



# Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

**TENTH ASSEMBLY**

**2 AUGUST 2022**

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**Tuesday, 2 August 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.

### **Resignation of member Statement by Speaker**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Pursuant to the resolution of the Assembly of 27 March 1992, as amended on 6 March 2008, which authorises me to receive written notice of resignation of a member, I wish to inform the Assembly that I have received written notice from Mrs Jones, dated 2 June 2022. Pursuant to subsection 13(3) of the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988, I present the following papers:

*Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988 (Cth), pursuant to subsection 13(3)—Resignation of office as Member—Mrs Giulia Jones—Letter of resignation, dated 2 June 2022.*

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory—Casual Vacancy—  
Copy of letter to the ACT Electoral Commissioner, from the Speaker, dated 2 June 2022.

### **Announcement of member to fill casual vacancy**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Clerk has been notified by the Electoral Commissioner that, pursuant to sections 189 and 194 of the Electoral Act 1992, Mr Edward Cocks has been declared elected to the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Mrs Jones. I present the following paper:

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory—Casual Vacancy—  
Declaration of the poll—Letter from the Electoral Commissioner, ACT Electoral Commission, to the Clerk, ACT Legislative Assembly, dated 22 June 2022.

### **Oath or affirmation**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The provisions of the Oaths and Affirmations Act 1984

require the oath or affirmation of a new member to be made before the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory or a judge of that court authorised by the Chief Justice.

*The Honourable Justice Lucy McCallum, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory, attended accordingly—*

### **Oath by member**

*Mr Cocks was introduced and made and subscribed the oath required by law.*

### **Legislative Assembly—affirmation of code of conduct**

*Mr Cocks affirmed his commitment to the code of conduct for all members.*

*Chief Justice Lucy McCallum having retired—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Welcome, Mr Cocks.

### **Inaugural speech**

**MR COCKS** (Murrumbidgee) (10.08): I seek leave of the Assembly to make my inaugural speech.

Leave granted.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I remind members that it is the tradition that inaugural speeches are heard in silence. Mr Cocks, you have the call.

**MR COCKS:** I will start by acknowledging the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, the traditional custodians of the land on which we stand. I acknowledge their Elders, past and present. I acknowledge that the history and custodianship of this land are contested, and I acknowledge the complexity of our shared family histories, spanning well over a century since my family arrived in this place. I acknowledge, too, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across Australia who choose to call Canberra home, and any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be here today. You have my commitment that I will see you, I will hear you and I will walk with you in the spirit of reconciliation, even when we disagree.

Madam Speaker, there are many people to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. Firstly, to everyone who placed their trust in me, either through their number one preference or through their other preferences, I say thank you. A great feature of Canberra's democratic process is that every Canberran gets a say in precisely who represents them. There is no order of preferences prescribed by political parties in Canberra. I am here because people in my electorate chose to trust me with their votes. But I am also here because I was part of a team. I say to Sarah Suine, Amardeep Singh, Jeremy Hanson and Giulia Jones: without your work, Murrumbidgee would be far worse off.

To all those who helped me in my campaigns, I say thank you. No-one makes it to any elected position without people willing to back them, and I have been privileged to

have some amazing people back me. There are far more than I can name, but I cannot let today pass without thanking some who have given more than anyone has any right to expect.

Attila Ovari, Anny Dailey and Mat Kerwin: without you I would not have made it through my first campaign. Adam Morris, you and your family gave me so much in 2020. I will always be in awe of your generosity and your fortitude. To Rob Lovett and Bradley Clarke, who have supported and counselled me through many ups and downs, I say thank you. To Andrew Pond, a true friend who has clocked up countless miles across multiple electorates over many years, supporting me just because I am me, I cannot say thank you enough.

Thank you also to the members of the Liberal Party, who have placed their faith in me to stand up for the values that we know give people the best chance in life. It is an immense honour to represent the Liberal Party. The Canberra Liberals have been part of my life for some time, and I hope my service goes some way to justifying the support I have received.

As I have said before in many forums, I will always be proud to stand as a Liberal in Canberra. I believe that Liberal values are the best way for people to prosper and to get ahead. In the battle of ideas, the Canberra Liberals are on the side of democracy and of freedom—freedom of choice, freedom of speech, freedom of religion and worship, freedom to set and chart your own course in life, and the freedom to aspire, to work hard and to achieve. Liberals are on the side of the individual and of the family.

Finally, and most importantly, I must thank my family. My family has lived in the Canberra region for a very long time. My great-grandfather was a farmer in this region before the national capital even existed. Both of my parents grew up in Canberra, although they came from very different backgrounds. My father, John, comes from a family with long-term local roots. His father was a local bus driver who became recognised by Canberra children as the driver of Canberra's mobile library. His mother was a farmer's daughter who, following my grandfather's early passing, made a career in the library at Parliament House.

My mother, Heather, came to Canberra with her family as part of the public service migration from Victoria. Her father, Neil, would become a relatively senior public servant with the Department of Defence. Her mother, Wilma, gave up a promising career to raise her family. My grandmother remains one of the sharpest and wisest people I know. She is still with us today. I believe she is in the gallery today, and I have to recognise that she is at her sharpest whenever the Geelong Cats are playing.

My parents came from different backgrounds but they have always been partners in the most meaningful ways. Together, they have raised a family, built businesses and pursued their passions. They have earned university degrees as part-time mature-age students, and they always put the needs of my sister and me first.

I learnt a lot from them. I learnt that the most worthwhile things take hard work and perseverance. I learnt that everyone deserves to be treated with respect, and that in business you have no business unless you have something to offer that is of value.

I learnt that anyone can make a contribution to their community and do great things. Most importantly, I learnt that I could do anything I set my mind to, as long as I persevered and worked hard.

My sister, Tammy, exemplifies these values as well. As a nurse at the Canberra Hospital, I am proud to say that the impact she makes on people's lives is far deeper and more personal than anything we do in this chamber.

Without my family's example and lessons, I would never have had the courage to stand up and do what is right, and they back me in every battle and every endeavour that I take on.

My eternal thanks must go to my wife, Nicole, the most intelligent and gifted woman that I know, and to my children, Cayleigh and Dylan. Politicians' families do not choose this life so much as they have it inflicted upon them. But they stand by me at every juncture, and they inspire me every day.

My life has not followed a smooth path to this point. I did not finish school with a smooth path through to university, a set career and politics. Indeed, in 1996, when I finished school, I had given up on education so deeply and performed so poorly that there was every likelihood that I would have been on a very poor path indeed. But inertia is not destiny. With my parents' encouragement, I fought to find a job in the Australian Public Service, and I found one as a courier, literally in the mailroom. That opportunity was the start that I needed. I worked hard, looked for ways to make a contribution and worked my way up. I enrolled in a mature-entry pathway to the University of Canberra and started my degree part time, and kept working.

I then met my wife, Nicole—a woman who had chosen to study engineering, a heavily male-dominated field; a woman who was not interested in just getting a degree to get a job, but who believed in excelling, working the hardest and achieving the best. Nicole fundamentally changed my perspective. By the last year of my degree, I was achieving academically and achieving my career goals, and I had discovered my passion for business, entrepreneurship, policymaking and politics. I do not know where I would be without her.

I must also acknowledge my children, Cayleigh and Dylan, who have endured three campaigns of hard work, long hours, excitement and, too often, disappointment. It was not until my daughter, Cayleigh, was born that I decided I could not sit around any longer and complain about the problems I could see in Canberra; if I wanted things to change for her, I had to be prepared to stand up and fight. Cayleigh is about to turn 11 and her brother, Dylan, is eight. I have contested three elections as a Liberal, and I still worry about their future. They are still my greatest inspiration.

Madam Speaker, it is a strange thing to enter the Assembly through a countback, separated from the excitement and action of an election campaign by roughly two years. It was no small thing to accept this path in life for me and for my family. In many ways, it is not so much with excitement that I speak here today as it is with a sense of responsibility and determination.

