's standing committees, be amended by omitting the words "ACT Ombudsman" in the row in the table labelled "6. Public Accounts" and inserting these words in the same column of the table in the row labelled "5. Justice and Community Safety".

This is a consequential motion and amendment, a tidy-up to the amendment to the bill that was done last sitting. It just moves that item from PACS to JACS. I understand that both the committee chairs have been spoken to and are supportive and understand the need for the change. I seek the support of the chamber.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.17): Of course we will support this, Mr Deputy Speaker, because this is about the better running of the Assembly. All of us should be working together in this place, granting Madam Speaker leave to try to make sure that we improve the practices of this place. We will support that. If you listen to Ms Orr and Mr Braddock, we should refer this off to some further committee for discussion and come back in 18 months time with a conclusion for Madam Speaker. That is patently nonsense. We will support this. It is just disappointing that when the shoe is on the other foot all they are doing is blocking the improvements.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 14

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (11.18): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 14, dated 29 March 2022, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR CAIN: Scrutiny report No 14 contains the committee's comments on 12 pieces of subordinate legislation, proposed private member's amendments to one bill, and four government responses. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee

Statement by chair

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (11.19): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality relating to statutory appointments in accordance with continuing resolution 5A. During the reporting period 1 July 2021 to 31 December 2021 the committee considered a total of six appointments and reappointments to the following bodies: the ACT Government Procurement Board, the Governing Board of the Long Service Leave Authority and the Cultural Facilities Corporation Board. I now table a schedule of statutory appointments considered during this reporting period:

Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—10th Assembly—Period 1 July to 31 December 2021.

Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 (No 2)

Debate resumed from 1 December 2021 on motion by **Mr Steel**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.20): The Canberra Liberals will be supporting this bill without amendments because it will make our roads safer and it is a common-sense road safety bill. There is nothing in it that is controversial. There is nothing in it that represents a major change. It is just a bill that makes sense. I said last sitting week, when we were debating the first road safety bill, that road safety is one of those things that is much more important than politics, and that is a sentiment that continues with this bill.

Standouts from this bill are the changes regarding the use of a bike or e-scooter in a road or road-related offence. I have to say that I was somewhat shocked to find out that currently the offence for riding a bike while intoxicated on a road carries with it a higher penalty than for drink-driving on the same road, which is quite bizarre. Quite bizarre.

Mr Steel: Brendan Smyth.

MR PARTON: We blame Brendan Smyth for a lot of things! No, we don't. I gather it was his amendment. I will have to ask him what is going on there. I think we can all agree that changing the penalties so that they are consistent and in line just makes sense.

This offence is also not one that seeks to punish those who might take an e-scooter home on a night out, when nested with the power for police to direct someone to not get on an e-scooter in the previous bill. When you marry those up, this offence will mean that, prior to a charge, the chances are that if indeed you were staggering out of a nightclub you would have been told not to get on the scooter. After that, the threshold for impairment is to the point of being incapable of having proper control of the vehicle, which is quite a high threshold. When considered together, I think it is clear that this is about making sure that people stay safe.

It also reflects the changing ways in which we are travelling around our city. The changes to ensure that parking a non-electric vehicle in an EV charging space is an infringement, again, just make sense. This will become more and more important as we see EVs adopting a larger role on our roads. If we want to ensure that electric vehicles become a more attractive and viable option for Canberrans—and, again, that is something that we all agree on in this place—we must ensure that they are able to be charged in an efficient manner. This change will help to ensure this.

As I raised in the previous debate as well, these bills present all of us in this chamber with a great opportunity and an even larger responsibility to play a part in educating the community about road safety measures. I am sure that the minister and the directorate have things in the pipeline, but I think it is imperative that, following the passage of this bill, we ensure that the changes are appropriately and effectively communicated with the Canberra community. There is no point in making a change to keep people safe if we do not tell them that we have made the change. That is all I have to say about this bill. I will leave it to the minister.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.23): The Greens are also really happy to support this bill and the amendments it makes. I want to take a few minutes to talk about the amendment around parking in an EV charging spot. I was really pleased to hear Mr Parton's words about that, too.

We all know that we are in a climate emergency; we need to tackle it as fast as we can and we are doing a really good job here in the ACT. We have named the problem, we have switched to 100 per cent renewable electricity and we have a policy in place to electrify everything. But we know that our transport emissions are around 60 per cent of our tracked emissions, and we know that we need to move faster on getting closer to zero emissions travel options. We need to make it practical and convenient for all Canberrans.

The really good news is that we are at a point in the world where most of our solutions are already here. Last week I rode in an electric freight truck. That truck had

been converted from diesel with a swap-and-go battery. It was really, really good to see that kind of easy solution coming through. EVs and battery transport have come such a long way in such a short space of time. We really need to support the community, business and infrastructure to make sure that we are using all of that technology in a really smart way.

This week Minister Rattenbury launched the Fleet Advisory Service, which helps businesses make the switch to an electric vehicle fleet. It helps them to realise how much better off they will be and how much money they are going to save at the bowser when they do that. Minister Steel's bill today is another great example of government support for that really practical transition to zero emissions.

Many people charge their EVs at home. That is easy enough to do if you live in a house. All you need is a socket, for most of us, and you have 100 per cent renewable electricity to charge your EV that way. But for people in apartments it can be a bit harder. We have made some changes to our planning laws to help people make those sustainability upgrades in their apartment buildings. You just need to talk to your body corporate and they should help you to do that.

But some people are still going to find it a bit hard to charge at home. Tourists and travellers in particular are going to find it more convenient to charge on the run. Overseas what we are seeing is that a lot of shops and destinations are finding that offering a charging facility is a really, really good way to attract customers to your business. They will need to spend half an hour or an hour on site while their vehicle charges, and they are probably going to buy something in your shop while they are there. It is a really great commercial drawcard and it gives a business a real edge.

The ACT government is also rolling out public charging stations. We have 50 of those rolling out to support tourism and to support our apartment dwellers in particular. Minister Rattenbury recently released plans for that in the electric vehicle *Public Charging Outlook* for the ACT.

But in order to make all of those charging facilities work, we need to make sure that they are there for EVs to use them when they need them. At the moment, what is happening is that some petrol and diesel cars will park in the specially designated spot for EV charging. It is known as ICEing, because those petrol and diesel cars run on internal combustion engines, the old-fashioned engines, so they are called ICE vehicles. It is a real barrier to the uptake of EVs.

It is also an issue for our just transition to a safer climate. The people who do not have charging facilities at home—and that is particularly true for those who live in apartments or maybe older houses that just cannot cope with the electricity—are the people who really, really need access to convenient charging wherever they are and whenever they are out. If you do not know that you can reliably charge your car, you are not going to buy a new or a second-hand EV; you are going to stick with an old-fashioned ICE car. You will buy a petrol or diesel car, you will be locked into really high petrol and diesel prices and Canberra will be locked into high climate emissions. It is a really, really stark barrier for anyone who is apprehensive about

making the switch, and we have to do everything we can to make that transition a bit smoother.

Minister Steel's bill addresses this problem. He has introduced penalties where a petrol or diesel car ICEs a designated EV charging station. I am really happy to see that. A lot of cities have not made those sorts of changes yet. It is good that we are moving ahead in the ACT and keeping on the front foot. The Greens are really happy to support this bill.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (11.27), in reply: I am pleased to conclude the debate on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill (No 2). The bill continues our focus on working towards Vision Zero by delivering the initiatives outlined in the ACT Road Safety Action Plan 2020-2023. It supports and builds on the Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill (No 1), which was debated and passed by the Assembly last month.

The Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill (No 1) improved road safety by strengthening the territory's regulatory and enforcement framework for dangerous driving and other unsafe behaviours on the territory's road network. The bill we are debating today builds on these amendments and ensures that road safety laws keep pace with changing technology, by introducing new penalties for using e-scooters and other vehicles while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

As new forms of transport like e-scooters grow in popularity, we want to ensure that everyone uses them safely to protect riders and others who use our roads and paths. These new laws will address a gap in our current drug and alcohol legislation, targeting unsafe drink-riding on footpaths, shared paths, verges and other road-related spaces.

These amendments are particularly important and timely because the government is in the process of expanding the availability of Canberra's shared e-scooter scheme across the city. Earlier this week, I was pleased to announce that Canberrans can now ride an e-scooter from Belconnen to the city through the shared paths over Bruce Ridge, as the initial shared e-scooter zones have now been connected up. This is the first step towards a city-wide expansion of this new transport technology, as we work to make shared e-scooters available to all Canberrans by the end of the year.

Shared e-scooters are proving to be great for short trips, as well as for longer commutes when combined with things like public transport. The expansion follows feedback from the community that e-scooters provide another useful transport option, and Canberrans would like to see them available more widely across the city. Through the 2021 review of the shared e-scooter scheme, the ACT government also heard clear feedback that new rules and frameworks are needed to promote safe and courteous use of the devices. This has informed our work both on the road transport bill passed last month and on the one that we are debating here today.

The Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill (No 1) gave police a new power to direct a person to get off, or not get on, a personal mobility device like an e-scooter, a

bicycle or other non-powered vehicle if the officer suspects the person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. This power will be used as an early intervention tool, and infringements will be issued for those who do not follow a direction from police. The bill being debated today builds on this enforcement framework by introducing a new offence where a person drives or rides a vehicle, or animal, on a road-related area while they are under the influence of alcohol or a drug to such an extent that they do not have proper control.

Currently, it is an offence to use one of these devices under the influence of alcohol or drugs on a road but not on road-related areas like footpaths, shared paths, car parks and nature strips. That is a gap that we need to close, as more people are using personal mobility devices on road-related areas. A maximum court-imposed penalty of up to 20 penalty units will apply for this new offence, representing an amount of \$3,200. Of course, because this is a court-imposed penalty, a magistrate may choose to impose a lower fine and financial penalty at their discretion.

To create an appropriate hierarchy to address these unsafe behaviours, the new offence is for those serious instances where early intervention could not occur and a person is under the influence to an extent that they have lost control of their device. These matters should be heard in court. We anticipate that this offence will primarily be used in circumstances where an accident has occurred and the rider themselves or other road users have been injured.

I would like to reassure the Assembly that these amendments will be supported with education to our community. This will help to ensure that road users are aware of where these new offences apply and to whom they apply. I thank the scrutiny committee for raising this important consideration which will ensure that the new offences achieve the desired effect.

The bill also adjusts the penalty for riding a personal mobility device, bicycle or other non-powered vehicle under the influence of alcohol or a drug on a road, to align with similar offences for driving a motor vehicle under the influence. This simply addresses a previous discrepancy in penalties that the government has identified in the course of designing these other reforms.

As I have noted earlier, these alcohol and drug penalties are court imposed to reflect the serious harm that riding or driving while under the influence can cause. The courts will have the discretion to consider all the facts to determine whether the person was under the influence to the extent that they were incapable of having proper control and to determine an appropriate penalty. There is some established case law in that area already.

We want to send a clear message that drink-riding is dangerous and vehicles like e-scooters are not a good option if you have been drinking. These new penalties will deter this kind of behaviour, helping to create a safer environment on and around our roads and responding directly to the community's concerns about drink-riding.

I will now move, briefly, to the other elements of the bill, which are primarily technical amendments to keep our road transport frameworks up to date. The first provides clarification of the legislative provisions allowing a vehicle registered in

another jurisdiction to lawfully drive on ACT roads where it is temporarily in the ACT, as the term “temporarily” presents some ambiguity. This ambiguity has meant that some people are moving to the ACT and garaging their vehicles here for extended periods of time but without transferring over their registration and insurance to the ACT.

The bill introduces a three-month period that a vehicle can be garaged at an address in the ACT before an ACT registration is needed to continue to drive on our roads. This change continues to support visitors to our territory and, where required, gives reasonable time for a person to obtain an ACT registration. Requiring vehicles that are garaged in the ACT to be under the ACT’s registration and third-party insurance schemes benefits safety in the community, as it ensures that as many vehicles as possible are subject to the same requirements for roadworthiness and have the same coverage in the event of an accident.

The bill recognises the transient nature of defence force employment and introduces an exemption to the requirement for defence personnel to transfer their vehicle to an ACT registration. The exemption applies to a vehicle registered in the name of a member of the defence force or their eligible families.

The last set of amendments in the bill supports the government’s work to encourage the uptake of zero emission vehicles by protecting dedicated charging spaces for these vehicles. Tackling climate change is an important focus of our government and the Canberra community. Reducing transport emissions from private vehicles is key to this objective. As Ms Clay mentioned, around 60 per cent—I think it has gone up to 63 per cent—of our emissions profile is transport.

To make it easier for people to find a place to charge electric vehicles, as the fleet of electric vehicles grows over time, this bill introduces two offences to protect the availability of electric-powered vehicle parking and charging stations. The first offence prevents the use of electric vehicle parking bays by non-electric vehicles, ensuring that these spots are only available to EVs. The second makes it an offence to park in a charging bay without using the charging facility, ensuring that EV drivers do not just take advantage of charging spots as a convenient place to park. Of course, when they are plugged in and are taking a little bit too long, the charge is finished, they are slugged by the minute, I think, depending on the charging facility.

Both offences attract an infringement notice penalty of \$125, which is consistent with similar parking penalties. The bill also introduces an additional 30 minutes to the maximum parking time limit indicated on electric vehicle parking signs for mobility parking scheme authority holders. The additional time maximises electric vehicle parking availability while still providing additional time for those that need it.

In summary, the bill supports a number of key government commitments and strategies. It supports a safer road network by introducing a new offence for driving or riding certain transport modes, including bicycles or personal mobility devices, on road-related areas while under the influence of alcohol or drugs to such an extent that proper control is not maintained. It updates the offence for using certain transport modes, including a bicycle or PMD, under the influence of alcohol or drugs on a road to reflect the serious harms that these users can cause to themselves and others.

It maintains the integrity of the ACT's registration and insurance frameworks by prescribing that ACT registration is required after a vehicle is at an ACT garage address for three months. It supports a reduction in transport emissions by introducing offences to protect the use and availability of dedicated electric vehicle parking and charging bays. It provides an improvement to the administration and efficiency of the road transport legislation through a number of minor or technical amendments.

I am pleased to conclude the debate on this bill. I look forward to its passage so that we have the improved frameworks in place, the right rules in place, to support safe and responsible behaviour as we expand the availability and use of e-scooters and improved vehicle technology here in the ACT.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 11.38 am to 2.00 pm.

Ministerial arrangements

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (2.00): The Chief Minister will be absent from question time today, for personal reasons. I will endeavour to take questions on notice or respond to them if I can.

Questions without notice

Calwell High School—safety

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, I refer to the story in today's *Canberra Times* titled "School like a war zone." The deeply troubling report reads:

... inspectors found teachers and administration staff were being abused, sworn at, screamed at and subjected to sexualised behaviour or violence from students on a daily basis ...

One teacher had been assaulted the previous week while trying to prevent one student from assaulting another, resulting in a dislocated shoulder, several broken teeth, welts to the lower arm and bruising to the back.

WorkSafe ACT has now issued a prohibition notice stating that year 7 and 8 cohorts are prohibited from being on the school premises. This situation has been called unprecedented by the teachers union.

Minister, how long have teachers and staff been abused, sworn at, screamed at and subjected to sexualised behaviour and violence on a daily basis at this school?

MS BERRY: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Calwell High School has been experiencing some challenges over the last six months or so. The ACT government, through the Education Directorate, has been providing additional support to the Calwell school community, implementing the Positive Behaviour for Learning program to ensure that the school can have a positive and respectful culture. In addition, the school has been able to access as a priority the relief teaching pool to make sure that it can provide additional teachers when there are absences at the school.

Of course, COVID has exacerbated circumstances at that school as far as staff absences are concerned. That has led, in more recent times, to an incident at that school which is unacceptable. The WorkSafe notice is upsetting to read. It is distressing for me and for everybody who has read it, and particularly for teachers and school staff at that school.

