



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

TENTH ASSEMBLY

4 MAY 2022

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Wednesday, 4 May 2022

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Wednesday, 4 May 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

Ministerial responses

The following responses to petitions have been lodged:

Moncrieff—sludge pit—petition 49-21

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Transport and City Services, dated Monday, 2 May 2022, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Braddock on Thursday, 10 February 2022 requesting the removal of the Moncrieff drying pit.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter regarding petition 49-21 regarding the Moncrieff drying pad, lodged by Mr Andrew Braddock MLA. The petition seeks for Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) to:

- 1. Temporarily effectively encase the pit so it contains the rubbish dumped into it; and*
- 2. Commission the removal of the pit to an area that is away from residential areas and closer to the landfill.*

Material collected and removed from the ACT stormwater network is deposited at approved drying sites like the Moncrieff Drying Pad, and then transported to the Mugga Lane Resource Management Centre.

The ACT Government uses the Moncrieff Drying Pad area to dry out waste material collected from a series of Gross Pollutant Traps from across the northern suburbs in the ACT. This site contains a drying pad to dry out wet waste, and a Gross Pollutant Trap to collect rubbish and debris from the nearby stormwater system. It is necessary to have a specialised area to dry wet waste at this site to comply with environmental protection requirements before this waste is transported to the Mugga Lane Resource facility.

Gross Pollutant Traps are the first water pollution control point in the stormwater network. They prevent the flow of coarse sediment, garbage and organic debris into waterways, water quality control ponds, and urban lakes. This maintains the appearance of these waterways and water bodies, assists with the maintenance of water quality, and ensures the health of downstream flora and fauna. There are over 265 such traps in the ACT's stormwater network, which are designed to remove up to 70 per cent of material from stormwater runoff.

The ACT Government acknowledges that the population has grown in the Gungahlin region since the Moncrieff site was established. We are taking steps to improve containment and introduce soft landscaping to better control the waste and improve the aesthetics. These works will be undertaken by 30 June 2022.

In regards to the specific petition requests, TCCS will be installing chain wire fencing around the perimeter of the drying pad including heavy duty shade cloth to contain the dry material. TCCS have also developed a planting design for new trees around the pad site to improve its aesthetics, and are coordinating with the Ginninderra Catchment Group to deliver this. TCCS is regularly monitoring and maintaining the site and removing material, and are also planning to incorporate small, scented plants to assist with odour control. TCCS is also consulting with the Fire Management team as the site is partially zoned as a Bushfire Prone Area and is close to the Outer Asset Protection Zone. Works have been scheduled to slash and spray along the fence line, and a thick layer of mulch will be placed on the eastern side of the area after the permanent chain link fence has been installed.

Ginninderra Catchment Group volunteers will plant larger sized eucalypts (250mm spring ring) and screening shrubs (tubes) along the eastern side of the drying pad, and plant casuarinas between the pin oaks on the western side. The group will also look for opportunities to plant trees around May-June 2022 along the cycle path which runs north-east of the creek as part of the autumn planting program.

The mid to long-term management strategy will be to arrange two to three maintenance events with Ginninderra Catchment Group volunteers in the first year, and to return to spray out weeds one year after the initial planting. The site will be allowed to naturalise to minimise the need for ongoing maintenance.

TCCS has developed a suitable containment treatment and aesthetic improvements to the Gross Pollutant Trap as a permanent solution.

At present, there are no plans to remove this trap, nor move the drying pad closer to the Mugga Lane landfill. This is because there is a shortage of viable alternative locations which can accommodate this drying infrastructure at necessary and strategic points in Canberra's waterways.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Gungahlin—skate park—petition 51-21

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Transport and City Services, dated Monday, 2 May 2022, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Braddock on Thursday, 10 February 2022 requesting an upgrade to Gungahlin skate park.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 10 February 2022 regarding petition 51-21, lodged by Mr Andrew Braddock MLA. The petition seeks for Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) to refurbish Gungahlin Skate Park and install lights.

The ACT Government continues to invest in new and upgraded facilities across the Canberra Region. The Government has a strong track record of listening to the community as we deliver a rolling program of upgrades to a range of recreational infrastructure. Our upgrade works span play spaces, sporting facilities, footpaths, seating, lighting, and other important community facilities. All requests for improvements to Canberra playgrounds and other open space recreational facilities are assessed and prioritised annually and considered for future improvements where necessary. This process ensures that investments in public spaces are suitably targeted and meet the needs of all Canberrans.

TCCS currently manages and maintains around 20 skateparks throughout Canberra. To ensure that skating infrastructure is safe and fit for purpose and the community is safe, independent annual audits are conducted to assess each skate park against the Australian Standard. In addition to annual audits, quarterly in-house visual safety inspections are undertaken along with daily visual checks during regular cleaning and operational maintenance functions. Repairs to the concrete surface at Gungahlin Skate Park have been undertaken to remediate cracks and exposed reinforcing bars as part of this safety-focussed work.

I am pleased to advise that feasibility and preliminary design work will be undertaken on lighting for the skate park as part of the Yerrabi Ponds Design Project. Consultation with the community will be undertaken as part of this process.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Roads—speed limits—petition 1-22

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Transport and City Services, dated Monday, 2 May 2022, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Davis on Tuesday, 8 February 2022 concerning the installation of speed limit signage on Bateman St, Kambah.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 8 February 2022 regarding petition 1-22, lodged by Mr Johnathan Davis MLA. The petition seeks for Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) to install 50kph speed limit signs at both ends of Bateman Street in Kambah.

In May 2003, the ACT Government introduced an urban 50 km/h default speed limit. This speed limit became the standard and was applied to all roads within the urban areas of the ACT. Areas where alternative speed limits apply are

signposted as such (40km/h, 60km/h, 80km/h, etc). Under this arrangement, the default speed limit of 50km/h applies to Bateman Street without the need for additional signage.

A traffic survey conducted on Bateman Street in November 2020, showed that motorists are traveling at an average speed of 49km/h and based on the seven-year period between 2014 and 2020, there were no reported crashes on Bateman Street.

As part of the urban default speed limit policy, TCCS does not support the individual installation of 50 km/h speed limit signage within urban areas on roads that come under the existing 50 km/h default urban speed limit.

More information about this policy can be found at www.cityservices.act.gov.au/roads-and-paths/policies-reports/installation-of-50-kmh-speed-limit-signs.

Given the information above, TCCS has no plans to install 50km/h speed limit signs on Bateman Street.

Motion to take note of petitions

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

That the responses so lodged be noted.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Emergency services—acknowledging first responders Ministerial statement

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) (10.03): The following is a ministerial statement recognising our first responders. I rise today to extend my gratitude and admiration to those who have worked tirelessly across our government to prioritise the safety of our community, particularly the first responders within my portfolio as Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

There is no doubt that it has been a difficult time for the people of Canberra, as it has been for many people across Australia and across the world. In the last three years we have experienced some of the most extreme weather events in Australian history, combined with the added complexity of a global pandemic. I would like to take a moment to pause, reflect and commend the volunteers and staff across all directorates of the ACT government for their unwavering commitment in supporting the community through these difficult and ever-changing times. I would also like to extend a special mention to our corrective services staff, healthcare workers, teachers and carers for their astounding work and flexibility in working through the recent health crisis.

There is no way we would have been able to recover and adapt as productively as we have without our collaborative, team-spirited approach. It has been a busy and demanding period without much respite for the volunteers and staff in the ACT Emergency Services Agency, the ACT Parks and Conservation Service and ACT Policing, who have kept our community safe through another bushfire and storm season, while dealing with recent protests and the ongoing impact of the global pandemic. To all of them we continue to say thank you.

On this International Firefighters Day, I would like to acknowledge not only our firefighters but all frontline workers who respond to emergencies day in, day out, all year round, no matter the circumstances or season. Thank you to our police, our paramedics, our firefighters, our triple zero call-takers, and to the enablers who support them, for their ongoing service and commitment to our community. We also recognise and thank your loved ones, partners, children and those who worry when you are working around the clock to keep the rest of the ACT community safe.

In order to meet the increasing demands of our growing population in the midst of multiple health and weather emergencies, our first responders have quickly modified their duties on-shift to ensure that every necessary precautionary measure reflects the most current health and safety advice. While most of us were able to enact our business continuity plans from the comfort of our own homes, with loved ones by our sides, our emergency services personnel continued to respond to emergencies out in the field. They chose to serve our community, despite the added demands and responsibilities of wearing full personal protective equipment every shift for long periods of time, undergoing regular meticulous cleaning of equipment and vehicles, transitioning their training to online platforms, navigating cross-border arrangements and undertaking endless risk assessments.

Regardless of the task at hand or how many changes were required to best manage the situation in these trying times, our police and emergency services continued to look out for one another, as well as for their community. With the undeniable impact of climate change causing increasingly severe weather patterns, combined with the ongoing disruption caused by the pandemic and the impact of a growing population, it is inevitable that our police and emergency services volunteers and staff will remain busy.

From my conversations in the community, it is clear that all Canberrans are incredibly grateful for the work that our police and emergency services personnel do. What is their business as usual often makes an extraordinary difference to someone's day. With this in mind, I target this message directly to our frontline responders: thank you for showing us what it means to put your community first and for inspiring us to do what we can when others are in need of assistance. When things become difficult, please remember, your work is valued and deeply appreciated. I look forward to continuing to work with you to keep Canberra safe into the future.

I present the following paper:

Recognising our first responders—Ministerial statement, 4 May 2022.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

World Day for Safety and Health at Work and Workers' Memorial Day

Ministerial statement

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) (10.08): The following ministerial statement is related to World Day for Safety and Health at Work and Workers' Memorial Day.

Madam Speaker, 28 April was World Day for Safety and Health at Work. It was also Workers' Memorial Day. This is an important day for working Canberrans, their families and the community. It is a day for reflecting on how to prevent work-related accidents, illnesses and diseases. It is also a day where we take time to remember those who have died at work or from work-related injury or illness. This year's theme of "Act together to build a positive safety and health culture" reminds us that we all—governments, employers, employees and the community—have a contribution to make to a world where work is safe and healthy for everyone. Work health and safety is a joint effort. Unsafe workplaces affect not only workers but their friends, families and the broader community.

All businesses and employers have an obligation under work health and safety laws to protect the health and safety of their workers. Workers also have responsibilities to themselves and to each other. As a government we have an important role to play. It is our responsibility to ensure that health and safety laws protect workers and keep pace as the nature of work changes, new hazards emerge and community expectations evolve. Our government has demonstrated our commitment to doing exactly that.

For Workers' Memorial Day, the International Trades Union Congress has set the theme as "Make safe and healthy work a fundamental right. It's a no-brainer." Sadly, while this is true, the latest data available tells us that 194 workers were fatally injured at work in Australia in 2020, including two deaths in the ACT. Every one of these people had a family who love them, friends who mourn them and colleagues who miss them. Everyone does have a right to return home safely from work, and this right must be protected. Every workplace fatality is a tragedy that devastates families, friends, co-workers and the wider community, but these are preventable tragedies.

The introduction last year of legislative change to make industrial manslaughter an offence under work health and safety laws was a significant step forward in delivering on the government's commitment to strengthen workplace safety across the ACT and to stand up for the rights of workers. This new offence sits at the top of a series of offences that provide strong deterrents against unsafe work practices and systematic

non-compliance. Strong penalties apply for those who continue to disregard safe work practices and breaches of work safety obligations. The government has always stood up for workers and their right to come home safe from work. These penalties reflect the extreme seriousness of the offence and give the families of those killed in the workplace better access to justice. Establishing industrial manslaughter as an offence was one of the key recommendations from the Boland review of Australian work health and safety laws.

We have also made strong progress on the recommendation to put a stronger focus on psychosocial risks and hazards in the workplace. This recommendation specifically addresses the lack of regulation in work health and safety laws for psychological health hazards in the workplace. It reminds us that work health and safety is not just about physical health and safety, but that work can promote, as well as present risks to, psychological health and safety. Bullying, stress, fatigue, harassment and sexual harassment are all examples of psychological health hazards that must be managed under work health and safety duties and obligations. Psychosocial injuries cause trauma and impact health and wellbeing. They have financial consequences and a negative impact on career progression for workers. They result in lost productivity, staff turnover and reputational damage for employers.

Poor psychological health and safety is bad for businesses. It costs Australian organisations an estimated \$6 billion a year in lost productivity. And psychological injuries typically require three times more time off work than other injuries. Each year around 7,200 Australians are compensated for work-related mental health conditions, making up six per cent of all workers compensation claims. Approximately \$543 million is paid in workers compensation for work-related mental health conditions annually.

In the ACT we are better supporting employers and business with new information, tools and other resources to support them in understanding their psychosocial health and safety obligations. WorkSafe ACT have launched their Strategy for Managing Work-Related Psychosocial Hazards 2021-2023, along with plans to manage work-related violence and aggression, and sexual harassment. WorkSafe ACT is a strong and effective regulator of workplace safety in our community. It upholds and enforces the laws and regulations that the government puts in place to keep workers safe, and we could not do it without that organisation.

The government, of course, have an ambitious legislative program to keep workers safe, and we are delivering on it. Earlier this month I was pleased to release the Silica Dust Reforms Action Plan for 2022. This is the latest initiative to progress the ACT government's commitment to strengthen work health and safety legislation and regulation in the current term of government. Like many of us, I have been concerned about the frequency of silicosis being seen in workers whose work involves cutting engineered stone. It is a debilitating disease that severely reduces victims' life expectancy. These reforms outlined in the action plan aim to improve protections for tradespeople exposed to silica dust. It provides a staged pathway for these new regulations and activities to educate tradespeople and provide clarity to workplaces about their obligations and responsibilities to ensure that the risk of silica dust exposure is prevented or minimised.

The reforms will be delivered in two tranches over 2022 to give workers and employers the time to adjust to the new requirements and be ready to work safely within the new regulatory environment for silica-containing materials. The first tranche of actions, currently underway, is the banning of uncontrolled dry cutting of materials containing silica and introducing mandatory silica dust awareness training. These actions will remove the highest and most dangerous risk of airborne dust and ensure that people working with silica dust are armed with the knowledge to protect themselves and others.

These reforms demonstrate the progress made against the commitments in the parliamentary and governing agreement to ensure that the ACT has strong and responsive work health and safety laws. I thank the unions and others who advocate so tirelessly for workers' safety. I was proud to stand strong in solidarity with them, and with workers, on World Day for Safety and Health at Work. Together we will continue to ensure that all working people in the ACT have work and workplaces that promote and protect their health, safety and wellbeing.

I also had the pleasure of presenting awards to delegates recognised in Unions ACT's May Day awards last week. One of these delegates was Bryan Kidman, the United Workers Union member who was unfairly disciplined for speaking up about unfair and unsafe working conditions. Bryan's advocacy showed that exerting public pressure on an employer is recognised as a commonplace and legitimate industrial activity. Congratulations to Bryan and all delegates recognised for their work. They are all a wonderful example of the power of collective action and the importance of solidarity.

On Workers' Memorial Day, we stand together in solidarity. When I introduced the industrial manslaughter bill to the Assembly I did so in memory of those who never come home from work, and for the devastated families, colleagues and communities that they have left. On Workers' Memorial Day 2022 we remembered them. And I continue the promise I made back then that the ACT and this government will be working to raise safety standards and promote safe and secure work into the future.

I present the following paper:

World Day for Safety and Health at Work and Workers' Memorial Day—
Ministerial statement, 4 May 2022.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (10.17): Last Thursday, 28 April, we commemorated International Workers' Memorial Day, as well as World Day for Safety and Health at Work. Along with my comrades in the union movement, we gathered at the National Workers Memorial to pay tribute to workers who have lost their lives or suffered an injury due to their work.

The service was a timely reminder that occupational health and safety is something that can never be forgotten or overlooked. No worker should lose their life at work. We need to work hard to ensure that every single worker comes home safe at the end of each day. International Workers' Memorial Day is a day to remember those who have died from a work-related injury or illness. It is also a time to reflect on what we need to do as legislators to continue improving workplace safety. The theme for Workers' Memorial Day this year—"Make safe and healthy work a fundamental right. It's a no-brainer."—reflects this. This theme puts work health and safety at the front of people's minds as a basic right. It reminds us all that workplaces are meant to be safe places, and no worker should suffer from any form of injury.

The latest Safe Work Australia data shows that, tragically, 194 workers lost their lives in 2020 due to a work-related injury. Here in the ACT, two workers suffered fatal injuries whilst at work. Whilst workplace fatalities have been on a steady decline since 2007, it is important that we take time to remember those who have tragically lost their lives. Their stories should never be forgotten. On World Day for Safety and Health at Work, we reflect on the fact that we must continue to prioritise workplace safety. It is a day that reminds us that we must continue to prevent occupational deaths, injuries, diseases and illnesses.

In 2019-20 over 120,000 serious compensation claims resulting from a workplace injury were lodged in this country. Serious claims include all workers who accepted compensation claims for an incapacity that resulted in a total absence from work for over one working week. Long-lasting workplace injuries are debilitating, not only preventing one from working but profoundly impact on someone's ability to live their life outside of work as well.

The theme set by the International Labour Organisation for this year's World Day for Safety and Health at Work is "Act together to build a positive safety and health culture". The theme encourages workplaces to adopt an inclusive work health and safety culture where everyone in the workplace is able to contribute and have a say on issues pertaining to health and safety.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced employers and workers to work side by side in adopting new WHS practices in an ever-changing situation. This unprecedented period emphasised that safety can and must be made a priority in our workplaces. This year's World Day for Safety and Health at Work aims to build on this relationship and to encourage employers and workers to work together to promote an inclusive WHS framework and culture.

It is important that workers feel able to speak up if they feel unsafe. They should never be shamed, ostracised or punished by an employer for raising a safety concern. Striving to shift the culture in workplaces so that speaking up is not only normalised but encouraged is essential. Every worker deserves to come home safe at the end of the day. We must continue the fight to ensure that workers' health and safety at work is always protected. Madam Speaker, we remember the dead and fight like hell for the living.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

ACT Health—workplace culture

Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (10.22): I rise today to provide the Assembly with the biannual update on the actions being taken in response to the independent review into the workplace culture within ACT public health services.

Madam Speaker, significant work has progressed against these recommendations at a system-wide level and within each of the three arms of the public health system—that is, the ACT Health Directorate, Canberra Health Services and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce. It is also timely to recognise that 5 May marks the start of Nurses and Midwives Week, with 5 May being International Day of the Midwife and 12 May being International Nurses Day. I am looking forward to celebrating these important days with our incredibly hardworking nurses and midwives, to keep listening to them and to thank them for their care of our community. It has been great to meet with so many of them recently and I look forward to celebrating their professions over the next week.

The strong governance framework of the culture review implementation continues to ensure that a positive workplace culture is embedded and sustained across the ACT public health system. The culture reform oversight group, which I chair, and the culture review implementation steering group, chaired by the Director-General of the ACT Health Directorate, continue to meet on a regular basis. These groups remain committed to delivering the recommendations of the review to and across our public health services.

The three working groups of the oversight group continue to work collaboratively and constructively to deliver initiatives that reinforce sustainable change and drive system-wide cultural reform. These working groups are the system-wide HR matters working group, the early intervention working group and the professional transition to work working group. Membership of these working groups includes members of the oversight group and other key stakeholders, including representatives from universities and the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.

The working groups have progressed a range of initiatives that support our current and prospective workforce. The system-wide HR matters working group is currently focused on system-wide industrial matters. An initial workshop was held in March, providing a forum for stakeholders to collaborate and genuinely consult on system-wide industrial relations issues, with a focus on developing evidence-based innovative solutions and improvement.

Further workshops have been scheduled throughout 2022 to enable solution-focused discussions on longstanding matters. For example, in response to system-wide feedback on work health and safety and incident reporting, a system-wide work health and safety community of practice has been established. An initial meeting was held in March to provide evidence-based recommendations to the culture review implementation steering group.

The early intervention working group is focused on identifying system-wide issues that have, or are likely to have, an impact on culture across the ACT public health system. The group has focused on identifying and monitoring culture issues that may arise from the implementation of significant change programs, including the digital health record, the human resource information management system, or HRIMS, and the Canberra Hospital master plan.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, the professional transition to work working group is aimed at investing in our early career professionals as they transition from being students to developing into professionals in the health system. Two research projects have been initiated by the working group. These projects support an evidence-based approach to understanding and delivering programs to best support professionals in their first two years of work within the health system.

Engagement with key stakeholders across the health system continues through a range of forums, including the ACT Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board, the NGO Leadership Group, the Clinical Leadership Forum and the Professional Colleges Advisory Committee.

As at the 27 April 2022 oversight group meeting, 11 of the 20 recommendations from the culture review have been completed and significant progress has been made on all other recommendations. There are 92 discrete actions identified to implement the 20 recommendations, of which 75 have been completed, or 82 per cent. Of the remaining actions, seven are on track and 10 are being actively managed. The remaining actions that are on track and being actively managed are those components of the recommendations that have dependencies on the previous actions to be marked as complete, such as evaluations.

The 11 recommendations completed to date are: recommendation 1, embed vision and values; recommendation 2, measure organisational effectiveness; recommendation 5, review better mechanisms to better integrate clinical streams of the community health services within the clinical divisional structures in Canberra Health Services; recommendation 8, memorandum of understanding for improved collaboration between the ACT and New South Wales public health systems for joint ministerial consideration; recommendation 10, clear requirement for senior clinicians to collaboratively participate in clinical governance activities; recommendation 11, Choosing Wisely program; recommendation 12, clinically qualified divisional directors across each clinical division with business manager support within Canberra Health Services; recommendation 13, implement leadership program; recommendation 17, public commitment; recommendation 18, culture review oversight group; and recommendation 20, change management and communication strategy.

The past six months have seen significant progress across a number of areas, including human resource functions, workforce planning, promoting positive workplace behaviour, leadership and management, and the territory-wide approach to health research. Progress towards addressing the 2020 HR functions reviews for the ACT Health Directorate, Canberra Health Services and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce

has steadily continued. All three organisations in the ACT public health system have reviewed their HR functions and have taken action to establish fit-for-purpose structures to meet business demands.

The ACT Health Directorate has specifically established a workforce planning function. Canberra Health Services is developing organisational workforce plans for the four major classifications: medical, nursing and midwifery, health professionals and administration. This workforce planning will be foundational to ensuring that our future workforce planning is consistent across each organisation and the system as a whole.

Canberra Health Services has developed the Fostering Organisational Culture Improvement Strategy—Strengths, Engagement and Development program, or FOCIS-SED, performance planning approach. Presentations are being held across the organisation to inform managers and staff about the approach, to further support implementation and manager training, and a resource library is under development.

There has been significant investment in each of the three organisations to develop the capability and understanding of available workforce data. Canberra Health Services and the ACT Health Directorate have established analytics and reporting capability that will transform how individual organisations monitor trends and manage their people.

Managers are being supported to access workforce data via dashboard reports to measure key people metrics across a range of areas. A system-wide workforce effectiveness dashboard report has also been developed, bringing this organisational data together to be analysed and visually represented. Access to this kind of reporting functionality about our teams and the health workforce means we can better see trends and the impacts of programs to continually improve workplaces.

Madam Speaker, a range of programs and guidance are being implemented in each organisation to educate and inform staff about appropriate workplace behaviours. The rollout of the Speaking Up for Safety program continues at Canberra Health Services, with more than 73 per cent of staff being trained in the program. An interim evaluation has found that substantial progress has been made towards achieving the program objectives, including improvements in psychological safety and speaking up.

There are indications that psychological safety has improved within Canberra Health Services, with the 2021 staff survey showing a positive trend in perceptions of psychological safety, compared with the 2019 survey. Implementation of the second phase of the Cognitive Institute's program, Promoting Professional Accountability, is underway at Canberra Health Services. The program is designed to identify, engage and hold accountable staff who demonstrate repeated unprofessional behaviour.