Life throws us curveballs sometimes—some good, some not so much. Lord knows, we have suffered far too many of the latter in the last few years. The pandemic and its continuing reverberations have seen people lose livelihoods, lives and loved ones. In many ways we have lived in an atmosphere of intense uncertainty for three years since the first stirrings of COVID-19 were observed overseas.

Since then our health system has been stretched to breaking point. Our economy faces the prospect of inflation not seen in a generation. People are struggling to afford a home, especially in Canberra, and rising interest rates may see home ownership turn from dream to nightmare for many.

Our economy is under threat, and at the same time we face a very long tail of mental health impacts resulting directly from the lockdowns and restrictions that we all endured, however necessary they were. Call rates to mental health support services skyrocketed. Services have become harder to access, and ABS data indicates more people than ever before may have experienced a mental health condition during the pandemic. An unexpected curveball has brought the pandemic to our world, and an unexpected curveball has brought me into this chamber. I am determined to use this opportunity to serve my community and my electorate to the best of my ability.

Our city is the national capital of Australia. It is the home of the Australian parliament and the home of the Australian Public Service. It is the home of our national cultural institutions, the custodians of the Australian story. But Canberra is much more than its stereotype. Canberra is home to over 467,000 people—people who are strong, caring and generous; people who are smart, driven and passionate. Our people make Canberra more than the sum of its public service offices and Parliament House.

Canberra is home to an amazing concentration of knowledge, skills, talent and initiative. It is home to world-class educational institutions, researchers, engineers, doctors and thinkers who are making a real difference, not just in Australia, not just in Canberra, but around the world.

Importantly, Canberra is home to ordinary people, too—people who do not necessarily set out to change the world, but do so and make it better just by their everyday actions; people who work hard to provide for their families; people who go out of their way to volunteer for a local club or charity; people who take time out from their job to care for their children or an older relative.

Canberrans, on the whole, are people of conviction. We believe in doing the right thing and leading by example—treating people well and lending a helping hand when others need it. We live in a great and unique city, unlike anywhere else in Australia or the world—a place where great ideas are born and a place where great things happen.

But after so many years of one government, Canberrans, and, especially those of us living in the south, can see problems—problems of confidence, competence and vision. For too long we in the south have been missing out. It is time for a new vision for our southern regions, one that moves beyond the city focus of the current government and treats the south as more than a place to sleep, and a source of rates and revenue.



My electorate is the most diverse in the ACT. It takes in some of the oldest suburbs—places like Yarralumla and Deakin, as well as some of the newest, in Denman Prospect and Whitlam. It takes in the entirety of Weston Creek, Woden and Molonglo. It takes in parts of Kambah, the inner south and the rural areas to our west. It is a diverse electorate. But if there is one problem which unites it, it is neglect—neglect of basic care and maintenance, neglect of ageing infrastructure, neglect of essential services, and neglect of planning and foresight. This is a wonderful electorate and the people there deserve better.

The Molonglo Valley is Canberra's newest region, with its stunning setting on the western edge of Canberra. Stretching from Stromlo to the Molonglo River, I have followed its development closely since its early days and its early planning. Sadly, its vision, its potential, has not been realised.

Well over a decade ago, I attended one of the first early planning and consultation sessions for the Molonglo Valley, and specifically for Wright and Coombs. I very clearly remember person after person warning of the very problems Molonglo now faces. The government was warned that evening that it would be critical to get infrastructure right before the suburbs were built, that Cooleman Court would become overloaded without local Molonglo shops, and that the Cotter Road, which was already struggling then to handle traffic, could not be the only major route into and out of the area.

The government was warned that the northern road connection would be critical, yet here we are, all these years later, with thousands of people facing crushing congestion every day, and the Molonglo River bridge still has not been started, and it will not be completed until well after the next election. The people of Molonglo and Weston Creek deserve real solutions to congestion. It is time to prioritise this project. It is time to get it done.

The one problem that I do not recall being a concern for the Molonglo Valley at the outset was crime. No-one anticipated the cuts in real terms to police funding and numbers that this government would deliver. No-one predicted that the problem could reach the point where police would be unable to attend significant crimes like theft.

Now, across my electorate, people fear the growth of criminal activity. People in Molonglo and Weston Creek have to contend with the knowledge that the nearest police station is not local and that help may not be quick, even if the situation is critical. For years now, the Canberra Liberals have been calling for an increase in police numbers and funding, and the building of a police station in the west. I will be adding my voice to those calls because everyone deserves to feel safe in their home.

We need to speak about Woden. Woden was Canberra's first satellite city. Gazetted nearly 60 years ago, it is positioned within easy reach of much of Tuggeranong, Weston creek, Molonglo and the inner south. Woden can and should be the pumping economic heart of the south. But through a lack of vision, through a lack of planning, through misdirected policies and at times through active neglect, we have seen the Woden town centre and region go backwards, enduring over a decade of urban and suburban decay.

I say again that Woden can be, and should be, the economic heart of the south. But it will take will, persistence and a new vision. It will take smart choices and smart investment. If Woden and the greater south are going to thrive, we need more than apartments, construction, retail and a shrunken CIT. Woden needs more than an overdue hospital reconstruction, it needs more than just apartments and it needs more than a plan for a tram.

To reach its potential, Woden must grow its economic, cultural and recreational footprint. We need entertainment, culture and the arts. We need to overcome the inertia of the haphazard planning and development, which has created siloed precincts with no connection between where people sleep, and where they work and live. It is time for a new vision for Woden.

Madam Speaker, I know that I have gone on somewhat; I promise that I am not aiming for an eight-hour filibuster to interrupt the Chief Minister's evening! But I do want to reflect on some things that the Chief Minister said in his inaugural address. There are several points that I would like to reflect on, because in that speech the then future Chief Minister said:

Good governments manage the economy responsibly, and that good management leads to benefits for all the community. It is what underpins the delivery of the services that Canberrans want and need.

He continued by pointing out:

Running a surplus operating budget provides intergenerational equity.

The Chief Minister was absolutely correct when he made those statements. Every dollar that the government spends, over and above what we have, is borrowed from our children. Our borrowing now has to be paid back by them, with interest. Yet in the decade or so since he became Treasurer, every budget that the Chief Minister has delivered has sent us backwards.

As an indicator of the regard he now holds for economic management, he removed from the budget papers a small statement which may be easy to miss, and which his predecessors always had in there—a simple statement that said that deficits should always be temporary. The Chief Minister has now committed the ACT to so much debt that it is unclear how the government will continue to operate without taking out more. The interest payments alone have become eye-watering.

As the Chief Minister pointed out, our children will inherit his burden. They will pay the price of Labor's debt into the future. I believe it is about time someone started delivering for our children instead of taking from them.

I intend to work towards a new vision for Canberra—a Canberra where people's aspirations are supported by their government, where the individual is valued and heard and community embraced; a city where not everything is done by government, but what is, is done well; a city where we build for the future and care for what we already have; a city where we can choose to work near to where we live and can afford to raise our families in our own homes, in vibrant communities, with a sense of

security and safety; a city which is just as caring and generous as it is today, not because we have been forced into it but because that is who we are as Canberrans.

Canberra should be a city where there are opportunities for everyone to succeed, irrespective of what they look like or where they come from, and regardless of whether I, or any other politician in this room, likes or approves of them. It should be a city whose citizens are free and empowered to make good choices for themselves and to contribute to the wellbeing of those around them.

There is opportunity right now to achieve great things. Distance is no longer the barrier that it once was. Technology has reshaped the world and we do not need to be tied to the old way of doing things anymore. We can reshape our place in our nation from an economy that is fundamentally dependent on other people's taxes to a genuine contributor, an economic centre where governments, businesses and academia can work together to drive great ideas and innovations.

I believe we can transform Canberra's southern areas so that people have the opportunity to do that near where they live, so that we can spend less time commuting and more time doing the things that we love. The south cannot afford to stay as the neglected dormitory of Canberra anymore. We can and should be more than just a source of rates, and our centres should be more than just places to buy our groceries. But change will take vision, and it will take a new way of doing things.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to making my contribution to that future.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, members. Get used to that seat, Mr Cocks, for at least until 2024!