I would like to assure the school community, schoolteachers and staff that the Education Directorate will continue to work very closely with that school community to ensure that additional supports are in place. We will work closely with stakeholders like the Education Union and the CPSU to ensure that the WorkSafe notice is complied with and responded to appropriately.

MS LEE: Minister, are you aware of similar problems, on any level, at any other ACT government school?

MS BERRY: That is a fairly broad question. I can say that there are a number of schools in the ACT that are finding absences with regard to COVID a challenge and have moved to partially remote education. That is not just in public schools but also non-government schools. As for incidents in our schools like this one, this is a rare incident and the government responds by providing additional support when it becomes aware of these incidents.

Our schools are safe schools. They are great schools. Our school staff and teachers care deeply about the education and health and welfare of students and young people. So we continue to support them with the implementation of the Positive Behaviour for Learning program and by providing additional support staff when that is required.

MR HANSON: Minister, how many children or staff have been assaulted at Calwell High School since you became aware of this problem about six months ago?

MS BERRY: I think there are two incidents that are being referred to here. One is the notice that has been provided by WorkSafe, who have interviewed a number of staff and teachers at the school, and concerns around workforce numbers and the ability to provide a safe and good teaching environment at the school. The Education Directorate will work with WorkSafe, school staff, teachers and the school principal to understand the advice and evidence that was provided to WorkSafe. Once that evidence—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, a point of order on relevance. My question was: just how many children or teachers have been assaulted at the school since the minister first became aware of the problem six months ago? I appreciate that action has been taken, but the question is: how many assaults have there been?

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, in time you have left, could you go to the specifics.

MS BERRY: Can I just be clear that Calwell is a good school and these kinds of incidents are rare. The school is being supported. The school community is committed to ensuring that it is a good school for parents and students alike and that teachers and staff have a safe environment. On the incident that occurred, WorkSafe has investigated it and held a number of interviews with staff—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on relevance, the question was very clearly: how many assaults have there been? The minister said that she is aware that there have been problems at the school since last July, I think. How many assaults have occurred in that period? It is a simple question.

MADAM SPEAKER: If you are able to answer it without compromising anything, Minister.

MS BERRY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will take the question on notice as far as the particular reference that Mr Hanson is making.

Calwell High School—safety

MR HANSON: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, WorkSafe has declared one ACT school unsafe, with teachers and students being assaulted and abused on a daily basis, with the union saying:

... it's unacceptable for things to have gotten to this point where the school is so under-resourced that we're having these sorts of issues.

The Australian Education Union further stated that “it is the responsibility of the Education Directorate to ensure that its schools are properly resourced”. They continued, “They have failed to uphold this responsibility.” Minister, why is this school so under-resourced, according to the union, that they are having these sorts of issues?

MS BERRY: I understand that the school has had some incidents insofar as needing additional support from the Education Directorate. That support has been provided. A later incident happened a couple of weeks ago which has meant there has been a WorkSafe investigation about some of the other issues at this school. WorkSafe are doing their job, and I greatly appreciate the work that they have done to ensure that this is a safe workplace. We will comply with and work with them closely about the incident that they have investigated.

As far as the Education Union are concerned, we also gratefully receive the work that they do on behalf of teachers, and their work with our government to ensure that all of our schools are safe schools and provide an excellent education for all students—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, the question was not about what WorkSafe is doing. The question very clearly followed the Australian Education Union's claims that this school is under-resourced. Minister, why is this school under-resourced? It is not about whether or not WorkSafe is doing an investigation.

MADAM SPEAKER: The minister is being relevant to the question, as she has been speaking about resources within the school.

MS BERRY: As everybody will be aware, there is an international health pandemic that has exacerbated a teaching shortage that has been experienced here in the ACT and across the country. That is the case. That is a fact. Nobody is making that up. That is a reality, and that is a reality that our schools have had to live with over the last couple of years, but particularly within this first term of 2022. It has been an incredibly challenging time, and I thank them and acknowledge the work that they have been doing.

MR HANSON: Minister, how has this situation been allowed to develop to such a critical point, given that you were informed of these problems at least last year?

MS BERRY: As I said, it is not about blaming COVID; it is about COVID being a reality and exacerbating the teaching shortage that we have, that we are all aware of, and that is occurring across the country. COVID has absolutely impacted the ability of our schools to operate in the same way they were 2½ years ago. That has had to change, and we have had to change a lot of things in our community, including within our school communities. We are doing that and supporting our schools to get through this incredibly difficult time. It is not just public schools; non-government schools as well are facing these teaching shortages, and are also facing these issues around having to move different parts of their schools to remote education. This is a difficult and challenging time, and we are working closely with all stakeholders to make sure we can do the very best by them all.

MS LEE: Minister, how widespread are these problems, given all schools face the same chronic staff shortages, and presumably COVID?

MS BERRY: I can advise that there are around five public schools at the moment. I do not know the number of non-government or Catholic schools that have had to move to remote education, but I understand that has been the case as well. That has been directly as a result of COVID, staff members being impacted by positive COVID results, and the inability to replace all of those staff across all of our schools.

Volunteers—arrangements and conditions

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety. Minister, I met with volunteers ACT who made me aware of some of the challenges local community organisations have with industrial relations and

WHS for volunteers. Can you please explain how the government assists those organisations to ensure that volunteers are not replacing paid employment positions?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Braddock for the question. It is an important one as we move forward and we see so much volunteerism occurring across the ACT. Of course, there are issues of pay and work relationships that fall under the commonwealth Fair Work Act. The Fair Work Ombudsman's website sets out what an employment relationship looks like; it can be indicated by organisational control or an obligation to attend work. Unpaid volunteer work can occur when there is no employment relationship and, conversely, if there is an employment relationship then volunteer work cannot occur and people need to be treated and paid as employees.

The government wants to support those employers that support volunteers across the territory. I can relate to experiences, particularly where volunteers operate within the ESA structure, which you would be aware of, Madam Speaker. This is where we support businesses that support those volunteers that help the Canberra community. There is quite a broad structure in supporting both the businesses and the volunteerism.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, how does the government ensure these volunteers are treated safely under the work health and safety laws?

MR GENTLEMAN: Again, there is quite a bit of work to ensure their safety, particularly in areas that I look after with first responders. Where we have volunteers working right alongside them we need to make sure that our workplace safety laws are up to scratch and support that volunteerism. You have seen recent changes to laws around workplace hazards, and indeed diseases, where we have supported those people where we can.

MS CLAY: Minister, what is the government doing to encourage Canberrans to re-engage with volunteering post-COVID?

MR GENTLEMAN: In similar ways, I think, to what I have been speaking about with ESA, we have been supporting businesses to support their volunteers to ensure that we can get them the right PPE for the work that they do and ensure that we recognise the important work they do. Indeed, just the Monday before last there was a ceremony at the Canberra Theatre thanking volunteers for the 2019-20 work they did through bushfires, storms and, indeed, COVID. Recognised by me and the Governor-General were 300 recipients. We recognise the Canberra community's view on how they support volunteers across the territory and we will continue to do that work.

Education—class sizes

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, I refer to the multiple reports on overcrowding and staff shortages in ACT schools. Today's report on the Worksafe prohibition states that teachers were regularly taking classes of more than 40 students due to a chronic shortage of staff and COVID-19 absences, with one instance of a class of 75 students supervised by one teacher and one learning support officer. The AEU has said:

Regrettably the situation at Calwell High School is not an isolated case. With the union receiving staff shortage SOS calls from school staff across Canberra on a daily basis we anticipate further interventions will and must occur.

Minister, why have there been repeated stories of classes of 60 or 75 students in ACT schools, and what is being done right now to address it?

MS BERRY: I do not know where the member has been for the last couple of years, but an international health pandemic—COVID-19—has impacted on the ability of our schools to meet their staffing requirements, on top of what we already know is a teaching shortage across the country, including in the ACT. In the ACT we have worked with the education union to set up a taskforce to understand the teaching shortage before COVID-19. We have worked with the teachers' union about the kinds of things that we can do within our schools right now to reduce the workload for teachers so that they are being impacted less in a really challenging situation. We will continue to do that, and we will continue to make assessments and review to see what we can do into term 2 and throughout the rest of the year to support our teaching professionals to provide the best possible face-to-face learning environment that they can—or remote if they need to—in the midst of an international health pandemic.

MR PARTON: I have a supplementary question. Minister, how often are teachers taking classes of over 40 in schools across the ACT?

MS BERRY: I do not have that detail with me. I can take that question on notice. What I can say is to refer to my answer to the first question: the education union and Education Directorate have been working on reducing teacher workloads and listening to school communities when they are impacted by COVID-19 absences so that they have the chance to move to remote education. I would encourage schools that are experiencing these kinds of shortages, as soon as they possibly know about them, to get in touch with the Education Directorate because we should not be afraid to return to remote education when we need to. We have excellent systems in place. We should be proud of those. Our schools are well prepared, through the initiative of the Labor government to provide Chromebooks and wi-fi dongles. We were well prepared, and we have excellent and internationally-accessed remote education tools that are available for everyone to use, and we are ready should we need to.

MR HANSON: What other schools in the ACT are currently sending SOS calls for staff shortages to the directorate?

MS BERRY: I do not think I agree with the way that they member has suggested in that question, that it is an SOS—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, allow the minister to answer.

MS BERRY: I do not have that level of detail with me at the moment. I can take that question on notice, but I would say that the Education Directorate, working with stakeholders, the education union and the CPSU around workforce availability in our schools, has directly taken responsibility for the relief pool to provide relief staff to

schools so that teachers and school staff do not have to do the run-around themselves. That work will be done by the Education Directorate. Along with a number of other changes to workloads that will lift the pressure from teachers so that they can continue to work safely in our schools.

Calwell High School—safety

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, I refer to the prohibition notice issued against an ACT school. It is reported that the prohibition notice stated that the year 7 and 8 cohorts were prohibited from being on the school premises unless they were going on a prearranged excursion. Vulnerable children, children of emergency workers and children in the learning support unit are permitted to attend. Minister, what will happen to the education and development of the year 7 and year 8 children who cannot attend because the school is unsafe?

MS BERRY: I thank Mrs Kikkert for her question and refer to my previous answer on the excellent tools that the Education Directorate has developed to ensure that young people in our schools, when they need to return to remote education, have the tools that they need. They can be accessed by students, by parents and carers and by teachers and school staff to ensure that that education continues. But it will be different. It will be different because it is not face to face. We have those tools in place, ready. We have Chromebooks available for young people who need to access their work from home. We have access to wi-fi dongles, should they be required by families.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, what is being put in place to protect the most vulnerable children in the LSU who will be at a school that WorkSafe has declared unsafe?

MS BERRY: Those students will be supported in our schools. WorkSafe has made recommendations and the Education Directorate is complying with them.

DR PATERSON: Minister, how are the year 7 and 8 students being supported through this process?

MS BERRY: The year 7 and 8 cohorts at Calwell had previously arranged excursions, so they were able to attend those excursions and not be at school yesterday or today, complying with the WorkSafe notice. They will also be supported by the online education resources that I referred to in my previous answers, as well as by teachers within the school checking in on them.

It is really important to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts that our teachers have gone to every day, whether that is through remote education or within their schools, through this international pandemic, and that will continue.

Waste—food and garden organics

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the progress on securing a dedicated FOGO facility in the ACT?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Orr for her question, and for her interest in the environment and the circular economy. I was very pleased recently to announce that the ACT government will establish a dedicated large-scale FOGO processing facility here in the territory. Feasibility has identified available and suitable land at the Hume resource recovery estate for this new facility. At this site we will be able to convert food and organic materials collected from Canberra households and turn it into nutrient-rich compost that can be used in the agricultural sector, in viticulture and in our city's parks and gardens. This is an essential step towards rolling out a city-wide FOGO service.

In order to be able to undertake food and organic waste collections here in Canberra at scale, we need to ensure that we have the capabilities, technologies and the facilities to process these goods into valuable alternative materials. The government will now work towards detailed design of this facility, with a tender expected in the new year. The facility is part of our huge capital works pipeline, and shows that the government is building sustainability into our plan to create jobs and build the infrastructure that we need for our growing city.

MS ORR: Minister, what impact will this new facility have on reducing waste to landfill?

MR STEEL: I welcome the member's interest in sustainably managing Canberra's waste. We know that as much as 37 per cent of our waste presently going into landfill is organic material from our garbage bins. By going to landfill, this waste is contributing to harmful emissions and is having a negative impact on our environment.

Ms Lawder: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, please, Mr Steel.

Ms Lawder: Whilst I am actually very interested in the minister's response, can I draw your attention to standing order 59, about anticipating discussion? This is an item that is on the notice paper for later today.

MR STEEL: Madam Speaker, on the point of order, I understand that questions in question time are explicitly exempted from that provision of the standing orders.

Mr Gentleman: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, I would be very interested, if this point of order was upheld, to see what questions are put from the Liberal Party, if they are not able to be answered by ministers during question time.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question is in order. Having regard to all of the various points of order, just because something is on the notice paper, it does not mean to say you cannot discuss it in any way, shape or form. If I look at your motion, Ms Lawder, it is around the collection of weekly pick-ups and other bits and pieces. The minister is in order.

MR STEEL: I am talking about the large-scale natural composting facility that we want to build, which is slightly different, anyway. We want to divert this organic waste from landfill, and we will be able to reduce our waste emissions by up to 30 per cent in doing so. This is an important part of reaching the ACT's ambitious emissions reduction targets as we drive towards zero net emissions by 2045. So far we have been able to divert a significant amount of food and organic matter away from landfill in the trial area in Belconnen. At the end of February, 480 tonnes of organic materials had been diverted away from landfill, to be converted into compost. This figure will continue to grow as we plan towards a city-wide expansion.

DR PATERSON: Minister, what has been learned from the ongoing FOGO pilot, and how will this shape the delivery of a city-wide service?

MR STEEL: I thank Dr Paterson for her supplementary. The government is actively listening to and learning from community feedback and engagement through the current FOGO pilot. Throughout the trial we have seen a very high level of engagement and a really low level of contamination. Contamination rates in the first three months of the FOGO trial have been just 0.1 per cent—a fantastic result which shows that these communities are taking recycling seriously and are embracing the new service.

We have heard and are listening to feedback that some households are finding the transition to fortnightly bin collections in the pilot challenging. We recognise that when there are big families, young children in nappies or people with disabilities in the household, this can mean that there is a lot of waste. We have been actively promoting the ability for households to order a second or larger bin if they need one, at a small fee, and around 80 households have taken up that option thus far. That is not a huge share of the 5,000 households in the trial, but we recognise that this is an important option to have available.

Last week I met with Randwick City Council to discuss how they managed these issues in their transition to FOGO services just over a year ago. TCCS is also engaging with members of the community and stakeholder groups to understand how we can best support households with particular needs.

I can assure Canberrans that when we move to city-wide FOGO collection services, we will have options in place for people who need more bin space or more frequent collections. This pilot is a great opportunity to work with the community to figure out what these should be. I want to thank residents in the Belconnen pilot suburbs for the way that they have embraced this new service thus far, and we look forward to incorporating the learnings from this into a bigger, city-wide service in the years to come.

Education—class sizes

MS LAWDER: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, according to reports on the WorkSafe prohibition, the ACT Education Directorate will need to demonstrate that Calwell High School can comply with the class sizes policy, which

states that a maximum of 32 students can be in a class for years 7 to 9, with 30 students the maximum for year 10. Minister, can the school comply with these class sizes, given the teacher shortage?

MS BERRY: That is exactly the work that the Education Directorate has been doing across the first part of this term, to ensure that schools do have the staff to be able to operate and deliver face-to-face education. When they cannot, the school might move to remote education for parts of that school whilst we are going through a health pandemic where teacher shortages, unfortunately, occur as a result of COVID.

MS LAWDER: Minister, can you guarantee that all schools can comply with maximum class sizes across the ACT, given the teacher shortage?