In August 2021 Canberra Health Services completed a pilot of an evidence-based civility program aimed at supporting a positive workplace culture. An evaluation of the program's impact has been undertaken which found that significant changes have been observed and maintained by individuals and the whole team. These changes were shown to have positively impacted supervisor and co-worker civility and

interpersonal relationships and have led to an overall improvement in work group culture.

Across Canberra Health Services there are indications that bullying and harassment have decreased. The 2021 workplace culture survey reported that bullying and harassment had reduced by 18 per cent, compared with the November 2019 survey. Continuing this trend by addressing all inappropriate behaviour remains a priority for Canberra Health Services, the ACT Health Directorate and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce.

A system-wide leadership development program was launched in December 2021. Feedback from participants has been positive and interest in the program is high. A waitlist has been established and additional training cohorts are being scheduled. More than 200 senior managers from across the health system are expected to participate in the program by June 2022.

A system-wide training program is also currently being developed to support managers in gaining foundational management knowledge, skills and competencies. The training program will be rolled out across the health system from June 2022. In addition, Canberra Health Services and the ACT Health Directorate are undertaking work to implement the recommendations of the 2021 training analysis review. This includes aligning training courses with the ACT public health system workplace culture framework and evaluating the impact and effectiveness of training programs being delivered across the system.

This work means that there are even more options for our senior leaders and managers to access leadership and management training. The culture review response has brought through new programs and assisted organisations to adapt their current work to ensure that there is a cohesive approach to upskilling our people to support their teams.

The culture review took a broad perspective when it came to the opportunities to improve culture across our public health system. That meant looking at not just how to address problematic behaviour in the existing context but also how our system can be more innovative, more engaging, for clinicians and ultimately an environment where everyone is more inspired and satisfied in their work.

That is where research comes in: creating an environment where new ideas and innovation are welcomed and celebrated. A territory-wide research strategy is in the final stages of development, overseen by the ACT Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board Research Working Group. This work, importantly, has been done in collaboration with all stakeholders, including Canberra Health Services, academic partners, primary care, Calvary Public Hospital Bruce and consumers.

The territory-wide research strategy is designed to guide and support decision-makers in enhancing health research that will be coordinated and consumer-centred and will complement partner research strategies. This includes the Canberra Health Services Research Strategy 2021-2025 that was launched at the end of last year.

Madam Speaker, it is exciting to see that the culture review program has completed such a significant amount of work, with 82 per cent of the actions implemented. Culture change takes time, and we know that there is much more to do. That is why we will continue to focus on making these changes sustainable across our health system. But in doing so, it is important to acknowledge the incredible work that is happening across the system right now to make our organisations great places to work.

Each organisation in our public health system and every individual team alongside the broader culture review program team have come together to bring these changes to their workplaces. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen excellent work across the system towards reforming culture. We know it is still incredibly hard in our health services right now. The pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic continue, and each organisation remains focused on supporting its staff.

Over the past few weeks, I have been taking the opportunity to engage with the staff at each organisation, now that visitor restrictions have been eased. Many of the nurses, midwives, doctors, allied health professionals and support staff I have spoken with are tired, even exhausted. As a government, we are continuing to listen and respond to what they are telling us so that we can support them to do what they do best. That is why we are taking decisions every week like reducing hours at the AIS vaccination clinic to better reflect demand and engaging the support of private hospitals to address the challenges.

As we approach the final months of the formal culture review implementation program, the oversight group has discussed how we will ensure that there is a continued focus on culture reform through to the delivery of the third annual review. The oversight group's terms of reference have been updated to reflect its focus in 2022 on embedding culture reform and accountability in business-as-usual structures.

The oversight group will continue to monitor the implementation of the recommendations beyond the end of the formal program. This means the strong governance framework that has structured the culture reform process across the territory will also continue as part of the transition to business as usual.

We all recognise that cultural reform across the health system will benefit not only the entire workforce of the three services but also consumers, their families and carers and our non-government partners. The ACT government's goal continues to be to create an environment where our workforce feels supported, valued and empowered to deliver exceptional health care. I present the following paper:

Workplace Culture within A.C.T. Public Health Services—Biannual update on the implementation of the recommendations of the final report—Update to Assembly resolution of 13 May 2021—Ministerial statement, 4 May 2022.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Education and training—Skilled to Succeed agenda Ministerial statement

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (10.36): On 29 April it was my pleasure to launch Skilled to Succeed, the ACT's skills and workforce agenda for the Canberra Institute of Technology. Today I would like to update the Assembly on this important strategy to deliver a highly skilled workforce for the ACT.

The ACT government is ambitious for Canberra: for the growth of our economy, the wellbeing of our community, the capability of our workforce and the great jobs that thriving local industries can offer. A highly skilled workforce is the cornerstone for a strong and growing economy.

Our ambition for the ACT is reflected in our target to grow the territory's workforce to 250,000 by 2025. It can also be seen in our own billion-dollar investments in local infrastructure, services and innovation, where we are leading by example in strengthening the economy in delivering quality jobs.

As we cautiously begin to emerge from the challenging couple of years of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are also optimistic about the ACT's potential. Since 2016 our population has grown by over 29,000 people. Our economy has grown by 20 per cent. Unemployment is lower than before the pandemic and 22,900 jobs have been created locally. This gives us a really strong foundation to launch into the next phase of Canberra's growth.

Chief Minister Andrew Barr recently released Canberra Switched On, a strategic document which sets out the government's economic development priorities for the ACT. This strategy highlighted the importance of developing and retaining talent locally to match the best and brightest globally so that we can capitalise on our opportunities for knowledge-based economic growth.

Skilled to Succeed supports this agenda by outlining our plans for harnessing the ambition and optimism that thrives in our community among local students and workers who are ambitious for their futures and optimistic about what these hold, among employers who are ambitious and optimistic for the growth of their businesses and among training providers who are ambitious about the quality, diversity and accessibility of their offerings, as well as optimistic about the future of the sector that they work within.

Skills shortages and accelerated change in the world of work have put a spotlight on skills and workforce development like never before. We want to turn that spotlight into a beacon for attracting new students to the ACT's training system and encouraging skilled workers to apply their talents in Canberra. Skilled to Succeed maps out the ACT government's key priorities and the focus of these efforts.

This document has been informed by feedback and input from many local stakeholders. I would like to acknowledge the ACT skills industry advisory group

members who have come together regularly to discuss the territory's skills and workforce needs with government; the CIT executive and board, who have been working closely with government to strengthen understanding of Canberra's training needs today and in the years ahead; and the many participants in the regular business roundtables convened by my colleague Minister Cheyne who have provided invaluable feedback on where the current gaps and challenges are. With ambition and optimism driving our approach, we are working to ensure that every Canberran is skilled to succeed—for a great job today and a rewarding lifetime in work as our economy changes and grows.

Today I would like to briefly outline the four priorities which sit at the centre of our agenda and what we will be doing over the coming months and years to deliver these. The first of these priorities is delivering skills inclusively to provide all Canberrans with a foundation for lifelong learning. Inclusive skills development is critical to maximising workforce participation and ensuring that all Canberrans can share in our prosperity.

We want to ensure that people with disabilities and diverse backgrounds, women and carers, older people and those who have been disconnected from employment have the opportunity to participate in work to their full potential, just like other Canberrans. Making skills and training affordable, accessible and supportive will ensure that all Canberrans have the tools to join, stay connected to or rejoin the workforce.

An inclusive approach to skills and training spans foundation skills training in literacy, numeracy and digital fluency, to develop the essential skills and capabilities required to engage in lifelong learning and work; occupation-specific skilling opportunities, to support entry into the labour market and job mobility; and higher level training, to drive innovation, entrepreneurship and growth in knowledge-intensive sectors.

Skills development starts in our schools. Our curriculum must support children and young people to develop foundation skills and capabilities, deep knowledge and a love of learning. Post-school, we need to ensure that our school leavers are informed and supported to navigate a range of attractive learning pathways to prepare for the jobs of today and tomorrow. As people move through their careers and the world of work continues to change, we must also provide access to relevant, flexible and accessible opportunities for reskilling and upskilling.

Our second priority is building a more responsive, flexible and future-focused skills system. As we emerge from COVID-19, our resilience and our future prosperity depend on our capacity to skill our workforce for the jobs of the future. We must strengthen both technical skills and broader capabilities to ensure an agile and adaptive workforce and drive entrepreneurship, innovation and future growth.

As the nation's capital, the ACT's employment base and economy have traditionally been dominated by the government sector. But over the last decade we have seen strong growth in knowledge-intensive sectors such as professional, scientific and technical services, health care and social assistance, research and information systems.

While we cannot predict with certainty what will power our economy in the future, there are strong signs that certain key sectors will play a leading role. We want to strengthen local skills and training capability in these areas to ensure that tomorrow's workers have the right skills to take advantage of expected jobs growth. These include the technology industries. We want to build on our knowledge capabilities in areas like space, cybersecurity, renewables and digital technologies.

The ACT has significant advantages, as the home of some of Australia's leading research and scientific institutions. Tomorrow's technology jobs will call for a mix of skills which draw from the best of the university and vocational education sectors. The newly formed digital skills pilot partnership is a great example of how we are seeking to strengthen skills delivery in this growth area.

The ACT government is partnering with the Canberra Cyber Hub and the national Digital Skills Organisation to deliver a pilot program addressing the current workforce skills shortages in cybersecurity. The 12-month pilot will help to define a standard, setting out the skills required for an entry-level professional in cybersecurity, so that providers, industry and government can then work together to deliver and fund this training.

The building and construction industries are another clear area of growth and will support the ACT government's record investment in infrastructure and our commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2045. Tackling long-running industry skills shortages while training workers for emerging priorities like sustainable building and the circular economy will ensure that workers benefit from our city's ongoing growth and development. It will be particularly important to think about ongoing skills development for workers who are already trained and qualified in these sectors.

The need to address climate change through our built environment, along with emerging technologies and materials, is rapidly reshaping what we build and how. CIT is leading the way with some great new courses, which I will speak about in a moment, which are designed to upskill and re-skill existing workers in areas like renewables and zero emissions vehicles.

The caring industries are seeing a strong and ongoing need for local workforce growth as we seek to improve quality of life and care for the most vulnerable in our community. Significant commonwealth and ACT government commitments in aged care, early childhood education and care, disability services and health care more broadly will drive increased investment in these sectors for years to come.

Meeting the ambition of these commitments means skilling many more workers to build and sustain rewarding careers in these critical sectors. Through the JobTrainer initiative running in 2021 and 2022, we have seen a very strong uptake of the free training on offer in these care sectors. This shows that, with the right incentives and support, we can attract new people into these essential industries.

Finally, we know that the experience industries have been hit hard by the pandemic, and we want to see the return and growth of vibrant and innovative tourism, hospitality and arts businesses. These businesses make Canberra a livelier place for locals while also strengthening our economy through interstate and international tourism. The ACT government has been there for local businesses through the pandemic, providing over \$300 million in support payments for local ACT businesses, including hospitality, tourism and arts businesses.

We recognise that COVID has brought about a fundamental shift in many business models, and we want to see local businesses embrace what comes next. Building resilience across the experience industries depends on establishing a strong local skills pipeline to develop and retain workers with a range of flexible and adaptive skills.

We recognise that to meet the needs of these and other growth industries, new and different training offerings will be needed. That is why the ACT government is partnering with CIT on the comprehensive renewal of its programs, offerings and modes of delivery. This renewal program seeks to build on CIT's strengths and harness emerging opportunities to ensure that its offerings are really relevant and responsive to current and emerging skills needs.

We particularly want to strengthen CIT's future-focused offerings by engaging with employers and stakeholders in the industries that I have just mentioned to understand what skills needs are coming, and to design offerings to match. To give just one example of this approach in practice, as more private and public vehicles transition to zero emissions technology, there will be a growing need for mechanics who are trained to work with battery and hybrid electric vehicles. So CIT has been collaborating with Tesla and the ACT government to design a dedicated auto qualification for electric vehicles.

The ACT government has undertaken to retrain the entire Transport Canberra mechanic workforce in zero emissions technology so that their skills stay relevant as we transition to a zero emissions bus fleet. Tesla will also be directing apprentices through this program so that there is a skilled workforce ready to go as demand for electric auto trades takes off.

We want to do much more of this kind of forward-thinking training design. CIT's course renewal work is particularly timely as we move towards the commissioning of the institute's purpose-built new campus at Woden in a few years time. That campus will accommodate over 6,000 students in a state-of-the-art new training facility. It will revitalise the Woden town centre with a mix of new public, education and community spaces, all closely integrated with the new public transport interchange in Woden and other facilities in the area. It is much more than a building. The move to Woden will mark the start of a new era for CIT. Ahead of that, we will be updating and refreshing the institute's course offerings to ensure that these are also fit for the future.

Our third priority is partnering with employers to build, attract and retain the right workforce. We know that everyone benefits from a highly skilled workforce. Businesses benefit from access to a diverse pool of quality candidates who can help

them grow and innovate. Workers benefit from better quality, more rewarding jobs with higher rates of pay. And our community benefits from a highly productive economy which attracts new businesses and workers.

That is why training and attracting workers with the right skills calls for co-investment by government and business. The ACT government plays a central role in supporting the training, reskilling and upskilling of workers. We are investing \$126.3 million into skills in 2022 alone, a record level of investment for the territory. Our demand-driven approach to Australian apprenticeships ensures that industries with skills needs can access significant government financial support. The ACT Building and Construction Training Fund Authority also provides financial incentives when a business employs an Australian apprentice from a target cohort or in high-demand trades.

We also help to attract skilled workers to Canberra through our suite of economic development initiatives and campaigns. The Canberra Switched On statement highlighted the unique qualities and progressive values that make our city a great place to live and work.

We recognise that employers also play a central role in growing the ACT's skilled workforce. Supporting workers to undertake tailored and relevant on-the-job training can boost engagement while strengthening the skills and capabilities that make them more productive. As we continue to shift our focus towards knowledge-based economic growth, the ACT government particularly welcomes industry input on ways our training system can better encourage and enable co-investment in workforce development.

In particular, we want to develop more detailed action plans for strengthening skills and workforce development in each of the future growth sectors that I have highlighted today. We want employers and leaders in these key sectors to tell us more about where the gaps are: the current skill gaps in our local workforce and the gaps in training opportunities with our local providers. If there is a course or program that will contribute to meeting those needs, we want to hear about it so that we can work with providers through our funding frameworks to get these up and running. Skills Canberra will be reaching out proactively in the coming months to talk directly with industry about how we can best do this. Government and industry are co-investors in building a skilled workforce, so we want to hear ideas and plans for strengthening that investment from both sides.

Our fourth and final priority is strengthening skills sector foundations. The Australian skills sector has undergone huge structural and policy change over the past decade. ACT skills and training providers have needed to change and adapt as major shifts in investment, progressive waves of reform and new skills priorities have impacted the sector. As we rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenge is to bed down good reform and ensure that all parts of our system are working with the right incentives and objectives.

The next national skills agreement between the commonwealth and the states and territories provides an opportunity to strengthen national and local skills sector

foundations through a positive funding partnership. The ACT government is open to pursuing significant reforms, like activity-based funding, in a phased and measured way. However, rapid transitions that force change on the sector before it is ready would run counter to all Australian governments' shared ownership of the national training system and quality improvement goals.

The ACT government has strong concerns about several aspects of the current federal government's proposed funding model. Chief among these are the risk of cuts to public providers like CIT and the risk of higher fees for students. Public providers are at the core of the Australian training system, yet the Morrison government's proposed model would reduce funding and long-term funding certainty for public providers in many instances.

The proposed efficient national pricing model does not take account of the very real differences in cost of delivery between public and private providers. Here in Canberra our public provider, the CIT, delivers training to students from all backgrounds and abilities and provides a range of course offerings not available in the private RTO market due to their limited financial return. Like other TAFEs around Australia, this means our public provider has a higher cost structure than private equivalents. Any new funding model must recognise the unique role of public providers and ensure that they are properly and sustainably funded for the long term.

There is also a risk that the proposed funding model leads to significant increases in student fees for many courses which are essential to meeting current and future skills needs. The ACT government has modelled the impact on local fees using some of the federal government's own pricing data developed by the National Skills Commission. This highlights a range of worrying potential fee hikes. For example, the student fee for a diploma of early childhood education and care or a diploma of community services could increase by nearly 250 per cent. We could also see higher fees for courses in other key sectors. At a time when so many businesses are struggling to find the skilled workers they need, it is unbelievable that the Morrison government has put forward a plan to make training more expensive for students, not cheaper.

These are just two of the ACT's major concerns with the proposed national skills agreement; there are many others. In November last year we joined with all states and territories, including Liberal states, I should add, in rejecting the commonwealth's model and setting out an alternative proposal that could form the basis for a genuine partnership on skills, going forward. The commonwealth had not responded to that proposal ahead of the federal election being called. This means there is now no chance of a new agreement being signed by the deadline of June this year. This is extremely disappointing, and we hope that whoever forms government after the 21 May election comes back to the negotiating table with a new approach.

There are encouraging signs that a new Labor government federally would take a different tack. The fact that Anthony Albanese has made free TAFE a cornerstone of Labor's economic plan is a really strong start. Labor in government also has a strong track record of building genuine partnerships with the states and territories. After all, it was the Rudd and Gillard governments that established and expanded the current

national agreement on skills and workforce development which has provided a solid basis for skills investment for over a decade now.

Whoever forms government in a few weeks time needs to take a fresh approach to negotiating this important national partnership agreement. We need a better deal for skills: one that protects and strengthens our public providers, keeps skills and training affordable and accessible for students, and is based on genuine partnership between the governments who fund it. The ACT government will not sign up to anything that delivers less than this for our community.

I began this statement by talking about ambition and optimism and I would like to end on that note as well. Our government is ambitious for how Canberra's skills sector can evolve and grow to meet the changing needs of our economy, students and businesses. From sustainable trades to cyber, caring professions and more, there is so much opportunity for Canberra's local training providers to contribute to building the skilled workforce we need to secure and build on Canberra's prosperity. We are optimistic about what we can achieve together when government and industry co-invest in skills and workforce development.

We want every Canberran to be skilled to succeed, not just young people leaving school today but anyone at any point in their life who wants to upskill, re-skill or reconnect with work. We know that local employers and industries share that goal because this will rapidly expand the number of people in our workforce with future-focused and in-demand skills. A highly skilled workforce underpins a vibrant, growing and inclusive economy and community, and that is what we are working every day to deliver. I present the following papers:

Skilled to Succeed—

Ministerial statement, 4 May 2022.

Skills and workforce agenda for the ACT.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Environment—World Bee Day 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) (10.58): When we start looking particularly at environmental issues, it is important to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we come together today, the Ngunnawal people. I respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to address the Assembly on such an auspicious upcoming occasion, with 20 May being World Bee Day. Bees are important. Symbolically, both native and European honeybees even reside in well-cared-for hives at our nation's Parliament House. Around 14,000 native stingless bees live in two hives at Parliament House in award-winning recycled plastic hives that allow for easier honey harvesting. While we have loaned these bees for the winter to the kitchen garden of Sydney's Government House, they will return to us in spring. Having native bees residing at these important locations is symbolic of the critical importance that native bees, as well as our productive honeybees, have for the health and wellbeing of this country.

Bees play a vital role in our nation's food security. It is staggering to think that a third of the food that the world consumes is aided by bee pollination. Unfortunately, bee populations are under threat globally. This is due to several factors, such as the destruction and fragmentation of their natural habitat, chemical use in intensive farming practices, and exotic pests and diseases.

With Australia being home to approximately 2,000 species of native bee, bees are critical to preserving our country's rich biodiversity. But this biodiversity is fragile. Some species of plant can only be pollinated by a certain species of bee. If that pollination does not happen, that plant species cannot reproduce and can become threatened or extinct.

With the benefits of looking after our bees being clear, it is also clear that the ACT needs to do what it can to create and sustain environments where these little workers can thrive and maintain both the natural and agricultural processes on which ecosystems and people depend. As the nation's bush capital, we have more than double the number of trees compared to people, and more is being done to achieve our 30 per cent canopy target and our 30 per cent permeability target for the city.

The ACT is also making concerted efforts to reduce the use of bee-harming chemicals, with the parliamentary and governing agreement to ban neonicotinoids and to reduce the use of glyphosate and other pesticides that can decimate our bee-loved insect populations. For example, the ACT government has adopted integrated weed management practices that reduce chemical use and incorporate other techniques such as flame weeding, biological controls and manual weed removal. We are also providing recommendations on bee-friendly plant species for urban landscape projects as part of the ACT government's municipal infrastructure standards to assist with maintaining and enhancing insect-friendly environments. This will contribute to creating pollination corridors across the urban environment.

Yet there is always more that we can do. A real opportunity is presenting itself with our development of the ACT's capital food and fibre strategy. The community and a breadth of stakeholders recently provided feedback on a discussion paper for the strategy. They supported a range of objectives for the soon to be drafted strategy, including the opportunity for the ACT and broader region to transition to ecologically sustainable food and fibre production, to build drought and climate change resilience of the ACT's farm sector, to increase the capacity to produce food and fibre locally, to

support innovation in the food and fibre sector, and to enhance participation, knowledge exchange and employment opportunities across the food and fibre supply chain.

We have had an overwhelming response from Canberrans and people across the region telling us what they want from the capital food and fibre strategy. In the wake of several natural disasters and a global pandemic, there is strong recognition of the need to increase our food security and strengthen our food supply chains and regional resilience. To do this will require the availability of fertile land, nutrients and water in both rural and urban areas as part of an enhanced food production network. This will be a challenge in the face of our growing population and competing demands for land use.

Achieving this will also require the engagement, participation and enthusiasm of Canberra and the region's diversity of people, with the breadth of skills, knowledge and experience that they bring. The interest in the strategy shows that we are on the right track.

With this engagement, there is cautious optimism. There is cautiousness because of the uncertainty of some stakeholders on whether the strategy will bring meaningful change in the ACT and region to support sustainable and healthy food and fibre production while maintaining our unique biodiversity. There is optimism because this government has the opportunity, with this strategy and the planning reforms that are ongoing, to address longstanding issues such as diversified, innovative and resilient agricultural systems and lease tenure for urban and rural landholders committed to ecological sustainability and land stewardship outcomes.

The capital food and fibre strategy will be finalised in 2022, and with it and its subsequent implementation will come the hopes, health and a hive of opportunities for Canberrans. In the interim we as regulators, planners and enablers will need to come together to look at the policy drivers that can support the realisation of the vision and objectives of the strategy.

Before I close, let us celebrate World Bee Day by acknowledging the significant role that our bees and biodiversity play in the "wellbeing" of all Canberrans. Without bees for pollination, our agriculture and our natural ecosystems would collapse. Bees are critical for our food security, biodiversity and ecosystem health. They are not simply a pot of honey. Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker and fellow MLAs, for your time. I present the following paper:

World Bee Day and the ACT's Capital Food and Fibre Strategy—Ministerial statement, 4 May 2022.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (11.06): I would like to thank the minister for bringing forward this statement on the importance of bees and the importance that bees have in the

environment, ecosystems and our food production systems. I am very happy to see members of this place continue to engage with bee health in the ACT. It seems that the personal commitments to this cause grow every Bee Day, and I welcome the enthusiasm. As I have said in this place before, the health of our bee population reflects the health of our ecosystem, with different types of bees, native wasps and other insects playing a key role as pollinators across countless plant species, native or introduced.

Indeed, Australia is home to around 2,000 species of native bees. Many of these species provide niche and key pollinator roles for specific species with which they have evolved symbiotic relationships and features. We also rely on a healthy bee population for food security, which depends on the bees who currently pollinate two-thirds of our food production.