### **Mrs Helen Cross** **Motion of condolence**

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (10.31): I move:

That this Assembly expresses its deep regret at the death of Mrs Helen Cross, former Member of the Legislative Assembly from 2001 to 2004, and tenders its profound sympathy to her family, friends and colleagues in their bereavement.

Madam Speaker, I rise on behalf of the ACT government to acknowledge the passing of former member of the Assembly Mrs Helen Cross. Mrs Cross served in the Fifth Assembly from 2001 to 2004, representing the former electorate of Molonglo. She was first elected as a Liberal Party candidate but left the party partway through the parliamentary term to serve as an independent.

Mrs Cross pursued a range of issues in her three years in this place. In light of the recent overturning of *Roe v Wade* in the United States, it does seem fitting to reflect on Mrs Cross's role in providing safe abortion access in the ACT. In 2002, Mrs Cross was the deciding vote—and the only Liberal MLA to vote in favour—of decriminalising abortion in the territory, as part of a conscience vote on former MLA Wayne Berry's Crimes (Abolition of Offence of Abortion) Bill.

Differentiating herself from her Liberal colleagues at that time cannot have been easy, but I am sure that many Canberrans are grateful for Mrs Cross's courage and conviction in voting in favour of this significant reform. Mrs Cross also successfully introduced the Discrimination Amendment Bill in 2002 to ensure that women are not discriminated against based on possible future pregnancy or their intentions to have children, such as during a job interview. Among Mrs Cross's legacies include a private member's bill in 2003 to ban smoking in confined public places, including hospitality venues, shopping centres, government buildings and hospitals, via the Smoking (Prohibition in Enclosed Public Places) Bill 2003.

I had the opportunity to meet Mrs Cross when I first arrived in this place, as a much younger man and adviser to then member John Hargreaves. It is fair to say that she made just as many friends across the aisle as she had on her own side. Many of these friendships were based around her diverse range of interests and passions, which she strongly expressed both inside and outside of this place. Mrs Cross was a genuine character, in the best sense of the term. She was great company and left an enduring legacy on this place. On behalf of my colleagues, I extend my sincere condolences to Mrs Cross's family and friends.

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (10.34): On behalf of the Canberra Liberals, I pay tribute to former Canberra Liberal and Assembly colleague Helen Cross. Whilst I never had the opportunity to meet Mrs Cross personally, I know that she achieved many things in her time here, on behalf of her community. Mrs Cross was born in Australia to parents of Greek origin and was elected to represent the people of Molonglo in 2001. Of course, who could forget the constant ringing on the radio of: "Don't put a tick, don't put a cross, put a 1 next to Helen Cross"? I still remember it and it was way, way before my time in politics.

But long before her time in the Assembly, Mrs Cross's commitment to always working to better the lives of the most vulnerable in the community was evident. Mrs Cross successfully organised many fundraising events in her lifetime, and her efforts were recognised in 1983, when she was crowned Miss New South Wales Charity Queen, having raised the most amount of money for children with cerebral palsy in New South Wales, and runner up Miss Australia Charity Queen, having raised the second highest amount of fundraising in the country—a truly remarkable achievement.

Mrs Cross was a trailblazer for women. She will be remembered for many things, not the least of which was casting the deciding vote to decriminalise abortion in the ACT, almost exactly 20 years ago. At the time, provisions in the Crimes Act allowed for ten-year jail terms for women undergoing abortion and had a requirement forcing women seeking abortions to view pictures of foetuses and to accept a 72-hour cooling-off period.

Mrs Cross was also very proud of the high proportion of female representation in the Legislative Assembly, saying, "No parliamentary body can hope to successfully develop realistic policy positions if the perspective of half the population is not fully understood and represented,"—a sentiment that resonates strongly with me and which I think is very well represented in parliament today.

During her three-year term in the Assembly, Mrs Cross was responsible for an amendment to the Discrimination Amendment Bill which protected women, during job interviews, from being asked about their debts or their intention of having children—issues that you could not even dream of being raised today but that were commonplace 20 years ago.

Mrs Cross also introduced a private member's bill which banned smoking indoors, in places such as pubs, clubs, restaurants, government buildings and hospitals, again something that we take for granted today. The passage of that particular legislation was a rare example of an occasion where the Liberals actually won a vote from opposition, having voted alongside the crossbench, made up of Democrats and Greens—when the Greens were actually a crossbench—to win a vote and pass legislation against a sitting Labor government.

A passionate advocate of the small business community, Mrs Cross held the position of President of the Philip Business Association, having owned and run a successful jewellery business for many years. Despite her declining health, following a serious accident in 2014, Mrs Cross ran as an independent in the 2020 ACT election for the seat of Yerrabi, stating that health was her top priority and that she wished to see a new hospital built in Canberra's north.

Being in a wheelchair herself and being a carer for her husband with Alzheimer's, Mrs Cross was inspired to run in 2020 by the nurses at Calvary Hospital, after spending two months there, where she had the opportunity to speak to fellow patients, their families and friends, nurses, doctors, ambos and wards people. Whilst she was unsuccessful on that occasion, no-one could deny that she was in a unique position to advocate on behalf of the many, many people with a disability or who were sick.

Mrs Cross was ably assisted in her role as an MLA by her trusted adviser and husband, David Cross, and I am told that theirs was a love story for the ages. In fact, I understand that Mrs Cross was buried with a box full of love letters and Valentine's Day cards from David, spanning the 35 years of their relationship. Sadly, Mr Cross passed away just over 12 months before Mrs Cross. I know that his loss would have had a deep, deep impact on Mrs Cross in her final year.

Whilst the Canberra community mourns the loss of Mrs Cross, I know that she will be at peace, knowing she is reunited with her beloved David in eternal life. On behalf of the Canberra Liberals, our sincerest condolences to Mrs Cross's family and friends. May she rest in peace.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong) (10.39): I rise today on behalf of the ACT Greens to mark the passing of Helen Cross, a member of the Fifth Assembly from 2001 to 2004, representing the former seat of Molonglo. That time line of course means that her time in the Assembly pre-dates all of us here now as members—although I note the Chief Minister's remarks at having met her as a staffer—but, as I will touch on through my remarks, her legacy does live on.

When one asks about Mrs Cross's time in the Assembly, the common recollection is that she was one of the most colourful and perhaps controversial figures to grace the

benches of this place—which, in itself, is no small feat, considering our chequered and eventful history, recalling the earlier days of the ACT government, when things were very different. Mrs Cross entered the Legislative Assembly in the wake of the 2001 election, a time when multiple Chief Ministers could rise and fall in the term of an Assembly, and a time when the very idea of a Liberal Chief Minister was not at all far-fetched; in fact, it was very recent history.

It was a very different time, when the ringing of the division bells signalled the resolution of still to be decided contests. Mrs Cross was a politician of such diverse views and opinions that it was apparently literally impossible for one party to contain her. The strength of her convictions was such that she was ready to jeopardise her whole career in the service of them. When you look at her voting record, I would not say that I agree with all of her positions, but it is striking how many of them, which were derided or dismissed at the time, have stood up to the test of the years. All of us can only hope that when our campaigns are considered, 20 years from now, the judgement of history is as kind.

When Mrs Cross campaigned against smoking in pubs and clubs, it seemed impossible, at that time, to imagine those venues without a thick veil of smoke drifting down from the ceiling, to the enormous health hazard of the staff and patrons. Yet, today, we would all recoil in horror if we walked into the choking miasma of one of those early millennium establishments. She was a fierce and vocal advocate for light rail—at the time an impossible vision for Canberra's future, yet today a much-loved fixture of all the places that it services.