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, it just confounds me that the opposition have not been hearing anything that has been going on. I wonder where they have been for the last 2½ years. There is an international health pandemic which is impacting and is already an issue within our schools around a teacher shortage. It means that we are experiencing extraordinary shortages in teaching and school staff.

Ms Lee: Can you say that you are going to comply with the WorkSafe order? That is what it says: 32.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please!

MS BERRY: At the moment, and whilst we continue to go through this pandemic and work through this pandemic together, of course we cannot guarantee—that is why we have these systems in place, to ensure that when there are teacher shortages schools can return to remote education for parts of that school to ensure that those schools are safe. That has been the case from the start of this year as we manage our school systems.

MR HANSON: Minister, how many teachers are we short in the ACT in order to meet maximum class size requirements?

MS BERRY: I have been asked a question just like this during one of the last sitting periods by Mr Hanson, where I said that there was one permanent position vacant at the start of this term. That has been the case. However, of course teachers take leave for various reasons and, unfortunately, that leave and teacher absence has been exacerbated as a result of COVID.

Calwell High School—safety

MR MILLIGAN: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Education. The union has said, “The fact that it takes a staff member to be seriously injured and the intervention of an external regulator to provide a degree of safety for the staff and students at Calwell High School demonstrates a lack of care on the part of Education Directorate.” Minister, what is being done to mitigate violence in this school, and how will that be demonstrated that to Worksafe?

MS BERRY: The Education Directorate will work through the notice that has been provided by Worksafe with regard to the issues and the incident particularly that has arisen at this school. We have already responded in part to part of the issues that Worksafe has raised around removing some of those students from the school community to receive remote education. In that case it would be the years 7 and 8 cohort that are on an excursion. We will continue to do that work with Worksafe and all the stakeholders within the school communities at Calwell to ensure that the school community can be assured that Calwell is a great school and a safe school. We will continue to do that work.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why did it take an injured person and external intervention for serious action to be taken?

MS BERRY: As I said previously, the Education Directorate has already been working with Calwell to provide the additional supports that it needed earlier last year, and has been continuing that work. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has exacerbated the circumstances around that school with regard to school replacements. That is the case. There is no hiding from that reality.

MR HANSON: Minister, when will the directorate comply with the requirements of the Worksafe direction?

MS BERRY: I have already said that the Education Directorate has complied in part with the directions under the Worksafe notice with regard to removing those two cohorts from the school community to attend their otherwise pre-organised excursions and to access remote education when it is required.

Mr Hanson: When will the kids be back? When will it be safe?

MS BERRY: When will you get COVID-19, Jeremy? When are you going to get it?

Mr Hanson: Last week, actually.

MS BERRY: When are you going to get it, Elizabeth Lee? This is ridiculous. You cannot predict when you are going to get COVID-19.

Mr Hanson: I have a point of order. Throwing those sorts of accusations to members about our personal health conditions instead of answering questions about a very serious issue in schools is unparliamentary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Berry, please go to the question with no other commentary, please.

MS BERRY: The suggestion that our schools can predict when they will get COVID-19 in their school communities is ridiculous, and that is what we have been hearing from the Canberra Liberals. In fact the case is that our schools are well prepared in the event that there are vacancies.

Opposition members interjecting—

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, seriously, how can I possibly respond to the question?

MADAM SPEAKER: There will be no more commentary from either side of the chamber, please.

Transport Canberra—female bus drivers

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, the ACT government agreed to PTCS committee recommendation 13 from the 2020-21 annual reports hearings. The ACT government said:

Transport Canberra is actively discussing possible options to enhance access to and provide opportunities for attracting and retaining more female bus drivers. This includes consideration of the relevant recruitment channels, community stakeholder groups, employment programs and workplace requirements, as well as the efficacy of identified positions, programs and targets and related policy.

Could you give me an update on where this work is up to?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Clay for her interest in this matter. Whilst COVID-19 has affected the recruitment of a number of positions across the ACT government, it has also affected the recruitment of bus drivers—and particularly the efforts of Transport Canberra in trying to attract a more diverse workforce. As a result, we have seen an increase of only one per cent in the number of female staff members at Transport Canberra, but we have a recruitment campaign that is underway to attract more drivers and particularly drivers who are women. There are a range of different benefits to working for Transport Canberra. It is a role that is suitable for people who are looking to earn money on weekends, to work flexibly. It provides a range of different training opportunities for people. Customer service is a big focus, so we are trying to attract people who have that particular focus to serve the very diverse community that Transport Canberra carries every day.

A range of materials have gone out. I will table one of those, which is a feature in HerCanberra:

“My mum was a bus driver. Yours (or any woman you know) could be too”—
Copy of article from HerCanberra, posted on 1 April 2022.

I am not putting Jane Steel up for the role, but I am sure that many people will be interested in joining Transport Canberra during this campaign.

MS CLAY: What is the breakdown of the number of bus operators by gender and by employment category, such as casual, part time or full time?

MR STEEL: The headcount for Transport Canberra as at 16 February 2022 was 101 female bus operators. There were 18 casual, 82 permanent and one temporary. A range of roles and different working hours are available for people who want to join Transport Canberra.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, how is Transport Canberra and City Services supporting cultural and linguistic diversity in the employment of bus drivers?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Braddock for his question. We have seen a more culturally diverse workforce in Transport Canberra and City Services. One of the reasons for that is that we have been advertising, and targeting particularly taxi drivers, who may be wanting to undertake more secure work, government work, working for Transport Canberra and getting paid better working for us than they could in a different industry.

We have seen our community become more diverse, and the workforce is reflecting that. We have a strategy around this that sets the direction for the people and activities that we have as a priority. We have a focus on purposeful leadership, attracting the right people, providing a great employee experience, providing creative pathways for people in employment, as well as shaping a diverse and inclusive workforce. Those priorities have shaped over 50 actions and commitments and we will be working towards each of those under the ACT public service diversity framework.

Calwell High School—remote learning

MR CAIN: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, following the investigation by WorkSafe ACT that found that at least one ACT school was unsafe for teachers and students, parents were informed that years 7 and 8 would be moving to remote learning due to COVID, not due to the prohibition notice. Minister, why didn't that notification include the real reason that students could not attend their school—that it was unsafe to be there?

MS BERRY: Calwell has been experiencing a shortage of staff, and has been able to have priority access to the relief pool. COVID has had an impact on that, and it has meant that there are staff shortages at that school. Fortunately, the years 7 and 8 cohort already had a prearranged excursion in place, so we were able to move those students off the school site, to ensure that there was an opportunity for that school to respond to the WorkSafe notice, and to ensure that there was appropriate engagement with the Education Directorate to meet the requirements under the WorkSafe notice.

MR CAIN: Minister, what official information has now been given to parents about the WorkSafe prohibition?

MS BERRY: There was information provided to the parent community that there had been an incident previously, prior to the WorkSafe visit at the school. Parents were aware that there was an incident at the school. The WorkSafe issue refers to the safety of the staff within that workplace, and it has been posted within a staffroom, in consultation with the school staff, as per the requirements under the notice.

MR HANSON: Minister, why did your directorate hide the real reason from parents that their kids could not go to Calwell school? That is what they want to know.

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, we have just spent this whole afternoon talking about teacher shortages within our schools. It is a teacher shortage that has been experienced across the country, including here in the ACT. Calwell has also been a victim of those teacher shortages, including because of COVID.

Opposition members interjecting—

MS BERRY: There are two challenges within that school. One is shortages as a result of COVID; and there was an incident that occurred in the previous week. Those are the reasons, and those are the reasons that were provided to parents in the school communities, that there were teacher shortages—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, enough!

Mr Gentleman: Madam Speaker, the opposition continues—

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes. Enough, members. You are about to be warned.

MS BERRY: For members' awareness, parents were told on the day of the incident that the incident had occurred. So there is nothing to hide here. The WorkSafe order relates specifically to the safety of schoolteachers and staff. All of the necessary actions are being followed, in complying with the WorkSafe notice. The Education Directorate will continue to work with WorkSafe and all of the stakeholders within that school to comply with the recommendations in that notice.

Education Directorate—Campbell Primary School procurement

MS CASTLEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, your directorate refused a freedom of information request to release documents regarding the Campbell Primary School procurement. Later the Ombudsman overturned that decision. Was your directorate aware of the probity issues with this procurement when it refused to release the documents?

MS BERRY: It was a decision that was made by the Ombudsman, as the member has suggested.

Ms Lee: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Lee.

Ms Lee: Perhaps the minister did not understand the question properly. The directorate refused the freedom of information request to release the documents. That decision was overturned by the Ombudsman. I ask that the minister be directed to the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, to the question.

MS BERRY: There were matters of commercial-in-confidence—that is why in the first instance—and then the matter went to the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman overturned that. And that is what they are there for.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, is the reason that the FOI was refused—

Ms Lee: The probity issues.

MS CASTLEY: the probity issues?

MS BERRY: I believe so, but I am just double-checking and clarifying the question that Ms Castley has asked. If it is specifically just the way she has framed her question, that is my answer to that. I will just double-check. My understanding is that it was for reasons of commercial-in-confidence.

Ms Lee interjecting—

MS BERRY: I just need to clarify that.

Ms Lee: I am very confused now.

MS BERRY: The question was not quite clear. If I can clarify: it was not for probity issues; it was for matters of commercial-in-confidence.

MS LEE: Minister, why did it take an FOI request, an Ombudsman's review and reversal and an Auditor-General's investigation to bring the issues with this procurement to public attention?

MS BERRY: First of all, the Auditor-General's work schedule is public, so everybody would have known that that work schedule was occurring and that the investigation was occurring. There is nothing to see here.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Ms Lee, Mr Hanson! Ms Lee, you are now warned.

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, can you stop the clock for a moment, please?

MADAM SPEAKER: You have the floor, Minister.

MS BERRY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have been completely transparent around the Auditor-General's—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! You are on a warning.

MS BERRY: We have been completely transparent—

MADAM SPEAKER: Just continue, I would suggest.

MS BERRY: If this is such a serious issue—

Ms Lee: Yes, it is, and yet you say, “There is nothing to see here.”

MS BERRY: then the Leader of the Opposition would not be sitting there giggling at the response that I am—

Ms Lee: At you, at “nothing to see here”.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! You are now directly warned, Ms Lee. One more infringement and you will be named.

MS BERRY: Members will be aware that there is a time frame for the government to respond to Auditor-General’s reports. On this question previously I have said that the government will respond in due course—and it will respond—and that response will be provided on Thursday. Then members of the opposition can go through the government’s response at their leisure.

Planning—Molonglo Valley commercial centre

DR PATERSON: My question is to Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, where is the ACT government up to with planning for the Molonglo commercial centre?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Dr Paterson for her interest in Molonglo, and for the question. The Canberra spatial plan identified the Molonglo Valley as Canberra’s next major urban area back in 2004. Molonglo Valley is planned to accommodate approximately 55,000 new residents over coming decades. Officials have been working closely with the Molonglo community to finalise the technical amendment for the Molonglo commercial centre, and I am pleased to advise the Assembly that the technical amendment was released for public consultation yesterday. The consultation period will run until 6 May 2022, which will allow for the amendment to be discussed at the next Molonglo Valley Community Council meeting, which I understand is on 28 April 2022.

As anticipated last year, this is a technical amendment process which will allow a fast-tracked planning process. The government has a vision for the Molonglo group centre as a focus for community life, with safe and inviting public spaces and street for people linger and easily move around the centre. Buildings and infrastructure will be designed and delivered through best-practice urban design, sustainability and innovation principles. Public transport and active travel routes will seamlessly connect the centre to the surrounding neighbourhoods, recreation spaces and to the wider areas of Canberra. The Molonglo group centre will be an all-electric group centre, and I will continue to work with my colleagues on delivering these sustainable goals.

DR PATERSON: I have a supplementary question. Minister, what kinds of facilities is the government planning for the Molonglo group centre.

MR GENTLEMAN: The suburb of Molonglo will have commercial, retail, residential and community facilities. The concept plan sets out the desired locations

for this range of uses, as well as identifying active travel and public transport routes. It includes a range of public open spaces, including connectivity to the Molonglo River corridor, and the river will be a real feature of the Molonglo group centre, with recreation spaces in Molonglo connected to the recreation spaces in the river corridor.

Incorporating the exceptional landscape setting and high-quality remnant trees are features of the group centre and surrounds, and the landscape and trees will guide where the key public spaces are located. The concept plan will set aside land for a range of commercial activities, including lands zoned at CZ3 services zone, so that people who live in the area will also have easy access to trades and services such as mechanics.

The concept plan also identifies suitable locations for a range of community facilities such as schools, emergency services, indoor and outdoor sport and recreation, and public transport interchange. The government's preference is for the community facilities to be co-located in highly accessible locations to active travel routes and public transport stops. We are also looking to the future for the Molonglo group centre beyond the immediate development, making sure that it is designed so that it can accommodate light rail into the future.

MS ORR: Minister, what are the next steps for planning in Molonglo?

MR GENTLEMAN: The government will seek further input from the community on the concept plan through the public consultation period. I encourage members to promote the consultation of the concept plan to their networks. In addition to the general public consultation, the government will work with our Ngunnawal community to ensure that our open spaces and urban places in Molonglo celebrate Ngunnawal culture. We will take account of the comments from the public and the Ngunnawal community before finalising the technical amendment and incorporating the changes into the Territory Plan. Once the plans for the group centre are incorporated into the Territory Plan this will set the foundation for details of the estate development planning process ahead of land release in the commercial centre.

Ms Berry: I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Supplementary answers to questions without notice

Education—class sizes

Education Directorate—Campbell Primary School procurement

MS BERRY: Just for members' information, Macgregor Primary School is currently closed for years 4, 5 and 6, and those students are in remote education. For Gordon Primary School, it is years 4, 5 and 6. For Calwell, it is years 7 and 8. For Namadgi, it is years 3, 4, 5 and 6. Campbell Primary School is having two student-free days on Thursday and Friday to transition into their new school.

I just wanted to provide some clarification on the question that Ms Castley asked me around the Freedom of Information Act and her question with regard to access to that the government. Of course, the act provides the right to access to government information unless access to that information would, on balance, be contrary to the

public interest. The freedom of information requests are made through the information officer, and it is their decision to make on what is provided through that request. The initial decision made on 12 January 2021 under the Freedom of Information Act 2016 with regards to Campbell to not release information relating to Lendlease scores and prices was based upon the consideration that public interest factors in accordance with section 17 of the act favoured non-disclosure, as release of information was considered prejudicial to Lendlease business affairs and the competitive commercial interests of the directorate; as I said, commercial-in-confidence. Applicants who are dissatisfied with the initial decision have the right to request a review by the ACT ombudsman, which was the case, who will confirm the decision, vary the decision or set aside the decision and make a substitute decision. In this case, the ombudsman varied the decision.

Calwell High School—remote learning

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, in response to Mr Cain's question about WorkSafe and the prohibition order and advice to parents, the minister stated that parents had been advised of the prohibition order. However, the letter for which I have been provided a copy to parents makes no mention of the WorkSafe order, and in order to make sure the minister has not misled the Assembly, could she either correct the record or provide evidence of parents being informed of that.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not think that falls under matters arising. You have made a request of the minister. If you feel there has been a mislead, there are opportunities for you to deal with that.

Answers to questions on notice

Question No 506

MS CASTLEY: I refer to standing order 118A and seek an explanation from Minister Davidson as to why she has not answered question on notice number 506. It was due on 7 January.

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you for bringing that to my attention. I will find out and get back to you as soon as I possibly can.

Question No 625

MS CASTLEY: Again, on standing order 118A, Minister Stephen-Smith, question on notice 625. It was due on 13 March.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: My office did check this morning. It was my understanding that the only overdue questions that I had on notice related to questions from Mrs Jones, on which Ms Castley is not able to seek an update. Was this a question from Ms Castley?