Regrettably, bee populations right across the world are being threatened due to the overuse of pesticides, herbicides and modern agricultural practices which make them more vulnerable to disease and human interference, which contributes to their declining habitat and food resources.

I have a record in this place of advocating for the rewilding of cities as a particularly compelling solution to this startling global decline in bee populations. For governments, the practice of rewilding cities can take a variety of forms—for example, facilitating the development and upkeep of bee-friendly gardens, reducing pesticide use in public spaces, including schools and parks and on roadside plantings, and prioritising bee population health to the fullest possible extent of existing regulatory frameworks when it becomes time to administer them.

The great initiative which has been progressed by this government is the development of micro-forests in our suburbs. This is a community-focused project which not only provides for more pollinator-friendly areas but also provides increased tree canopy and adopts a park-style community engagement as part of the government's ongoing program of planting 54,000 more trees in the city by 2024. There are micro-forests being developed by communities in the territory, and I am looking forward to seeing some of them pop up in my own electorate.

Education is a necessary part of helping the community to contribute to keeping the bee population healthy. As I have noted in this place in the past, ACT for Bees have done some great work in this area, in particular with their curriculum development to help to increase education and awareness. I would encourage members and anyone else who tunes in to today's sitting to visit actforbees.org for an impressive collection of resources on how individuals can best promote bee health in the ACT, including art movements, gardening for bee health, educational resources and scientific literature, with accessible options for all age groups.

I would also note that families and individuals can celebrate World Bee Day on the 21st and 22nd of this month by enjoying the fun activities to support our hardworking pollinators at the Capital Region Farmers Market or a screening of *Hive* at the Kambri Cultural Centre.

I am pleased to hear from the minister about the changes to weeding practice by the ACT government, avoiding the use of particular pesticides and herbicides and focusing on biological controls. Flame weeding and manual weed removal is one step that is really important to avoid damage to pollinator populations. The recommendation about having bee-friendly plants as part of the municipal infrastructure standards is the kind of excellent education campaign that I have discussed in this place in the past.

I look forward to seeing further work by the government to increase habitat for, reduce damage of and raise awareness about our pollinator populations as we approach World Bee Day.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.10): I want to reiterate the minister's emphasis on the importance of bees. Bees are important. I think we are all at least relatively familiar with the phrase "no bee, no me". It is a simple but powerful message.

Many of my colleagues may not know that my mum, in north-eastern Victoria, is a very successful olive farmer, with 3½ thousand trees which produce around 10,000 litres of oil each year. Her produce is distributed globally and, like any farm, garden or produce, it is highly dependent on bees.

My mum uses organic farming principles. In addition to relying on wind pollination, she welcomes beekeepers to bring hives onto the property to help cross-pollinate. Studies show that the addition of bees when plants are flowering significantly increases their yield, and the crop quality. I understand, and have seen firsthand, the importance and positive impact of the humble bee.

Bees are one of our most fundamental environmental considerations. World Bee Day, coming up on 20 May, is a great opportunity to highlight this. Quite simply, we need bees. As the minister said, they provide us with food security. The World Wildlife Fund suggests that one in every three mouthfuls of food that we eat is dependent on natural pollinators. As noted on the World Bee Day website:

In the absence of pollination, the plant species cannot reproduce so that if the bee species dies, so too will the planet.

I echo a comment made by Minister Vassarotti that we have over 2,000 different species of native bees in Australia. There are over 20,000 different species globally. Each one is equally important and has a role to play. Bees are, of course, also critical for ecosystem health and biodiversity.

Globally, the number and diversity of bees are in decline due to a number of challenges they face, including insecticide and herbicide use, pests and diseases, intensive farming, habitat loss and global warming, and a decline in commercial beekeeping.

It was great to hear some of the important preventive initiatives of the ACT government in this space. However, unfortunately, some bee species are already listed as endangered. Even fauna such as bee-eating birds—it seems counterintuitive,

I know, when we are talking about the need to protect bees, to start talking about the animals that feed off them—would lose their prey and would start to die off, again having significant ripple and flow-on effects.

We would likely still have cereal-based crops to eat, as they are largely wind-pollinated. But fruit and vegetables are a different matter. It would be quite sad if we started to lose even some of the wealth and variety of fruits and vegetables that we have available to us. Blueberries and cherries, as an example, rely on bees for up to 90 per cent of their pollination. Hand pollination is a possibility, but it is incredibly labour intensive. I know it is not something that would be a practical option for farmers.

How serious is the bee situation? Pretty serious. Loss of bee populations is a real threat. Hence the need for World Bee Day to throw a spotlight on this and help to raise awareness. What can we do? We can recognise that climate change is real, that the warming of our planet is real, and that climate change will negatively impact our bee population. We, as individuals, government and businesses, need to do what we can to protect bees.

At an individual level, we can plant bee-friendly gardens or balcony pot plants. Plants, including lavender, marigolds, primrose and many native species such as abelia, butterfly bush, callistemons, native daisies, grevilleas, many eucalypt species, tea tree, honey myrtle and native rosemary, are all great. We can reduce the use of herbicides and insecticides, and we can be mindful of the products and produce we buy and the practices of businesses behind those products and produce.

We can also show our support for beekeepers as a vital industry in our agriculture sector. In 2017 the contribution of honeybees to Australian agriculture through pollination services was valued at around \$14.2 billion.

Individually, one of the best ways to show our support is to buy local honey and beeswax products. I welcome the ACT government's efforts in the recently announced food and fibre strategy, and it is great to hear how Canberrans are already engaging with this.

I would also like to acknowledge the Canberra Region Beekeepers Association. Their website is incredibly accessible and there is a swarm collector list that has provided a constant reference point for me, for constituents who report swarms in their neighbourhoods.

As humans, we have plenty more than one job to do, but one of our jobs is to help to keep these bee species alive, to look after them and to raise awareness of their importance.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mental health services—mental health, alcohol and other drug use disorders

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) (11.16): I rise to address a resolution of this Legislative Assembly on the integration of mental health and alcohol and other drug treatment services in the ACT, which was passed on 2 December 2021.

This motion is an important one for the people in our community who experience both mental health and alcohol or other drug issues, including for their carers and families. As highlighted in the motion, the Productivity Commission inquiry report on mental health found that “many people with mental illness and comorbid physical health problems or substance use disorders do not receive integrated care, leading to poor outcomes”. This underlines the importance of providing high quality services and continually reviewing to improve the integration of our services to better meet the needs of our community.

I thank the members opposite for raising this important issue and for giving us the opportunity to provide a detailed overview of the ACT government’s services and commitments to address co-occurring mental health and substance use issues and how we are working to continually improve our integration and coordination of mental health and alcohol or other drug services.

I would like to start with a summary of the scope and cost impacts. The Australian National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing in 2007 found that 35 per cent of individuals with a substance use disorder also meet the diagnostic criteria for at least one co-occurring mood or anxiety disorder. This rate is even higher for people receiving treatment for either condition.

A recent Australian study found that 70 per cent of those in alcohol and drug residential rehabilitation were experiencing a current anxiety disorder, and 55 per cent were experiencing current depression. A 2010 survey of people with psychosis found that 50 per cent of people with a psychotic disorder requiring treatment also had a lifetime history of alcohol use or dependence.

According to the Matilda Centre at the University of Sydney, co-occurring mental health and substance use issues are also chronic, common and costly diseases of the young. People with co-occurring mental health and substance use issues are more likely to experience more frequent hospitalisations; longer stays in emergency departments and premature discharge from inpatient units; higher levels of suicidal ideation; and worse economic and social outcomes, including problems with housing and homelessness, employment, income support and legal problems.

This clearly shows that co-occurring mental illness and alcohol and other drug issues have health and social impacts on people and their families and the community around

them. But they also have significant economic and healthcare costs associated with their treatment and management. Given these challenges, it is critical that appropriate supports are in place.

It is therefore no surprise that people with mental illness and substance use issues are a key priority group in the National Drug Strategy 2017-26, in the ACT government's Drug Strategy Action Plan 2018-21 and in the next drug strategy action plan that is currently being developed. It is also a key commitment that is outlined in the 10th parliamentary and governing agreement for the Legislative Assembly, which includes commitments to improve programs that target and support alcohol or other drug use and mental health together.

In responding to this need, it must be acknowledged that people experiencing mental illnesses and substance use issues experience differing levels of severity and that there are potentially a very large number of combinations that result in a wide spectrum of mental illness and substance use co-occurrence presentations.

As such, there is no one single model of care or service that can cater to the needs of all people. The ACT government recognises that better integration of existing services, and collaboration and engagement across the service system, is crucial to prevent people from falling through the cracks. The integration of mental health and substance use services requires a tiered model that can provide a spectrum of services and supports that are available and skilled to effectively meet each individual's unique needs.

Integration refers to a wide range of coordination and collaboration activities between the sectors, which are able to provide holistic support for people across the spectrum of mental health and alcohol and other drug issues. These include activities focusing on supporting cross-referral, multidisciplinary teams, cross-sector training and education, and supporting people to navigate through the system.

So what is in place now? Across the ACT there is a wide range of both mental health and alcohol and drug services that range from prevention and early intervention services through to tertiary inpatient services for people who need intensive supports.

These services are delivered by a mix of government and non-government organisations. This range of services supports people at the differing stages of need, and combinations of support can reflect the potentially differing level of needs of people with co-occurring conditions. This is a critical goal for the health system in order to be able to provide the right level of care at the right time and in the right place. Most of these services are provided free or at low cost to clients. Our public mental health and alcohol and drug services provide supports at the middle and tertiary levels, with the mental health and the alcohol and drug services integrated and managed within the one division of Canberra Health Services.

The Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol and Drug Service Division, also known as MHJHADS, provides an integrated structure under one executive director and enables a close working relationship between each of these services and more coordinated governance and administrative processes.

Within this area, a wide variety of services are delivered. The alcohol and drug services provide specialist medical services; consultation and liaison, opioid medication, or pharmacotherapy, treatment; withdrawal or detoxification; Drug Court services; counselling; and police and court drug diversion services. These services are provided as inpatient and outpatient services. The mental health services deliver a range of inpatient and outpatient services, including assessment and liaison, assertive community outreach, day programs and inpatient and residential care. In addition, the Health Directorate provides funding to a range of non-government organisations that provide a range of services across the mental health and alcohol and other drugs sectors.

Services supporting people with alcohol and other drug use issues include counselling, case management, residential and non-residential withdrawal programs, rehabilitation, and needle and syringe distribution services, as well as intensive treatment through residential programs and day programs.

Case management is a frequently used model of alcohol and other drug treatment support, and is a more structured type of holistic approach, taking into account all client needs, including general welfare needs, and includes assessment, planning, linking, monitoring and advocacy.

Rehabilitation focuses on supporting clients in stopping their drug use and also preventing psychological, legal, financial, social and physical consequences of problematic drug use. However, specialist alcohol and other drug treatment services provide not only alcohol and other drug treatment to individuals but also support services to their families, their carers and friends. This includes information and education, counselling and other supports.

Examples in the ACT include the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy, which carry out overdose response training for consumers and their families and develop suitable information materials for people who use drugs. The Karralika Family Program provides alcohol and other drug residential rehabilitation services for men, women and couples with accompanying children up to the age of 12. The program provides comprehensive care that is focused on the individual to address underlying reasons for alcohol and drug dependence. Key components of the program include parenting education, family counselling and supported playgroups, with a focus on working with the whole family, including children, using a trauma-informed and strengths-based approach.

The Health Directorate also provides funding to NGOs to provide a range of mental health supports, including psychological therapy, counselling, residential-based programs, and community access supports to individuals with mental illness and their families and carers.

While I have described a range of services for both alcohol and other drug and mental health, I am pleased to say that MHJHADS, the Health Directorate and community NGOs are also working closely together to deliver and promote greater connection and coordination of supports. In addition, there are a number of services that provide

integrated support for people with co-occurring mental health and alcohol or other drug issues at different levels of need.

In response to the outbreak of COVID-19 in August 2021, MHJHADS set up a COVID-19 community response team, which included experienced mental health and drug and alcohol nurses who provided clinical support to people in quarantine and isolation. These nurses conducted assessments, provided support to people affected by substance use and dependence, and helped to manage withdrawal symptoms and mental health issues.

Based on the success of this initiative, the mental health and drug and alcohol nurses have joined the rapid evaluation and care in the home, or REaCH, team. This tri-service approach supports the primary health, mental health and drug and alcohol needs of people across the ACT who are in quarantine or isolation. The REaCH team is supporting clients in the community that may otherwise be without appropriate services and may require admission to hospital.

In the emergency department, consultation and liaison nurses across both the alcohol and drug and mental health services have increased their presence and are able to conduct assessments, provide support and referral to people affected by substance use, and help to manage any withdrawal symptoms for anyone presenting to the ED.

The mobile primary care outreach clinic is a new service established with joint funding by the ACT Health Directorate, Capital Health Network and John James Foundation. The mobile primary care outreach clinic—also known as PAT, pathways to assistance, or “Pat the Van”—is operated by Directions Health Services. This mobile outreach service provides weekly integrated primary care, appropriate acute care services—health, mental health and alcohol and other drug—and access to a range of supports to highly vulnerable people with complex service needs, at five locations across the ACT for free and without an appointment.

The ACT government has a long history of partnering with a broad range of dedicated and nation-leading community alcohol and other drug and mental health NGO services. The screening and assessment of mental health is a routine practice for community alcohol and other drug treatment providers and reflects a person-centred approach to working with people on co-occurring issues.

These services also provide support to access specialist mental health services where needed. A key example of a community partner service delivering integrated care is Ted Noffs, which includes a comprehensive mental health history and suicide assessment as part of the specialist alcohol and drug admission assessment.

Ted Noffs has a psychologist on staff who can assist young people attending the alcohol and other drug program with mental health issues as part of their treatment plan, with clinical treatment planning each week and consultation with a clinical psychologist. They also maintain joint management, consultation and liaison with Mental Health ACT and partnerships with other mental health services.

While services do currently provide and facilitate dedicated treatment and support for people with mental health and substance abuse issues, the ACT government recognises that there is much more work to do to continue to meet the growing need of the community and to support people.

Finally, I would like to outline some of these new developments. MHJHADS recently undertook a project to include an alcohol and drug intake worker in the Home Assessment and Acute Response Team, HAART. This intake worker enabled the HAART team, who provide mental health assessments to people at home or in the community to facilitate care and treatment, to identify people with identified alcohol and other drug use vulnerabilities and to strengthen the partnerships with the Alcohol and Drug Services. The alcohol and other drug nurse practitioner is now working with HAART to continue to assist in improving the management of people accessing HAART who have co-occurring mental health and alcohol and other drug issues.

In addition, Youth Drug and Alcohol Program clinicians from the Alcohol and Drug Service are completing training in family therapy in order to provide an extension of the therapy to the wider family. A comorbidity clinician from the Alcohol and Drug Service is also providing smoking cessation and nicotine management education to primary health staff and forensic mental health staff at the Alexander Maconochie Centre.

Currently, MHJHADS are also finalising the development of the Responding to People with Co-occurring Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Conditions Plan. This plan will provide guidelines and priorities for the treatment and support of people with co-occurring mental health and drug and alcohol conditions within the public health system and is due to be completed this year.

This plan aligns with the Health Directorate's work regarding the next Drug Strategy Action Plan, which is currently in development, after the completion of the previous Drug Strategy Action Plan 2018-2021. This next Drug Strategy Action Plan will again focus on people with co-occurring mental health and substance use issues as a priority group and will help to identify the best evidence-based policy and program activities and investments to develop and maintain effective integrated mental health and substance use sectors.

While these plans are in development, the Health Directorate is also moving forward with work for the integration of these services. As an example, the ACT government has committed to the redevelopment of the Watson health precinct to deliver a world-class, community-led alcohol and other drug and mental health treatment precinct for those most in need.

The government provided \$803,000 in the 2021-22 budget for this work, including \$550,000 in funding for the initial design work for rebuilt facilities for the Ted Noffs youth alcohol and other drug residential rehabilitation; the CatholicCare youth mental health facility; and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and other drug residential rehabilitation facility. The total funding also includes \$253,000 in funding for staff for Winnunga Nimmityjah, to help that organisation plan for the new facility.

Winnunga will lead the early planning and design work for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential alcohol and drug rehabilitation facility, with support from the ACT Health Directorate.

The government has also announced that a new facility will be built for Gugan Gulwan Aboriginal Youth Corporation. This facility will provide new opportunities for Gugan Gulwan's youth alcohol and other drug services, among other services it provides. These facilities are intended to complement existing services, including the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, which offer the opportunity for cultural healing and physical and mental support for those who experience co-occurring mental health and alcohol or other drug issues.

I am also very pleased that the ACT and commonwealth governments' mental health and suicide prevention bilateral schedule, announced on 27 March 2022, includes a co-funded commitment of over \$8 million over four years for the development of the new integrated Youth at Risk program. The development of this program is closely informed by a six-month scoping project, funded through the 2020-21 budget and undertaken by the ACT Health Directorate in 2021.

This scoping work included an environmental scan, evidence review and broad consultation with more than 70 ACT mental health and human services agencies. The project provided detailed advice on an evidence-based response to meet the needs of young people who had experienced trauma and/or emerging co-occurring mental ill health and alcohol and other drug issues.

This program will deliver integrated care through a new adolescent trauma service, build sector partnerships and enhance flexible outreach for youth at risk, including young people with co-occurring mental ill health and alcohol and other drug misuse. It will include a territory-wide integrated framework of supports to reform the current service system and build increased capability to respond across sectors, settings and professions. Planning for the new service will commence in the second half of this year.

The ACT government has also recently signed the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement, with the commonwealth government and other state and territory governments. This national agreement sets a national, integrated, system-level framework for mental health and suicide prevention reform and commitments between the commonwealth, state and territory governments.

In this agreement, the ACT government advocated strongly for the inclusion of people with co-occurring mental health and alcohol and other drug issues as a priority population group. This will help to guide national activities, with shared responsibilities between the commonwealth and the state and territory governments to support these people. In particular, a key goal of this will be to support better integration across primary care, community and tertiary services.

These plans and agreements will guide both the clinical and policy goals and activities over the next few years and will be crucial for guiding the integration of these services

over future years, building on the ACT health system's current capacity and further developing the already established approaches.

While these plans are in development, there is more that the ACT government will be pursuing in the short term to support the integration of these services in the community. This includes establishing an advisory group of local substance use and mental health stakeholders and experts, including representatives from community organisations, primary care and hospitals, to provide advice on integration activities; and supporting the development of a stronger connection across the community mental health and alcohol and other drug sectors to enhance local knowledge and skills development.

To facilitate this, the ACT government has already started working in partnership with local mental health and alcohol and other drug peak organisations to identify how to best support the community sector and to build the local interest and knowledge, to support people with co-occurring mental health and alcohol or other drug issues.

I believe that, together, all of these initiatives that I have described are a good platform for the ACT to further develop integrated and coordinated mental health and substance use supports for people. I am conscious that there is no finish line with regard to integrating services. Rather, continuous development and iteration is required to meet the growing demands and needs in the ACT.

As the Minister for Mental Health, I am committed to continuing to work closely with my colleague the Minister for Health to ensure that our ACT services are closely integrated and able to provide the right care, at the right time, in the right place. This cooperation also will be important as the ACT government progresses our nation-leading harm minimisation approach to alcohol and other drugs policy, which is a key tenet of the Drug Strategy Action Plan but is also a key theme of the proposed Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021, currently standing in the name of Mr Pettersson.

I note that the debate on this bill has been delayed until after this update. While I will leave that particular discussion until then, I would like to say that I hope that this statement and the upcoming debate on the amendment bill will go some way to alleviating the stigma that people with co-occurring mental illness and alcohol or other drug issues experience and are exposed to. Issues of stigma and discrimination can lead to people with these co-occurring issues not being able to seek treatment or being refused services.

One of the reasons for this, as highlighted in the Productivity Commission's inquiry, is that many still see substance use issues as an issue of character or personal choice and not as a problem that is influenced and exacerbated by a range of social and economic determinants. I want to say to everyone listening today: there is no shame in seeking help if you or others around you have identified mental health or alcohol and other drug issues in your life that you want to address. I hope that we will see more people able to identify when they need help and coming forward for assistance to receive the support they need and to continue on a path to recovery.

I present the following paper:

Mental health, alcohol and other drug use disorders—Treatment services—
Update to Assembly resolution of 2 December 2021—Ministerial statement,
4 May 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Seniors—Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing Ministerial statement

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (11.36): I rise in this Assembly today to provide an update on the priorities and planned work of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing. In June last year I welcomed a new Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, also known as MACA. A quarter of the members are continuing from the previous term of the MACA, with nine members newly appointed. This renewed council will serve a three-year term, until 2024, and I am delighted to be supported in my role as minister with portfolio responsibility for seniors by this connected, passionate and deeply knowledgeable council.

The role of the MACA is central to my responsibilities as the minister for seniors. MACA is made up of 12 community members from a diversity of backgrounds. Each member brings rich individual lived experience and expertise as it relates to the lives of older Canberrans. Collectively, MACA is a finger on the pulse and an ear to the ground on some of the key issues facing older Canberrans, including their experiences of ACT government services, policies and programs. MACA therefore forms a critical part of my ongoing engagement with older Canberrans and issues of ageing in the ACT.

It was my privilege to recently deliver the second progress report on the Age-Friendly City Plan 2020-2024. Focus area 1 of the plan is called Involved, Connected and Valued, and it recognises the experience, wisdom and personal and economic contribution that older Canberrans make to our city. Everyone benefits when the intrinsic value of older Canberrans and their active involvement in the community, and as decision-makers, is valued and fostered.

An age-friendly city is founded on the active participation of older people and their advocates in policy formation and decision-making. We know that older Canberrans are avid community builders, generating immense social and economic value to the life of our city. Almost a third of people aged 55 to 69 have volunteered in the last 12 months, and almost a quarter of those aged 70 and over.

I am pleased to report that members of the MACA bring a wealth of experience, expertise and networks as volunteers across a range of areas. A map of MACA's networks and experience has indicated strong links into the arts and creative community, the multicultural community, the health sector, aged care, the energy and water sectors, and a range of community sector and membership-based organisations. It is from this strong foundation that, almost a year into its term, MACA has provided timely, responsive and relevant advice on the challenges and experiences of older Canberrans throughout COVID-19, as well as presented its key priorities for proactive advice and work to the ACT government.

Just one month into MACA's term, the ACT went into lockdown. MACA took to this challenge, providing real-time feedback on the many and varied COVID-19 issues felt by older Canberrans and acting as a sounding board on the continuing ACT government response. Acknowledging the evolving COVID-19 situation, MACA continues to provide advice to me on how to support older Canberrans during COVID, as well as providing feedback and insights to inform the ACT government's social recovery, including the impacts of and role of older Canberrans as part of this social recovery.

In addition to MACA providing advice and feedback on COVID-19 needs and impacts, they have also developed a forward-looking plan on areas of advice and action. This plan encompasses areas of work which MACA has collectively agreed as being the council's priorities for its term. It is my privilege today to be able to table a summary of MACA's work plan and provide this overview.

For this term, MACA will be targeted in its work, and has identified two priority goals to advise me on the following areas: the promotion of positive ageing and tackling age discrimination in the community, policymaking and social systems; and the ACT's COVID-19 recovery and support of older Canberrans.

Underpinning these goals are two focus priority areas. Focus area 1 is supports and services for older people to live the best life they can. To this end, MACA will focus on advising in the following areas: promoting positive ageing through research and sharing of best practice; monitoring the Age-Friendly City Plan, which I welcome as an important piece of community engagement, as well as an accountability mechanism for the government to older Canberrans; advocating and providing advice on the housing needs of older Canberrans; advocating to relevant bodies on the social inclusion and rights of those in the community and residential aged-care; advocating on the health and mental wellbeing needs of older Canberrans, which I welcome as an important intersection with my portfolio responsibilities for mental health; and advocating on the needs of, and impacts on, older consumers of changes to energy consumption and use as a result of technology changes and climate change.