She was decisive, as has been noted, in decriminalising abortion in the ACT when she crossed the floor of the Assembly, defying the will of both the Canberra Liberals and her wider party, including active lobbying by Tony Abbott, for the crucial vote on that issue. All of us in this place know how hard it is to get elected to begin with, to come out on top of those crowded and competitive fields. We do have the unique and shared experience to acknowledge that accomplishment and to appreciate the courage to place it all at risk in the service of conscience, particularly on an issue which, in this city and this country, has been proven by the passage of time and the progress of our society to be the correct one.

Mrs Cross's subsequent campaigns for re-election also showed how hard it is to win votes without the support of a political party. She was a fierce feminist who cared deeply for issues affecting women and mothers, and a strong advocate for small business, especially in the Woden area. She was proud of her Greek heritage and was renowned for going into bat for constituents who were having a tough time. She was known for being a hardworking and committed local member, and was described by her husband, David, as someone who could light up a room when she arrived.

At this time, as we mark her passing, we should celebrate a brave and far-sighted woman, strong in her convictions, whose decisive vote brought about significant legislative change to make this territory a better place. As we work here in this place, with our colleagues, to find positions which satisfy all of our own beliefs, principles and perspectives, it behoves us to remember those turn of the century days and the legacy of Helen Cross. On behalf of the Greens, we offer our condolences.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (10.44): I just want to speak briefly today on the passing of Helen Cross. I think we have all talked about how she was described—and particularly by Bill Stefaniak, who said that Helen was a larger than life character. She absolutely was.

She was never afraid to speak her mind and wore her heart on her sleeve, and anybody who knew her experienced that—sometimes not with great pleasure—but certainly she made it clear where she stood. Whilst I did not know Helen well, I did know her. It was actually a very long time before I was elected into this place that I first met Helen, after she had left, after she had finished up with the Canberra Liberals and was an independent, working on the non-smoking ban in public places.

At the time, I was working for the United Voice union and representing hospitality workers in conversations that she had with the community about the changes that she wanted to make. For somebody like her, who wanted to make this change, she was incredibly empathetic to the situation that hospitality workers were in, both working in an environment where they were exposed to passive smoke every day and with a change to their workplaces, as a result of this legislation, meaning that they could lose their jobs.

I think she was an incredibly amazing woman and I was really pleased to be able to work with her in that space. I was not in the Assembly at the time, but I think that the changes that she made in that work we can all be absolutely grateful for. The world did not end, as was predicted at the time. In fact, it is much better, and we are all breathing, excuse the pun, more easily, as a result of her work in that space.

Her work in the discrimination space, particularly around women, as Ms Lee has referred to, as well as her work with Bernie Bryant on asbestos reforms, was achieved by Helen as an independent, after she had left the Canberra Liberals. This was quite extraordinary, given the time that she was in this place and what she achieved. She was well ahead of the game with both of those actions.

Her brave stance on abortion law reform and decriminalising abortion in the ACT was historic and momentous at the time. She had made a promise to supporters and activists, quietly and carefully, because she knew that she would have to pay the price when she crossed the floor, and she did. She delivered on her promise, but it did cost her dearly and we saw her move into independence. As an independent member she achieved so much in this place.

I know that the last few years have been very difficult for Helen and her family, particularly with David becoming even more unwell. I and the health minister, Rachel Stephen-Smith, spent a lot of time trying to support Helen and David during that difficult time. Helen was incredibly upset, of course, when David passed away. It was a very sad and difficult time for her. I do just want to say that, even through all of that difficult time, she wanted to become a member of the Assembly again. She ran as an independent candidate, and she was tireless and she continued to dig deep, as she

always does. I am deeply saddened to learn that she has passed away. I do want to pass on my sincere condolences to her family and friends, for both Helen and David.

*Question resolved in the affirmative, members standing in their places.*

## **Mr Shinzo Abe**

### **Condolence statement by Speaker**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, early last month, like many Australians, I was shocked to learn of the assassination of the former Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe. Abe was Japan's longest serving Prime Minister and in his time was considered a pioneer of Australia-Japan relations. His friendship and partnerships with consecutive Australian leaders of all political persuasions are a testament to the leader and friend that he was to Australia.

Abe visited Canberra a number of times. On behalf of the ACT Legislative Assembly and the people of the territory, I extend our most sincere condolences to his family and to the people of Japan. As a mark of respect, I ask all members to rise in their places for a short period.

*Members standing in their places—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, members.

## **Petitions**

*The following petitions were lodged for presentation:*

### **Waste—proposed waste to energy incinerator site—petition 12-22**

*By Ms Clay, from 919 residents:*

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

The NSW Government proposes a priority waste-to-energy incineration precinct 35km from the ACT.

A proposed incinerator at Tarago will burn 380,000 tonnes of Sydney's waste each year, including plastics, municipal and industrial waste. It will operate 24 hours a day for 30 years.

The NSW Government plan says these facilities are unsafe for Sydney, reporting for some common air pollutants, there is no safe threshold of impact and citing research concluding "contamination of food and ingestion of pollutants is a significant risk pathway for both nearby and distant residents".

Emissions modelling demonstrates pollutants will spread throughout the ACT and surrounds.



The ACT Government banned waste-to-energy incineration and proposes legislating the right to a healthy environment. The proposed incinerator jeopardises these moves to protect Canberrans from climate change and ensure everyone can access clean air, water, healthy food and nature.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to:

- publicly oppose the proposal and any waste-to-energy incinerator proposed near the ACT;
- ban ACT waste from being used as feedstock for waste-to-energy incineration;
- call on the Act Government to liaise with NSW Government counterparts to ensure ACT opposition is heard;
- call on the ACT Government to lodge a submission to oppose the proposal during the public exhibition of the Development Application and Environmental Impact Study;
- call on the ACT Government to conduct an awareness campaign to ensure Canberrans are informed and know how to object.

*Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petition, having more than 500 signatories, was referred to the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity.*

## **Environment—Callum Brae Nature Reserve—petition 16-22**

*By Ms Clay, from 583 residents:*

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

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

Callum Brae Nature Reserve is a very special place. It protects critically endangered Yellow Box and Blakely Red Gum and grassy woodland. Callum Brae is the largest, best-connected and most diverse area of these species remaining in Australia. Many species of birds, some of which are critically endangered or endangered including the swift parrot and the gang gang cockatoo nest there. It is a popular location for birdwatching and walking, accessible to people with mobility issues, offering serenity in a peaceful natural environment.

Callum Brae Nature Reserve is under severe threat by a proposed large crematorium and cemetery adjacent to it. (Development Application: 202138789). This commercial development proposal is inappropriate, unnecessary and damaging to the environment and endangered flora and faunal species, and includes the loss of mature native trees with nesting hollows. The location of the proposed development site provides necessary connectivity to the Mt. Mugga Mugga Nature Reserve.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to:

1. Review Canberra's future needs for crematoria. Ensure we only build as many as we need and take action to ensure we carry this out.
2. In this review, consider alternative burial methods, including Recompose, human composting.
3. Ensure a full environmental assessment for DA202138789.
4. Undertake to add Block 1 Section 3, adjacent to the Callum Brae Nature Reserve to the existing Callum Brae Nature Reserve.

### **Environment—Bluetts Block-Piney Ridge—petition 11-22**

*By Dr Paterson, from 732 residents:*

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

The following residents of the ACT draw to the attention of the Assembly: The area commonly known as “Bluetts Block-Piney Ridge” (extending across Stromlo Block 402/403 and Denman Prospect Block 12, Section 1) is home to over 100 different species of plants and supports over 130 species of birds, including the Black Mountain Leopard Orchid, and vulnerable Superb Parrot, a species facing increasing loss of habitat. The area is likely to support rare marsupial populations of Dunnart and Antechinus.

Bluetts Block-Piney Ridge provides important landscape connectivity from the Murrumbidgee River Corridor to Black Mountain. Without connectivity, many animal species cannot find food or shelter, or space to breed, leaving them vulnerable.