MS CASTLEY: On behalf of Mrs Jones is the—

MADAM SPEAKER: Perhaps we can seek some advice about how we can redirect correspondence through.

Question No 662

MS CASTLEY: Another question on notice to Minister Berry. It is number 662. It was also due on 13 March.

MS BERRY: I will investigate with my office and provide Ms Castley with some advice on where that question is up to.

Supplementary answer to question without notice Calwell High School—remote learning

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, just for clarification for Mr Hanson, the letter that was provided to parents was about the incident, and that was provided on the day of the incident.

Leave of absence

Motion (by **Mr Braddock**) agreed to:

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Davis for today for health reasons.

Motion (by **Ms Lawder**) agreed to:

That leave of absence be granted to Mrs Jones until the end of the June sitting period for personal reasons.

Motion (by **Mr Gentleman**) agreed to:

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Barr and Mr Pettersson for today for personal reasons.

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Allocation of Statutory Functions to Assembly Committees (General) Nomination 2022, dated 4 April 2022.

Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Act, pursuant to subsection 20(2)—Independent Reviewer—Report for the period 1 July to 31 December 2021, dated 28 March 2022, prepared by Professor Dennis Pearce AO.

Legislation Act—Assembly Committees for Consultation (Appointments to Statutory Provisions) Nomination 2022, dated 5 April 2022.

Standing order 191—Amendments to:

Crimes (Policing) Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, dated 29 March 2022.

Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, dated 29 March 2022.

Mr Gentleman presented the following papers:

Administrative Arrangements—

Administrative Arrangements 2022 (No 1)—Notifiable Instrument NI2022-157, dated 30 March 2022.

Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Ministerial Appointment 2022 (No 1)—Notifiable Instrument NI2022-158, dated 30 March 2022.

Planning and Development Act, pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Approval—Variation to the Territory Plan 381—Local Centre shop size, dated 22 February 2022, including associated documents.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Act—

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-15 (LR, 21 February 2022).

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-16 (LR, 21 February 2022).

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2022 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-17 (LR, 21 February 2022).

Cemeteries and Crematoria Act—Cemeteries and Crematoria (Determination of Trustee) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-28 (LR, 21 March 2022).

Court Procedures Act—Court Procedures Amendment Rules 2022 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2022-2 (LR, 25 February 2022).

Food Act—Food (Regulated Events) Declaration 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-18 (LR, 24 February 2022).

Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Act and Financial Management Act—Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Governing Board Appointment 2022 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-25 (LR, 15 March 2022).

Motor Accident Injuries Act—Motor Accident Injuries (Quality of Life Benefit) Guidelines 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-22 (LR, 3 March 2022).

Planning and Development Act—Planning and Development Amendment Regulation 2022 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2022-3 (LR, 28 February 2022).

Public Health Act—

Public Health (Notifiable Conditions) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-20 (LR, 24 February 2022).

Public Health (Reporting of Notifiable Conditions) Code of Practice 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-19 (LR, 24 February 2022).

Race and Sports Bookmaking Act—Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-27 (LR, 17 March 2022).

Road Transport (General) Act—

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation (Manuka Oval) Declaration 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-13 (LR, 21 February 2022).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-14 (LR, 21 February 2022).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2022 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-23 (LR, 7 March 2022).

Road Transport (General) Concession Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-21 (LR, 3 March 2022).

Senior Practitioner Act—Senior Practitioner (Disability Support Providers) Implementation Guideline 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-12 (LR, 21 February 2022).

Taxation Administration Act—Taxation Administration (Off the Plan Unit Duty Exemption Scheme) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-31 (LR, 24 March 2022).

Veterinary Practice Act—

Veterinary Practice (Board) Appointment 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-24 (LR, 11 March 2022).

Veterinary Practice (Board) Appointment 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-26 (LR, 15 March 2022).

Administrative Arrangements 2022—notifiable instrument

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (2.57): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Administrative Arrangements 2022 (No 1)—Notifiable Instrument NI2022-157.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Ministerial Appointment 2022—notifiable instrument

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (2.57): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Ministerial Appointment 2022 (No 1)—Notifiable Instrument NI2022-158.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Planning and Development Act—variation No 381 to the Territory Plan

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (2.58): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Planning and Development Act, pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Approval—Variation to the Territory Plan 381—Local Centre shop size.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Waste—food and garden organics

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (2.58): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) Canberrans are supportive of recycling, reducing waste to landfill, and cutting emissions;
- (b) some families have large amounts of waste, such as bigger families, people with disabilities, those with additional medical needs, and multi-generational families;
- (c) at the time of promising a food organics and garden organics (FOGO) collection, Canberrans were not advised that this would mean a reduction in their general waste collection services or a charge for an additional or larger bin;
- (d) some Canberra families already have their own composting and recycling practices in place yet still have rubbish to be collected;
- (e) Canberrans pay excessive rates with the basic expectation that their rubbish will be collected;
- (f) residents in some Tuggeranong suburbs are concerned about the odour from a new organic waste facility;
- (g) commitment to organic waste recycling has seen very low contamination rates so far during the pilot;
- (h) there is no scheme to incentivise or encourage the use of recyclable nappies in the ACT, despite single-use nappies being a key concern for FOGO participants; and
- (i) the Labor-Greens Government has no online mechanism for residents to provide feedback on the FOGO pilot; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) continue weekly rubbish pickups for Canberrans unless they opt out of weekly pickups;

- (b) reassess charging for an additional or larger bin;
- (c) ensure state of the art processing of organic waste and stringent odour reducing policies and practices;
- (d) investigate how a recyclable nappy rebate scheme could be introduced in the ACT, similar to other local council initiatives and report these findings to the Assembly by the end of the June 2022 sitting period;
- (e) create an online option for residents to provide their feedback on the pilot and encourage participants to do so; and
- (f) publicly release the feedback and results of the current FOGO trial in Belconnen.

I am pleased to speak on the motion listed on the notice paper in my name. I think we can all agree that Canberrans are very enthusiastic recyclers. They are passionate about improving our environment. Reducing food waste, food organics and garden organics—or, as we call it, FOGO—goes hand in hand with this sentiment. In Australia, food waste accounts for a few per cent of our annual greenhouse gas emissions, so anything we can do to reduce those emissions is worthwhile. Additionally, food waste costs the economy about \$36.6 billion a year. From my interactions I know that most Canberrans are welcoming of the FOGO scheme here in the ACT.

Equally, many Canberrans, including myself, have already been composting their green organic waste and garden waste at home, and are very actively trying to reduce the amount of waste that their households produce. I know that our colleague Ms Clay has often spoken about this in this place. So my motion today seeks to recognise the potential of the FOGO scheme and make what is currently being trialled even more suitable for all Canberrans to access. Specifically, the thrust of the motion relates to the switch from weekly to fortnightly rubbish collections in the trial, which has met with some concern and some criticism. Again, I would like to stress that this is not because people are against the scheme; it is more because fortnightly collection is just not suitable for their households.

I understand that one of the objectives of schemes like this is to change people's behaviours, to change their daily habits, to make them think about the choices that they make—whether they are purchasing or disposing of materials—and, overall, to reduce the amount of waste being produced by Canberra households. However, I also believe that most Canberra households are already very waste conscious and that for some, for a range of reasons, fortnightly collection of their general waste is just not a viable option.

For example, for many larger households and families there is an obvious need for weekly rubbish collection. Some of the feedback I have received—and I am sure, Mr Deputy Speaker, you have received it too—is that Canberrans, who already pay some of the highest rates in Australia, feel it is absolutely outrageous to ask them to fork out an additional cost for an additional bin or a larger bin. For example, people living with disabilities or those who have special medical needs—those who use items such as adult diapers or diapers and nappies for older children—use more bin space,

and stockpiling medical waste in addition, including feeding systems for those people who are unable to eat everyday food or who have special nutrition requirements, is not sanitary, not safe and not savoury. Nor should we waste the valuable time of carers. We talk about supporting carers; why would we put the onus on them to deliver extra waste to landfill? They are already doing their very best every day to support the other people in their households.

And there is the human matter of dignity. From what I have heard from some residents, the odour that arises from stockpiling this sort of waste is unpleasant, and many may feel embarrassed putting their bins out onto the kerb. They feel embarrassed having it in their backyards, in their driveways or in their car ports, because it smells. How would this be across Canberra for a fortnightly waste collection? And just imagine if you happen to pop away for a night and you missed your fortnightly collection. That would give you a month between garbage collections unless you had the means and the ability to take garbage to the landfill.

Many people do not have that ability. They are not going to jump on a bus to do it. Some people do not even have a car or a trailer, let alone wanting to put this stinky waste into their car. That is not to mention the time it would take them—time that they would prefer to spend caring for their families, rather than having to carry waste to the tip, when they are already paying their rates for what should be a basic municipal service. Waste collection is a basic municipal service that this government should be providing.

These concerns have also been raised with the minister. However, I fear that the FOGO, as it is now in the four suburbs of Belconnen, will be rolled out across all of Canberra, including the fortnightly waste collection. I have heard some suggestions that the NDIS could pay for the additional or larger bin. Firstly, this would not stop the stockpiling of waste, and these are for families who may have extra or excessive waste because of their medical or disability needs. There are thousands of Canberrans living with a disability who are not on the NDIS, but the NDIS was not designed to pay for basic municipal services that you are already paying for through rates. The NDIS was about choice, control, dignity and respect, not about paying to have your garbage collected, just as you used to have it collected but now you have to pay extra.

In fact, it is cost shifting. Someone else, someone else will pay extra for your basic right as a rate payer to have your garbage collected. So we are going to shift that cost onto the NDIS and onto a different government. I think that is absolutely outrageous. This is not a health issue. It is a council issue. It is a basic local municipal service; we pay for it in our rates.

It is worth noting also that some older Canberrans and other residents may not be physically able to take larger or heavier bins out to the kerbside. The government has a bin assistance program, which is great. I commend the government and those garbage truck drivers who help with that. They get out of their trucks and collect the bins for people who are on that assistance program. But is the government ready for that to be more widely accessed? Currently, people have the physical ability, the independence and the agency to put their own bins out to the kerbside.

Older Canberrans, possibly frail, who are proud, have some dignity. They are happy to take their own bins out, but if you make it a bigger bin, which is full of rubbish because it is two weeks since the last collection, they are not going to be able to cart it up to the kerb. They have lost that bit of independence and agency, and that is a really shameful thing as well. In effect, you are forcing them onto this bin assistance program. Whilst it is great to have, I sense there may be an uptick in the take-up of that bin assistance program. It is a matter of pride. The ability to undertake daily tasks without asking for help is about basic human dignity, and you are taking that away, potentially, from a big range of Canberrans.

The minister is most likely to say that the model being trialled with fortnightly rubbish collection is based on the experience of local councils across Australia. This is, indeed, the case; but it is also worth noting, colleagues, that there are a number of councils across Australia who have FOGO programs and weekly rubbish collections. I am not sure if you heard that: they have FOGO programs and weekly rubbish collections. For example, Wollongong City Council and Ipswich City Council both have food and organic waste schemes and weekly rubbish collection. In fact, in Victoria, the Hobson's Bay Council reversed its decision on fortnightly rubbish collection to reinstate weekly collections, following community concerns.

We have this trial or pilot going on in Belconnen. We need to learn from that and from the experiences of other councils because, remember, this is a basic local council issue—a basic municipal issue. The government—the council—must collect the rubbish, not leave it festering in people's backyards and carports. It is not good enough for the Labor-Greens government to pick and choose some councils that are doing it fortnightly and say, "We are doing what others are doing." This is a trial, and the government needs to take the feedback seriously before they roll it out across the ACT in the exact same format. All we are asking is that they reconsider and genuinely assess the feedback from this trial.

We also hear from participants that there is not enough of an online option for participants to give their feedback. When I asked the minister where residents could write to, to provide feedback on the scheme, he responded that there was a government email; but we need a specific feedback point for the pilot. What is the point of a pilot if not to collect feedback and act on it in a meaningful way before you roll it out to everyone else across the ACT? That is why you have pilots. You do it on a small scale to start with so that you can gather that feedback.

I know that my colleagues in Ginninderra, representing the Belconnen area, have been getting contact from a lot of residents who simply want to know where they should go to provide their feedback on the FOGO pilot. Despite this, the minister has already claimed—I think it was in the *Riotact*—how successful the trial has been and has claimed it is receiving lots of support.

I think the FOGO trial is successful. It is a good thing; it is the garbage collection that we need to do more on. FOGO does have a lot of support; but the problem is when you roll out something with a one-size-fits-all solution, you disenfranchise and discourage so many people who do not fit into that one-size bucket.

Those people really struggle, and we should not charge them more. We should not expect them to take up the role in their own time. We should not expect them to buy bi-carb soda, or whatever it was that was proposed, to clean out their own garbage bins to avoid the smell. When there was a weekly collection, they did not have that. They did not have those time, cost and effort constraints. But this is the solution that the directorate is proposing: wash out your bin more frequently. I find it amazing that we are putting that onus back onto the individual in so many ways.

All residents should be able to have their say, not just if they are lucky enough to get a slip in the mail, but through a meaningful online system. The slip in the mail is also useful because I hear from some older people—not all older people but some older people—that they prefer getting something that is paper based, although for many of us these days the online option is automatic.

The other part of my motion calls on the government to investigate how a re-usable nappy scheme could be introduced into the ACT and report back on these findings by the end of June this year. Other councils, such as Blacktown City Council, have a cloth nappy rebate scheme to help reduce the number of disposable nappies ending up in landfill. Nappies have been a key concern in the switch from weekly to fortnightly rubbish collections. Instead of penalising people for their rubbish, I would like to see the government incentivising people to make better choices—a carrot rather than a stick; encouragement rather than punishment; entrusting our residents rather than mistrusting them. The difference of this government is that they want to punish everyone. (*Time expired.*)

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (3.14): Since November 2021 the ACT government has been undertaking a trial of a weekly food organic and garden organic collection service for residents in four Belconnen suburbs. This trial has been initiated to inform the design and delivery model for a city-wide household FOGO collection service in the future. Prior to the commencement of the trial, the ACT government undertook wide-ranging research into community support for our initiatives to reduce waste. The research showed that 92 per cent of respondents supported the government's plans for the collection and processing of FOGO materials to reduce waste going into landfill. This helped inform our commitment to instigate the pilot.

Throughout the trial, residents have been provided with a large green FOGO bin, a kitchen caddy and compostable liners to recycle food waste alongside green waste in their FOGO bin. We have seen and heard a great response from Canberrans in the trial suburbs, with very low rates of contamination; enthusiastic commentary about the shift to separation of FOGO and its impact in reducing the amount of waste going to red bins; and appreciation for the service, making it easier for households to take everyday action on climate change.

As part of the trial, the collection schedule for regular general waste collections, or red bins, has been updated from weekly to fortnightly. I acknowledge that this has been more challenging for some people in the trial, and we have heard from some households that they are not happy about this transition. Change can sometimes be

difficult, and the trial has required a period of adjustment for some households. I particularly acknowledge that this is the case for large families and those with young children; Canberrans living with a disability; carers and people with medical needs. ACT NoWaste has been working with people in the trial suburbs to understand their needs and to see how we can support them through this change. In a lot of cases the answer is simply for households to order a large bin to accommodate their ongoing waste collection needs.

The purpose of this trial is to test and learn from the experience of households in the trial region. To design a city-wide FOGO service, we need to understand how our community is going to respond to and use these new services, as every community around Australia is a little bit different.

I can advise Ms Lawder and the Assembly that no final decisions have been made on the delivery model for a future city-wide household FOGO collection service. The format and delivery of this service, including the frequency of bin collections and size of bins, will be informed by the trial and community feedback gathered through a range of consultation processes which are already underway.

Participating residents have a direct email address to provide feedback, and a detailed online survey of participating households will be launched this week, following three months of the trial in operation. This important feedback will help us to guide a city-wide approach that is mindful of Canberrans' diverse needs, including those who produce more waste than others, and this will be an important consideration, moving forward.