Focus area 2 of MACA's work plan is for older people to be socially active and included. To this end, MACA will focus on advising in the following areas: identifying, promoting and growing arts and creative initiatives in Canberra by and for older Canberrans; seeking opportunities to promote intergenerational initiatives; advocating for and supporting the enhancement of ACT government information to

and with older Canberrans; exploring and defining alternative models and opportunities related to the creation of community hubs; facilitating stronger connections among people working in the field of dementia in the ACT and region to support the Age-Friendly City Plan's action on dementia-friendly design; and, importantly, supporting the ACT government's continuing and evolving COVID-19 response.

As part of their advice and advocacy, MACA will engage with the ACT government's budget considerations to lift and highlight issues of importance to older Canberrans. Enhancing community engagement and participation in such processes is key to being a voice for older Canberrans. I am wholly supportive of MACA's work plan for this term and welcome their advice and activities on these priorities, which are areas ripe with opportunity and rich potential to meaningfully impact the lives of older Canberrans.

In particular, I would like to make some brief comments on some of the priorities identified by MACA. In positive ageing, MACA recognises that negative stereotypes and misconceptions about ageing drive age discrimination and ageism and are a key barrier to older Canberrans being able to live the best life possible. A strengths-based approach to policy development and program and service design will have a more positive impact on older Canberrans.

On this topic, I would like to recognise the recent Never Too Old to Play Outside event held at Haig Park on 2 April. Organised by the City Renewal Authority in collaboration with COTA ACT and the University of Canberra, Never Too Old was a unique event catering to the most seasoned users of our public spaces. I commend all involved for facilitating this age-friendly use of public space.

On intergenerational initiatives, COVID-19 has furthered some of the age-related silos and generation gaps in our community. Research on intergenerational initiatives and connections consistently demonstrates their benefit to the health, fulfilment and wellbeing of the older and younger alike. By addressing and overcoming age-based divisions, intergenerational connection enriches our whole community.

Regarding community hubs for the future, the work of MACA here will no doubt complement and add value to the moves towards community and digital hubs outlined in CBR Switched On, the ACT's Economic Development Priorities 2022-2025. On dementia-friendly design, MACA's engagement here will be an excellent and welcome addition to the solid foundation from the Age-Friendly City Plan's progress in this space.

I would be remiss if I did not put on the table that MACA have signalled to me very strongly that they intend to engage with the broader community over the course of their term, and I very much welcome that. MACA have purposely set broad priorities to ensure that their activities and advice can be shaped by their ongoing engagement with the many and diverse older Canberrans.

In light of COVID-19, Ms Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, an independent expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has stated:

Older persons have become highly visible in the COVID-19 outbreak but their voices, opinion and concerns have not been heard. Instead, the deep-rooted ageism in our societies has become even more apparent. We have seen this in some cruel and dehumanising language on social media and in the exclusive emphasis on older persons' vulnerability ignoring their autonomy.

MACA represents an important platform and conduit to amplify the voices of older people and highlight their diverse views and experiences to inform policy and decision-making. They are an important part of our democracy, and the day we stop believing that democracy can work is the day we lose it. The transition to COVID-19 normal life is an opportunity to bolster these views and their voices.

It is in that spirit that I am pleased to have taken this opportunity to inform the Assembly of the goals, priorities and work of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing. I do this in good faith and to put on the record my openness to MACA's frank and fearless, evidence-based advice across the broad range of areas they have identified. I welcome opportunities for MACA to partner with and support ACT government initiatives in these areas. There is no doubt that the depth and breadth of MACA's knowledge and networks is a rich asset for the government and to continue our efforts to build a truly age-friendly city.

To the council members—Chair Prue Power, Deputy Chair Cathy Hope, Louise Bannister, Jo Cochrane, Christine Leopardi, Jenny Mobbs, Philip Piggan, Wendy Prowse, Charlie Sage, Juliette Spurrett, Jane Timbrell, and Thi Nha Tran—thank you for your ongoing and insightful advice to date, throughout lockdowns and transitions. Thank you for putting forward your vision for older Canberrans and for our city. I look forward to working together over this term and commit to doing everything I can to support this vision.

I present the following paper:

Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing Work Plan—
Ministerial statement, Wednesday, 4 May 2022.
Work Plan Summary 2021-2024, dated May 2022.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2022

Ms Stephen-Smith, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement and a Human Rights Act compatibility statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (11.47): I move:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

I rise today to present the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. The bill proposes amendments to three acts—the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2008, the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1927, and the Transplantation and Anatomy Act 1978. These amendments, while minor and technical, will have significant impacts on the health and wellbeing of Canberrans.

Proposed changes to the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act aim to achieve two key outcomes. First, the changes seek to increase protections for minors with respect to the sales of e-cigarettes in the ACT. Second, changes are proposed to address impacts in the ACT of commonwealth changes to the scheduling and availability of nicotine vaping equipment.

Consistent with laws in all other Australian states and territories, the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act prohibits the sale of tobacco and e-cigarette products to persons under 18 years of age. The act also allows for authorised officers to undertake compliance testing on licensed tobacco retailers to ensure that traditional combustible tobacco product sales are restricted to adults.

Compliance testing involves a young person, engaged by the ACT government, attempting to purchase a tobacco product from a tobacco retailer, under the direction of an authorised officer. This testing allows the identification of retailers who are selling tobacco products to people under the age of 18 years.

The bill amends the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act to ensure that compliance testing can be performed for all smoking products, not just traditional tobacco products. Unfortunately, across Australia there are increasing reports of illegal sales of e-cigarettes, including sales to minors. This bill will enable future compliance testing to include e-cigarettes and will therefore offer an additional tool to deter sales to minors.

The ACT government is committed to minimising the harmful effects associated with the use of e-cigarettes by minors, and I have actively worked with other Australian health ministers to further reduce the impact of nicotine in Australia. I will continue to strongly advocate on this important public health issue.

Building on the ACT government's nation-leading work in this space, on 3 August 2021 this Assembly unanimously agreed to a motion on e-cigarettes that included a number of actions. These actions included that the government would review relevant ACT legislation to ensure that current arrangements are contributing to minimising the harm being caused by e-cigarettes and vaping across our community, particularly for young people.

Today's amendments will ensure that the fundamentals of vaping products regulation are in place as we grapple with the broader impacts of such products. The changes will modernise the act to ensure that all smoking products are able to be captured in compliance work.

Adolescent brains are highly vulnerable to nicotine addiction, and the use of smoking products can lead to a lifetime of dependency, as well as exposing the young user to the short- and long-term health risks of vaping or smoking. In April 2022 the Australian National University published the first global systematic review that has been conducted on the evidence of the health effects of e-cigarettes.

The review found that the use of e-cigarettes is increasing and is greatest in young people in Australia. The review found strong evidence that non-smokers who use e-cigarettes are three times more likely to go on to smoke combustible tobacco cigarettes than those who do not use e-cigarettes. This finding supports concerns about a gateway effect, with initial e-cigarette use escalating to tobacco use. The ANU's findings underscore the importance of ensuring that there are appropriate regulatory mechanisms in place to prevent minors from accessing e-cigarettes.

The other key change to the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act also relates to e-cigarettes. In October 2021 the commonwealth made changes to the scheduling and availability of nicotine vaping products to support their use as a smoking cessation aid. In practice, this means ACT pharmacies are increasingly filling prescriptions for nicotine vaping products.

Under section 67(1) of the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act, a pharmacy commits an offence if it obtains nicotine vaping products from a supplier who is not a licensed tobacco wholesaler. To ensure that these products can be safely supplied to and dispensed by pharmacies, the bill provides that the section 67(1) offence does not apply to a pharmacy when they obtain nicotine vaping products that are medicines.

This approach will facilitate pharmacies to undertake their role as medicine suppliers. The model of care provided in community pharmacies is considered more likely to be conducive to smoking cessation, as there is an opportunity for counselling and support from trained pharmacists. This is as opposed to online sales of nicotine vaping products, where there are limited regulatory controls and limited opportunities for meaningful engagement with primary healthcare providers. In effect, the change removes unnecessary red tape for community pharmacies and for pharmaceuticals provider participation in the regulated sale of nicotine vaping products.

The bill also augments the ability for the Therapeutic Goods Administration to support the regulation of e-cigarette and vaping products. The bill adds a new section to the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act. The new section, 157(3), extends commonwealth therapeutic goods laws so that they apply to a person who is not a corporation within the ACT.

This change expands existing authorisations for the Therapeutic Goods Administration under medicines and poisons laws in the ACT. In addition to the

Therapeutic Goods Administration's existing powers against corporations, this section will enable authorised TGA officers to take action against sole traders in the ACT, where these traders may be in breach of the Commonwealth Therapeutic Goods Act 1989. For example, sole traders illegally selling nicotine vaping products could be subject to TGA enforcement action. We know that complaints about the illicit sale of nicotine vaping products are increasing in the ACT and nationally—something Dr Paterson has brought to the attention of members and continues to advocate about.

This amendment will provide an additional regulatory resource for the ACT, as well as clarity for the TGA when undertaking regulatory interventions. While the impact of the change will likely affect only a small number of businesses, the involvement of the TGA in compliance and enforcement activities supports good practice regulation and collaboration between ACT government regulators and the TGA.

The final key change proposed by the bill will address an inconsistency between the Transplantation and Anatomy Act and the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1997, with respect to confirming and acknowledging a deceased individual's organ donor status. The Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act was amended in May 2021 to allow the family of an organ donor to opt to have the donation formally acknowledged on the person's death certificate and also formally acknowledged to the family in a letter from the Chief Minister.

Currently, the Transplantation and Anatomy Act does not clearly permit officers to release information about organ or tissue donors. The bill will support the lawful release of this information when a request is received from a bereaved family for an acknowledgement of a person's donation. Such an acknowledgement can provide solace to family members of those who have passed away, as they are able to have their loved one's gift officially and publicly acknowledged. The community also benefits from the public discussion of organ donation experiences, as this helps raise awareness, thus further promoting and potentially increasing organ donations in the territory.

I acknowledge the advocacy of families, carers and loved ones regarding the technical barriers that were recently identified across Australia's transplantation laws that have limited families' ability to share their stories publicly. In recognition of the importance of organ and tissue donation, it is my intent that further government amendments to the Transplantation and Anatomy Act will be brought forward prior to the debate of this bill.

Additional consultation with the Organ and Tissue Authority and the Government Solicitor's office will inform the amendments that will potentially be the blueprint for other jurisdictions to also amend their respective pieces of legislation. This change will acknowledge the significant gift of organ donors and allow families to tell their stories to commemorate their loved ones and raise awareness. This, in turn, will enable promotion of, community awareness of and increased territory participation in the Australian Organ Donor Register. I recognise at this point the ongoing advocacy, advice and commitment of my colleague Minister Cheyne, who continues to be a champion for all those in the community touched by organ donation.

The bill has some minor engagements with the right to presumption of innocence, the right to life and the right to protection of family and children under the Human Rights Act 2004. The Attorney-General has reviewed the provisions of the bill and considers these to be aligned with the objectives of the ACT Human Rights Act. These engagements are further detailed in the explanatory statement, as presented with the bill.

The bill before members, while containing relatively minor amendments, includes changes that are nonetheless necessary and are particularly important to ensuring that ACT laws continue to protect children and young people from exposure to tobacco and vaping products. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Leave of absence

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

That leave of absence be granted to Ms Lee for today due to illness.

Seniors—Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (11.57), by leave: In my earlier ministerial statement about the work of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, I was talking about an event that was planned for 2 April, the Never Too Old event in Haig Park, which has been postponed to 4 June because of weather. It will start at 10 am. There will be a whole lot of live music events, large board games and all sorts of other fun things for people to participate in, but it will happen on 4 June, not on 2 April. Thank you.

Sitting suspended from 11.58 am to 2.00 pm.

Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (2.01): The Attorney-General will be absent from question time today. Minister Cheyne will assist with the Attorney-General's consumer affairs and gaming portfolios, and I will endeavour to assist members on energy, water and emissions reduction.

Questions without notice

Schools—safety

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, I refer to a *Canberra Times* article titled, 'It's time to confront our shameful record on school violence.' The article states:

Getting an education in a safe, secure environment is a basic right for every child. It is not a right that all children in Canberra have right now.

And:

Escalating violence in schools is a direct result of an underlying teacher shortage.

The Calwell High School incident follows an Assembly committee report on school violence from 2019, the Australian Principals' Occupational Health and Wellbeing survey of 2021, multiple reports in the media, and advice from the Australian Education Union last year. Now one ACT school has been closed by Worksafe ACT and five are being investigated. Minister, why isn't every child in the ACT enjoying the basic right of a safe, secure education?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. Members will know that over 50,000 students in the ACT attend Canberra public schools, which are primarily safe and supportive learning environments. We have implemented a number of plans and policies in the ACT over the last couple of years to improve the environment in our schools, including the implementation of Positive Behaviour for Learning, an international and nationally proven program of culture change within our schools to ensure safe schools, free from bullying and violence.

However, there will be circumstances, and there has been in recent months a serious circumstance in one of our public schools. We are working with that school community and all our school communities to continue to ensure that students who come to our schools are safe and that it is a safe workplace for teachers and school staff as well.

MR HANSON: Minister, how many serious incidents have occurred at ACT schools since you have been minister?

MS BERRY: I do not have that level of detail on me today. I will take it on notice and if it can be provided, I will provide that to the Assembly. However, I would note that—as Mr Hanson has rightly pointed out—there has been a number of inquiries in this space. The Education Directorate is implementing nation-leading policies and plans around occupational violence within our schools. We are working very closely with WorkSafe, and with the school staff and their unions to ensure that they are safe places for our staff and that they are safe places for our school students.

MR PARTON: Minister, why have your actions failed to the point that a school has been closed and another five are being investigated?

MS BERRY: No, they have not failed. There are nation-leading and internationally works to ensure that our schools are as safe as they possibly can be.

Opposition members interjecting—

MS BERRY: I understand Mr Hanson is going to be spending some time today measuring up the curtains of Ms Lee's office while she is not here! But if you could give me the chance to respond without the continued interruptions—

Mr Hanson: I am not sure that interjections are a new thing, to be frank.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, and we all do wish it would stop, Mr Hanson!

MS BERRY: He will know that the Education Directorate has implemented these leading plans and policies around occupational violence within our schools. In fact, the Education Directorate is contacted by state and territory school directorates in other parts of Australia to understand the implementation of our programs here in the ACT. For the majority of students who attend our schools, they are safe, supportive learning environments for more than 50,000 in our public schools and 80,000 across all the schools in the ACT. Of course, non-government schools are not required to report incidents to the ACT government. I see that the focus of the opposition, as usual, is on muddying the waters of our public schools, which are great schools. They are doing everything they can under the most challenging of circumstances over the last couple of years to provide a safer learning environment, both face to face at school—

Mr Hanson: But it is not; that is the point.

MS BERRY: They are safe learning environments, and we will continue to work to ensure that that happens.

Schools—safety

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, under recent questioning and during the no confidence motion in you, you repeatedly stated that serious assaults were “very rare” in Canberra schools. It has since been revealed that before the Calwell closure and before the Assembly motion there had been another alleged assault at a Canberra school. This incident occurred during school hours, in full view of other students and teachers. The footage reportedly shows three male students repeatedly punching and kicking a student on the ground, putting that person in hospital with serious injuries. Minister, were you aware of this incident when the Assembly last sat?

MS BERRY: I will have to take that question on notice and check the dates. As I have informed the Assembly, I am notified of these serious incidents soon after they occur, so I would have been informed about this incident. I am aware of the incident that I think Ms Lawder is referring to.

Violence and incidents of this sort, serious incidents in the ACT, are rare in our schools. However, these incidents occur in schools across the country. Here in the ACT we are doing everything that we can, implementing nation-leading work by changing the culture within our schools through the Positive Behaviour for Learning framework, which has been identified as the best way to change the culture in our

schools and have everybody understand what a safe, inviting and supportive school environment looks like.

That is not an easy thing to do when you have an environment surrounding the school and a culture of violence within our community that we are still trying to address as well. We have issues around domestic and family violence. We are dealing with sexual assaults in our community. We have a community that is battling away at resolving violence in all its forms, including bullying and unacceptable behaviour across our community and in our schools as well.

This issue is occurring not just in the ACT. However, the ACT is delivering on its plans and policies across our schools. The issues have been conflated, unfortunately, by COVID. There is no doubt about that. We are working with our schools through these difficult times, making sure that they feel supported, respected and valued as great learning and teaching environments for both our school staff and our school students.

MS LAWDER: Minister, how often have ACT police been called in relation to an incident in an ACT school?

MS BERRY: I do not even think I would have that advice. That might be incidents that are referred to police by individuals outside of school hours as well. I just do not think that data would be available.

MR HANSON: Minister, in what way has the critical shortage of teachers in our schools contributed to violence?

MS BERRY: The ACT is not immune to the national teacher shortage. Schools across the country are experiencing a shortage in the teaching workforce. COVID has absolutely had an impact on how our schools operate and has exacerbated the issues that might occur in our schools. We are working with the Education Union to ensure that we meet the needs of our school staff, to ensure that they are safe, keeping in mind that COVID has definitely had an impact on the teaching shortage in our schools because people, unfortunately, contract COVID and need to take time off work. That also happens in our school communities.

In those circumstances, our schools can temporarily return to remote education, for parts of a school or a whole school, where that is required. We have excellent resources in place, developed by the Education Directorate, for teachers and school staff to access and for students and their families to access during that time when they need to return to remote education temporarily.

We are managing what is an ever-changing situation that has been in place for over two years now and that has put enormous pressure on our school system. We acknowledge that, and we work very closely with them. We thank them for the incredible work that they have done over the last couple of years in moving from and back to remote education, when that has been required, under incredibly challenging circumstances. We will continue to support them to do that.

Health—hydrotherapy services

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, last year the ACT government stated that it wanted to build a hydrotherapy pool in the south of Canberra. At this time the government said its preferred site was at the Lakeside Leisure Centre in Tuggeranong. Is that still the case, and can you provide an update on the scoping work for a hydrotherapy pool?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Davis for the question. Yes, that is still the case. The government, of course, recognises the value of hydrotherapy as an ongoing therapeutic activity for many people with chronic illness, to maintain their mobility, to manage their pain and to foster overall wellbeing.

The ACT government has committed to delivering a hydrotherapy pool for the south side of Canberra. This was a 2020 ACT election commitment. In the 2020-21 budget the ACT government provided \$250,000 to develop early design and costings work for the development of a new south side hydrotherapy pool. This work included targeted community consultation and has informed the development of a business case for the 2022-23 ACT budget.

Key outcomes of the approach to date have confirmed that Tuggeranong Lakeside Leisure Centre is a suitable location, and has received feedback on important issues relating to design and accessibility. Stakeholders who were consulted and engaged through this process included Arthritis ACT, Health Care Consumers Association, Tuggeranong Community Council, Sharing Places and a small number of individual community members.

In March 2022 two additional workshops were held to support community and stakeholder input into the operation of a future south side hydrotherapy pool. Through those workshops there has been general agreement that building the pool adjacent to a current facility was supported, and the operation of a hydrotherapy pool should be open for similar hours to the public pool. Public access to the pool is important, and the operational model should be flexible to ensure significant access times and an ability to deliver some scheduled classes and bookings at times.

The provision of some useful hydrotherapy exercise equipment will be important and, because hydrotherapy can be expensive, the charging model needs to be conscious of its impact, as good preventive treatment such as hydrotherapy can offset more costly treatment. *(Time expired.)*

MR DAVIS: Minister, as the Lakeside Leisure Centre is currently run by the YMCA, will the hydrotherapy pool be contracted to the YMCA or run by the ACT government?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Davis for the question. Those are exactly the kinds of issues that the government will be working through in response to the feedback from the community. But it is positive to have that feedback that Tuggeranong Lakeside Leisure Centre was identified as a suitable location.

The government is proposing to write to the participants in the consultation, thanking them for their input and feeding back the important information that we heard, in line with the ACT government's general response to consultation and the production of listening reports, and ensuring that people are fed back what we heard and to double-check that that was what they intended.

Subject, of course, to the outcome of the 2022-23 budget, construction of the pool would be expected to commence in the mid to second half of 2023, and the pool would be operational approximately in the second half of 2024—subject, of course, to development application, contractor availability, market conditions and all of those things. Additional pool user and community consultation as part of the design user group would be undertaken through the construction process. That period would also be used to consider the operational arrangements for the pool.

MS CLAY: Minister, how will the ACT government ensure that the hydrotherapy pool is accessible for those on lower incomes and reduced incomes?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Clay for the question. As I was indicating in response to the first question, we recognise that access to hydrotherapy pools can be expensive, so we are very conscious of the need to develop a charging model that takes account of this impact. As I said we are very much aware of the importance of preventive treatment, so that individuals can avoid having to escalate to more acute care, and because preventive treatment reduces the pressure on the acute care parts of our health system.

We are also aware that some people are not going to have the capacity to pay, and some people are going to have the capacity to pay a small contribution towards their hydrotherapy support. Arthritis ACT, for example, charges clients \$5.90 per session for their group work. Of course, the ACT government already works with and funds Arthritis ACT to provide hydrotherapy services on the south side. In 2021 Arthritis ACT offered 1,814 client-led hydrotherapy sessions and 135 instructor-led sessions. We are already supporting those people who have financial difficulty in accessing hydrotherapy services. Twenty per cent of the places for Arthritis ACT sessions are provided free to clients who are facing disadvantage and cannot afford the services, and other people pay \$5.90 per session.

We will be having those conversations with the community around what is a reasonable charge for those people who can afford to pay. I certainly had feedback from people about models in other jurisdictions where you can buy a series of tickets, and they thought that was perfectly okay, for those who can afford to make that contribution.

Schools—safety

MR PARTON: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, following your claims that incidents of serious assault were “very rare”, one retired principal who worked across ACT government and non-government schools for more than 40 years told the *Canberra Times* that they “didn't know a principal in the public system who

had not been assaulted at some point. During their career, they had knives brandished at them, had a student bring a gun to school, received death threats and had their car damaged four times.” Minister, how many principals have reported an assault during their career at an ACT school?

MS BERRY: I find disturbing the focus that the opposition has on our public schools. It is trying as much as it can to talk them down when they are great schools. For over 50,000 students who attend them, predominantly they are safe. They are safe and supportive environments for our school communities, our school teachers and school staff. So I start with responding to that question by making that statement. Very clearly—

Mr Hanson: On a point of order. I would ask the minister to be relevant because the question related not just to government but to non-government schools. It talked about ACT government and non-government schools. The question was specifically about an ACT school, not about public or non-government. I would ask the minister to be directly relevant and cover both school systems in her answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: She has a minute-plus to cover anything else, but she is on track at the moment.

MS BERRY: Thank you. I have already responded to the second part of the question with regard to ACT schools, where school principals in non-government schools are not required to report incidences to the ACT government. So I would not have any detail other than if there were people who were individually reporting to me on that, and I have not heard that. However, what we have seen in ACT government schools since we have implemented our occupational violence plans is that we have an increase in reporting and a really good reporting culture in our schools of incidences when they occur so that they can be addressed. That is what we need to see across our school communities.

This has been complicated by COVID and by the impacts of an international health pandemic. That is the fact of the matter. It has been incredibly difficult for school communities to connect with students and their families over this period remotely, but they have done an excellent job at delivering a great education, whether that is remotely or on the school campus. Implementing our occupational violence plans and management processes has also been complicated during this time.

MR PARTON: Minister, how many teachers have reported an assault during their career at an ACT school?

MS BERRY: That is just a ridiculous question. How long is a piece of string, really? What I have continued to say and what I will continue to say is that our public schools—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! The minister is on the floor answering the question.