The view of the petitioners is that a Nature Reserve should be established in this area to protect biodiversity values.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to:

1. Ensure that Stromlo Blocks 402/403 undergo full ecological assessment.
2. Ensure that urban development is not pursued on Block 12, Section 1 Denman Prospect until there is sufficient information to decide on the environmental significance of the block.
3. Ensure that the ecological considerations of Stromlo Block 402/403 and Denman Prospect Block 12, Section 1 include the impacts on threatened species, critically endangered Box-Gum Woodland, old-growth trees, landscape connectivity, and consideration of urban edge effects.
4. Following full ecological assessments, ensure areas which have nationally outstanding ecosystems, and species, formed mostly by non-human factors are declared a Nature Reserve.

## **Roads—speed limit—petition 18-22**

*By Ms Lee, from 542 residents:*

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

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

The section of Canberra Avenue between Hume Circle and Barrallier Street currently has a speed limit of 60 km/h. St Edmund's and St Clare's Colleges both border on this section of Canberra Avenue.

Many students from both colleges who reside on the Kingston side have to cross Canberra Avenue to get to and from school each day.

Students from both colleges also regularly cross Canberra Avenue to access cafes and other businesses on the Kingston side of Canberra Avenue.

Students and staff who use public transport have to cross Canberra Avenue to access the closest bus stop.

The nearest signalised crossings across Canberra Avenue are located at Nyrang Street, Narrabundah (1km East of St Edmunds) and Captain Crescent (1.2km West of St Edmunds).

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call upon the Government to reduce the speed limit along Canberra Avenue between Barrallier Street, Griffith and Hume Circle (intersection of Canberra Avenue, Wentworth Avenue, and Sturt Avenue), Griffith, to 40km/h.

*Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petitions, having more than 500 signatories, were referred to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services.*

## **Schools—maintenance—petitions 15-22 and 21-22**

*By Mr Davis, from 277 and 258 residents:*

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

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

The Lyneham Primary P&C is concerned by our school building condition. It is over 60 years old and desperately needs work. It needs a building condition report to identify and address all risks and hazards. Past issues included windows and doors with drafts; lead paint; asbestos; old and ripped carpets; cracked walls; flammable cladding; and unhygienic bathrooms that no amount of cleaning can fix. Short term ad hoc work has addressed some of the most urgent issues but many remain.

The ACT Government partially completed a building report in 2013 however it was stalled and eventually discontinued. The report has never been finished,

despite many approaches to the Minister and Department. On current Departmental capacity calculations, increasing enrolments has seen specialist teaching rooms converted to classrooms. In 2021 the French room was converted in this way. These calculations could see other specialist spaces like the library and multi-function rooms converted to classrooms. This would lead to a major loss of learning opportunities.

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

1. Immediately conduct and complete a building condition report of Lyneham Primary School, to identify areas of high risk and undertake a risk-based program of maintenance.
2. Accept and implement the recommendations in the ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion Report - Managing ACT School Infrastructure, May 2022.
3. Remove all library and specialist teaching facilities from school capacity calculations.

*Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petitions, having more than 500 signatories, were referred to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion.*

## **Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021—oppose—petition 22-22**

*By Mr Hanson, from 361 residents:*

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

This **petition** of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention of the Assembly that:

1. There is a bill before the assembly to decriminalise small quantities of hard drugs, namely; ice, heroin, cocaine and methamphetamines.
2. Your petitioners fear that this bill, as currently worded will lead to an increase in hard drug use, especially by young people

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly to not proceed with this bill and if it is brought on for debate vote against it and instead improve rehabilitation facilities for drug users and fund a comprehensive education campaign to warn people, especially young people of the dangers involved in taking illicit drugs.

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

## **Ministerial responses**

The following responses to petitions have been lodged:

**Vehicle registration—transfer—petition 10-22**

By **Mr Barr**, Chief Minister, dated 24 June 2022, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Clay on 5 April 2022, concerning vehicle registration transfers.

*The response read as follows:*

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 5 April regarding petition 10-22, lodged by Ms Jo Clay MLA. The petition draws the Assembly's attention to barriers to motor vehicle registration transfer between family members, including paperwork and motor vehicle registration duty.

Ease of transfer

Minimal paperwork is required to transfer the registration of a vehicle within the ACT, regardless of whether the transfer is within a family or not. This requires a transfer registration application, proof of acquisition and, for vehicles over 6 years old, a certificate of inspection confirming the vehicle meets the applicable standards for registration in the ACT. This helps protect against fraud, reduces dispute around legal status, and aids with ongoing road safety for older vehicles.

When a vehicle is registered to multiple operators, the primary and joint operator order can be swapped over the phone. If an infringement notice relating to use of the vehicle has been issued for an offence, either an internet SmartForm or paper form can be submitted to nominate the actual driver responsible for the offence.

The government does not consider this to be arduous paperwork. There is little need or opportunity to amend the system for family transfers.

Motor vehicle registration duty

Motor vehicle registration duty is a tax on the registration of a vehicle after it is transferred and is not charged on the purchase of a vehicle.

Motor vehicle registration duty is one of the more efficient taxes on transfers, allows diversification of the ACT's revenue base, and is a strong tool for achieving environmental policy outcomes (such as encouraging reduction in carbon emissions). Exempting categories of vehicle registration transfer from duty diminishes these advantages. For this reason, the Government does not consider a broad exemption from motor vehicle duty between family members is appropriate.

Transfers to minors

The petition draws particular attention to the case where a parent or guardian is the registered operator while their child is in practice the main user of the vehicle. In most cases, there is no legal impediment from first registering the vehicle in the child's name and the Government would prefer the main user of the vehicle to be the primary registered operator. As indicated above, the vehicle can also be registered to multiple operators.

However, registering a child as the primary operator is not always possible. For example, this could occur for learner licence holders aged 15, until they turn 16

and are entitled to register a light passenger vehicle (or 16 years and 9 months for a motorbike). While this alignment could be explored further; I do not consider there is room for significant improvement.

I trust this information is of assistance.

### **Roads—Watson—petition 8-22**

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Transport and City Services, dated 24 June 2022, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Vassarotti on 6 April 2022, concerning a zebra crossing at a childcare centre in Watson.

*The response read as follows:*

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter regarding petition 8-22, lodged by Ms Rebecca Vassarotti MLA. The petition requests the ACT Government to address community concerns and to authorise the installation of a zebra crossing on Gwynne Street between the Nipperville Childcare Centre and Watson Shops.

Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) investigated the request for a pedestrian (zebra) crossing at this location and assessed it with reference to Australian Standards and ACT guidance for the installation of a zebra type crossing. This involved examination of traffic volumes and movements of pedestrians as well as crash history—both involving injury and property damage. This assessment indicated that a pedestrian (zebra) crossing was not warranted at this location as it did not meet the standard thresholds for traffic volumes or accident frequencies. However, to increase awareness of pedestrians, TCCS installed pedestrian warning signs on each entry of Gwynne Street.

TCCS has noted the concerns raised in the Petition. To seek more detailed site-specific advice, the directorate has engaged an independent consultant to undertake a Safety Assessment for installing a pedestrian (zebra) crossing on Gwynne Street.

The study will assess the risks and impacts associated with the installation of a zebra crossing and determine the most suitable location for the crossing if it is considered appropriate. The study will also consider other alternative measures to enhance pedestrian safety on the road and provide recommendations on the most suitable treatment or treatments for implementation on Gwynne Street.

The recommendations will be reviewed and any minor measures that are determined to be warranted will be implemented via the Minor New Works program, within existing funding. If necessary, these will be scheduled into the 2022-23 works program. Funding for any recommendations of more extensive works may be pursued through future budget process.

This further study has been commissioned and is expected to be completed by July 2022. Once options have been reviewed consultation with the community will then be undertaken on the recommended safety improvements.

I trust this information is of assistance.

**Roads—Kambah speed limits—petition 50-21**

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Transport and City Services, dated 24 June 2022, in response to a petition lodged by Dr Paterson on 5 April 2022, concerning traffic-calming measures in Kambah.

*The response read as follows:*

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter regarding petition 50-21, lodged by Dr Marisa Paterson MLA regarding speeding in Kambah.