We are already learning a lot through the trial. Firstly, we know that participation is very high, and contamination of the FOGO material is low. This helps to ensure that we get the right processing capacity in place to deal with this material. The government has also just announced our commitment to build a dedicated FOGO processing facility here in the ACT, so this data is very timely and useful in planning to deliver that piece of infrastructure.

We know that only a small number of households have requested a larger bin or additional bins for general waste collections in the trial suburbs. In response to initial feedback about the transition to fortnightly collections, we have increased the awareness and promotion of this option to residents in the Belconnen trial area. It is great to see that a majority of people are finding that they can make adjustment by separating their FOGO from other materials and therefore having less waste put into their red bins.

We are continuing to engage with community organisations and residents on how we can further tailor the service to more vulnerable members of our community or those with particular needs. I acknowledge the concerns that Ms Lawder has raised about the smell of FOGO facilities. I can confirm to the Assembly that the feasibility study that we undertook in preparation for building a large-scale composting facility recommended in-vessel composting as the best option for the ACT because this is an enclosed facility, in a building, in a vessel where odour, temperature and aeration can be controlled more easily and readily.

The government will investigate better environmental options for nappy waste in the ACT as part of our broader work on promoting a circular economy in the ACT, and we will be reporting back to the Assembly by July 2023. This will build on the government's response to the Assembly resolution moved by Ms Cheyne in July of 2019, which I delivered to the Ninth Assembly in May 2020. I look forward to the opportunity to further explore this matter and use the findings to help inform future collection services in the ACT.

The government will be completing the ongoing scheme to understand how we can use waste management and the composting of food and organic matter to help reduce the ACT's carbon emissions and methane emissions.

We know that roughly one-third of the household rubbish bin is food waste. That is roughly 26,000 tonnes of waste taken to landfill each year. The FOGO trial currently diverts a significant amount of waste away from landfill, and that is the ultimate goal of the city-wide service. We expect to have up to 42,000 tonnes by the time we reach the start date for a new large-scale in-vessel composting facility.

The food and organic matter is then converted into compost in the facility. We can then use it in community parks, gardens, the agricultural sector and the viticulture of the region to generate that true circular economy. The government will also look to the success of a range of models across the country in forming a more detailed policy and service delivery model, going forward.

We have received 19 other councils with a similar service across Australia as part of our work towards a city-wide service. The model that we are currently trialling has been a success in a range of other local government areas, but we will consider the needs of our communities before there is a future city-wide rollout and will listen to their feedback throughout the trial. The purpose of running a trial is to help inform improvements to the scheme before it is rolled out to the rest of the city.

I look forward to the opportunity to update the Assembly on the progression of the FOGO pilot into the future. I acknowledge the interests and engagement by colleagues on this important trial. The ACT government will continue its engagement with trial participants as we look to design a future city-wide FOGO service that is closely informed by community input.

I move the following amendment:

Omit all words after "That this Assembly", substitute:

(1) notes:

- (a) Canberrans are supportive of recycling, reducing waste to landfill, and cutting emissions;
- (b) since November 2021, the ACT Government has been undertaking a trial of Food Organic and Garden Organic (FOGO) collection services in four Belconnen suburbs, with this trial to inform the future design of a citywide household waste collection service;

- (c) commitment to organic waste recycling has seen very low contamination rates so far during the pilot; and
 - (d) no final decisions have yet been made about the format and delivery model for a citywide household FOGO collection service;
- (2) further notes:
- (a) some households produce more waste than others, including those with bigger families and young children, people with disabilities, those with additional medical needs, and multi-generational families;
 - (b) some Canberra families already have their own composting and recycling practices in place, yet still have rubbish to be collected;
 - (c) waste from nappies is a concern for many young families and those with caring responsibilities;
 - (d) the ACT Government is already engaging with pilot participants in a variety of ways to understand their experiences with the FOGO pilot, including an already existing online survey, a direct email address for collecting feedback at any time, a dedicated multi-unit development engagement officer and a detailed survey of participating households which will be launched this week; and
 - (e) the feasibility study into a dedicated FOGO facility recommended an in-vessel facility to reduce odour risk in processing organic waste, which is the preferred technology the ACT Government is procuring to build; and
- (3) calls on the Government to:
- (a) continue to collate input and feedback from pilot participants, through online and other forums, to inform the design of a future citywide FOGO collection service;
 - (b) consider and address the needs of Canberra households that produce a large amount of waste in the design of the citywide service, potentially including free additional bin upgrades for those who need more capacity;
 - (c) investigate better environmental options for nappy waste as part of planning for the citywide FOGO service and report back in June 2023 on how this waste stream will be addressed through future household collection services;
 - (d) ensure state of the art processing of organic waste and stringent odour reducing policies and practices for a future FOGO facility; and
 - (e) publicly release the feedback and results of the current FOGO trial in Belconnen.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (3.21): I would like to thank Ms Lawder for bringing this motion to the Assembly and I would like to note that the Greens are happy to support Minister Steel's amendments to that motion. The Greens have been campaigning for FOGO for 14 years. We called to deal with food waste in our parliamentary agreements with Labor as far back as 2008.

Long before I joined the Greens, I was in the recycling sector. I worked for government on recycling, and then I ran a recycling company. I know from a

professional viewpoint and from a community viewpoint, that we really need FOGO. We have known that we need FOGO for over a decade. I watched council after council roll out FOGO and I hoped that Canberra would act soon. I was so glad to put FOGO into our 2020 Parliamentary and Governing Agreement with Labor, and I was really happy to see Minister Steel roll out the FOGO trial.

I am even happier to hear about the incredibly low contamination rates that we have had so far. This has been a real problem in a lot of areas, and it looks as if Canberra will be able to manage it. I am actually not surprised. Canberrans are really conscientious and environmental, and we got great results from our garden waste. So it is really good to see that we are likely to get the same from our FOGO.

It is really important that we bring in city-wide FOGO as fast as we can. More than a third of waste in Canberra's household bins is made up of discarded food. There is also a lot of food waste in our commercial stream. Reducing our food waste in the first place and then processing what is left to enrich our soils will keep that waste out of landfill and will make a really valuable product.

When food and other organics like garden waste breakdown in landfill, they release methane. That is a much more potent greenhouse gas than carbon. The methane from landfill at the moment accounts for around 10 per cent of the ACT's tracked emissions. If we countered scope 3 emissions embedded in that food, we would get a much higher figure. Food waste really matters.

We are also making compost from our FOGO, and that is really important. Minister Vassarotti recently began consulting on the ACT government's first ever food and fibre strategy. We know we need to grow more of our food, we need to recycle our food waste and we need to make really good compost to enrich our soils. Why do these things matter? We are in a climate emergency; we are running up against the natural limits of our environment. We cannot keep doing things the way we have done them in the past.

Another IPCC report came out yesterday. The UN Secretary General has blasted politicians in the wake of this grave climate crisis. He is calling current government actions:

... empty pledges that put us firmly on track towards an unliveable world.

He said:

Some Government and business leaders are saying one thing, but doing another. Simply put, they are lying.

Those are not my words; those are from the UN Secretary General in the IPCC report. I certainly do not want to be one of those politicians making empty pledges or saying one thing and doing another. We need real climate action, and we need to make it work. FOGO is a really simple, tangible, practical thing that we can do. It addresses 10 per cent of our tracked emissions right now.

I am really pleased Ms Lawder has brought this motion to us. She has run a number of recycling motions over the years, and I can see that she is genuinely committed to recycling in this area. I also agree with most of the points in her original motion, but I do not agree to the model she put in that motion. I understand that some people have different views about the trial. We certainly can, and should, make improvements before we roll it out to Canberra. That is exactly why we are running a collection trial first—so that we can talk to people and find out how to do it better.

We have the benefit of learning from other councils, and most other councils are using the same model we are—a weekly collection of organic waste, with fortnightly collection of residual rubbish. I am really lucky to be living in one of the trial suburbs, Macquarie, so I can see how this works directly. I also represent Belconnen, and I am pleased to hear that my fellow MLAs who represent Ginninderra have also been talking to people about this trial. I would encourage them to tell people that there is a lot of information on the website. There is a targeted FOGO email address that has been there for a very long time, and I have been encouraging people to put in their feedback and to look at those questions. We are running the trial to find out what is going on.

I have used the FOGO service and I have spoken to my friends and family, to community groups, to local composters, to businesses and to constituents. I also met with one of the most active public critics of FOGO recently. We had a really great chat in a cafe over a coffee. He has walked and door-knocked a lot of suburbs to talk about this issue, and I applaud his grassroots campaigning. Interestingly, he told me that most of the people he is speaking to are supportive of FOGO, and I was pleased to hear that, because that matched up with my experience when I talk to people.

He highlighted some of the really good points that have been highlighted in Ms Lawder's motion, that some people need extra bin capacity. Often it is those who are in bigger families, those with kids in nappies, or those with certain needs as a result of a different life stage or a disability, or some other reason. I absolutely agree with that; I have heard the same thing from some constituents.

I have discussed it several times with the minister, prior to this motion coming forward. We have agreed that for the permanent service we need to look at ways to make this service work for everyone in our community. That is part of a just transition to a safer climate. For FOGO, that includes considering free additional bin upgrades for those who need them, and we have that in this amendment.

We have also discussed the long-term problem of nappies in landfill. Waste in landfill—any waste—is not part of a truly circular economy, so we need to plan for better outcomes. Nappies are a bit of a problem waste stream. There are some options around, including reusables, and there are some recyclables, but it is actually a really hard issue. It needs some more work. It needs more consideration, and it needs more consultation. I am also pleased to see Minister Steel's amended motion commit to further work on that issue.

I am confident that our city-wide FOGO service will provide great outcomes for the community and for the environment. If you are in the FOGO trial, or if you have any

views on FOGO, get in touch. Use the government FOGO email address—it is on the website—and participate in the survey. Get in touch with the minister, with me, with Ms Lawder or with any of your local members. Let us know how we can improve this service and let us know, generally, how we can roll out a just transition to a safer climate.

We will have a lot of these operational issues as we transition to zero emissions. We know that we need to act on climate. There is no more debate here about that; but it all comes down to how well we do it, how quickly we do it, and how we bring everybody along with us on the journey. The Greens are happy to support Minister Steel's amendments to the motion.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (3.28): I thank Ms Lawder for bringing this very important motion before the Assembly. With the FOGO trial happening in my electorate of Ginninderra, I have received many pieces of feedback from residents involved in the trial. This feedback has been largely negative. Let me be clear, though: the intentions of the FOGO trial are supported and the ability to dispose of food waste in the green bin is welcomed. What has been roundly rejected is the switch from weekly rubbish collection to fortnightly. This issue has a direct impact on day-to-day living for all Canberrans and it will have even more of an impact on the residents of Ginninderra as a whole.

The latest census tells us that residents in my electorate of Ginninderra have larger average household sizes than the rest of the ACT. More people per household naturally leads to more domestic waste, and more domestic waste requires weekly pick-ups. This is common sense—something that is frequently lost in this government.

The move to reduce public collection is just another sign that this government is tired, arrogant and out of touch. With their blinders on, Labor and the Greens have tunnel-visioned on the needs of the inner city, which has lower than average household sizes and lower than average numbers of children in nappies, while forgetting about the needs of the family-dominated suburbs.

Ignoring the needs of families is classic behaviour by the Greens, as evidenced by their recent discussion paper on active travel, which is full of ideas for disadvantaging Canberra families. Take, for instance, the idea to implement car-free days. How much more difficult would car-free days make the weekly shopping run or school drop-off? Or how about the idea of reduced parking in areas with good public transport? Should a single mother have to walk hundreds of metres from a shopping centre with her trolley to go to her car, just because there happens to be a bus stop nearby?

These family unfriendly policies are part of a larger but unspoken philosophy of a radical attitude towards population. Federal and local Greens vaguely hint at this in their party platforms by calling it “sustainable populations”. Greens patriarch Bob Brown has recently been more up-front about this Greens philosophy, calling, “the human herd” unsustainable.

Maybe this mentality of calling humans a herd, like a bunch of farm animals, has inspired the Greens' need to force more Canberra families into tiny apartment battery cages!

Our local Greens are more veiled in their statements on population, but the hypocrisy of their position is still stark. I read from the ACT Greens' plan for Canberra. Under their population principles they say:

The ACT Greens believe:

... achieving an ecologically sustainable population in the ACT should take into account social justice ...

I want to be clear that the shift to fortnightly rubbish collection will hurt families who choose to have multiple children. As data from the ABS and Commonwealth Treasury show, many of these families will be vulnerable and disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and refugee families. Families with medical needs will also be harmed by this policy. The Greens pretend to be the champions of such families, but I ask you: where is the social justice in this decision?

Moving weekly rubbish collections to fortnightly pick-ups will add another degree of stress onto families who have been through enough these last few years. Are rising inflation, increased cost of living and sky high petrol prices not already putting enough pressure on families? Now this government wants to reduce rubbish services and possibly force people to pay for their rubbish at the tip, on top of ever-increasing rates. Again, how is this just? It is uncaring and it is wrong.

One way that the ACT government justifies this reduction in services is by saying that other council areas in Australia that have implemented FOGO have changed their rubbish collection to fortnightly. But not all of these other council areas are directly comparable to ours. The Coffs Harbour, Clarence Valley, Bellingen and Nambucca council areas have implemented FOGO and fortnightly rubbish collections. However, their rubbish bins are 100 litres larger than the ones provided by our government. As a consequence, they are, of course, able to fit more rubbish in their bins between collections and deal better with fortnightly pick-ups.

Labor and the Greens have recognised that bin size might be a problem and have said that there will be the option for Canberrans to get a bigger bin, but—surprise, surprise!—there will be a monthly tax on it, on top of our rates. This is their solution to everything. How does this take into account social justice at all? It does not. It is, frankly, hypocrisy.

In the Southern Grampians in Victoria, where they also have FOGO, there is a one-off payment of \$85 to buy a bigger bin. That is it. Once you have paid it, it is yours. What our government wants to do is cut your service and then charge you a monthly tax to deal with the ramifications of its own decisions. This will be an unfair and targeted tax on families. You do not need to be a high-level policy analyst to know which groups will be most impacted by this change. Families will be the ones most harmed by this, especially families with infants.

The government will also claim that they have received positive feedback that has informed their decision to change to fortnightly rubbish collections. Using ABS data, it is interesting to note that the suburbs the government specifically targeted for this trial have a lower average rate of people per household and a lower average rate of children between zero and four compared to the rest of the Ginninderra electorate. These smaller and demographically older households would naturally produce less household waste, making them less reliant on weekly rubbish collections and therefore more likely to be receptive to reduced rubbish collection, giving the government the pretext that they need to cut services.

If the government had chosen suburbs with a higher proportion of young children and more people per household, such as Dunlop or Macgregor, they would have heard a much different story. In other words, the government neglected to trial FOGO in areas that would be the most harmed by a reduction in rubbish collections. This is not good governance. The intentions of FOGO are good, but the move to reduce rubbish collections will be harmful to many families and is based on questionable evidence. On behalf of these families, I commend this motion to the Assembly. Thank you.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (3.37): I want to thank Ms Lawder for presenting and Mrs Kikkert for supporting this very commendable motion. I am grateful to see Ms Lawder's commitment, as a shadow minister, to bringing the concerns of the public to this place, particularly in environmental and waste management.

As members are aware, I am a local member for the suburbs where this FOGO scheme is currently being piloted. Unsurprisingly, I have received numerous complaints and concerns about the implementation of this rollout, almost all focused on the fact that household rubbish is being picked up fortnightly. That is the concern.

We do support sensible waste management and use of materials that are produced by households, but to reduce the frequency is something that is of concern not just to families, with the materials that they produce in their homes if they have young children, but to the disabled, to the elderly, to those recovering from surgery or to those who are under some sort of constant medical treatment where they require the use of disposable medical materials.