MS BERRY: Our public schools are great schools and for the over 50,000 students that attend them they are safe and supportive environments.

Mr Hanson: On a point of order, on relevance. The question is a simple one as to how many teachers have reported an assault during their career at a school. I assume the directorate records that information. If the minister does not have it available she can take it on notice. She should not just say that because it is a ridiculous question that is a reason not to answer it.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, she is referring to incidents of assault and violence, as she has done on this question and others. She has a minute to provide more information. She is not out of order. I will give the minister the call if she has anything else to add.

MS BERRY: No, I am happy to take the supplementary.

DR PATERSON: Minister, can you outline how you have worked to encourage a positive reporting culture within ACT schools?

MS BERRY: When we implemented our occupational violence management plan and policy in the ACT since 2018-19, we have seen an increase in the number of reports of incidents in our schools. That has allowed the Education Directorate to work with school communities, including school principals, on how we can overcome and assess these incidences to ensure that our schools remain as safe as they possibly can and encourage that reporting culture, because there are no more supports that can be given to schools unless we know of the incidences that are occurring in those schools. That reporting culture has been supported by school principals and encouraged across their schools as well.

What we are seeing, and what we will continue to see, is a report of these incidences. These incidences can occur across the school community in a variety of different ways. They can include incidences of assault or violence such as swearing, kicking or pushing past teachers to more serious incidences that have been reported recently. Any incident of violence or assault in our schools is unacceptable. That is why we have a plan in place to address these, to work through them, to assess the nature of the violence, to stop the activity, the practice or the procedures that cause that incident to occur and then work with schools to provide the supports to the teaching and school staff or to the students and/or to the students and families, should they need it.

Schools—teachers

MR CAIN: My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, I refer to an article in the *Canberra Times* titled ‘Teachers are leaving the system in droves, but no-one is listening’. This attracted a lot of attention and comment on the ACT teachers’ Facebook groups, particularly the following comments:

What they need is a system which gives them the resources, time and conditions which allow them to do what they love the most ... teach.

Since they are smart enough to know that that is not happening, brilliant teachers are leaving their classrooms behind.

Minister, how many teachers have left the ACT system in the last two years?

MS BERRY: I will have to take that question on notice.

MR CAIN: I have a supplementary question. Minister, how many vital support positions, such as relief teachers and learning assistants have left the ACT system in the last two years?

MS BERRY: I will take that question on notice. If I have that level of detail then I will provide it to the Assembly, but I will have to seek advice from the Education Directorate.

MR HANSON: Minister, how many of the currently advertised positions are actually there simply to refill positions that have been vacated?

MS BERRY: Obviously, when you are recruiting new staff to a workplace, that can be to fill existing vacancies. That could be for a variety of reasons. It could be maternity leave, parental leave, retirement. All are not leaving the system because they are burnt out. I have to say that for our teaching community the lack of respect and the value that they do not get from the members of the opposition around the work that they do, is exactly the kinds of things that they talk about when they are devalued in such a way. Then there are obviously reasons why they would not want to continue when they have to continually defend the great public schools that they work in every day against the constant attacks from the Canberra Liberals. It is unbelievable that there is this constant attack.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Ms Berry has to floor if she wants to continue.

MS BERRY: I have finished, thanks, Madam Speaker.

Canberra Institute of Technology—Woden campus

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Skills. Minister, could you please provide an update on the construction of the new CIT campus in Woden?

MR STEEL: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. I am really excited to update the Assembly that this week we have announced that Lendlease is the preferred tenderer for the design and construction of the new CIT Woden campus. Lendlease has a long history in Woden, having first built the Woden Plaza, and is experienced both locally and internationally in delivering large-scale infrastructure projects. We are very confident that their expertise in design and construction will help to support the successful delivery of a digitally enabled, innovative and modern CIT campus with vibrant common areas and integrated green spaces.

Negotiations with Lendlease are now underway, and we hope to sign a contract in the next couple of months. Once in contract, Lendlease, in partnership with the ACT government, will progress the current design concept for the new facility towards a final design that meets the needs of Canberra's growing community now and into the future. The design process will be iterative, with community feedback at the heart of the project.

Construction on the adjacent public transport interchange is already underway. Construction of the campus itself is expected to commence next year and create over 500 local jobs. Meanwhile, we have also recently lodged the estate development plan with the independent planning authority. The EDP is currently on public notification and I encourage the community to have their say.

DR PATERSON: Minister, how has community feedback been incorporated into this design so far?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her supplementary question. The views of the Canberra Institute of Technology teachers and students, and the broader Woden community, have been at the very centre of the new campus design as it has evolved. Community consultation undertaken to date has directly fed into the design requirements that we are currently negotiating with Lendlease. This includes the construction of a public east-west pedestrian boulevard through the campus, connecting the Woden interchange to the town square and the rest of the town centre. The pedestrian boulevard will be activated with green spaces, seating and frontage from the campus, including cafes and shelter.

We will also be establishing a new north-south road connection, a local access road, which will be a shared zone as well, connecting Bradley and Bowes streets. The connection will provide access for local vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. We are installing new public toilets at the adjacent Woden interchange, in response to requests from the community last year.

Last week I released the findings of our most recent round of consultation, which was undertaken over the summer period. This engagement piece highlighted how important activated, clean, open, well-lit and safe public spaces are to the community, as well as clear signage. We will make sure that these considerations remain a top priority as the design progresses. The community can have their say in the estate development plan for the next week. There will be multiple further opportunities to provide feedback, ahead of the development application process later on this year.

MS ORR: Minister, how will CIT Woden support the government's skills and workforce agenda?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. Last week I joined a group of key industry representatives and training partners to launch Skilled to Succeed, a new skills and workforce agenda for the ACT. The document set out the government's ambitions for Canberra for the growth of our economy, the wellbeing of our community, the capability of our workforce and the great jobs that thriving local industries can offer.

As I outlined in the chamber earlier today, our agenda is focused on the four key priorities of delivering skills inclusively, to provide all Canberrans with a foundation for life-long learning; building a responsible, flexible and future-focused workforce, particularly a skills system that identifies areas of future skills growth like technology, construction and the caring and experience industries; assisting employers to build, attract and retain the right workforce; and strengthening our skills sector foundations.

The construction of CIT Woden will help us to achieve these priorities and provide a huge boost for vocational education and training in the ACT with new hands-on training spaces and immersive work-simulated environments to help students achieve their full potential in areas like IT and cybersecurity, as well as hospitality and business, plus much more. The new campus will be much more than a building. It will ensure that CIT remains a provider of choice and an agile partner to meet industry, business and community needs by delivering quality vocational education and training for the jobs of the future.

CIT, following the development of their strategic compass, are going to be undertaking a reform program, looking at how they can make sure that their course offering meets the skills needs of the future.

Planning—community consultation

MS CLAY: My question is to the minister for planning. Minister, the current planning bill has been out for consultation for around six weeks, and there are about another six weeks left. Community members have told me what good consultation looks like. They think it needs to be transparent, well informed, give plenty of opportunities for questions and involve a diverse range of people and groups. I heard from community members on the earlier sessions that there was not enough time for questions, they could not provide verbal feedback and sessions were not recorded. But I was really pleased to hear that today's session went well. It was recorded, questions were asked mid-session and it focused on the environmental impact provisions. Can you tell me how consultations have been going so far, including the number of people in attendance and whether the recorded sessions will be published?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Clay for the question. I will refer her to the previous answers I have provided to her, and the extensive engagement between my office and hers regarding the consultation for the new planning bill. I have answered a lot of questions for her regarding this. Consultation has been going very well so far. The directorate has held four information sessions on the bill, as well as a facilitated workshop with the Environment and Planning Forum. There is at least one more information session scheduled, along with a second facilitated workshop with the EPF.

I would like to take the opportunity to remind everyone that consultation is open until 15 June this year, which means people have a further six weeks to have their say. Seventy people, I think, have attended so far, and there will be more attending these other sessions as well. This is quite a bit longer than most ACT government legislation consultation periods, and we have a separate plan of consultation coming up for the district strategies in the Territory Plan, which started earlier this year.

MS CLAY: Minister, will the verbal feedback provided during the information sessions be recorded and be considered as feedback?

MR GENTLEMAN: There has been recording of the sessions, and that is taken into consideration as we consult on the bill.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, are you planning to run additional sessions outside working hours before the end of the consultation period, like you did for the district planning discussions last year?

MR GENTLEMAN: There will be that work, as I said, for the detail stage of the district planning. Of course, if required, we may need to have extra consultation. So far it has been well attended and well received.

Schools—safety

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, following the closure of Calwell High School, it has been revealed that in total five Canberra public schools were visited by WorkSafe ACT inspectors in term 1. The concerns included similar issues to Calwell, including a chronic shortage of staff, with classes of more than 40 students common and classes of over 60 being reported. Minister, what is the status of these five schools currently under investigation by WorkSafe ACT?

MS BERRY: The status is that WorkSafe ACT has visited those schools.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what is the safe maximum class size and will you advise the Assembly when this maximum number is breached?

MS BERRY: We will work with our school communities, our school staff and their unions around making sure that we implement the enterprise bargaining agreement as far as class sizes are concerned. We have a matrix in place to ensure that schools can return temporarily to remote education, should it be required, as a result of staff shortages that have been exacerbated as a result of COVID.

MR HANSON: Minister, were you aware of these other five schools and the issues with them, including WorkSafe visits, and, if so, why did you not refer to this in the last sitting when this was a matter of debate in this Assembly?

MS BERRY: What I understand is that WorkSafe have visited these schools. As a result of the visit there has not been any other action taken at this stage by WorkSafe. I encourage and am very happy for WorkSafe, as an independent organisation, to visit our schools, or any of our workplaces, to ensure that they are safe for our work staff. We will work closely with them to ensure that our workplaces are safe.

This has been a particularly difficult time for our school communities. We have families who have been isolated from support services, where their children have had complex needs or complicated lives. Our teaching workforce and our school staff have had to pivot back and forth from face-to-face to remote education, meeting the

challenges that have been placed on them as a result of this international health pandemic, which is not finished yet. We are still feeling, unfortunately, the impacts of that. That is directly impacting the staff shortages in our schools.

As a result of all of those complex issues that I have described, it is a complicated space for our school staff. What a refreshing thing it would be if this government and all members in this place joined together and supported our school staff, acknowledged the difficult time that they have had and that they continue to have, and actually allowed them to get on with their work. The Education Directorate will continue to work with them closely to do that.

Health services—PET scans

MS CASTLEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Recently I met with a patient who has stage 4 incurable pancreatic cancer. She and others need regular PET scans. While Queanbeyan patients have the cost of PET scans met by the hospital, in Canberra there is a cost—they have to pay. On December 16 last year, this patient met with your senior adviser to ask why Canberra patients are being charged different fees—anywhere from \$600 to \$800 for the same PET scan. Minister, can you explain why this patient is still waiting for a response from your office four months after this meeting?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Castley for the question. I will follow up. I am very sorry to hear that this individual is in the circumstances that they are, and that they are still awaiting a response from my office. I will definitely follow that up. I will take the question on notice and come back to the Assembly and let them know. Obviously, my office has been very busy, but we do endeavour to get back to people as quickly as possible, particularly in those kinds of circumstances.

MS CASTLEY: I have a supplementary question. Minister, why doesn't the Canberra hospital cover the cost of PET scans like the New South Wales hospitals do?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: There are a range of circumstances in which Canberra Health Services does have patient charges in place. Again, I will take the detail of the question on notice in relation to the PET scans, but there are also arrangements for those charges to be waived in circumstances where people would have financial difficulties. Again, I will take it on notice to provide some further detail to the Assembly in relation to all of that is managed.

MS LAWDER: Minister, why are Canberra's cancer patients being charged different fees for the same PET scans?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Lawder for the supplementary question. The ACT health system and the New South Wales health system are separate systems and there are separate, different arrangements in place between the two jurisdictions.

Planning—ACT Planning System Review and Reform Project

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, there have been many questions about consultation on the Planning System

Review and Reform Project, but I would like to know more about the technical planning work that is underway. Can you please update the Assembly on what reports and technical studies the ACT government is using to inform this project?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Orr for her question and her interest in the technical aspects of town planning. The ACT government has commissioned several studies that will help to inform the development of the district strategies and the new Territory Plan. These studies include estate development; best practice greenfield infill developments; achieving improved built form, place design and public realm outcomes; commercial and industrial zones and mixed-use development; and EV-ready developments.

The recommendations from these reports will help to inform future policy decisions. The government recognises that we need to plan for Canberra's future. We are looking at how we prepare our buildings and our public spaces for new technology and of course a changing climate. I have said before that the aim of the new planning system is transparency, and we are applying that principle when it comes to this technical work.

The information that I have mentioned here is all open to the public. Reports are available on the EPSDD website. Anyone with an interest in the technical planning work, such as Ms Orr, can have a look at what the government is considering. We will look at all the information available, along with the technical and community input, in developing a new Territory Plan and the district strategies for the ACT.

MS ORR: Minister, given my interest in mixed-use development, particularly as it relates to my electorate of Yerrabi, can you please explain more about the report on commercial and industrial zones and mixed-use development?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. I know that the Gungahlin Community Council have a particular interest in this report. The planning system is a critical part of attracting jobs and investment to the ACT, and ensuring that we have sufficient commercial and industrial land available in the right locations is a consideration for the current Planning System Review and Reform Project.

We are balancing our need for commercial and industrial land with our need to provide homes for our growing population. This is again a challenge for many different jurisdictions, including here in the ACT. The report has looked at different jurisdictions and ideas for managing land uses and makes recommendations to government on what we might do for the future. The report provides advice on best practice planning considerations to limit potential conflict between users, particularly in mixed-use development.

There are recommendations regarding compatibility of uses in mixed-use development and how this can be implemented through the planning system; a cost-benefit analysis of commercial and industrial zones; and recommended processes and frameworks to guide the planned delivery of commercial and industrial zones. These recommendations look at both strategic and statutory provisions to guide our overall thinking about commercial uses, as well as the ideas for site-specific zoning

and land use controls. The recommendations from this report will be coordinated and considered as part of the ACT Planning System Review and Reform Project. Outcomes of the process will be provided as part of the community and industry consultation later this year.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, aside from these reports, what other information is the government using to inform the district strategies and the new Territory Plan?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary question. The government will be looking at existing ACT government policies and strategies to inform the direction of this work. These include the climate change strategy, the transport strategy, the housing strategy, the infrastructure plan and the planning strategy. These strategies include planning-related actions that require an integrated approach. For example, the transport strategy envisages a compact, walkable and livable city. This relies on the planning system to deliver.

The Planning System Review and Reform Project is an opportunity to make these changes and will set up Canberra for the future. There is a lot of good, old-fashioned town planning, to quote Fiona Carrick from the Woden Valley Community Council, going into our district strategies and Territory Plan work.

Once the government has brought together all of this information and assessed it, we will be working with the EPF, in the first instance, to see that it meets community and industry needs. That will be followed by broader community consultation, starting later this year.

Hospitals—elective surgery

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Health. Recently, we heard from the mother of a patient whose 17-year-old son was booked for elective surgery at the Canberra Hospital. After a day of fasting and waiting, the surgery was called off and they were told to return the next day. The following day, she stood in a waiting room all day to draw attention to her son's need for surgery. Three times she asked for paperwork, with staff saying they were too busy and would send it. This mother shared her story on social media and people responded by saying, "Yep, that's normal." Minister, how often are elective surgeries cancelled on the day of the surgery in Canberra hospitals?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Kikkert for the question. I do get regular representations from people who have had the experience of waiting for their elective surgery, having attended the emergency department, been sent home and told to come back for their surgery. Unfortunately, either for elective surgery or emergency surgery, they are not able to be fitted in that day.

As I have said in the media on many occasions over the last few weeks, both our hospitals, like many other hospitals around the country, are extraordinarily busy at the moment. Sometimes it is the case that urgent emergency surgery does come in, and unfortunately it has to take priority over the people who have returned for their

emergency surgery that could be delayed somewhat, or for their elective surgery; then those people, unfortunately, have their surgery delayed.

It is really distressing when this happens. I am always really concerned to hear about this. I visited the Canberra Hospital theatre area and intake area for surgery the other day, and had a conversation with the senior staff there about the processes for managing people who are waiting for their elective or return emergency surgery, and the way that that is done. I refer particularly to the fact that people sometimes are asked to change into gowns and sit around and wait and, as Mrs Kikkert has indicated, fast and then end up not getting their surgery.

Canberra Health Services is doing some work around how to better manage that process. Unfortunately, it is sometimes the case that people are unable to get their surgery because more urgent matters, where people really need lifesaving or limb-saving surgery, do come first.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, what other reasons are there that staff are so under-resourced that they cannot provide paperwork?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I cannot comment on the individual circumstances, but if the person has not already written to my office, and Mrs Kikkert or Ms Castley have details and would like to encourage that person to write, we will be able to address the individual circumstances on the day that that occurred. I do not know which day that was.

As I have already indicated and as I have said publicly, there are a range of reasons that our hospitals are under significant pressure at the moment. I refer to the number of staff furloughing, not only because of having COVID or being household contacts of someone who has COVID-19, but because of a range of other respiratory illnesses that are circulating in our community, as well as staff being sick and having caring responsibilities. We have also recently seen two long weekends in a row and school holidays, and having staff on planned leave during that period. Canberra Health Services worked really hard to not bring staff back from leave who were on leave. Everyone has been working really hard over the last two years, and when staff have scheduled leave, it is really important that they are able to take that.

In addition to those staffing pressures, around the country we are seeing increased demand. All of the reasons for that are unclear, but it is quite likely that some of that is a result of people delaying care during the COVID-19 pandemic; then their situations escalate to require more significant and acute health care. I was talking to one of my interstate colleagues yesterday about the circumstances that they are experiencing. People would have seen the very significant new investments in the Victorian budget to respond to this situation, and people would have also seen stories around the country of ambulance ramping at emergency departments. This is something we are seeing right across the country.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what do you say to this particular mum who fasted for the first day to support her son, but told him the next day she needed to eat, just so that she would have the energy to physically stand all day in order to be seen?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Castley for the supplementary. As I say to all of the people who write to me, contact me or talk to me about this, I am very sorry to hear about the experience of this family. It is really unfortunate when these things happen. As I say, we have been extraordinarily busy. It is not something that has just occurred; people's surgery occasionally gets delayed because of some significant demands on emergency surgery, and Canberra Hospital is working through that.

It is exactly why, in the budget, we committed additional funding for emergency surgery. We provided additional funding for both the emergency department and for emergency surgery, to ensure that we could increase the number of hours. There was \$39 million to increase emergency surgery capacity and post-surgery care, providing 1,920 theatre hours over the year for emergency surgery, to ensure that we could respond to that increased demand that we are seeing, and increasing the bed base by eight, to support that greater throughput of both elective and emergency surgery.

Disability—ACT disability strategy

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Disability. Minister, the ACT disability strategy is currently open for public consultation. Can you please provide an update to the Assembly about the strategy and why it is so important for Canberrans?

MS DAVIDSON: I thank the member for the question. The consultations that have recently started for the ACT's disability strategy are incredibly important because they set the work agenda for ACT government for the next 10 years of how we make sure that we are a truly inclusive and accessible city for people with disability.

I would like to note that we are now in our third year of risk and isolation for people with disability, as well as for their carers and their family and friends. While a lot of us have really been enjoying being able to go back to a lot of the in-person things that we have previously done, there are people with disability for whom that is too great a risk.

With that in mind, the Community Services Directorate and the Office for Disability have worked with the disability reference group to come up with a plan for how we do this consultation in a way that is inclusive for people and enables them to participate, whether that is in small groups or from home, as well as in larger groups.

It is incredibly important that we are able to have conversations about things that we have not been able to talk about these last couple of years while people have been dealing with the risks of COVID for people with disability, as well as trying to save the NDIS and keep it true to its original intent of choice and control for people with disability. A lot of those conversations have very much focused on a very medicalised view of what disability means.

What we are able to do with these consultations is have a really broad conversation about what disability means and about the ways in which people with disability would like to engage in our community and participate in employment, education and leadership in our community. Those conversations take courage, both from people

who are participating who have disability and from all of us to perhaps sometimes hear some things that are very hard to hear about where we have not been doing as well as we could have and what we can do to change that.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, from a personal perspective, what is the disability strategy going to do for parents with children who have autism?

MS DAVIDSON: It is incredibly important that we are able to have these broader conversations about what disability means in our community. I have had quite a lot of feedback from people who have autism or from people who have ADHD as well about the ways in which they have had difficulty in achieving a diagnosis and then achieving the supports and services that they need. The NDIS has not been able to provide them with the supports that they need in all of those cases.

It is about being able to have a conversation about what neurodiversity means and how important neurodiversity is for us as a society. The different perspectives that people bring to solving problems that we all face can make all of us stronger as a community. We need all of those perspectives if we are really going to solve big problems like climate change, the future of work and how we engage and communicate with each other in a respectful and effective way.

MR DAVIS: Minister, what specific and tangible outcomes would you like to see come out of the strategy to improve the lives of people with a disability in Canberra?

MS DAVIDSON: I would not like to pre-empt what the outcomes might be, but I have been really excited to hear some of the early feedback that people are having conversations about issues like employment, as well as some of the physical infrastructure and town planning aspects.

I am very excited about the way in which this is being conducted, because that will shift the way that we think about disability in this city. All of the conversations that are being held as part of this consultation are being led by people from our disability community. They have shown great courage and great leadership in being able to do that and in co-designing the process with the Office for Disability.

I am very excited that, with the diverse range of ways in which people can engage, we will be able to hear the full ideas that people have about what we should be working on. That includes being able to complete a survey on the YourSay website that will be open until 31 June. They can attend open forums and there are a series of public consultations on particular topics happening between now and June, also on the YourSay website.

There is also a kitchen table conversation kit, and that is really exciting to me. People will be able to get together in small groups of people that they know and trust and have a group conversation in a COVID-safe way and then contribute that back to this broader consultation, as well as being able to upload submissions, not just written submissions but audio and video submissions as well. With all of those different ways of being able to engage, I am hopeful that we will see a really diverse range of outcomes from this strategy.

Centenary Hospital for Women and Children—neonatal care

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, can you please provide an update on the work of the neonatal intensive care unit and the special care Nursery at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children to support premature and unwell babies at the beginning of their lives?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. And it is timely as tomorrow marks the start of nurses and midwives week, tomorrow being the International Day of the Midwife, 5 May; and 12 May being the International Day of the Nurse. And of course, nurses and midwives are part of our fantastic multi-disciplinary teams at the Centenary Hospital for women and children.

The work of the neonatal intensive care unit and the special care nurseries in our health services is important to recognise, particularly as they have continued to care for the most unwell babies through the challenges of the past two years. They are not always mentioned when we talk about critical care, but I really want to acknowledge their crucial work and I thank Mr Pettersson for the opportunity.

The Centenary Hospital for women and children is a regional level 6 NICU, providing neonatal intensive care to the ACT and surrounding region. This includes a neonatal medical emergency team response and emergency retrieval. Each year, up to 800 patients and their families need the support of the NICU or the special care nursery at the Centenary Hospital.

The highly specialised team of nurses, doctors, allied health and support staff provide exceptional care to babies and their loved ones. Family-centred care is central to their work and they provide a range of programs to ensure caregivers can access supports in hospital when they get home. This includes the newborn and parent support service, which provides an early discharge program for families and babies who still require nursing care support and advice at home; the growth and development follow up program for NICU and special care nursery graduates, which provides early identification and referral to appropriate services to help them reach their full potential; NICU cam, a complementary livestream for families to see their baby when they are not in the unit, via phone, iPad or a computer; and further partnerships with non-government organisations who aim to support care givers. Overall, the teams provide an excellent service to some of Canberra's most vulnerable patients. I am sure we are all grateful for the work they do.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how are you ensuring this vital service is growing with the Canberra region?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary and the government is, of course, committed to ensuring that vulnerable babies born here in the ACT from Canberra and the surrounding regions, have the right care, in the right place, at the right time. In the 2021-22 ACT budget, we invested over \$15 million to continue expanding neonatal intensive care beds at the Centenary Hospital for women and children.