The ACT Government is committed to improving road safety. Our vision is to see no deaths or serious injuries on our road transport network, as identified through the ACT Road Safety Strategy 2020-25.

I am pleased to advise that Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) completed a traffic study on Mannheim Street, Inkster Street, Marconi Crescent, Summerland Circuit and Livingston Avenue during the 2020-21 financial year.

In reference to transitioning from roads such as Drakeford Drive, Sulwood Drive, and Athllon Drive to residential lower-speed zones, the completed traffic study considers and recommends a variety of traffic calming measures to improve road safety on these lower speed roads. This includes consideration of treatments such as speed limit reduction and associated signage, road markings to narrow lane width and treatments to support safe pedestrian crossing points.

As part of the 2021-22 ACT Budget funding has been committed to upgrade the Sulwood Drive / Mannheim Street intersection and construct an off-road cycle path along Sulwood Drive between Drakeford Drive and Athllon Drive. This project is in the design planning phase and has been funded for construction. TCCS is currently designing the following measures:

- traffic signals with pedestrian crossing facilities at the intersection of Sulwood Drive and Mannheim Street;
- raised pedestrian crossing on Livingston Avenue approximately 40m south of Sulwood Drive; and
- raised pedestrian crossing on Inkster Crescent approximately 40m South of Sulwood Drive.

These measures will assist in providing a visual demarcation between the higher speed environment of Sulwood Drive and the connecting residential streets.

TCCS will consider the further recommendations of this traffic study in developing future programs of work for budget consideration. I have also asked TCCS to review the adequacy and appropriateness of speed limit signage in the residential areas highlighted by this petition, with a view to installing further signage if this is needed to clarify the transition from major thoroughfares to residential streets.

I trust this information is of assistance.

## **Housing—tenants wellbeing—petition 4-22**

By **Mr Rattenbury**, Attorney-General, dated 23 June 2022, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Braddock on 5 April 2022, concerning a wellbeing clause in the Residential Tenancies Act.

*The response read as follows:*

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 6 April 2022 regarding petition number 4-22, lodged by Mr Andrew Braddock MLA on behalf of the petitioners regarding a proposed amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* (the Act) to include a ‘wellbeing clause’ for tenants. This letter is my response, pursuant to Standing Order 100.

The ACT Government notes the petitioners’ concerns that under the current legislative framework, landlords and agencies are not obliged to consider the well-being of their tenants when making decisions about the tenancy arrangement. It is noted that the clause proposed for insertion in the Act includes a requirement for the landlord to compensate the tenant in the event that their decision, made lawfully under provisions of the Act, impacts the tenant in certain ways.

The ACT Government is committed to ensuring the rights and interests of tenants are adequately protected and has in recent years made a range of amendments to reform and modernise the Act so that tenancy laws are clearer, fairer and deliver better outcomes. The Government also has an ambitious program of reform for the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliamentary Assembly, including a commitment to end no cause terminations in the Territory, which is discussed in more detail below.

In undertaking reform to residential tenancy laws, it is important that the legitimate rights and interests of landlords, as well as tenants, are recognised and protected. This is a delicate balancing act and is one that is the subject of regular review and refinement by the Government. For instance, the rights of tenants to feel safe and secure in their homes must be balanced with the legitimate interests of landlords in managing their property. In doing so, the Act contains safeguards to ensure a tenants’ right to quiet enjoyment is protected but also provides a framework for the landlord to have access to their property where required. In the event that these interests are not respected by one or both parties, the Act creates remedies for breach.

The suggested clause would constitute a significant burden on landlords as it requires them to compensate tenants in the event they wish to lawfully use or maintain their property in accordance with residential tenancy laws. Taking into consideration that the Act has been designed to manage the competing interests of both tenants and landlords as much as possible, the Government does not propose to include the suggested wellbeing clause in the Act.

While I do not recommend a clause of the kind proposed in the petition being included in the Act, the ACT Government is undertaking reforms to the Act this year which will strengthen the rights of tenants in other ways.



Under the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement, the Government has committed to removing the ability of a landlord to evict a tenant for no cause. This reform is being progressed through policy development stages, and amendments to the RTA to remove the no cause termination provision will be brought forward within the next 12 months. This reform will mean that landlords will only be able to terminate a periodic tenancy where there is an identified and genuine reason under the Act. This important reform will significantly increase security of tenure for renters in the ACT but does not completely remove a landlord's ability to use their property if they can establish one of the permitted grounds for termination.

In addition to this reform, the Government is also considering amendments to make it easier for tenants to grow food and compost, to regulate rent bidding, and to introduce a framework for the introductions of minimum housing standards.

Together, these reforms will strengthen tenant's rights in the Territory in a meaningful and measured way. As these reforms are progressed, I encourage Canberrans to have their say to ensure the final reforms reflect the needs of the ACT community.

More information about upcoming residential tenancy reforms can be found at <https://yoursayconversations.act.gov.au/expanding-rights-renters>.

### **Braddon Park—upgrades—petitions 2-22 and 14-22**

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Transport and City Services, dated 28 July 2022, in response to petitions lodged by Ms Lee on 3 May 2022, concerning the upgrading of Braddon Park.

*The response read as follows:*

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 3 May 2022 regarding petitions 2-22 and 14-22, lodged by Ms Elizabeth Lee MLA. The petitions seek a citizen-led upgrade of Braddon Park, Lowanna Street in Braddon.

The ACT Government continues to invest in new and upgraded facilities across the Canberra region through our record program of suburban infrastructure upgrades. We have a strong track record of listening to the community as we deliver these upgrades, which include new and improved play spaces, sporting facilities, footpaths, seating, lighting and other important suburban infrastructure.

All requests for improvements to Canberra parks and play spaces are assessed and prioritised annually. Play spaces are considered for future improvements taking account of factors such as demand, demographics, equity, sustainability, co-location and availability of funding. This process ensures that investments in public spaces are suitably targeted and meet the needs of all Canberrans.

In May 2022, the ACT Government released the ACT Play Space Strategy following community engagement and consultation. The Strategy provides a clear vision, supported by key principles, objectives and actions to guide the future planning, delivery and management of play spaces in the ACT. It seeks to ensure an equitable, inclusive, diverse and engaging mix of play opportunities

across Canberra, to ensure all residents have equitable access to a mix of district, central and local neighbourhood playgrounds.

There are currently no plans to upgrade Braddon Park, Lowanna Street. However, should future upgrades be considered, consultation will be undertaken to ensure community needs and priorities are identified and incorporated.

This area of the inner north is well served by an existing network of green spaces. Haig Park, the Angas Street playground, Sullivans Creek green space and Corroboree Park are all within one kilometre walking distance from Lowanna Street. Corroboree Park, in particular, provides a range of recreational facilities including a basketball court, BBQs and playground. Further afield, the Hope Street playground in Dickson has recently benefited from significant investment and offers new playground facilities flat paths and seating.

The petitioners may also be interested to know that through the 2022-23 ACT Budget the Government will deliver on its election commitment to build a destination play space in the Inner North, catering for a range of age groups. The play space will be co-located with the Academy of Interactive Entertainment (AIE) campus in Watson.

The ACT Government provides the Canberra community the opportunity to garner support for citizen led projects within their locale through a number of grants processes. Grants provided through the 'Adopt-A-Park Community Grants' <https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/maintenance/volunteering> and 'Nature in the Cities Grant' <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/act-nrm/grants-and-support-packages/act-environment-grants> may allow the petitioners to address some of the issues identified within their petition.

I trust this information is of assistance.

## **Environment—kangaroo management—petition 17-22**

**Ms Vassarotti**, Minister for the Environment, dated 1 August 2022, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Pettersson on 2 June 2022, concerning kangaroo culling and the conduct of an independent review.

*The response read as follows:*

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 2 June 2022 providing Petition No. 17-22, lodged by Mr Michael Pettersson MLA, concerning the ACT Government's Kangaroo Management Program.

The petition questions the science behind the Kangaroo Management Program and requests a moratorium on kangaroo culling whilst an independent review is conducted.