Surely this very, very vulnerable part of our community should be a focus of this government as it reviews this pilot scheme. As Ms Lawder has said, the reason you have a pilot scheme is to see if it is working. Does it need amending? Does it need changing? The fact is that it is so obvious to my constituents that it needs changing by keeping the weekly collection of household rubbish or, at the very least, giving families and households the option of retaining the weekly collection—at the very least.

I would just like to present a few examples, without revealing details of names or locations. A constituent said he had a large family under one roof and, even though they were trying to fit in with the intentions of this scheme, they could not fit everything in their weekly collected household bin. I wrote to the minister, asking for an extra bin to be provided, to which he replied that he recommended the constituent

“upgrade to a bigger bin”, apparently to the cost of \$116.40. Of course, having a bigger bin with material of such a nature hanging around for a fortnight is just exacerbating the problem.

A retirement home expressed concern about accessibility and how older people would manage the requirements of the program, particularly that age group, as I mentioned, where there are health and vulnerability needs and the frequent use and hence need to dispose of medical supplies. An assisted living centre whose bins were not being collected when they should have been, which is also very unfortunate, called me in desperate confusion about what to do next. We have mentioned adults with their own nappy and medical waste needs. This scheme is really impacting on them by losing that weekly pick-up.

I want to read something from a constituent. I will keep the details confidential:

Dear ACT Government,

Your rubbish trial isn't working for me—I doubt it's working for any disabled families. Picking up normal garbage once a fortnight rather than weekly means that despite paying for a second bin, we are overrun with soiled nappies and despite double-bagging them, everything smells. It's pretty gross. And we have medical waste on top of that. We used to compost and put our food scraps on the garden, but now you've given us a bin and more bags to put them in that you collect weekly, but the things we really need to get rid of can't go in there. I just don't get the logic. There has to be a better way.

And a further comment from this household:

It was at an extreme point of frustration where I couldn't find a solution and the smell in our yard was overwhelming. We paid for an extra service but because of my son's meds and condition, his nappies are awful to hold on for two weeks. We've had neighbours complain about our rubbish. We don't have a huge amount of medical waste at all times, but when there's a hospitalisation required at home, then the medical wastes that are produced are overwhelming to this household.

Because of these concerns brought to me by constituents in Ginninderra, I am pleased to say that I am sponsoring a petition on behalf of residents, which is live and active on my MLA webpage. I encourage all those who hear me and see this recording or read the *Hansard* to participate in this petition that expresses the will of, I believe, the majority of families, those with health needs, the elderly and the disabled in the Ginninderra community.

Mr Steel's amendment, which I speak against, of course suggests that the government is doing a pretty good job, is listening to people and is giving them advice. Here is one piece of very interesting advice. I quote from a frequently asked question from the website. It is about managing food scraps and meat waste and having that sitting in the FOGO bin for a time. The suggestion is to “freeze your meat and fish scraps and putting them in the bin the morning before”. Wouldn't that be an easy thing to do: everyone goes out and buys an extra freezer so that they can accommodate the smell, and then they have to remember to put it all out in the morning before the pick-up.

Minister, this is a ludicrous suggestion. Are you then going to suggest to families, the disabled and those with medical needs that they freeze their nappies? Is that the next answer you are going to put on your website? Ridiculous!

I speak in favour of Ms Lawder's motion, totally rejecting Mr Steel's amendment. I strongly disagree with the support coming from the Greens and other Labor members. If this is rolled out in its current form across Canberra, I have some fears. I have fear that the green bins will be contaminated. I have fear that the recycling bins that people have in their homes will be contaminated, just to use the extra space and maybe to cloud the aroma, surround it with other things—old nappies and diapers. I also have a fear that there may well be a rise in illegal dumping.

Is the government anticipating the problems? Is it looking at the risks associated with removing the weekly household pick-up? Again, at least it could provide households with the option to retain the weekly collection. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I wholeheartedly support Ms Lawder's motion and reject the Labor-Greens amendment.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (3.45): We are now over four months into the FOGO pilot and it is worth revisiting some of the history here, which goes back almost two years, of this commitment. This was an ACT Labor election commitment about creating sustainable jobs while taking real action on climate change.

More than a third of ACT residential garbage bin contents are food waste, which currently goes to landfill and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. We simply cannot keep doing what we have always done. This initiative is about reducing our emissions by 30 per cent and, more than that, about turning food waste into valuable compost which can be returned to the soil. As Ms Clay has flagged, this is a genuine action that results in real change.

I have heard a lot of things in this place but never did I expect that I would hear Mrs Kikkert proclaim that reducing bin collections is about stealthily trying to control population growth. What I would ask her to reflect on is the carrying capacity of our planet, including the impact of the generation of waste, and that we do have to take action to ensure that there is a planet here for our children.

The FOGO proposal was incredibly popular, even in suburbs where there was a high rate of composting, noting that the green bins are able to take meat and bones, which is not something that is often able to be composted in backyards. There were many positive conversations and genuine community excitement that was generated during the election. I know this firsthand because I doorknocked many suburbs, including and especially the suburbs which are now participating in the trial, talking explicitly about this initiative.

During the election we were able to confirm that Belconnen town centre would be a focus for the pilot, to understand how the collection service could be successfully

implemented across Canberra. After the election, Minister Steel was able to expand that to Bruce, Cook and Macquarie, representing a diverse cross-section of household types.

It began in November last year, and it is worth noting that, if a household did not already have a green waste bin, they were provided one free of charge. Now that we are in the pilot stage, we are actively listening and learning. This is exactly what the nature of a trial is: to test and to learn. As Minister Steel emphasised, there have been no final decisions made. It is a pilot. But the facts are that the trial has been widely embraced. This is not unexpected, given how strongly the community embraced it as an election commitment, and this has translated into the actions the community has demonstrated.

We have seen an incredibly low level of contamination. I acknowledge that Ms Lawder, and Mrs Kikkert to an extent, have flagged that FOGO as a concept is a success. But we also appreciate that this is a transition and a period of adjustment, and that households come in all shapes and sizes and have different needs. That is exactly why so much thought was given to providing a suburb mix that was so diverse. I do want to acknowledge the contributions we have heard today and the matters of dignity and wellbeing at the heart of many of them.

Households can order a larger bin for a small fee, and 1.5 per cent of households participating in the trial have done so. I think it is worth reflecting that this is a very small amount. This remains a learning period. Households have been encouraged to provide feedback, including to that direct email address and via an existing online survey. Four months in, I am pleased to learn that City Services will be undertaking a detailed survey of pilot participants to better drill down into their experiences with it and inform the full rollout.

The detailed survey will seek to understand the household type and size, the types of bins the household uses, how often the household uses the bin for household scraps, and, if they have not been, why not—noting that there could be different reasons for this. It also seeks to understand how households have transitioned in their use of their rubbish bin, or red bin, including whether or how often they have run out of room and if there are any particular circumstances that might be contributing to a larger amount of waste being generated.

The survey also asks questions about general satisfaction and what, if any, changes constituents would like to see, and whether households are interested in purchasing the compost that is being created from this initiative. I commend Minister Steel for going into this level of detail with residents to help inform and to help consider and address the needs of all parts of the community.

Going briefly to Ms Lawder's points in the motion regarding no scheme existing to incentivise or encourage the use of recyclable nappies and her calls to investigate a recyclable nappy rebate scheme, it was amusing and perhaps bemusing to see a copy and paste of my motion that was debated in this place and responded to in the last term of parliament. The opposition does have form in recycling ideas!

Members will, or should, recall that we noted just how much disposable nappies and sanitary products can contribute to landfill, that there are an increased number of recyclable products about, and that the technologies, as Ms Clay flagged, are evolving. We called on the government to best consider how to promote these and to consider if a rebate scheme would be appropriate. The motion also emphasised that this was about choice.

The government rightly acknowledged that it would always support the use of more sustainable alternatives to reduce the volume of disposable products entering our waste streams but noted that personal decisions about the products to use involved the consideration of hygiene, convenience, price, availability, self-sufficiency and dignity. Again, I acknowledge Ms Lawder's comments regarding dignity and I certainly support those.

The government also stressed that it would be doing more to promote and educate the community about the options of re-usable products, and I want to acknowledge that work now. The Recycling Discovery Hub in Hume has exhibited cloth nappies and re-usable personal hygiene products to its over 6,000 annual visitors for quite some time and the Canberra Environment Centre has also hosted a display for parents to look at and feel nappy alternatives. That information is also available on Recyclopaedia, our one-stop shop of recycling information.

The ACT government also has supported ongoing workshops with the Canberra Environment Centre on cloth nappies, and extra workshops were run back in 2019, when we could. With regard to a rebate scheme, Minister Steel proposed in 2020 that the government would revisit possible arrangements for financially supporting the uptake of cloth nappies and re-usable sanitary items in the future, once we had a better grasp of our "new normal", following the COVID-19 pandemic, which I note we are still in. Building on this, I note that the amendment to the motion also stresses that the government will investigate better environmental options for nappy waste and that there will be a report back on this.

I appreciate Ms Lawder bringing this to the Assembly's attention and her interest in this area, and that she has acknowledged FOGO's success so far. I also acknowledge that there has been feedback, and for some families this does go to matters of wellbeing and dignity. But I reject Ms Lawder implying that we were not taking the feedback seriously. As Minister Steel and his amendment have emphasised, the needs of Canberra households which produce a large amount of waste will be considered and they will be addressed. This is about a transition that is just.

I want to thank those Belconnen residents who have been engaged in this pilot and encourage them to continue to provide their feedback, to engage with the detailed survey that is coming. I look forward to seeing the result of the actions in Minister Steel's amendment and I commend it to the chamber.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (3.53): In speaking to the amendment and in closing, I would like to thank everyone for their contributions today. I did not speak too much in my opening speech about reusable nappies, but I would like to note that I asked the

minister recently, in a question on notice, about the volume of nappies and sanitary products going to landfill. He said that no such data was collected, which was very disappointing, whereas Ms Cheyne has just talked about how many nappies go to the waste collection centres.

In my electorate of Brindabella there is a small local business called B Eco Family. It used to be called Bellelis. In fact, the owner of that business, Olga, was named the Canberra Women in Business Businesswoman of the Year last year. They sell eco-friendly products for babies and parents, such as cloth reusable nappies. These are quite the little fashion accessory for little ones, as well as being environmentally conscious, which is why I introduced some words about reusable nappies into my motion.

As I think we have all said at some point, Canberrans are natural recyclers. They believe in recycling. They are generally good at recycling. They have a commitment to recycling. But this particular motion is not about recycling. I have had many overwhelmingly positive comments about FOGO—food organics and garden organics. Let us not forget that this government signed the contract for green bins that specifically excluded food waste from the bins. It could have been done in one go.

Leaving that aside, this motion is not about FOGO. The feedback has been very positive. It is very welcome. It is about waste collection and ensuring that we genuinely take these concerns on board before FOGO is rolled out across the whole of the ACT. I believe there is strong evidence that a weekly waste collection is still required. We will see the proof of that when it is rolled out across the ACT, and whether the comments that have come from the pilot are genuinely taken into account.

We genuinely believe that there is the opportunity to improve this scheme before it is rolled out Canberra-wide, and that was the objective of my motion today. We have heard concerns from some members about illegal dumping, about littering, about contamination of the different waste bins because people may run out of space in their normal waste bin. That is not what we want. That is the last thing we want, when we are having such a great rate of non-contamination in the pilot.

Equally, I am sure that we do not want to put another burden on our families here in the ACT. With respect to larger families—and some members in this place have larger families—we do not want to put a burden on them. We do not want to put another burden on older Canberrans. And we do not want to put another burden on families with a disabled person or a disabled child—someone with disability in their own family.

Mr Cain read out some comments from someone with a child with disability. They got a message back from the directorate suggesting that they clean out their smelly bin with bicarb of soda. How condescending. How out of touch with a family with a child with disability. This family love their child, and they will look after their child for the rest of its life. How do you think they felt when they got that message back from the directorate? “Hose out your bin and put a bit of bicarb of soda in it.”

This is a family with PPE that goes in the bin, specialist feeding equipment that has to go in the bin, and large-sized nappies—not baby-sized nappies—several a day, that go in the bin. They have already had neighbours complaining about the smell. It will make other elderly people and other people with disability pretty upset that that sort of cavalier and condescending comment was put forward when someone complained about it. I will give another quote:

We are a 10-person household so even with a weekly pickup we are overrun with garbage, let alone once we get moved to fortnightly. Illegal dumping will increase as people cannot afford to pay tip fees to get rid of the excess each week, not to mention the increases in health issues and rodents. We also recycle a huge amount of stuff. We have paid for a second recycling bin to keep up. I also cannot imagine how hard it would be with all the nappies. It is easy for people to suggest cloth nappies but they are not practical in our case.

In other words, in the case of an older child wearing nappies. Mr Assistant Speaker, I do not want to further single out, disadvantage or reduce the dignity of these families by making them have to go through extra paperwork, extra forms to fill out, extra phone calls to make, extra costs and extra demands on their time, just to deal with their rubbish. Remember that it is a basic municipal service. The government must collect the rubbish. We are paying for this with our rates. Why would you countenance, even for a moment, charging people extra to get rid of their rubbish? Why would you do that to a family with a child with special needs—a child with disability, possibly more than one person with disability, in the household? I do believe it is really outrageous.

When I spoke earlier I said that a one-size-fits-all approach does not suit us, but we do not want to single people out, either, so that it is obvious they are different. That is not what inclusion is about. We want to make people feel as much a part of a community as possible. Remember that, even if you have special requirements for nappies or medical waste in your own household, that does not mean you do not have a commitment to recycling, to reducing waste and to reducing emissions. I am sure these families are also doing whatever they can, but not all of us have the privilege to be able to spend time, money and effort on some of these things.

My husband and I are a two-person household. We are lucky to fill a small bag a week. We could deal with a fortnightly collection, except I am concerned about the smell. We have a dog who eats a few scraps; we have chickens that do a great job of mulching up the food scraps. It then goes into the compost heap and eventually into the vegetable garden. I have silicon bags which are reusable, instead of Glad wrap, and we have beeswax wraps. There is a whole range of ways that we can try to reduce our waste. But not everyone can do that, or not everyone can do it immediately.

We want to help people along the path, not punish them, not be punitive, not single them out. A one-size-fits-all approach does not suit everyone, especially vulnerable people and larger families. The last thing we should be doing is putting more cost, more forms, more effort and more energy onto those families, so that they have to ask for or pay for another bin. I think it is terrible. I think it shows condescension. It shows that they are out of touch with average families. The government must collect

the rubbish. It is a basic municipal service. We should not have to pay extra to have basic services that we already pay for in our rates.

I will wait to see the results when this is rolled out across the ACT. Will it be fortnightly or will it be weekly? We will find out, and we will see how much notice the minister has taken of the feedback. In the meantime we will not be voting for Minister Steel's amendment. It does not make any specific mention in the "calls on" section about considering putting the fortnightly pickups back to weekly, or leaving them at weekly. On that basis we will not be supporting the amendment.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 13

Noes 6

Ms Berry	Ms Orr	Mr Cain
Mr Braddock	Dr Paterson	Ms Castley
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mrs Kikkert
Ms Cheyne	Mr Steel	Ms Lawder
Ms Clay	Ms Stephen-Smith	Mr Milligan
Ms Davidson	Ms Vassarotti	Mr Parton
Mr Gentleman		

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Digital access—libraries

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (4.08): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the importance of internet access for social connectivity, employment and lifelong learning;
- (b) the importance of access to digital infrastructure and technology to achieve digital equality in our community;
- (c) that not everyone in our community can easily afford or access the internet;
- (d) the important community service that public libraries have provided in Australia for over 150 years;
- (e) that investing in public library collections and infrastructure is necessary to maintain this important community service;
- (f) the success of the provision of e-resources as part of the Libraries ACT collection, including:

- (i) encyclopedia;
 - (ii) language learning resources;
 - (iii) coding resources for kids;
 - (iv) personal and professional development; and
 - (v) many more;
- (g) that the ACT Government is currently undertaking a community co-design process on the future of libraries through the *Imagine 2030* project, recognising that the role of libraries in our community and society is continually evolving;
- (h) that governments across Australia and around the world are increasingly recognising the central role that libraries play in improving digital equality and access, such as the successful pilot of wireless internet device loans at Thomastown Library in Victoria; and
- (i) that the ACT Government has a strong track record of working to improve digital access and inclusion, including through the distribution of chromebooks to all ACT public high school students and the Technology Upgrade Fund grants program; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to make improving digital access and inclusion a priority through the *Imagine 2030* libraries co-design process, including through consideration of wireless internet device loans and other initiatives to increase access to necessary digital equipment.