This funding ensures we can increase services in the NICU to meet demand now and into the future. Between now and 2023-24, we will deliver additional intensive care costs and more than 20 extra staff to support these critical services. The new cots and additional doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and administration staff will see the ACT continue to deliver a high functioning NICU for Canberrans and the surrounding New South Wales region. This also means we can significantly reduce the number of babies transferred to other jurisdictions for care and by increasing our investment in the NICU, we can ensure one to one nurse-to-patient ratio is maintained and sustainable.

The ACT government also invested \$50 million for the expansion of the Centenary Hospital for women and children that continues our work of upgrading our health infrastructure right across the Canberra Hospital. This investment includes a series of new builds and refurbishments of a number of areas of Centenary Hospital, including neonatology. I was fortunate to spend a bit of time the other day with some of the NICU team and to see the incredible work that they do every day. They are very passionate about the treatment and care they deliver for the ACT and the ACT government is really proud to support this excellent care.

And I was particularly interested recently to talk to some of them about the research that is conducted in the neonatal intensive care unit as well. And some really great contributions to knowledge about how to care for some of those most vulnerable babies. So thank you to everybody working in the NICU and the special care nursery.

DR PATERSON: Minister, how does this link with the broader expansion of the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Dr Paterson for the question. The \$50 million Centenary Hospital for Women and Children expansion is delivering more health infrastructure to the Canberra Hospital campus, dedicated to key maternity, paediatric, and neonatology services. This includes new builds and refurbishments across the Centenary Hospital and builds on the ACT government's almost \$1.3 billion health infrastructure investment over the last decade.

There are a number of upgrades being delivered in neonatology that will refurbish these essential areas for both babies and families. In the special care nursery, we are undertaking refurbishments to create four new cots and two new parent rooming in spaces. There will also be a new family support zone for families whose babies are being cared for in the NICU. Further support services are also being improved to provide a neonatal, paediatric and adolescent nutrition service, a new parent lounge and dining and education facilities. More broadly, the Centenary Hospital expansion has already completed refurbishments in the paediatric high care ward and a new build of the key administration building, supporting the activities of Centenary.

Over 2022-23, further stages of the expansion program will be completed, including: a new build extending the Centenary Hospital that will deliver a new adolescent mental health unit and adolescent mental health day service; refurbishment of the maternity assessment unit; refurbishment of the antenatal ward and early pregnancy

assessment unit; new clinical administration spaces; new education spaces to support professional development of our Centenary Hospital staff; and the refurbishment of the gynaecology procedure suite.

The expansion of the Centenary Hospital is a vital piece of work that is demonstrating our commitment to continually transforming health infrastructure on the Canberra Hospital campus that will benefit the whole Canberra community and surrounding region.

Mr Barr: Further questions can be placed on the notice paper.

Supplementary answer to question without notice Planning—community consultation

MR GENTLEMAN: I want to clarify something for Ms Clay, regarding her question earlier about information and feedback streams for the planning bill. I can advise that the information sessions are being held to help the community to understand the bill, which is technical. The feedback on the bill is being sought online and there is a range of ways to provide this. I would encourage people to go online and use the various ways on the YourSay page to engage.

Leave of absence

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

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Rattenbury for today due to his attending ministerial duties.

Defence—defence industry

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.06): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the importance of defence industry to the Canberra economy and local jobs;
- (b) the importance of the defence industry to the security of Australia; and
- (c) the important role of western military equipment, including Australian equipment, in the defence of the Ukrainian people;

(2) further notes:

- (a) the recent attack on the defence industry by the Greens in this Assembly;
- (b) the attack on the defence supplier that is providing vital support to Ukraine; and
- (c) that the defence supplier in question has its Australian headquarters in Canberra;

(3) affirm its support for Canberra's defence industry sector; and

- (4) support the Australian Federal Government and others in their provision of equipment to enable Ukraine to defend their people.

It genuinely upsets and disappoints me that I feel the need to move this motion today. I am calling for this Assembly to do something quite simple; that is, to affirm its support for Canberra's defence industry sector and support the Australian federal government and others in their provision of equipment to enable Ukraine to defend their people.

Sadly, there are thousands of Canberrans who work for the Australian Army, Navy and Air Force, who work in the defence industry and who work at the Australian War Memorial who deserve to know that we are on their side and that the attack on them in this place by a government member is unwarranted.

The people of Ukraine need to know that we remain on their side and that the support that we all offered them in a motion only recently in this place was not empty words. We will not seek to cut their lifeline of Australian and Western military equipment.

Only recently, this Assembly refused to condemn a proposal to cut the ADF in half, which would cause massive job losses in Canberra and leave Australia defenceless. Since then the Greens, members of this government, have doubled down in this place, accusing the War Memorial of having dark elements and accusing a local defence industry organisation of encouraging wars. In fact, to quote Ms Clay, in her recent speech she accused members of the defence industry of "fanning the flames of war" and "predisposing us to more wars that might otherwise have been prevented".

We are witnessing firsthand the horrors of war as it unfolds in Ukraine, a peaceful country that has been invaded by an aggressive neighbour because Russia thought Ukraine would be weak. But the people of Ukraine have fought back, and there are two key contributors to their brave fight. The first, as we have all acknowledged, is the incredible bravery and resilience of the Ukrainian people. The second is the military equipment that they are using to defend themselves which is being provided by the West, including Australia and Canberra-based companies.

Significant in that brave fight is the equipment that has been built and provided by the company on which the Greens launched their extraordinarily vitriolic and disgusting attack. The weapon that has played such a significant role in saving the people of Ukraine from murder, rape and destruction is the Javelin missile, manufactured by the very company that the Greens demonised and vilified in this place.

The people of Ukraine are praising that piece of equipment. They are eternally grateful. The only people angry with the Western defence industry and the manufacturer of the Javelin are the Greens and Vladimir Putin. Just do some basic research, and you will find out how significant that system has been in the defence of Ukraine. Let me quote from a few headlines: "We will speak softly and carry a large Javelin, Biden says"; "Putin is angry: Ukraine is getting thousands of Javelin and stinger missiles"; and "US Javelin Missile system plays a key role in Ukraine's defence".

From the *Guardian*, there was this headline: “Biden praises Lockheed workers for making weapons for ‘Ukrainian heroes’”. Let me quote from that *Guardian* article:

President says production of Javelin anti-tank missiles in Alabama critical to war effort, as he urges Congress to approve \$33bn in aid.

Biden told workers: ‘You’re making a gigantic difference for these poor sons-of-guns who are under such enormous pressure and firepower.’

Joe Biden on Tuesday told assembly-line workers at an Alabama factory that the weapons they are crafting are going into “the hands of Ukrainian heroes” on the front lines of the effort to repel Russian forces.

The US president praised the employees of the Lockheed Martin plant that manufactures Javelin anti-tank missiles, saying their work was critical to the Ukrainian war effort and to the defence of democracy itself.

I continue quoting from the article.

“You’re making a gigantic difference for these poor sons-of-guns who are under such enormous pressure and firepower,” Biden told the workers from a podium flanked by the Javelin missile launchers.

From a sprawling compound in Troy, Alabama, to the battlefields in Ukraine, the anti-tank missiles have helped equip the Ukrainian forces, the president said.

“You’re making it possible for the Ukrainian people to defend themselves, without us having to risk getting into a third world war by sending in American soldiers fighting Russian soldiers.”

While the President of the United States has said that Lockheed Martin was critical to the Ukrainian war effort and to the defence of democracy itself, the Greens in this place have attacked and smeared that organisation which has its Australian headquarters here in Canberra.

Those Greens words would be poison to the brave people of Ukraine, and only give comfort to Vladimir Putin. I am on the side of the West. My colleagues and I are on the side of Ukraine. I say to Lockheed staff here in Canberra, and the staff of all of the other defence industry companies here in Canberra, particularly those who are providing support to the Ukrainian people, thank you. And thank you for the world-class equipment that you provide to our ADF. As we have seen with Ukraine, if you do not have a strong and capable military then there are those who will seek to dominate you. The equipment that you provide to the ADF is what keeps them strong and, in doing so, prevents war. It prevents war, rather than encouraging it, as the Greens assert.

If Ukraine had been armed with Javelin and other Western military equipment in the first place, it is my view, and that of military experts, that Russia would never have invaded Ukraine in the first place. History shows us that a strong, well-equipped military is a deterrence, not something that, as the Greens have asserted, will encourage war.

The ACT government used to share these views that I have expressed. It used to support the defence industry. It had a defence industry strategy and an advisory board. Given that this attack came from a government backbencher and seemingly expresses the view of a government coalition party, I wonder whether that is still the case. I certainly hope that it is the case and that it still supports that industry.

Mr Barr, in 2017—this is from the government defence industry strategy—said:

We recognise that collaboration between the Australian, state and territory governments and defence-related industry is essential to strengthen our nation's security.

He went on to say:

We are ready to strengthen and grow existing partnerships and show leadership in promoting state and territory collaboration to enhance defence capabilities.

The question that arises, given what has been said by the Labor Party's coalition party members, is: does Andrew Barr still believe this? Do the Labor Party still believe this? I hope that they do, and I genuinely hope that at least the Labor Party will support my motion here today.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (3.15): Mr Assistant Speaker, if you have been in this place for long enough, you will see everything, or nearly everything, and you will see many things cycle through many times. This type of motion from Mr Hanson in a federal election campaign is not particularly unexpected, and I do not think it is particularly useful in the context of the issues that are before this place. I do not intend to debate military strategy or, indeed, enter into the political fray and the wedge that Mr Hanson is endeavouring to engender through this motion today. What I am proposing is an amendment, which I now formally move:

Omit all text after 'That this Assembly' and substitute:

“(1) notes

- (a) the defence industry is a major employer in Canberra;
 - (b) the importance of the defence industry to the security of Australia, alongside diplomacy, international partnerships, strategic context, intelligence, and soft power and influence;
 - (c) the Australian Government has committed \$191.5 million of military equipment to the democratically elected Ukrainian government to assist in the defence of the Ukrainian people and nation; and
 - (d) climate change is one of the biggest threats to Australia's security and that dependency on fossil fuels diminishes nations' energy security.
- (2) condemns Vladimir Putin's military aggression in Ukraine and the consequential suffering of ordinary people bearing the costs of war;
 - (3) acknowledges the right of the people of Ukraine to sovereignty and territorial integrity;

- (4) acknowledges the contribution of Canberrans in supporting Australian security through their work in diplomacy, international partnerships, climate change, soft power and influence, intelligence and defence;
- (5) recognises the compassion and generosity of many Canberrans in their support of the Ukrainian nation, by contributing to aid organisations helping displaced, injured and traumatised Ukrainians;
- (6) encourages the Australian Government to support investment in diplomacy, aid, trade, and climate change mitigation and adaptation, commensurate to defence spending;
- (7) affirms its support for Canberra’s defence industry sector; and
- (8) affirms its support of the Australian Federal Government and other nations in their provision of equipment to enable Ukraine to defend its people.”

I circulated it in advance of the debate. It endeavours to reach a compromise position that may be supportable by a majority of members in this place. It acknowledges the role that the defence industry plays in our region as a major employer, noting that the reason for its level of economic contribution and employment is off the back of Australian government investment, in large part.

It acknowledges the importance of the defence industry to the security of Australia. It also acknowledges that it is our efforts in diplomacy and multilateral international partnership and engagement through global fora, through our soft power and influence, the contributions of our intelligence and national security agencies and, indeed, the strategic context in which we find ourselves now, that are all important parts of Australia’s international engagement and our defence and national security response.

It acknowledges that the Australian government has committed nearly \$200 million in military equipment to the democratically elected Ukrainian government. It acknowledges another important fact: that climate change is one of the biggest threats to Australia’s security. Importantly—and we are living through this in the context of surging inflation and cost of living pressures—it acknowledges that the dependency on imported fossil fuels diminishes our nation’s energy security.

My amendment condemns Vladimir Putin’s military aggression and acknowledges the terrible consequential suffering of Ukrainians and, indeed, people across the world bearing the costs of war. It acknowledges the right of the people of Ukraine to sovereignty and territorial integrity. It acknowledges the contribution of Canberrans supporting our national security through work in diplomacy, international partnerships, combating climate change, and the work that is undertaken, as I have mentioned, in intelligence, defence, national security and the soft power and influence that a nation of our size can have.

It recognises the compassion and generosity of Canberrans in their support of the Ukrainian nation. It encourages the Australian government to support investment in diplomacy, aid, trade, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and for that to be commensurate with our efforts in defence spending. It affirms our support for Canberra’s defence industry sector and affirms our support for the Australian federal government and, indeed, other nations in their provision of equipment to enable

Ukraine to defend its people. That provision of equipment is both military and humanitarian, and it is all necessary in the current context.

I want to acknowledge that, in preparing this amendment, I have reached out to the Greens party and sought to include in this amendment many of the ideas and suggestions that they put forward, in an endeavour to reach a position that a majority of members in this place could support. I would hope that, amongst the elements of my amendment, the Greens will see many of their ideas and perspectives recognised. But it would appear that there is another amendment circulating that does not contain some elements of my amendment that the Labor Party believes are important to be put on the public record at this time.

Mr Hanson indicated during question time that he would be supportive of this amendment. I thank him for doing so. I believe that it does represent as close as we can possibly get to a consensus position across this parliament at this time. It probably does not give everything that everyone would want or say everything that everyone would want. I understand and acknowledge that. In the current climate, I think it would be impossible to find a form of words that everyone would be 100 per cent happy with. But I am endeavouring to take some of the political heat out of this matter and find a way forward.

I stand by the ACT government's stated policy in relation to the defence industry. It is clearly part of our economy and will continue to be so into the future. We of course seek to grow and diversify the territory's economy. I would refer members to a more recent statement on economic development priorities that highlights a range of areas that we will be focusing our endeavours on.

I note that there is often an intersection between different sectors of the economy and their interaction with defence industries, and that there are many companies that operate in what could be viewed as a defence context and also make very significant contributions to research and development and to the manufacturing of equipment that is absolutely fundamental in our response to climate change, in our response to natural disasters and emergencies and in the development of new technologies, particularly as it relates to the fast-growing space industry. It is the government's view that there is a role in our economy for businesses that operate across those different areas.

I understand and acknowledge that not every member of this place and not every member of the community will be supportive of every single element of activity in the defence sector. That is fair enough. That is what living in a liberal democracy is about. I do not think that means you need to denigrate a whole group of people in our community who are working in those areas. Equally, I do not think it is particularly necessary to seek to score political points around the deeply personal views of individual members of parliament or members of the community in relation to matters of defence, war and peace, and otherwise.

This amendment, I believe, captures the spirit of what Mr Hanson is endeavouring to convey, takes out some of the unnecessary pre federal election rhetoric and presents a sensible way forward. I commend it to the Assembly.

Mr Braddock: On a point of process, Mr Assistant Speaker, we have two competing amendments to Mr Hanson's original motion. Is it proper that we deal with Mr Barr's amendment and vote on that before we deal with my amendment?

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Pettersson): Correct. Members, charting a path forward, the question is that Mr Barr's amendment be agreed to. Once that question is dealt with, my advice, Mr Braddock, would be to seek leave to move your amendment.

Mr Hanson: Mr Assistant Speaker, if you wish, I am happy to speak again now; we can deal with Mr Barr's amendment and then we can move on to Mr Braddock.

Mr Braddock: I am amenable to that as well.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (3.27): It looks like we are all on board. Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.28): Peace has broken out. Thanks, Mr Assistant Speaker. I will be supporting Mr Barr's amendment because, although it does change some of the language, fundamentally it reaffirms that support for our defence industry sector here in the ACT, which is the nub of it.

In terms of the motivation for what is happening here today, I think people would recognise the fact that, since my first days in this place, and indeed my inaugural speech, I have been supporting the ADF and Defence. It was the Canberra Liberals that put forward the concept of a shadow minister for veterans' affairs. Indeed, in 2016 I made a speech at the Press Club about the importance of the defence industry sector and the need for a defence industry strategy. After we were unsuccessful at that election, Mr Barr rolled that policy out and I supported it in a bipartisan way. So it is something that I feel very passionately about, as I do about the Australian War Memorial.

I think that there are plenty of opportunities to engage in the federal election. This motion does not reference the federal election or the previous Greens commitment to cut \$300 billion, nor have I mentioned that. So the reality is—

Members interjecting—

MR HANSON: I am responding to the comments. I am responding to the critique. The genesis for this was when I was sitting in this chamber on the Thursday of the last sitting week, when Ms Clay came in and made her speech. I turned to Mr Parton and said, "I am going to get up and respond." I was furious. I was deeply upset. In fact, I did not speak; I did not respond.

Mr Parton: I talked you out of it.

MR HANSON: He was a calming influence. I did not respond because it is best sometimes not to respond in the heat of battle, when you are genuinely upset and angry. I went away and reflected on how best to deal with this. I thought an adjournment speech would be the best way to respond to it.

The reason that it has been brought forward as a motion like this is that Ms Clay is a government member. She came in and made statements that attacked the defence industry sector. She made comments, I think very negatively, about the Australian War Memorial. As she is a government member, I wanted to make sure that it was pretty clear where the Labor Party, the senior partner of the coalition, sat on this.

I must say that I am happy, although Mr Barr has changed the language in the motion that I have moved; I am relieved that these seem to be the comments and the position of the Greens and Ms Clay, as opposed to a lurch to the extreme left by the coalition. I think there is a sense that this is a coalition that has been moving to the left progressively, through the influence of the Greens. I think it is good that the Labor Party, through Mr Barr here today, is holding the line.

I think it is very important that we express support for the War Memorial, for the defence industry, for the ADF, to recognise our complex circumstances. I am not trying to turn this into a quasi-federal parliament. I am not trying to have a strategic debate here, but we must recognise that we are the home of the Australian War Memorial. They are our constituents. We are home to the headquarters of Lockheed Martin, which has been, in my view, vilified by the Greens. We are home to the important defence industry. It creates an enormous amount of benefit for our community, so it is also important, I think, that we recognise its contribution to the ADF and that, equally, there are a lot of ADF members here.

I am very satisfied today, through the comments of Mr Barr, that they have not followed the Greens on this issue. They have followed them on many other issues, but they have not on this issue. So I can indicate that I and my colleagues will be supporting Mr Barr's amendment.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 14

Noes 5

Mr Barr
Ms Burch
Mr Cain
Ms Castley
Ms Cheyne
Mr Hanson
Mrs Kikkert
Ms Lawder

Ms Orr
Mr Parton
Dr Paterson
Mr Petterson
Mr Steel
Ms Stephen-Smith

Mr Braddock
Ms Clay
Ms Davidson
Mr Davis
Ms Vassarotti

Amendment agreed to.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (3.37), by leave: I move:

Omit all words after ‘Assembly’ and substitute:

“(1) notes:

- (a) this year, the climate crisis was described as the biggest threat to Australia’s security by former Australian defence leaders;
- (b) these military leaders further said “The first duty of government is the safety and protection of the people, but Australia has failed when it comes to climate change threats. Australia currently has no credible climate policy, leaving our nation unprepared for increasingly harsh impacts”; and
- (c) there are no jobs on a dead planet;

(2) further notes:

- (a) the relative investments made by governments of all levels sends a strong message about the priorities and values of Australians;
- (b) Defence spending has increased by more than 300 percent over the last decade, and now stands at around nine times the total spent on diplomacy, aid and trade. Investment in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and along with it, Australia’s international aid program has hit all-time lows of 1.3 percent of the Federal budget; and
- (c) genuine peace rests on international cooperation and development, and respect for human rights. A country as wealthy and as fortunate as Australia should be an international champion of multilateral moves towards peace;

(3) calls on this Assembly to:

- (a) condemn all military aggression in the strongest possible way;
- (b) acknowledge the contribution of Canberrans in supporting Australian security through their work in diplomacy, international partnerships, climate change, soft power and influence, intelligence and defence;
- (c) recognise the suffering of ordinary people bearing the costs of war and the compassion and generosity of many Canberrans in their support of displaced, injured and traumatised people affected by war, particularly during the current conflict in Ukraine;
- (d) acknowledge that current events in Ukraine can be particularly hard for veterans and their families, and also recognise the impact that the conflict is having on the ACT’s Ukrainian community; and
- (e) affirm its staunch support:
 - (i) for all industries in Canberra that contribute to local, international and national security;
 - (ii) for commensurate investment in diplomacy, aid, trade and climate change mitigation and adaptation to levels of defence and military spending;
 - (iii) to tackle the Climate Emergency in order to create the conditions for peace and security for Australia and the region; and
 - (iv) to use the most effective means through which Australia can assist the efforts for peace in Ukraine and other conflict zones, noting particularly the critical role of supplies, sanctions and humanitarian efforts.”

I rise today to speak on the motion, which tenuously links the horrors of the war currently underway in the Ukraine with the question of how we pay our dignified respects to the dead and turns it into a political strawman that the Greens' bogeyman is coming after your defence industry jobs. Mr Hanson does so in a way that plumbs new depths, demonstrates a lack of understanding of how national security works and is actually quite gross. I feel the need to wash myself afterwards.

Firstly, to be clear, the Greens condemn Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine, as we condemn all war. We affirm the right of the people of Ukraine to sovereignty and territorial integrity. We support the democratically elected government of the Ukraine.

Mr Hanson's motion makes mention of the economic activity of defence spending in the ACT and the region. Certainly, government expenditure supports jobs and promotes economic activity. It is a very simple law of economics. With the sheer quantity of funds that the federal government is injecting into military hardware, of course there will be subsequent jobs.

Defence spending sits at two per cent of GDP, over nine times the budget allocated to aid and diplomacy. As Melissa Tyler, a researcher at the University of Melbourne has written, if the 2022 federal budget was \$100, we would be spending \$6 on defence, 72 cents on development and one cent on diplomacy. This means that we are currently spending eight times more on defence than on peaceful means to create a better world and better relationships with our neighbours and countries across the globe.

It would be a mistake to directly conflate the investment of taxpayers' dollars in the defence industry with increased military capability or increased Australian security or even increased jobs available for Canberrans. That is a very long bow, but it is one that this motion is trying to draw today.

Billions of dollars are being thrown at weapons manufacturers with very little scrutiny. Many of the government's costly acquisitions will be obsolete by the time they are deployed. Some will not be delivered at all. We dropped \$5.5 billion on submarines before the government decided to welsh on the deal with the French. We dropped \$1.3 billion on reaper drones before we decided that that money pit could not be filled. So the question is: has that increased spending on weapons manufacturing and the associated industry actually made us more secure?

On the contrary, I want to give a concrete example of the real and tangible impacts of diplomacy: the coordinated global response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, supposedly the target of Mr Hanson's concern. How were those sanctions implemented? Concerned nations communicated with each other and came to an agreement. These nations then convinced others to come on board. Diplomats persuaded the governments of the United Kingdom and Italy, among others, that they could live without Russian oligarchs. This diplomatic process even persuaded Switzerland to break its centuries-old neutral stance and join the move to sanction Russia.

Diplomats and their colleagues worked with the international banking system to cut Russia off and shared information across borders to identify targets to sanction individuals. This created a snowball effect as companies began to voluntarily stop operating in Russia. A Russian spokesperson has described this peaceful effort—one that does not involve the bloodshed of citizens, of children or the elderly—as “total war”. The impact of coordinated action cannot be overstated, yet none of it is possible without investment in the humans that carry out these negotiations, who have the cultural, language and interpersonal skills to create a consensus for effective action.