The Government's response is structured in alignment with the key issues raised within the subject petition.

Eastern Grey Kangaroo populations are under threat generally throughout the ACT and are extinct in some areas.

There is no evidence to support the assertion that Eastern Grey Kangaroo populations are under threat throughout the ACT and are extinct in some areas.

The Eastern Grey Kangaroo is the most widespread and abundant kangaroo species in the ACT. It is listed as being of 'least concern' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The species is considered abundant locally and is not listed as threatened in any jurisdiction within Australia.

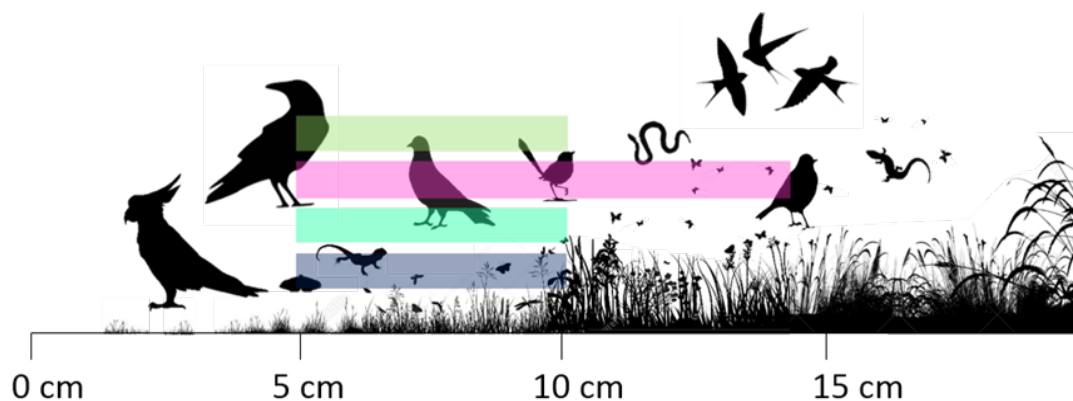
While some land uses in the ACT are unsuitable for kangaroos (for example city/urban areas and pine plantations etc), the ACT contains extensive habitat for kangaroos. Over 70% of the Territory is reserved Public Land (including nature reserves, national parks and unleased territory land) or other Government managed open space land.

Suitable Eastern Grey Kangaroo habitat extends throughout these areas, from the lower elevation grassy valleys in Namadgi National Park to the lowland grasslands, grassy woodlands and open forests of the plains, hills and ridges and river corridors. These areas provide suitable, often ideal, kangaroo habitat.

The petition questions the scientific basis for determining the sustainable levels of kangaroo populations to be retained.

The ACT Kangaroo Program has been periodically and scientifically peer reviewed. The ACT Kangaroo Management Plan was independently reviewed by eminent ecologist Associate Professor Graeme Coulson from the University of Melbourne who recommended it "serve as a model for the management of kangaroos and other wildlife in Australia".

The aim of kangaroo management in the ACT is to maintain kangaroos at densities that conserve the natural integrity of the ecological community and result in the maintenance of habitat for all grassland plant and animal species. Kangaroo densities are managed in order to maintain average grass heights between 5 -15 cm. Research has shown that this level of grass structure provides suitable habitat for a wide variety of species as shown in the Figure below. Further information on the research informing the management program can be found at: <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/nature-conservation/conservation-research/macropod-research>.



The sustainable kangaroo populations on conservation land is calculated in accordance with the Nature Conservation (Eastern Grey Kangaroo) Conservation Culling Calculator Determination 2018. The ‘one per hectare rule’ is the basis for this calculation and is set as the desired sustainable kangaroo density in grasslands under average climatic conditions. The sustainable number is scaled down with increasing tree canopy cover. This base density is then adjusted up or down based on current vegetation and climatic conditions. Annual site specific population estimates are used to calculate how many, if any, kangaroos need to be culled to achieve the desired density. Minimum population densities are retained to ensure no risk of extinction from culling activities.

The Petition questions the accuracy of the ACT Kangaroo Population surveys.

The ACT Government relies on the best practice scientific methodologies for undertaking kangaroo surveys and population estimates.

The ACT Government is aware of a recent report “Eastern Grey Kangaroos in Canberra Nature Park. Population estimates and culling history 2009-2021. A citizen science project April 2022”. The report details surveys for kangaroos undertaken in 37 Canberra Nature Park reserves with a total of 4,074 kangaroos reported. The counts for individual reserves have been redacted from the report. The ACT Government is a supporter of citizen science and commends the authors for the report.

However, the ACT Government is confident in its kangaroo population estimates that use robust counting methods suited to the individual sites. The citizen science report uses a single method known as “Direct counts” which is a valid method in some circumstances. Direct counts require observers searching the entire site and counting all individual kangaroos without missing any or counting any more than once. Repeat counts should be undertaken to validate results. This method of counting is only suitable for small sites with open vegetation and requires a high amount of knowledge about the site and the behaviour of the animals.

The direct count method is not suitable for many ACT nature reserve sites because of their size, vegetation and terrain. Attempting direct counts at these sites is likely to result in an underestimate of the true population size.

At these sites, ACT Government uses two other count methods – sweep counts and walked line transect counts.

- Sweep counts involve a coordinated line of people walking across a site and counting the kangaroos that move through the line. This type of count requires careful coordination of the counters, aided by the use of 2-way radios and maps. This type of count is suitable for sites larger than those that can be counted directly, and where the vegetation and terrain allow for good visibility from one counter to the next.
- The ACT Government now relies largely on walked line transect surveys which is suited to larger more heavily vegetated sites where kangaroos cannot be reliably counted by a direct or sweep count. Surveys utilising the walked line transect method adopt linear transects which, importantly, are unbiased with regard to landscape features such as roads or waterbodies, that are known to influence the distribution of kangaroos across the landscape and hence risk a bias in abundance estimates.

Observers walk approximately 44 km of transects per nature reserve with the aim of achieving a coefficient of variation around the mean abundance estimate of <20%. Surveys are undertaken in the early morning, when kangaroos are evenly dispersed across the grazing landscape and are most likely to be detected from survey lines, over approximately 11 days. Surveys are not conducted in strong wind, heavy fog, or rain.

Methods for counting kangaroos are described in the Eastern Grey Kangaroo: Controlled Native Species Management Plan (2017) (EGK:CNSMP) and in a recent peer reviewed publication available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/emr.12485>.

Kurahaupo Consulting independently reviewed the kangaroo population count methods, count results, the method for determining the number of kangaroos to cull in the ACT, and the science behind the relevant parts of the 2010 Kangaroo Management Plan (the key policy driver at the time). The review endorsed the ACT Government's counting methods and culling advice.

#### The ACT Government does not support a moratorium on kangaroo culling

The ACT Government's kangaroo management policy and programs are based on scientific knowledge supported by ongoing research, appropriate regulation and monitoring and national codes of practice. Ongoing improvement and review have been, and will continue to be, a key feature in the development of kangaroo management policy and the implementation of management programs in the ACT.

The ACT Government has been extremely transparent in the science behind the kangaroo management program, the lengths that it goes to with respect to animal welfare issues and the community perceptions to kangaroo management. I would direct members of the Assembly and the public to the Directorates webpage (<https://www.environment.act.gov.au/parks-conservation/plants-and-animals/urban-wildlife/kangaroos>).

An overview of the key review processes include:

- 2010 – The ACT Kangaroo Management Plan was released. This plan provides principles, objectives and policies relating to kangaroo management in the ACT. Its explanations include over 400 references including approximately 125 peer reviewed science journals and 155 books or book chapters, most of which have been peer reviewed.
- The conservation cull has been challenged in the ACAT three times: 2012 (did not go to hearing), 2013 and 2014 (reported in *Animal Liberation ACT v Conservator of Flora and Fauna (Administrative Review)* [2014] ACAT 35). Additionally, the cull of eastern grey kangaroos on Defence land was challenged in 2009. All four challenges were unsuccessful and the ACAT held that the conservation cull on both Territory and Defence land was valid.
- 2014 – Kurahaupo Consulting independently reviewed the kangaroo population count methods, count results, the method for determining the number of kangaroos to cull in the ACT, and the science behind the

relevant parts of the 2010 Kangaroo Management Plan. The review endorsed the ACT Government's counting methods and culling advice.