I rise today to speak in support of the motion moved in my name. Societies have been recording their histories in many forms for centuries. The first records came in the form of oral records passed through generations. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures of this country have been recording their histories, stories and culture in this way for hundreds of thousands of years. Accounts and stories of the dreaming, traditional ecological knowledge, language knowledge and, more recently, historical information all make up part of this wealth of knowledge in this form of, in essence, an oral library.

As writing developed across the ancient world so, too, did the want to collect and store written articles. This began the tradition of the written library. As far back as 2000 BC, these libraries were beginning to be compiled in Mesopotamia and Egypt, among other places. They were written on clay tablets in various scripts or on papyrus in hieroglyphics. These first libraries were private collections belonging to universities, religious institutions or individuals, but they all had restricted access.

A little later in history, one of the most famous of these ancient libraries was, of course, the Library of Alexandria. Constructed around 250 BC under the Greek Ptolemaic dynasty, at its peak the library contained the equivalent of 100,000 books. The original purpose is believed to be an undertaking of the Ptolemaic dynasty to collect all knowledge from the world. A lot of resources were spent sending agents out to collect material for this collection, and bringing it back to Alexandria. However, given the levels of literacy in this period, the extreme stratification of society in Ptolemaic Egypt and the fact that much of the material was in Greek, a language that the majority of the population of the city of Alexandria and Egypt could not even

understand, it was not exactly a useful or accessible community facility, to say the least.

This model of private, exclusive and inaccessible libraries continued for another 2,000 years. There were similar examples in the Roman Republic, the Roman Empire, the Middle Ages and into the colonial period.

The push for equality within society at the turn of the 20th century led to a push to open up libraries as well, and make knowledge and lifelong learning accessible to the masses. The first local public lending libraries were championed by wealthy philanthropists and, in particular, a Scottish man by the name of Andrew Carnegie, in the USA, UK, Canada and Australia and other countries during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Carnegie's model was to provide a comparatively small amount of money to a city or jurisdiction to build and initially staff a small and simple but functional library that was accessible to all. Part of the agreement was that the jurisdiction would continue to fund, staff and maintain the library for the benefit of the local public. This is in contrast to previous public libraries, which, while free to access, were bigger, grander, located in bigger metropolitan areas and less accessible to people in general.

Work by Carnegie really pushed the idea that libraries should be simple but highly functional and accessible institutions for everyone, leading to the subsequent development of the library model we now recognise from the 1890s onwards.

The library as a place of written record keeping and lifelong learning came to Australia through colonialist aspirations and has been a feature of Australian society for over 150 years. The Melbourne Public Library, which is now well known as the State Library of Victoria, was established in 1854. This means it was not only the first public library to be opened in this country but also one of the first to be opened in the world. South Australia has a particularly interesting history of acknowledging the importance of libraries. The plans for the public library were already in the works before colonists arrived in 1836. The intent of this group of people who colonised South Australia was to bring written material to provide for "the cultivation and diffusion of useful knowledge throughout the colony".

Moving even closer to our time, the government of Gough Whitlam employed the respected librarian Allan Horton to come up with ways to improve the usefulness of libraries and their connections to the community. He put together a report called *Libraries are great mate! but they could be greater*. From this report the government expanded and improved libraries in the late 1970s and onwards.

This long history of improving on, maintaining and expanding library facilities shows the acknowledgement of the importance libraries play in social, cultural and educational access and infrastructure.

Libraries have evolved over this time to recognise a wide range of histories that historically have been invisible, such as the oral histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that I mentioned earlier. Libraries such as the National Film and

Sound Archive, for example, hold oral recordings and videos of traditional stories, historical accounts and language. This includes an 1899 recording of Fanny Cochrane Smith, the only recording of a Tasmanian Aboriginal language native speaker in existence.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is continuing to add to its library of Indigenous languages dictionaries, stories and histories. Much of this material can be found more and more easily through both ACT and other public libraries. For example, a Ngunnawal language handbook is available through Libraries ACT, as is *Footprints on our Land*, by Ngunnawal elder Aunty Agnes, and a book about traditional Ngunnawal plant use.

Library services have also been adapted to enable more varied and nuanced ways of engaging with the library. Gone are the days of a librarian hushing everyone to maintain silence while the library users sit quietly, studiously reading line after line from a pile of books. Now we have all sorts of resources, programs and activities. There are English conversation classes, story time for younger kids, story dogs who help slightly older kids with their reading confidence, or apprenticeship and employment assistance.

In more recent times, with the advent of the internet and personal computers, the resources that libraries can provide have not only expanded in scope but reduced the need for physical floor space and allowed access to libraries from schools and homes. The successful provision of eResources under Libraries ACT's collection demonstrates this government's commitment to maintaining support for our libraries in an enduring, future-minded manner. Currently, eResources include free access for the community to a range of things such as encyclopaedias, language learning resources, coding material for kids, personal and professional development, and much more.

The ACT government is currently undertaking a community co-design process on the future of libraries through the Imagine 2030 project, recognising that the role of libraries in our community and society is continually evolving. My motion today calls on the ACT government, as part of this project, to consider ways library services can improve digital equity and equality in the ACT. We have already seen the ACT government begin work on this issue. The government has already shown its commitment to digital access and inclusion via the distribution of Chromebooks to all ACT public high school students and through the Technology Upgrade Fund Grants Program.

The role of the library in providing onsite internet access has been integral to the inclusion and connectivity of thousands of Australians for decades. However, as I note in my motion, investing in public library connections and infrastructure is necessary to maintain this community service. Solely providing a site for internet access may not be enough to maintain this level of community service anymore. Most libraries can only be open for so many hours of the day for access to their physical premises. If you do not have the internet at home, you subsequently do not have access to any of the library's resources.

Governments across Australia and around the world are increasingly recognising the leading role that libraries play in improving digital equality and access. To further expand on this commitment to the community service that I have outlined, there have been successful pilots of wireless internet device loans, such as at Thomastown Library in Victoria. One of the librarians at Thomastown Library was one of the staff working early and late, providing care packages of books and the like, which our fabulous librarians in the ACT also undertook; and this was during the COVID pandemic.

Coralie, this librarian, started noticing some cars in the car park morning and evening, and thought it was very strange that they were staying for so long. She ended up going to say hello to some of them and discovered it was parents and children spending hours there, within range of the free library wi-fi, so that the kids could do their homework.

According to the 2021 Australian Digital Inclusion Index, 92 per cent of Australians earning less than \$52,000 a year would have to pay more than five per cent of their household income to access a quality, reliable internet connection, and 14 per cent would need to pay more than 10 per cent.

Thomastown library undertook, during the midst of Melbourne's sixth lockdown, to trial providing free wi-fi dongles with 60 gigabytes per month to 100 families for a year. To date this has been a successful trial and there are multiple other trials underway in Victoria. This is a service that has also been tried and rolled out in other countries, including in places such as the New York Public Library in the US, which was the direct inspiration for the Thomastown trial.

I feel that there is a lot of possibility for such a program to be investigated in the ACT and delivered through our libraries. The final part of the motion that I am moving today calls on the government to make improving digital access and inclusion a priority through the Imagine 2030 libraries co-design process, including through consideration of wireless internet device loans and other initiatives to increase access to necessary digital equipment.

Investing in good public infrastructure today means investing in equitable access to digital infrastructure and technology. We know for a fact that libraries often guarantee digital access on premises. According to the 2016 study on four libraries run by the Newcastle City Council, libraries "play a significant role in deprived areas in relation to the provision of IT services otherwise inaccessible for the majority of users who live in the area".

In the Newcastle case, the libraries provide PCs, scanners, printers and internet access that customers usually do not have at home. This means that these resources are the only ones available to support their work, study, entertainment, ordinary activities, communication, online social connections, and a whole range of things that are now part of our normal everyday activity. Hence this helps to reduce the first level of the digital divide.

However, there is still a divide for those who may not have ready access to the internet in their home, and access to the internet is pretty integral to educational and social connectivity in this era. Without the internet, you are often less socially connected, and it is nearly impossible to undertake education and extremely difficult to find a job. In short, we live in a digital era.

I commend my motion to the Assembly and look forward to the subsequent work on reimagining our libraries and building digital equity and equality into them.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (4.19): To quote R David Lankes:

Bad Libraries build collections. Good libraries build services (of which a collection is only one). Great libraries build Communities.

The Greens believe that everyone should have equitable access to digital communications to ensure full participation in community life.

This motion asks the government to make improving digital access inclusion a priority through the Imagine 2030 libraries co-design process. Technological breakthroughs have brought countless benefits to communities in connection, in education, in improved productivity and in efficiency. But there has also been considerable damage to society wrought in the name of digital disruption and development, particularly for our most vulnerable. The effects of digital inequality are apparent, even in an affluent city like Canberra, in the divides between different demographics. Therefore, we need to work on bridging inequities that have arisen because of technological advances to ensure no digitally excluded social groups are left behind.

I must applaud the work of the University of Canberra research cluster for digital inequality and social change who—in fact, this week—hosted the first international symposium on digital inequality and social change, with the theme “Bridging digital inequality for a better, more inclusive society”. Whilst the ACT scores better on average than the rest of Australia on digital inequality, we need to recognise and support those sections of the community who are on the wrong side of the digital divide.

Online spaces are very important for many parts of our community, for example neurodivergent people and people with access and transport difficulties. The online space can provide spaces that are safe and inclusive for these groups. Jee Young Lee, a PhD graduate from the University of Canberra, researched the experiences of disconnected Canberrans. They discovered that digital inclusion needs ongoing support and encouragement. This means not only the means to connect, but the people to show you how and to stand beside you through your learning journey. It means creating communities of practice and welcoming places where people feel safe to ask questions and find out what they need to know.

Representation problems in the public space also cost a lot of money and take a long time to fix; whereas representation in the digital space can be fixed much more

quickly and easily. Libraries also provide access to global media for migrant communities, for example instant access to 6,000 newspapers from 100 countries, in 60 languages, as well as providing essential language learning resources for parts of our community. We can also use digital means to create beneficial outcomes, for example increasing the social participation of historically marginalised groups.

I also applaud the ACT government's technology upgrade fund to upgrade IT equipment and improve digital access and literacy across Canberra. The fund was co-designed in consultation with the community to ensure it has a positive impact and promotes equitable digital access across the ACT. The technology upgrade fund was an election commitment noted in the 10th parliamentary and governing agreement. I personally took great delight in handing out some of the laptops on behalf of the ACT government through the migrant and refugees support services digital access program.

This program aligns with the ACT government's digital strategy to meet the needs of Canberrans most at risk of digital exclusion. This includes older Canberrans and people with disability and access requirements, including mobility restraints, by providing access to a registered community organisation in the ACT. The technology upgrade fund supports the community sector to make improvements and access contemporary hardware, software and services. It also includes training and education with an aim to ensure everyone in the community has equitable access to digital support. But digital access is only one part of the solution. To quote one of my favourite authors, Neil Gaiman: "Google can bring you back 100,000 answers, a librarian can bring you back the right one." Libraries are the gateway drug to knowledge and libraries are the dealers.

Libraries are a public good and a critical part of our community. As the visionary umbrella group Australia reMADE recently reported from their research into the public good, there are a handful of basic goods and services people want to be available to everyone. These came up time and time again, in every conversation group, regardless of people's socioeconomic resources, location, cultural background or political leanings. Namely, they are housing, health care, education, jobs, access to nature and access to the internet. Whether you live in a big city or a small country town, we all need to feel connected to the place we call home. Public libraries, parks and other free community spaces are vital infrastructure for everyone in our communities to be able to access. They also provide important digital resources for people who are in isolation or isolated for whatever reason in these COVID times.

The social causes of exclusion are just as important as the technical ones. It is not just about having an internet connection or laptop; it is about translating this access into plain English. In recent research in the ACT, they found, and I quote:

This study emphasises the importance of social resources, including ongoing support and encouragement, to digital inclusion outcomes. It suggests there are different dimensions that must be considered when addressing digital skills and social constraints, both of which contribute to non-engagement. The thesis suggests that the success of future digital inclusion policy relies on implementing effective means to facilitate new forms of ongoing social support surrounding the use of digital technologies that are deeply embedded in our everyday lives.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.26): It is a pleasure to rise today to speak to Ms Orr's motion. I know from being on committees with Ms Orr, and in hearings, that she has a genuine interest in the work of our libraries here in the ACT. Libraries are a lovely place, a special place and they have an important role in our community. As it has with many things, I am sure the pandemic will change the role of libraries in our society as well.

Even prior to the pandemic, the continuous growth of technology meant that libraries were looking to become more innovative and accessible to meet their customers' needs. Just yesterday, there was an article in the *Canberra Times* with representatives from local Canberra libraries calling for help to innovate their spaces. It is the opportunity for Canberrans to talk about the future of libraries and what they would like to see.

Ms Orr's motion today calls on the ACT government to improve digital access and inclusion through the Imagine 2030 libraries co-design process. I would like to say from the outset that the Canberra Liberals are fully supportive of this idea. We believe that improving digital access in our public libraries for all Canberrans is a positive and just step forward. Ms Orr's motion touches on the role of libraries in improving social inclusion. So there is an opportunity to help more vulnerable groups and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds that may not have had the same access as others to technology before.

I would like to spend a bit of time specifically talking about older people. I know that the ACT government already outsources COTA to run seniors' technology lessons in several ACT libraries, which is a great start to improving digital literacy in our older Canberrans. Thank you, COTA, for the work that you do.

Older Australians and older Canberrans started being exposed to and using the internet in the 1990s. It is never as easy to learn something when you are a bit older, whether it is a language or using a computer. There are a whole range of things that are more challenging for older people, as opposed to small children, who we see running around with their iPads. They are digital natives. Some people, depending on the stage of life in which technology became more readily available, may be better or worse. Of course, that is a mass generalisation. It does not apply across the board to everyone, but for older Australians, older Canberrans, it can be more of a challenge.

In 2021 the Australian digital inclusion index, or ADII, ranked Australians in the over 75 age group a 47.4 score, which is 23.7 points below the national average score of 71.1. Similarly, people who did not complete secondary school were also ranked poorly on the ADII, at 52.7. According to the ADII, 11 per cent of Australians are highly excluded.

What that tells us is that more can, and should, be done to improve access for First Nations Canberrans, people from multicultural backgrounds, people from low socio-economic backgrounds, people living with a disability, those who may have been incarcerated, and older Canberrans. So improving digital literacy using our Canberra libraries is important, as is putting steps in place to ensure that no-one in our community gets left behind, especially due to affordability.

Another group that I have concerns about are people with disability who have some more special requirements in accessing the internet. Some of you may know that I used to work in the deaf community with people experiencing deafness. When the internet came about, deaf people were really excited because this was a text-based model that they could access really easily. Then, of course, we moved, over time, towards video and sound, which once again started to exclude people with deafness.

I would encourage all of you, if you do not already, to include captions on any of the videos that you produce so that people who are deaf can access them. In fact, I think research shows that the vast majority of people use YouTube and social media channels with the sound off, so captions have a benefit for just about everyone, even if you are not deaf. Certainly, I am interested in improving accessibility for people.