All of this was achieved with the support of Canberrans working in trade, aid and diplomacy. Those are real Canberrans too, because Canberra is the home of DFAT, of AusAID—workforces that the federal coalition government has neglected, undermined and underfunded to their lowest ever levels. It is their jobs that I am talking about also.

The Greens’ policy is clear on where taxpayers’ money needs to and should go. We do not need to be giving our taxpayers’ money as corporate handouts to private corporations to become arms dealers for nations with a chequered past of human rights abuses. The Australian government’s policy is to sell arms to anybody that will take them from us, without regard to the human cost. While the federal coalition is wasting money on corporate handouts to export arms, the Greens’ view is that this money can be used more effectively for more genuine development in our region, to address climate change and implement measures that will more effectively promote security, rather than propping up private corporations involved in the manufacture of weapons. As Winston Churchill, no stranger to war, stated:

Meeting jaw to jaw is better than war.

We are talking about \$300 billion over 10 years. Imagine the alternative uses we could put that money to. Just imagine what possibilities could be achieved. Rather than simply rolling out a line about how we need to buy a shiny piece of kit, just imagine for a moment what we could do for Australians with that money when we are talking about jobs in Canberra and more effectively protecting the wellbeing of ADF personnel. How could we more effectively spend this money?

All we have heard is jingoism and slogans from Mr Hanson about the importance of defence industry jobs, but no reflection on how Australia’s security can be maintained and improved. Mr Hanson, like many of his counterparts, is all about the shiny pieces of kit. Politicians on the hill seek the announcement and the photo opportunity next to that shiny piece of kit but totally fail to understand that there are many contributing factors to national security. Mr Hanson is taking just one of the fundamental inputs to operational capability and conflating that to equal our national security.

I am not saying that the defence industry is not a component of Australia’s security architecture; I am saying that it is one component and the architecture is far broader, more nuanced and complex than Mr Hanson seems capable of understanding. Mr Hanson is ignoring the other contributors to Australian security, ignoring the staff working in Foreign Affairs who provide the diplomatic channels and heft; ignoring

AusAID, who, through local partnerships, work hard to develop essential services for ordinary people in our region; ignoring the intelligence and policy professionals who contribute to the government's understanding of the world in which Australia resides; ignoring those trying to reduce climate emissions so as to ensure our security in the future; and ignoring those who actually hold a hose to fight our bushfires. I say that their jobs are important too.

An increase in foreign aid spending, especially in the area of climate resilience, will assist in reducing regional pressures. The Greens' policy proposes to increase our aid spending to 0.7 per cent of gross national income, an amount equivalent to what other developed countries, such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Denmark, spend. This is the United Nations target as well for developed countries. I stand with the United Nations, Mr Hanson. 0.7 per cent fulfils our moral responsibility as well as our obligations and strategic interests to provide support to a disaster area that needs it most.

The Greens recognise the need to act on the threat of climate change in our region, to alleviate suffering and solve human problems before they become military matters. That is why the policy also proposes to commit \$1.6 billion per year in climate finance, in recognition of how important aid is to many of these issues. The policy also proposes to establish an independent oversight agency and to reinstate a minister for international development in the Pacific. This investment would be welcome within the Pacific region and would do far more to promote security than sending Junior Woodchuck to apply a bandaid after Australia's greatest security failure since the Second World War.

The people of Lismore understood what security meant when no government assistance was on hand as the floodwaters rose. The people fighting the bushfires got it when everyone needed to hold a hose. The people of the Pacific Islands get it as their islands disappear under the waves.

Let's talk about the speech that has got Mr Hanson's knickers in a knot. Ms Clay spoke in this chamber about the Australian War Memorial, which, first and foremost, we must remember is a shrine. It contains the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, an ordinary person who would have seen the unimaginable horrors of WWI. The Unknown Soldier, lying under the inscription, "Known unto God", represents all who have died.

The Australian War Memorial commemorates the sacrifice of Australians who have died in war or in operational service. Along the long walls leading up to the tomb is the Roll of Honour, which contains the names of 102,000 Australians who have fallen either in the course of war or in operations. I, like a lot of Canberrans, have family memorialised on that Roll of Honour and I think about them every ANZAC and Remembrance Day.

Ms Clay asked a quite reasonable question: why does a solemn shrine, meant for quiet reflection on the sacrifice and horrors of war, require corporate sponsorship at all, let alone corporate sponsorship from the wholly owned subsidiary of a US private company involved in weapons manufacture and export, particularly at a time when the

federal government is spending half a billion dollars to tear down an award-winning piece of architecture in the War Memorial to replace it with a larger exhibition space?

I am tired of the Australian War Memorial being a proxy for cultural wars. This is a solemn place that should be treated with dignity and respect in the face of the tragedies and sorrows of war. It is not a boys' own military hardware glorification money pit that provides ex-Liberal ministers with taxpayer-funded retirement gigs, brought to you by a wholly owned subsidiary of the US weapons manufacturer that, coincidentally, also happens to have another ex-Liberal minister sitting on its board.

I want to close on the topic of security versus that of war. Security is an intellectual, complex, nuanced, dynamic and multi-variable concept. War is simply horrific. War is a terrible blight on humankind. Banging the drums of war as part of a khaki election does nothing to help our security. I wish I could ask the 102,000 names that are listed on the Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour what their thoughts are on war. Thank you.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.49): I would like to speak to a line in the amendment from Mr Braddock which acknowledges “that current events in the Ukraine can be particularly hard for veterans and their families, and also recognise the impact that the conflict is having on the ACT’s Ukrainian community”.

I note that it has been a particularly hard year already for our veterans and their families and for the Ukrainian community. Veterans saw the publication in March of Major General Andrew Hocking’s *Preparing for the Future* report and there were hearings in Canberra in April for the royal commission into veteran suicide.

With that in mind, I would just like to acknowledge that difficulty and say that if there are any veterans or their families out there who are experiencing distress, there are a number of ACT government services available to help them. That includes the Safe Haven Cafe in Belconnen, where people can drop in and have a conversation with someone face to face. There is also the Access Mental Health line on 1800 629 354.

I would also like to note that we have a number of ESOs and VSOs in the Canberra community who are providing social connection and trauma-aware wellbeing and mental health programs to support our veterans and their families. I would particularly like to thank organisations such as the Vietnam Veterans Motorcycle Club, Open Arms, RSL, Soldier On, Legacy—and there are many others.

For people in our Ukrainian community who are feeling particularly distressed, we also have services available to help you. You can call Access Mental Health on 1800 629 354. There is also the ACT Women’s Health Service available, which provides services in particular for people who are unable to access Medicare-funded services, and that includes women from our migrant community.

For young people, there is the Multicultural Youth Services ACT drop-in, and you might also find some services on mindmap.act.gov.au, where you can engage with a navigator who can help you find the right mental health service for young people in the ACT.

I would also like to note that we have valuable skills being shared across many industries in Canberra. On Monday I signed the Soldier On pledge, which values veterans' skills and experiences in our ACT public service. I would like to note that we would not have been able to get through everything that occurred in the ACT last year during the lockdown without the help of veterans in our food relief program in the ACT, literally putting food on the table for people who would otherwise have had great difficulty doing so.

I am very pleased that we are onboarding more ACT public service executive veterans' employment champions in more directorates across our ACT public service right now. This will continue the good work that we have been doing in our ACT public service. In 2020 we were awarded the Veterans' Employer of the Year for public sector organisations in the Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Awards. If there are veterans out there in the community who are thinking about their employment options in the ACT and are thinking about the ACT public service, they can find more information on act.gov.au/veterans.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.53): We will not be supporting the amendment. It is not often that I am lost for words in this place, it is fair to say, but what I heard from Mr Braddock was mad, offensive and incoherent. I am comforted only by the fact that the Labor Party, I presume, will not be supporting him and they will not be supporting it. Outside of the crazy, crazy left of the Greens, I think the only people that would find comfort in what Mr Braddock said are the Russian Embassy and Vladimir Putin. It is extraordinary. What Mr Braddock was saying here was an attack on reason. It was an attack on the whole defence establishment here.

He suggested disarming the Ukrainian people of Western weapons, essentially, by his attack on Western industry, and that the solution is more diplomacy with someone who does not listen to reason. Mr Putin was not listening to diplomacy; it is evident; it is clear. To suggest that that is a rational way forward, I think, exposes the flaw in the whole Greens logic here. If this speech from Mr Braddock serves any purpose, I hope it is that it exposes to his Greens coalition partners, the Labor Party members, who these people actually are—who your Greens colleagues actually are—how extreme they are, and how distant they are from mainstream Australian values. I am disturbed at how they have doubled down on this, how dangerous they are and how extreme they are.

Let me say that I am encouraged that the Labor Party is not supporting this. We have our differences between the Liberal Party and the Labor Party, but I acknowledge today that you have drawn a line in the sand and you are not going down this path of madness. I am glad to see Ms Cheyne shaking her head there and agreeing with me. It is encouraging to me that the Labor Party is holding the line here, and I thank you for that. I genuinely thank you for that because the sorts of policies, proposals and plans being put forward by the Greens, by Mr Braddock today, are dangerous, are extreme and give me real cause for concern. We obviously will not be supporting this amendment, and I am hopeful that the Labor Party will not either.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (3.57): No, Labor will

not be supporting Mr Braddock's amendment. I will not speak for long on Mr Braddock's speech. I will make some observations.

There are many elements of issues that he raised—around failed defence procurements, the importance of diplomacy and issues relating to climate change—where he makes a reasonable point. There are other elements of that speech that I just cannot agree with. I appreciate his right to express his views in this parliament, and that is what it is. But I do believe it is important today to be clear in relation to the necessary nuance and the extremely complex and challenging national security and defence environment that we find ourselves in.

At a state and territory level we are not actively involved in day-to-day defence operations. We do have a role and a seat at the table in relation to national security matters. My role as Chief Minister does, from time to time, bring me into the orbit of some of the issues and challenges that are confronted by our national government. It is a challenging environment. I do not think that it lends itself to sloganeering or simplistic responses that would appear to be designed to appeal to very narrow sections of the community. However strongly felt those views are, I am not sure that the tone of what has just been expressed serves the interests of Canberra or, indeed, the nation. I regret that, whilst acknowledging that there are many elements of Mr Braddock's speech that are legitimate.

Mr Hanson: Do you think?

MR BARR: Having just visited my place of birth, Lismore, last week, I will acknowledge that that city faces some extraordinary challenges. It was heartbreaking to visit where I was born, where my grandparents lived and where I first came into the world and to see the state that it is in as the result of multiple floods. Mr Braddock is right to raise the slowness of response there, but I do want to acknowledge that the response, when it came, involved Australian Defence Force people, many of whom have perhaps been indirectly attacked in some of what has been said this afternoon.

I think we can all try and lower the temperature on this a little. I do not think this is serving anyone any good, at this time, acknowledging, as I have, that there are strongly held views on this matter. I stand by the amendment I moved that has been supported by a majority of members in this place and reiterate the points I made in speaking to that. It is not going to please everyone and achieve 100 per cent of what everyone wants, but it is very rare in this place, and indeed in Australian public life these days, for an outcome to be possible where everyone is happy.

We will not be supporting the amendment Mr Braddock has moved. I believe the amendment I moved that has been supported in this place sets the appropriate tone for our local response and sends the right signal to our community about the majority view of this Assembly. So we will not be supporting the amendment this afternoon.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (4.01): Starting with a point of order, under standing order 47, misrepresentation: Mr Hanson alleged that I wish to disarm the Ukrainians. I have never said anything to that extent.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.02): On the point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker, it is clearly a debating point. I think that if you are attacking Western military equipment, saying that it should be defunded, in essence, that is clearly a debating point. That is the effect of Mr Braddock's policy. It is clearly the effect of his policy. Not only does he want to defund the Ukrainian people; he would like to defund the Australian Defence Force. He said it: that their plan is to cut \$300 billion out of the ADF and to get rid of the defence industry. So there is no point of order; it is a debating point.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Pettersson): There is no point of order, Mr Braddock.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (4.01): In closing, I am going to refer to one of those radical—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Braddock, we are closing the debate.

Mr Hanson: It's not your motion, mate.

MR BRADDOCK: We haven't had a vote yet on my amendment.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: We are doing it now.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.02): I am just wondering if this is on the amendment or whether there is going to be a closing, because I want to close.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Members, the question before us is that Mr Braddock's amendment to Mr Hanson's amended motion be agreed to. Our path relies on the outcome of that vote.

Amendment negatived.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.04): Democracy is what we all do here. In *The Friends of Voltaire*, Hall wrote the phrase "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." We are all entitled to our views—yes, I agree. We are all entitled to our positions.

Mr Barr, I am thankful to you and your party that you have held the line here. You have to walk a difficult path of, hopefully, clinging to some reason whilst also appeasing your coalition colleagues, and you have navigated that today. I am not encumbered by that; the Greens are not my coalition partner and they never will be my coalition partner. I think if you listened to what Mr Braddock said today in his speech, it is clear why we would never do a deal with the devil. You, in the Labor Party, have decided to. But when you listen to the—

Mr Davis: The devil!

MR HANSON: It is a turn of phrase, Mr Davis. Do not be offended by everything.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, please direct your remarks through the chair.

MR HANSON: I will not respond to his interjection. Thank you. We do not have to acquiesce, bend, negotiate, deal and do what Mr Barr has to do; but, regardless, I am thankful to him today for holding the line as he has. I think that the Greens have, to an extent, jumped the shark with some of their comments today and have put on the public record how extreme they are.

Just as I would defend your right to say what you have today, Mr Braddock, and Ms Clay previously, let me assure you that I will exercise my right. I will make it very clear to the public, and I will make it my task, day in, day out, to expose to the Australian people, to the people of Canberra, just what your policies are, how dangerous they are to not just Canberra but through the flow-on effect of that to the ADF, national security and, consequently, internationally in places like Ukraine.

It has been an interesting debate, I think. This is, as I said, the first time I have seen the Labor Party actually hold the line and not go to an extreme level. I thank you for that. But let me say that it is a revealing day, too, about just how mad and bad the Greens have become.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Transport—bus services

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.07): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) 62 percent of the ACT's tracked climate emissions come from transport, primarily cars. Cars also contribute to congestion and poor air quality;
- (b) not enough people in Canberra currently use public transport. Only 4.6 percent of all journeys were taken by bus according to the ACT and Queanbeyan-Palerang Household Travel Survey 2017;
- (c) service frequency and reliability, particularly on weekends, are barriers to bus use for some Canberrans; and
- (d) Transport Canberra has fewer woman bus drivers than the national average (around 11 percent in the ACT compared to 13 percent nationally);

(2) further notes that:

- (a) Transport Canberra is operating an interim timetable due to COVID-related staff absences;
- (b) weekend services are only available two hourly for most services after 12 pm on a Saturday and all day Sunday;
- (c) Victoria has a detailed Women in Transport program and strategy which includes a target of 10 percent increase every year in women drivers;

- (d) Transport Canberra's enterprise agreement does not support workplace flexibility. It reflects historic work patterns of Monday to Friday work for full-time permanent bus drivers. A full-time bus driver who wants to work on weekends must either become a casual employee or increase their working week to six or more days. This does not provide modern workforce flexibility, does not match government commitments to flexible working arrangements, does not allow parents and carers to make permanent care arrangements around work and does not support hourly weekend services or weekend reliability; and
 - (e) around Australia, other public transport operators and service sector employers provide a range of alternative working structures which enable flexible working hours, such as:
 - (i) a work roster that includes permanent part-time positions involving fewer than five working days such as Tuesday to Thursday; and
 - (ii) a permanent position that involves a five day work week, or a short work week, which may include weekend days as part of the standard roster, such as Tuesday to Saturday (five days) or Sunday to Wednesday (four days); and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) expand Transport Canberra's workforce to provide enough drivers to return to the regular timetable as soon as possible this year;
 - (b) pursue an outcome through the current enterprise bargaining processes which can achieve the Government's previous commitment for hourly route bus services all weekend, from 2023;
 - (c) develop a Women in Transport Program and target to increase the percentage of women across Transport Canberra in driver roles;
 - (d) work with the Transport Worker's Union as an employee representative, and Transport Canberra staff directly, to give new and existing drivers the option to work full or part-time without having to work a Monday to Friday work week; and
 - (e) update the Assembly by the first sitting day in 2023 on this motion.

I rise today to speak on the motion circulated in my name, on buses in the ACT. We are in a climate emergency, and that is the only reason I am here. Over the last decade I have done whatever I can to grapple with this. I have changed my lifestyle, I have run climate and recycling projects and I have joined the activist movement. Now I am in parliament in order to make every single decision a climate decision, and today is a great day for another one.

We need really good public transport. This is so important. It was one of the things singled out by the IPCC this year as a way to fight climate change. We need a better bus service that gets Canberrans to where they need to go, when they need to get there. This is a part of our efforts to decarbonise our economy. Here in the ACT we have done good work so far. We are powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity. We have built the first stage of our light rail network, which is running on that renewable electricity. We have an EV strategy, an EV loan scheme, an EV charging station plan and an EV business fleet advice service to support it.

We are transitioning away from fossil fuels in our government fleet vehicles and in our buses. Soon they will all be fossil-fuel free, I hope. This is really good progress, because transport accounts for over 60 per cent of our tracked emissions. But we do not just need to electrify our transport; we also need to improve it. If we want to help more people get out of their cars, we need to make buses a better option. Canberra is a city that was built for the car, but we cannot stay that way. Not everyone can drive, not everyone wants to drive, and not everyone can afford to drive. I meet so many people who choose not to drive for environmental reasons or because they cannot afford to buy or run a car, or a second car, or because they physically cannot drive. We need to look after our people.

There are lots of other reasons for a growing city like ours to become less reliant on cars. Cars need a lot of space, and that is really expensive. They need space on our roads. They need parking space when they get to where they are going. They need space at the traffic lights. Next time you see someone on a bike or in a bus, wave at them and smile, because they are not in front of you at the traffic lights and they are not competing with you for a car park. Those roads and car parks are expensive to build and maintain. They take up room we could otherwise use for housing or businesses or growing food. Cars that do not need to be on our roads are also taking space from those who do need to be there.

No matter how good our active and public transport is, we will have some people who need to drive. I am thinking in particular of a few groups of people like delivery drivers, some people with a disability who find that active and public transport do not work for them, shiftworkers who finish at 3 am, tradies who carry tools for the job, and cleaners and carers who work in private homes and move from one house to the next. These people need their cars, and we need to make sure that we have left enough room for them.

But a lot of us probably do not need to drive as we do, and if everyone drives everywhere our city will choke on cars. Congestion is a real problem here. Growing up, we did not really have traffic in Canberra, but now congestion is growing at a rate three times faster than in other mainland cities. We cannot keep doing it the way we have done it. If everyone drives everywhere, soon we will all be stuck in traffic. Canberra's cost of congestion is predicted to reach over half a billion dollars a year by 2031. We need to do something about that.

If we want people to use public transport, we need to make sure that they do not feel forced to drive because there is no other option. We know from our last household travel survey that many people do feel like that. More than three-quarters of all journeys in the ACT were made by private motor vehicle. Less than five per cent of journeys were made by public transport. That survey was conducted before light rail, so the balance may have shifted, but I do not think it has yet shifted much for buses.

Walking, riding, catching the bus and catching light rail need to be really good choices, if not the best choices. People need to know that there are reliable and reasonable ways to get around. We need to change to our infrastructure and our traffic priority. We need change the basic levels of investment in our public and active

transport. We need to change how we think about the public and private realm, and we need to remove the barriers to using public transport. The good news is that we already know what the barriers are. Canberrans have told us loud and clear, and repeatedly.

Transport Canberra's surveys show that the frequency and reliability of buses are some of the biggest problems we have to fix if we want more people catching a bus. What does frequency and reliability look like? It looks like a bus service that gets you where you need to go, when you need to get there. We need confidence in that. We need to know that our buses will run often, turn up on time and take us to our destination, whether that is a Sunday, a Monday or any other day. We do not live Monday-to-Friday lives and we cannot rely on a transport system that only works Monday to Friday.

Light rail stage 1 showed us what a frequent, reliable service can achieve. In March 2022 it ran on time at an impressive rate of 99.97 per cent. It runs at least every 15 minutes at quieter weekend times and as often as every five minutes in peak weekday periods. That is a frequent, reliable service. It has been so popular that I suspect in the near future we will be having debates about how we can increase its capacity.

Our buses sometimes reach this level of service. On trunk routes, at peak times on weekdays, the buses run often and people use them a lot. The corridor from Belconnen to the city via the University of Canberra and Bruce is the busiest corridor we have. The high-frequency services' morning and evening peak, with the rapids 2, 3 and 4, see incredible volumes of passengers transported, and most buses have standing room only. That is a lot of cars off our roads.

We know the barriers are lack of reliability and frequency, and we have seen what happens when we remove those, with light rail and with the Belconnen to Civic rapid bus corridor. But, unfortunately, not all buses run like that, particularly when it comes to our weekend services. I hear from so many people about how bad our buses are on weekends. There is a student I know in Belconnen. He busks at Jamison. Anyone who knows Jamo knows that shopping on Saturday afternoon and Trash and Treasure on a Sunday morning are really busy. They are a great time to go busking, but his route runs once every two hours. It is really hard for him to get to his job. He needs to spend half a day to do an hour or two of busking, and sometimes the bus does not come.

I know a woman who could afford to buy a townhouse in Belconnen or a car, but not both. She bought the home, moved in and then found she could not see her housebound mother. She could not go on the weekend because the bus was too infrequent, and she could not go during the week because she works to pay off the mortgage. This is heartbreaking.

A lot of people give up. If you are deciding whether to catch the bus or drive and you know you cannot go out on the weekends unless you have a car, you will buy the car if you can afford to. Once you own that car, why not drive to work and to the shops and everywhere else? You have already paid for it; you might as well. So many people could get by without a car or with one fewer cars for their household, but they

are spending thousands each year so that they can get around on a weekend. It is bad for them, it is bad for our city congestion and it is bad for the climate.

If your bus only shows up once every two hours, that is no good. But if the bus service does not show up at all then you have lost half a day of your life. You might have missed an important event, an appointment, a visit or a work shift. You might lose your job. Reliability sometimes is not too bad. Last weekend it was pretty good: 97 per cent of our buses showed up. But on the weekend of 26 of February, only 87 per cent showed up. We cannot have a weekend timetable where one in 10 buses does not come and the ones that do come once every two hours.

It is not just a problem on the quiet suburban routes. One of the busiest routes on the weekday is route 32, which takes a meandering course from Belconnen, via Jamison, through Macquarie, down into Cook then Aranda and into the city. It is one of the busiest buses in the whole network. Those people in Macquarie, Cook and Aranda—that is my patch—love the bus. But by the time Saturday afternoon comes around we cannot really catch it anymore. We have six bus services on Saturday afternoon, and on Sunday we only have eight all day long. A proper seven-day, reliable, frequent bus service would really help all of these people out. It would help out our older kids who would catch the bus instead of asking to borrow the car or get driven. It would help shape an entire set of habits for the next generation. And it would empower people to take real action on the climate.

This motion also calls for our bus driver workforce to better reflect our population. Our drivers at the moment are predominantly male, but driving a bus is a great job. Drivers have worked hard over decades to get some of the best pay and conditions in the country, and the ACT Greens strongly support public sector jobs with great pay and conditions. I would love to see more women get this kind of work. A woman on minimum wage who decides to get a job as a bus driver would more than double her hourly income. One of the ways we can address the gender pay gap is by getting more women into predominantly male industries. We need to set a target and have a really good program in Transport Canberra to hire and retain more women, ideally in permanent roles.

Transport Canberra have named this problem. They are working on getting more women drivers. They have taken some steps to improve, such as running a come-and-try day for women and doing targeted recruitment ads in HerCanberra, but we need to do much more. Victoria recently developed a Women in Transport program, and they have a target to increase by 10 per cent each year. We could replicate that here in the ACT.

There are a lot of barriers women face when getting a job and staying in it. I know this because I have done it. A lot of women do not see pathways for themselves in a predominantly male industry. They do not see anyone who looks like them doing the job. They may face cultural barriers. They may face difficulties even getting the job because men have had more opportunities to get the industry experience and so they are hired first. These are general barriers that apply to a lot of predominantly male industries, and we can use the tools we have used elsewhere, but there are a few particular issues in bus driving.

One problem is overly rigid rostering. Our current agreement says that if you want permanent full-time or part-time work you must work a Monday to Friday week. You can only work on weekends on a casual basis or as an extra shift. This is a big deterrent for many people who might otherwise apply, but I think it is a particularly big deterrent for women with children or people that they are taking care of. I asked questions about this in my very first estimates. I asked how women with kids are meant to work if they do not know when and whether they will be working each week.

I was told they get a few days notice. When I had a baby, I was on the day care waitlist for 12 months. I called up every single week to see if they had a place, sometimes in tears. It took 12 months to get day care. We could not find a reliable babysitter; it is really difficult to do that in Canberra. There is no way I could have taken a casual job that gave me three days notice with maybe some shifts.

The casualisation of our workforce is a problem for everyone but it is particularly bad for a few groups of people. It really affects women and parents. It affects anybody who is a primary caretaker. Permanent part-time work that allows work on a weekend would be really valuable for these people. I think a lot of parents would love to work when their partner is home to look after the kids and they could dodge that whole morning and afternoon drop-off and squishing work hours around that.

Casual work also affects those who have a disability or chronic illness, or those caring for someone in that situation. Carers may struggle to reconcile a five-day work week with the reality that all of their medical appointments are Monday to Friday. It takes months to book one of those appointments and you cannot miss one. It would be great to have permanent work on a weekend and to have some permanent days off during the week.

This kind of rostering also affects people at the ends of their careers, who often want permanent part-time work that is a bit more flexible. It is also a real problem for tertiary students and young people, who often like to work weekends and like to have permanent part-time work that they can factor around their study. We moved rapidly beyond a Monday to Friday society during COVID. Our government understands the need to support flexible working hours, and we really need to make sure that we are offering this kind of reliable, permanent work to more people than just the ones who can currently access it.

I am really looking forward to seeing an enterprise bargaining agreement that achieves this. I know it is possible to get, because we have done it in so many other industries. I have intentionally held back from offering specific solutions in my motion because there is a negotiation underway and I do not want to interfere with it. But I have named the problem, I have named some of the people it affects, and I have called for the outcome we need. I am really confident we will get there.

I have based this motion on research and data and my lifelong experience of living in Canberra and knowing a bit about how the buses work. I have also spoken to the transport minister, the TWU, the Public Transport Association of Canberra, Women in Transport, and a lot of Canberrans who catch the bus or would like to. We Greens

highlighted this as a major issue last election because we know how important it is. We put it in our parliamentary and governing agreement and our 2020 election campaign, and I am really pleased to take this forward.

I also want to acknowledge the effect COVID has had on our bus timetabling. We looked at this during the last sittings, and in my office we went through the data quite carefully. It was clear that we are still running a workforce that is affected by high levels of staff absence related to COVID, and that is why I am also calling for a lot more drivers overall, before we get back to the regular timetable.

But we do not just want to return to that regular timetable; we want to get a better service. We need more drivers. We need to let those drivers who want to work on weekends do so on a permanent basis. We need a program and a target to get more women driving our buses. This will also help our overall workforce capacity. We need to do this as soon as possible so that Canberra has the reliable, frequent bus service we need, every day that we need it. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (4.22): I rise to add a few words to this conversation, on behalf of the government. Transport Canberra and our government are committed to delivering an efficient, reliable, seven-day-a-week bus network for the Canberra community. Continuing to make public transport better is our very strong focus. We understand that Canberrans want reliable and accessible public transport services that turn up on time and efficiently take them where they want to go. We also recognise that providing quality services is an essential tool for achieving a long-term shift away from private vehicles and towards more sustainable ways of getting around.

Where we differ from Ms Clay, however, is in thinking that this is something that can be achieved with the stroke of a pen on an Assembly motion. We recognise that attracting and retaining the workforce needed to deliver a fantastic public transport service requires consultation and collaboration both with our current workers and with those who may be keen to join Transport Canberra in the months and years to come. That consultation and collaboration is underway right now, including through enterprise bargaining for a new four-year industrial agreement. To be honest, I am not sure that it is very helpful for the Assembly to be attempting to presuppose the solutions and outcomes that those conversations will arrive at.

To provide members with an update on that process, the ACT government rolled over all industrial agreements by one year in 2021 to allow government and worker resources to be channelled towards the COVID-19 pandemic response. We have recommenced bargaining in 2022, and these conversations are off to a constructive start. We are undertaking an interest-based bargaining approach which involves the Transport Canberra workforce and unions like the TWU and the AMWU, as their representatives, in a conversation about how we can achieve our shared objectives of continuing to make our public transport system even better.

We are not going to charge into that conversation and demand certain outcomes because, as those who have been around the ACT government for a while can attest,

this simply does not work. We need to have a genuine and good-faith conversation about what it takes to deliver an expanded network, what it requires from our drivers, and what the government can do to support their job security, quality of work and opportunities for a rewarding career with us.

I would caution members of this place that what looks like flexibility to one worker can seem like insecurity or unreasonable demands to another. We need to work through these conversations about change calmly and constructively with our workforce.

The ACT government have indicated in the past that we want to see services run more frequently on weekends than they currently do, but we are not going to sacrifice reliability to get there. Transport Canberra's priority is to offer reliable transport services for Canberrans, both during the week and on the weekends.

Cancelled services and missed trips are a huge frustration for regular public transport users and a strong disincentive for potential users to give their local bus route a try. We will not make any headway in driving a long-term shift to public transport if people do not believe that the services that are timetabled will reliably turn up. And we want to make sure that they are available when and where people want to use them.

Like many workplaces across Canberra and around Australia, Transport Canberra is continuing to experience workforce issues as a result of the ongoing impact of COVID-19. While we are working towards returning to the full pre-COVID timetable as soon as possible, at present this is not possible while ensuring the kinds of reliable services that I have just mentioned.

There are a range of steps that are currently in train to help address these challenges and strengthen public transport as we adapt to living with COVID. Transport Canberra is currently recruiting more bus drivers to ensure a stable supply to operate all shifts, including drivers who are specifically available and willing to work on weekends. Transport Canberra will also seek to further grow the number of drivers over time to deliver a reliable weekday and weekend network to the community as Canberra continues to grow.

These actions, combined with the potential outcomes to be achieved through the next enterprise agreement, should stand us in good stead to keep making public transport better for Canberrans. But I want to be clear that this cannot and will not happen overnight, because recruiting and training workers does take time.

Turning to the other points in this motion, we absolutely agree that there should be more women working in Transport Canberra, just like there should be more women working in male-dominated industries right around Australia. Transport Canberra has a range of actions already in train to try and tackle this imbalance. For example, prior to COVID, Transport Canberra initiated a series of come-and-try days aimed at breaking down barriers to applying to become a bus driver. They gave members of the community an opportunity to have a go at bus driving in a safe and comfortable environment. Specific days were particularly geared towards women, and these were

extremely well attended. Transport Canberra plans to do more of these come-and-try days as it becomes possible to run open public events again.

This is just one of a number of different promotional activities, with the others including a recent recruitment campaign targeted at women through channels like HerCanberra and LinkedIn. These social media campaigns have strongly featured women and promoted the benefits for women of working with Transport Canberra, helping to counter perceptions that driving a bus is only a job for blokes.

Additionally, we will continue to support the employment of people with families by including provision for special shift requests in the enterprise agreement. These arrangements support staff with specific family or other qualifying reasons to structure their work around these requirements.

We are also keen to see these arrangements retained in the next iteration of Transport Canberra's enterprise agreement because they are an important way of ensuring that people who do shiftwork can still be mums, dads, soccer coaches, book club members or whatever else is important to them in their lives.

We agree with Ms Clay that there is more that we can do to grow the Transport Canberra workforce in an inclusive way to deliver better public transport for Canberrans, particularly on the weekends. We are committed to doing that work. It is currently underway. I will be happy to update the Assembly on our progress in the new year, or sooner, if we are able to reach some good conclusions in the EBA process before that time. But the outcomes of that process are not known at present, and the ability for us to deliver extra weekend services is, of course, contingent on that process and the other measures that I have outlined.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.29): We will not be opposing or amending this motion, but I have to say that there are some aspects of it that I am not entirely comfortable with. I am much more comfortable with Ms Clay's motion than I was with, say, Mr Braddock's amendment to the last motion. In particular—and Mr Steel has made mention of it—I am not entirely comfortable with the concept of us as an Assembly holding some of the enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations here in this chamber, because I am just not sure that is how it works.

There are aspects of this motion—which, by the looks of it, we are going to pass—that pretty much present the government with a fixed position on some aspects of EBA negotiations. I think we all know that EBA negotiations are about compromise. I am just not sure that it is for this parliament to be setting a fixed position in a negotiation which has already commenced.

It must be said, Mr Assistant Speaker, that the current EBA is quite generous; it is one of the most generous in the country for bus drivers. I think Mr Pinkus and the TWU have done a fine job of looking after their members. That is what they are here for. I would argue that some of the battles that the union has won in this space over the years might have been to the detriment of the wider community. I know that there are those on the left side of politics who would agree with me, because they have agreed in the past. But we are where we are, and I think it is important that when these

negotiations are done, the government has not already been told how it must negotiate, because I just do not think that gets the best deal for Canberrans and bus drivers.

The other thing that I would say about this motion is that a healthy chunk of it could have come from me. The first thing the motion calls on was in my last motion last sitting. Would you look at that? The Greens and Labor voted against a Canberra Liberals motion only to debate the same thing less than a month later and rubber-stamp it. Labor and the Greens know that, and Mr Steel has acknowledged it. Certainly, Ms Clay made a very compelling argument on a number of levels about (a) returning to the full timetable; and (b) beefing up things on the weekend. They have acknowledged that, when it comes to returning to the full bus timetable, it is the right thing to do. They acknowledged that when they amended my motion in April to say, “Restore the full bus timetable as soon as practicable,” and now apparently they need another motion calling for the same thing.

Mr Assistant Speaker, I will just refresh your memory. My motion called upon the government to return to the full bus timetable. Ms Clay’s motion calls upon the government to return to the full bus timetable as soon as possible, but adds that this will require more drivers. So it is pretty much the same thing: Liberal idea, bad; Labor-Greens idea, good. I just think it is interesting.

I would like to repeat from the *Hansard* a couple of things that I said in April when we debated my bus motion, because I think they are extremely pertinent. I said in wrapping up:

We will not support Mr Steel’s amendment. Mr Steel’s amendment basically says, “This would be a cracker of an idea if it was ours.”

It is in line with a lot of the ideas that come into this place in that they are great ideas if they come from the government, but not if they come from us, the Canberra Liberals.

This motion has also tried to predict what the TWU wants from the EBA negotiations. I note that Ms Clay stated that she has consulted with the union, but I am not sure of the depth of that consultation. I know that, as evil Liberals, we are not supposed to be consulting with the union—I do not think we are, anyway—but since I have had the transport portfolio I have always seen the TWU as an absolute key stakeholder, which is shocking, I know! But I guess you could say it is consistent, when we see what the teachers and nurses unions have been saying about this government recently. Based on the discussions, I am not sure that this motion addresses their concerns and what they are seeking to achieve for their members or, indeed, aspects of that are going to lead to a better bus service. In fact, the head of the TWU told me that this motion is unlikely to have an effect on the final result of the EBA negotiations.

So why are we debating those aspects of it? I will tell you why we are. For this mob—and when I say “this mob” I am looking more to the top end of the room than the other side—it is not about outcomes; it is about making people believe that you are focused on outcomes.

On female drivers, I am with Mr Steel and Ms Clay. I would love to see more female drivers. But, I have to say, when I first saw the headlines in the *Canberra Times* around this motion, it read as though we are a mile behind the rest of Australia when it comes to gender diversity in this specific workforce. I scratched my head and thought, “Really? I don’t think that’s the case.” I had to go and have a look. We are not a mile behind at all. The national average is 13 per cent. We are sitting at 11 per cent and, given the size of the entire workforce in this space, what does that equate to? A dozen, 15 or 20 drivers? I am not sure. But it is not a huge gap.

Sure we should be pushing to address that but, having reviewed the mechanisms and the processes that Mr Steel referred to—the mechanisms and the processes that the transport directorate are undertaking to attract more female drivers—they look pretty solid to me. They really do look pretty solid to me. Certainly, the conversion rate of applications to actual drivers is very good. I would go so far as to say—and you do not often hear me saying this in here—that I applaud the minister and the directorate for the come-and-try days and for the genuine focus that they have had to recruiting female drivers. They will get a little push along in that direction from this motion. They will stay on the game; they will stay on track. They will know that Ms Clay is looking closely at it and they will know that I am looking closely at it. I think that they are doing a pretty solid job in that space and we look forward to some further positive outcomes.

I would note that Ms Clay is correct when she says that the lack of flexible rostering is a problem for many female drivers. I get that. Ms Clay has raised what is a very pertinent point. Mr Steel gets that; he is fully aware of that. He has been reminded of it by Ms Clay today; he gets it. Mr Pinkus probably gets it too. I am not sure that he would be prepared to admit it publicly, but I am sure he gets it as well. I would assume that this is already being discussed as part of the EBA discussions. We will let that process unfold, as it should, and we look forward to the outcome.

The Canberra Liberals will not be opposing this motion. We do not see that it is going to achieve a great deal. There is nothing in it that will make our bus network much better and nothing that is going to make it much worse.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.37), in reply: I am happy to be accused of being inpatient when it comes to the climate; I certainly am. I think we need to do as much as we can as fast as we can, and that includes our public transport. We have been told by every expert body in this field and we just know it is so in Canberra.

It is interesting that we are getting a bit bogged down on when and whether we are calling for certain measures. In the Greens we have been for hourly weekend buses for quite a long time now. It was certainly in our 2020 election campaign. We have put it in the parliamentary and governing agreement, and it is ACT government policy. We have not delivered it, but we have certainly committed to it. So this is absolutely not new.

I understand it is awkward sometimes to talk about public issues when there is a negotiation going on, but it is fairly normal to talk about public issues when there is a

negotiation going on. There is just a respectful way to do it. We talk about nurse-to-patient ratios when agreements are under discussion. We talk about classroom sizes. This is just something that happens. I would say that almost any time an EBA is being negotiated, the industry and the policy issues that that industry is working in are going to be talked about in the public realm. They kind of have to be. We are always here talking about health, education, transport and those really core issues. We have talked about it again today and we will continue talking about it until we fix the problem.

As impatient as I am to get real climate action and to fix our buses so that people can use them the way they are meant to be used, I also understand that it does take time. We understand that we need more drivers. I am equally impatient about the gender representation in our bus-driving workforce. We are very low nationally at 13 per cent. We are even lower locally in the ACT at 11 per cent. I am pleased to see that we have some government strategy to start driving that up. I am very keen to make sure that we get a really good target set on that so that we are tracking it.

I certainly would not accept calling victory on gender equity in bus drivers with the national average of 13 per cent. I would say we should be aiming for fifty-fifty or something that looks much more like the representation we get in many other industries. I certainly think that is a realistic goal. It is great work and many women would love to do it. We just need to help them do that. We need to track it and make sure that we are performing and achieving what we say we will achieve.

I just want to reiterate what this motion does. There seems to be a little bit of confusion so I will just run through it. It is really simple. We understand that we need to expand our workforce to provide enough drivers. We had a really good discussion about that last Assembly. We know that that needs to happen. Everybody is in agreement, so that is fantastic. I have just reasserted that we need to get back to the regular timetable as soon as possible this year because a lot of people are getting a bit worried about how long that is going to take. We also know that we need to pursue outcomes to get to our hourly route bus services all weekend and I have said that we should do that from 2023. I think that is a realistic time frame, given what is going on. I think it gives everybody a lot of reassurance to know when we are going to be doing that. We have said we will do it. We have not achieved it. Let us just set the dates down and say, "Here's when we are going to get there. We know we can do it."

We have a lot of initiatives about getting women into transport and getting more women bus drivers, but we have not yet achieved those. This is a new initiative. We are at 11 per cent. We know we need a lot more women bus drivers. Let us start tracking that. Let us start having a look at what some of the other states are doing and make sure that we are increasing that as quickly as we can and doing what we can to support women to get into this industry. I certainly would not be taking the national average of 13 per cent as my goal. I think that is deeply lacking in ambition. I think we can do a lot better than that.

We know we need to work with our unions. We always need to work with our unions. Of course we do it. We do it when we are talking about nurse-to-patient ratios. We do it when we are talking about classroom sizes. We do it in all these fields and, of

course, we will do it again here. We are just asking for an update by the first sitting day in 2023, because that strikes us in the Greens as a really good period of time to make sure that we can get all this done. That is a really good way to give Canberrans a bit of certainty about when we will get our bus service operating the way it should.

I am really excited to see that we are switching to electric buses. I am excited to see a lot of the climate action that we are taking in the ACT. A lot of that action is moving really well in the right direction. But I am quite keen to make sure that we get our buses fixed up. This is a really urgent issue for a lot of people. I am pleased to see that this motion will pass. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

National Domestic Violence Remembrance Day

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (4.43): Mr Deputy Speaker, today is National Domestic Violence Remembrance Day. It is an opportunity for us to remember all people who have lost their lives to domestic and family violence. It is also an opportunity to reach out with love to others in your community who have been impacted. Perhaps you know someone who has lost a loved one, or someone who has survived experiences of intimate partner violence.

This city has seen horrific and fatal incidents of violence that we mourn today. Some have sparked long-awaited changes to the way that we as a territory think, act and respond to domestic violence, such as the deaths of Tara Costigan and nine-year-old Bradyn Dillon. But there are many more beloved members of the ACT community that we have lost—so many over the years that I cannot even begin to name them all.

Data collected just before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 showed that 41 per cent of all assaults recorded in the ACT were related to domestic and family violence. We know that people have been at greater risk of domestic violence in recent years and now, due to the impacts of COVID-19.

In the last couple of years, this city has seen an increase in domestic violence incidents being reported—be it emotional, physical, financial and, acknowledged in more recent years, technological abuse.

As someone who has personal lived experience of domestic violence, I know the importance of family safety. I add my voice to the growing chorus of voices around the nation and across this territory in support of the principle that all people have the right to feel safe in their personal relationships and in their homes. Not only do we each have the right to live free from violence or abuse; we have the right to live without fear of such violence and abuse, especially at home.

I rise today alongside many others to remember and mourn all of those who we have loved and tragically lost due to domestic and family violence. I reaffirm my commitment to do the best I can in my office to reduce domestic violence incidents and achieve better outcomes for individuals, families and communities in this city. I am committed to holding the government to account when it comes to prevention and early intervention, as well as immediate and long-term responses to domestic violence.

I also give my thanks to all of the individuals and organisations who work tirelessly and passionately to prevent and respond to domestic violence in this city. I am grateful for the much-needed support that you give to our most vulnerable.

Florey shops—amenities

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.46): Today I would like to raise, as I have in the past, various issues experienced by residents in the Florey shops precinct, located in the electorate of Ginninderra. Recently, less than three weeks ago, I met and communicated with some of the brilliant residents there, particularly from the Neighbourhood Watch group and other advocacy groups. They continued to raise a range of issues, with a partial update, I must say, to follow.

I refer to: missing toilets promised in the last election by the government for Florey shops; blocked drainage on Florey Oval and its surroundings; persistent traffic issues around the shops, particularly with truck deliveries; lack of open space at Florey Primary School; and a constant lack of community consultation. These are not issues on which local residents should have to fight to be heard by this Labor-Greens government, but it seems that that is the case.

The issue of toilets for Florey shops has been raised by the residents, and by me on their behalf, on several occasions for over a year. When I was at Florey shops just a few weeks ago, there was, to the surprise of all of us who had gathered for a Neighbourhood Watch meeting, an A4 piece of paper stuck on a post, saying, “Proposed toilet site”, which surprised many.

I have been in contact with the very active residents in that group and they still have not been engaged, much to my surprise. I wrote to the minister in April last year regarding the failed commitment to construct public toilets at Florey shops and the lack of publicly available plans for this precinct. To date, there are no publicly accessible plans for the construction works or any real development so far.

It is very disappointing that the community is kept waiting for this basic sanitation amenity, given that there is a children’s playground nearby, as part of the shops precinct, and there is a primary school just across the road. The Labor-Greens government has once again failed to meet the needs and requirements of part of the community in Canberra.

On behalf of the Canberra Liberals, I applaud the vendors at Florey shops. It is a thriving precinct, with many families and businesses who deserve basic public

amenities, and I will continue to speak up for that. The people of Florey have a lot of knowledge to share in the community consultation process, and it would be great if they were given that opportunity. I look forward to providing continued support to these residents and others in my electorate of Ginninderra and promoting a holistic approach to planning for this popular shopping, educational and professional services precinct, and of others in Ginninderra.

I bring this up today to convey that Labor and the Greens do not seem to care much about community needs and consultation. Elizabeth Kikkert, my colleague in Ginninderra, and I are working very hard on the community's behalf.

Florey shops—amenities
India-Australia Association of Canberra—50th anniversary

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) (4.49): I need to respond to Mr Cain's comments, because they are wrong. I think it is worth correcting the record here, and I acknowledge that Minister Steel is in the chamber.

Building a toilet at the Florey shops was an ACT Labor election commitment to be delivered in this term of parliament. I know that because I personally advocated for it. I was very pleased that we were able to confirm that it was an election commitment to be delivered in this term of parliament. We are in this term of parliament. That does not mean it has failed to be delivered. That is just ridiculous.

Mr Cain should well know that there has been very active discussion in the community over the last few weeks because that consultation on the site for the toilet block has started. It has started, necessarily, with the tenants at the shops. I have also had it separately confirmed that there will be community consultation, but it is being done in a staged way, and Florey Neighbourhood Watch will certainly be part of that. I confirmed that to the community at the beginning of April.

For Mr Cain to come in here and say that it is a failed commitment is simply wrong. It completely misrepresents the situation. I would almost say that he should withdraw, because it is just not what is happening here. To make a political point out of something that is literally being delivered shows that he is having to grasp at straws to find something to speak about regarding his electorate.

On other matters, I want to take a moment this evening to acknowledge and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the India-Australia Association of Canberra, which I know is known to many of us and has been for a long time—50 years, in fact. It is currently helmed by someone who has boundless energy and enthusiasm for the Indian community, the Canberra community, and for taking action; that is, Sandi Mitra.

The IAAC, as it is known, has worked tirelessly over the past 50 years to promote understanding, and to promote an appreciation of the cultures and friendship of India and Australia.

Last month we were able to come together to celebrate in a fantastic event that was held in Deakin, with many local and regional sponsors awards for our COVID and emergency services responders, a very large number of cultural performances and a fantastic and very generous selection of food. It was wonderful to see so many political representatives there on the day as well.

The event could not have been a better example of the association's passion to promote fraternity, understanding and camaraderie within our community. Fifty years is a significant milestone by any standard, and it is no accident that it is represented by gold, given its resilience and its precious value. I think I can speak for all of us in this chamber when I say that this is certainly how the Canberra community thinks about the India-Australia Association of Canberra. I have no doubt that the association will be continuing its cultural and community work long into the future, as Canberra continues to grow and flourish with its diversity.

I also want to acknowledge the efforts and leadership, particularly in the last few years, and for how it has represented and connected the community during such a difficult time for the diaspora. Congratulations to the association and to all members, past and present, for a golden 50th anniversary.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.53 pm.