People with blindness or vision impairment are another group where there are ways that you can improve their access. For example, if you put up a photo you could put a description of the photo as alternative text so that the person with vision impairment knows what the photo is showing or describing.

It is great to talk about improving libraries and coming up with innovation to ensure that they remain vibrant, viable and exciting places. Some of us—maybe not so many in this room—may remember taking our children to libraries when they were little, to story time. I think they have Giggle and Wiggle these days. These have innovated over time as well to different models of delivery for children.

We all need to keep moving with the times, taking the technology that is available and running with it. And when we run with it, we cannot leave people behind. We cannot just take it and presume that everyone is the same as us—that everyone has an iPad and a phone and a desktop computer and a computer at home, because we are elected not just to talk about our own views and our own experiences but to represent everyone in our community. That is why it is important that we are talking here today about social inclusion and digital inclusion and using libraries to do that. So thanks again to Ms Orr for bringing this motion to the Assembly. We are happy to support it.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (4.33): I thank Ms Orr for bringing forward this motion today. I thank her for her engagement on libraries in the ACT and the need for greater digital access and inclusion. Libraries ACT provides an important service to our community across nine public libraries and the ACT Heritage Library by engaging with the public to promote literacy and interconnectivity and supporting access to a range of digital services.

The Imagine 2030 libraries project will help develop a plan for our libraries over the years between now and the end of the decade. Using a co-design approach is much more than consultation. It means that the library is working with the community to listen to what they say they need and what they want from a public library. Community workshops, deep-dive interviews, and peak body and stakeholder organisation workshops are all part of the process that Libraries ACT is engaging with as part of this co-design.

Whilst it is too early to anticipate specific outcomes, we can expect that priorities and initiatives that relate to digital resources, technology access and related topics will feature strongly in community ideas for Imagine 2030 and the plan for the future. Imagine 2030 will help to identify what the community wants as priorities for library services, just as Better Suburbs did for City Services.

The plan for the future of libraries is expected to be completed by the middle of 2022. Access to technology, guidance on how to use it and advice on cyber safety are all essential for our community, and libraries have a critical role to play. Not everyone in our community has their own computer or a smartphone. Not everyone has internet access at their fingertips, and not everyone has the skills or confidence to use technology.

There are often challenges in offering technology, including continually upskilling, needing to keep up to date with rapid changes in devices and software, and the wide variety of devices, products and software available. However, our libraries remain aware of the important role that they play in supporting the community. Our libraries provide access to computers and the internet, including wi-fi, all for free. Library staff can help people in a range of ways, such as setting up and using email and social media, how to download apps, using QR codes, basic smartphone tips, and how to seek help for cyberbullying.

Council of the Ageing ACT's outreach service has trained digital mentors who are also regularly visiting libraries to provide digital support to older people with using technology, including assistance in understanding and accessing My Aged Care and housing options, as well as information, advice and referrals on topics of interest to older people, such as transport and seniors cards. Libraries can connect people with easy-to-use training videos and step-by-step instruction guides such as those offered online by Be Connected.

These actions we are taking are consistent with the ACT government's digital strategy. As the strategy notes, this is not just about technology but about how we can optimise digital and smart technologies for community-centred services. Importantly, the strategy puts emphasis on the need to think about the design and delivery of digital services with community at its heart. The programs and services that Libraries ACT offers work hard to achieve this goal.

Beyond skill development and technological access, and providing resources to children and their parents, there is a wide variety of advice on technology and strategies to teach and learn e-safety. Picture books for young children can help to reinforce messages about online safety—books like *The Internet is Like a Puddle*, by Shona Innes and Irisz Agocs, which explains that, just as some puddles are fun to play in and others are too deep and unsafe, the internet is the same and it is important to stay in the right part of it. Understanding cyber safety is important for people of all ages, and library staff can help by providing advice and referring people to current and authoritative information.

The library provides access to an extensive collection of digital resources, including ebooks, audio books, digital magazines and newspapers, and streaming movies and

music. These are all subscribed to on behalf of the Canberra community and anyone with a library membership can use them.

More broadly, the ACT government is continuing to invest in infrastructure development, library collections and facilities on an ongoing basis. This includes the recently upgraded Woden Library, which offers community access to technological equipment and facilities, including a podcast studio and a recording and rehearsal studio. I look forward to seeing more community members engage with these facilities in the future.

As Ms Orr notes, libraries are an important part of the city and provide an important asset to our community. Their role in providing the most vulnerable members of our community, and indeed all members of our community, with access to the internet and technology safely is to be commended. I thank her for her interest in this topic and commend the motion to the Assembly. We will be considering technological access as part of the libraries 2030 project.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (4.39), in reply: Just briefly, in closing, I would like to thank all members for their contribution today. It is clear from the debate that there is much support for libraries and the role that they play within our community, and certainly a recognition that digital access is an important part of how we prosper and fully participate within our community. I was very encouraged to hear the minister's closing remarks, where he said that they will be definitely looking at this aspect of provision of services within the Imagining 2030 libraries strategy. I am very keen to see this progress and for digital equity and access to be improved in the ACT.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Absence of Speaker

The Clerk, pursuant to standing order 6, informed the Assembly that the Speaker would be absent for the period 6 to 22 April 2022 inclusive and that in that period the Deputy Speaker, Mr Parton, as Acting Speaker, would perform the duties of the Speaker.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Mr Gentleman**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Canberra—community initiatives and events

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (4.40): Mr Assistant Speaker Cain, I want to speak to a number of community initiatives and events across the last two weeks. In doing so I acknowledge that this is just a small representation of all that

has been on offer across our incredible city. Several of these are related to International Women's Day, which, as you know, we formally celebrated on 8 March, but there were plenty of events throughout that week, and indeed throughout that month.

On 26 March I was pleased to join the Alo Enlightened Women and Canberra Multicultural Women's Forum. Specifically, my role was the launch of Alo's new financial literacy program, Caring for Your Money, which is an initiative to improve financial understanding and management for women. It is delivered by women, and it is done in a way that is meaningful and leads to real and positive change; thus it helps women to participate more equally. This was ahead of a keynote speech from Mariam Veiszadeh on gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow.

I was very pleased to see how well attended this event was, including a very strong presence of men and community leaders. My sincere thanks go to Alo and CMWF for their collaborative spirit and the consistent and thoughtful way they continue to have such genuine impact in the community.

This event preceded the Nowruz celebrations in Civic Square, which I spoke about in the last sitting. This coincides with the spring equinox or, for us in Canberra, the autumn equinox. Nowruz promotes values of peace and solidarity between generations and within families, as well as reconciliation and neighbourliness. It is also a celebration that contributes to cultural diversity and friendship among people and different communities.

The event in Civic Square showcased the very best of this spirit, together with crafts and textiles, delicious food, wonderful dancing, as well as a particular highlight for me, the singing of children of the Iranian nationalist song, *Ey Iran*. This was the very first time that the Persian-Australian Community Association of Canberra has held such an event, and I congratulate them and hope that we see it back again, and with an even bigger crowd, soon.

On that day there was also the BAPS Women's Conference, which I was very honoured to speak at, and share a little bit of my background and my journey to where I am today. The BAPS community is known to many of us in this space. This women's conference was one of many held throughout Australia. It was firmly women only, and included skits, videos, dancing and speeches. The theme was "everyday extraordinary", and it was incredibly humbling to be in a room of women who exemplified this theme. I thank all of the organisers and all who spent time with me that day for the huge amount of effort they went to in making me feel so very welcome and part of the conference.

Initiative for Women in Need also held an International Women's Day event with a firm focus on female-led social enterprises, the impact they have, and the opportunities for women. This was before the relaunch the following night of Her Kitchen Table, a social enterprise which in just a few months last year created not only real connection but also real money for culturally and linguistically diverse Canberra women. I valued the opportunity to share how increasing the number of businesses run by women is a key part of diversifying our economy and to outline

some of the ways in which the ACT government is working to make this a reality, in addition to hearing from the Leader of the Opposition, and especially from a former Canberra Woman of the Year and social entrepreneur powerhouse, Cindy Mitchell. My sincere thanks go to the IWIN Committee for hosting such an enjoyable and inspiring event, even with a few challenging logistical circumstances.

The following day was the Molonglo Valley Multicultural Day, which I know many members in this place attended. I congratulate the Molonglo Valley Community Forum for their gumption, and for all of the effort in pulling together what was such a great event, with so many performances, and a real generosity of spirit that was present at the event—and, of course, the rain held off.

In one weekend these were just five events, but I think they do show the absolute diversity and vibrancy of our great city. It is quite extraordinary to think about it.

BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.45): I rise tonight to acknowledge the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha organisation, or BAPS, and His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 100th birth anniversary year.

BAPS is a Hindu socio-cultural organisation affiliated in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN. BAPS strives to care for the world by caring for societies, families and individuals. BAPS has millions of followers around the world and, as a volunteer-driven organisation, it has thousands of volunteers carrying out seva, or selfless service, in communities around the world. The BAPS volunteers are inspired by their gurus, their spiritual leaders, to serve their communities.

This year BAPS is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the birth of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His Holiness was initiated as a sadhu or a Hindu monk in 1940 and served communities for over 76 years. His Holiness presented at the United Nations Millennium Peace Summit in 2000, urging peace and harmony around the world. He lived his life by the ethos "In the joy of others lies our own", and inspired countless others to follow that ideal.

During his leadership of BAPS, His Holiness travelled to over 17,000 villages, towns and cities in 50 nations and visited over 250,000 homes. His Holiness visited Australia in 1984, 1996 and 2002. Representing their gurus—His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj until August 2016, and now His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj—senior BAPS sadhus have visited the Australian parliament on numerous occasions and prayed for peace, prosperity and a bright future for all Australians.

As with BAPS congregations around Australia and the world, BAPS volunteers, inspired by their gurus, contribute here in Canberra to our community—for example by: regular blood donation drives; raising funds for charitable organisations like the Canberra Hospital Foundation and others; providing hot meals and food packs during the COVID-19 restrictions, especially to international students and others in situations of vulnerability; participating in clean-up days and tree planting drives; promoting peace, unity and harmony through participation in an interfaith forum for the Royal

Canberra Show and the Celebrate Gungahlin community event; and holding weekly assemblies and celebrating Hindu festivals at various locations for over a decade. Now and for the last six years these have been held at the Ngunnawal Primary School.

For many years BAPS has teamed up with the Hindu Council of Australia to present the annual Diwali, or Festival of Lights, and Annakut, the Festival of Gratitude, and exhibitions at the Australian parliament. The BAPS Hindu mandir or temple and community centre in Canberra is the vision of His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj. His Holiness visited Canberra in October 1997. The BAPS volunteers in Canberra will then have a base, when the completion of the BAPS Hindu mandir or temple is completed. It is about to begin construction, I believe just this week, in Taylor. That temple and community centre hopefully will be opened in the second half of 2023. BAPS is looking forward to providing even greater community service activities then.

There are many volunteers who can be acknowledged, and I do not have time to mention them all, but I will mention a couple: Ms Twinkle Brahmhatt, Ms Nayna Patel, Ms Komel Gondaliya, Ms Harshita Kakkad and Ms Chaitali Shah, Mr Vivek Brahmhatt, Mr Hari Krishna Patel, Mr Dipak Gondaliya, Mr Hiren Raval, Mr Parag Shah, Ms Chai Chobani, and Mr Sitesh Goshani. Thank you to everyone involved at BAPS Canberra for all of the work you do for our community.

Roads—maintenance

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.50): I have an unfortunate topic to speak of and I do not think the government is going to enjoy my adjournment address. I keep getting expressions of concern from my electorate about the state of the roads, in particular the potholes. Over the last few months this has been continuing from the residents in Ginninderra. It is not just the potholes; it is how poorly repaired they are, just waiting to open up yet again. I do not know if any of the other local members have noticed this, but heading from the Belconnen Mall side of Southern Cross Drive, turning right onto Coulter Drive, which then takes you north down the Ginninderra highway, at that very major intersection, as one turns right, you have to steer over or past a very sizeable depression, a poorly repaired pothole.

The things that I have been hearing about from my constituents include damage to vehicles that reduces their durability. There are certainly safety concerns being expressed. Frankly, it is just a sign of a lack of care and competence from a government that they are paying a lot of money to, through their rates and other taxes. It is a discouragement to businesses and to parking because there are some places where you just cannot park. You have to be careful how you park, even.

The other aesthetic side of all of this is that I think Canberrans deserve beautiful infrastructure—not unsightly infrastructure but beautiful infrastructure—and they are not getting it from the Labor-Greens government. I have rather reluctantly come to the conclusion that this Labor-Greens government is the worst service delivery government the territory has had since self-government. It is the worst service delivery government we have had in the territory since self-government.

Who would have ever guessed that in a country like Australia, in a city which is its capital, there would be significant discussion and concern about potholes on major roads? I obviously welcome the attention of government members, as they are driving or even cycling, to the state of the roads around them. It is not a comforting sight. Canberrans deserve well-maintained, regularly cared for and beautiful infrastructure.

Where is the investment for what Canberrans use every day? Where is the concern for what affects Canberrans every single day? Where is the pure utilitarian approach, politically, from a government that is meant to provide quality urban services? I do, with some reluctance, raise this very negative aspect in what is normally a positive end of a sitting day—our adjournment speeches. I speak in this way on behalf of many, many concerned constituents who keep bringing this to my attention. Shame on Labor and the Greens for being the worst service delivery government the territory has had since self-government.

Canberran of the Year 2022—Mohammed Ali

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (4.54): Members, today I would like to talk, with considerable appreciation, about our Canberran of the Year, Mohammed Ali, and to thank him for everything he has done for the people of our city. I would like to thank the Chief Minister for awarding him this honour. Having missed the last sitting due to illness, I am conscious that it has been a little while since this was announced, but I do not want to miss the opportunity to make these remarks in this place. I think it is really important to recognise some of these not-unsung heroes but insufficiently-sung heroes in our communities—the people who just get in and do the work, who see a need and jump in to fill it, and who bring people together with a positive goal. Mohammed Ali is a tour de force in this regard.

Coming from a family in which he saw caring for others strongly modelled by his father, Mohammed moved to Canberra from Karachi in Pakistan more than 30 years ago and has backed his love for his adopted home with real action. A couple of years ago, when the *Canberra Times* interviewed him, he said he thought Canberra had become more loving, peaceful and caring over the past 30 years, and I am quite certain that he has had a hand in making that happen.

In 2004, following the Boxing Day tsunami, he started a curry lunch club in his workplace, the Therapeutic Goods Administration, him and his colleagues cooking and selling curries to co-workers. Over a number of years this raised thousands of dollars for a range of different causes.

After Mohammed retired from the Therapeutic Goods Administration a few years ago, he stepped up his work even further. In 2018 he founded HelpingACT, which helps vulnerable Canberrans with food security and works with other organisations such as Slabs for Heroes, the Early Morning Centre and local street pantries. He has also had important roles on the ACT Multicultural Advisory Board, the ACT Refugee Asylum Seeker and Humanitarian Coordination Committee, and with Companion House.

In between all of this, he finds time to be a husband, father and grandfather and also to be a regular and positive presence on ABC talkback radio. More than once I have

hopped in the car and turned the radio on and heard Mohammed talking about a range of different matters affecting both this city and often the global community more widely.

I, like most members of this place, have met Mohammed many times over the years and have been invited to many of the events and gatherings he has been involved in organising or helping to promote. Not only have I always appreciated both his personal warmth and enthusiasm but I have particularly appreciated the opportunity that those events have afforded me to meet different members of the community, to hear a range of different perspectives and issues that people are talking about and to learn more about what is happening in this city. Whilst those events are really important in their own right, I think many members of this place have really benefited from the opportunity we have had to go to those events and be exposed to those perspectives and opportunities.

We need more people like Mohammed Ali in our community. I congratulate him on being an inspiration to so many and on receiving this official recognition. For Canberra's sake, as well as his own, I wish him many more years of fulfilment and success in his contributions to the community.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.59 pm.