- 2017 – The Eastern Grey Kangaroo: Controlled Native Species Management Plan was released. This plan is an update on the 2010 Kangaroo Management Plan and applies only to Eastern Grey Kangaroos in the ACT. It is a statutory plan under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* and includes two instruments detailing the process for calculating the number of kangaroos to cull for conservation and rural purposes. This plan incorporates relevant research conducted since 2010, some updates to policies and codes of practice.
- 2018 – The ACT Government's adaptive management approach to managing kangaroo impacts on conservation lands was reviewed by a panel of experts during a Kangaroo Management Research Workshop held in 2018. A report was prepared detailing recommendations, including the adoption of a management goal for grassy ecosystems of maintaining between 5 and 15cm of grass (See figure above). This recommendation has become a key component of the management program, with annual monitoring of vegetation undertaken at all sites considered for culling and vegetation modelling incorporated into the cull calculations. The review report is available online at: [https://www.environment.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/1550292/kangaroo-management-research-report-april-2019.pdf](https://www.environment.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1550292/kangaroo-management-research-report-april-2019.pdf).
- 2008, 2011, 2015 and 2019 – Phone polls of ACT residents opinions to kangaroo management have been undertaken. The results show high support for kangaroo management in the ACT. The 2019 survey indicated that 79% of ACT residents agreed that culling kangaroos is appropriate under certain circumstances, 72% supported kangaroo culling for conservation of other native species while 12% are against culling under any circumstances. The support for culling has grown from 59% in 2008. Reports are available online at: <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/parks-conservation/plants-and-animals/urban-wildlife/kangaroos/opinion-poll-act-residents-views-on-kangaroo-management>.
- Macropod culling is conducted under the strictest animal welfare standards. An audit of compliance with National Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Non-Commercial Purposes is undertaken at 5-7-year intervals. A 2017 audit found that all aspects of the Code of Practice were complied with and can be viewed at [https://www.environment.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/1556892/animal-welfare-assessment-kangaroo-culling-2017.pdf](https://www.environment.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1556892/animal-welfare-assessment-kangaroo-culling-2017.pdf).

In keeping with the commitment to ongoing review and improvement, over the next 12 months the following activities will be undertaken:

- Repeat the ACT residents opinion poll;
- Review the 2017 Eastern Grey Kangaroo: Controlled Native Species Management Plan; and
- Undertake an independent veterinary audit during the 2023 conservation culling program to ensure continued regard to animal welfare issues.

I trust that this Government response has been helpful and provides advice on the issues raised in Petition No. 17-22.

## **Motion to take note of petitions**

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

That the petitions and responses so lodged be noted.

### **Roads—speed limits—petition 18-22**

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (10.53): I briefly want to speak to the petition from Principal Joe Zavone of St Edmund's College.

The section of Canberra Avenue between Hume Circle and Barrallier Street currently acts as a wall, stopping students from safely arriving and leaving both St Edmund's College and St Clare's College. We are trying to encourage active transportation for students to get to and from school, and this 60 kilometre an hour section of the road is a major deterrent.

For students who live north, the closest signalised crossings of Canberra Avenue are at least a kilometre, if not more, away on either side of the school, being at Captain Cook Crescent to the west and Nyrang Street to the east. The fact is, students are not going to be walking a further kilometre to make this detour, and it makes crossing this dangerous road a very appealing option.

There are also cafes and other businesses to the north of Canberra Avenue which act as magnets for older students in their break times, and they are crossing the busy street.

The school has been told that the only issue is parents dropping students in the median strip of Canberra Avenue, and this is not an issue. The school has been very clear, and the principal has been very clear, that this is not an issue. The issue is having a 60 kilometre an hour dual carriageway street that is bordering on two colleges.

The number of signatures gained in a very short period of time shows just how much the school communities of both St Edmund's and St Clare's care and are deeply concerned about this issue. I am sure that no-one in this place wants to see a student, or a child, or a parent, or anyone for that matter, hit by a car on this section of the road.

I know that Mr Zavone, the Principal of St Edmunds, has raised this issue with this Labor-Greens government a number of times over a number of months—as well as raising it with me so we would get this petition underway. I thank him for his hard work and the care that he puts into his role as guardian for his students, and I know that this is also of great concern to the school communities at St Clare's.

I note that it has gained more than 500 signatures, so it will go to a committee, but I do implore the minister to listen to the concerns that have been raised by the school communities and rethink his approach. The 40 kilometre zones that we see are a common place outside every school, and this should be no exception.

**Environment—Callum Brae Nature Reserve—petition 16-22**

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (10.56): I would like to speak about three of the petitions tabled today, two of which I have sponsored.

I sponsored the Callum Brae Nature Reserve petition. Pamela Collett brought that to me, along with several community members. They were really worried about a proposed development of a large crematorium and works next to Callum Brae, and they are worried that will detract from connectivity and destroy mature trees.

I understand that Callum Brae contains critically endangered Yellow Box, Blakely Red Gum, grassy woodland and is habitat to several species, some of which are listed as vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered. It is also a popular spot with walkers and a great location for birdwatchers.

I have asked several ministers questions about our current and future needs for crematoria services in the ACT. In the last two years we have doubled our crematoria from one to two. This current proposal, that the petition is about, is a tentative third, and there is a fourth planned as part of Southern Memorial Park.

The 583 people that have signed this petition,.; are requesting the Assembly: review Canberra's needs for future crematoria—ensuring that we only build as many as we need; consider alternative burial methods; ensure a full environmental assessment is done for this particular DA; and add a block and a section to the existing Callum Brae Nature Reserve.

I am really looking forward to the petition travelling through the Assembly process.

**Waste—proposed waste to energy incinerator site—petition 12-22**

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (10.58): I also sponsored the petition by Communities Against the Tarago Incinerator—about the New South Wales government proposal for a waste-to-energy incinerator at Tarago, which is only 35 kilometres from the ACT border and around 50 kilometres from where Harrison and Hackett residents live. That petition has 919 signatures, which shows that a lot of people are really concerned about this.

The ACT government has a commitment not to build waste-management facilities here in the ACT, and there are serious and genuine risks raised by the community about the burning of rubbish.

The ACT government is currently seeking to include the right to a healthy environment in our Human Rights Act, and I am interested in how a waste-to-energy facility on our doorstep will fit in with that.

This petition states that the proposed incinerator at Tarago will burn 380,000 tonnes of Sydney's waste each year, including plastics, municipal and industrial waste. The petition says it will operate 24 hours a day for 30 years.



The New South Wales government plan says these facilities are unsafe for Sydney—reporting some common air pollutants—and says there is no safe threshold of impact. It cites research concluding that contamination of food and ingestion of pollutants is a significant risk pathway for nearby and distant residents. Emissions modelling has demonstrated that pollutants could spread throughout ACT and surrounds.

The petition states that the proposed incinerator jeopardises moves to protect Canberrans from climate change and to ensure that everyone can access clean air, clean water, healthy food and nature.

The 919 petitioners have asked the Assembly: to publicly oppose this proposal; to ban ACT waste from being used as a feedstock in it; to call on the ACT government to liaise with New South Wales government counterparts to make sure the ACT opposition is heard; to call on the ACT government to lodge a submission to oppose the proposal; and to call on the ACT government to conduct an awareness campaign to make sure Canberrans are informed and know how to have their say on this proposal.

### **Environment—Bluetts Block-Piney Ridge—petition 11-22**

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (11.00): Lastly, I would like to speak briefly on the petition sponsored by my colleague Dr Marisa Paterson on the protection of Bluetts Block-Piney Ridge. This is close to our hearts in the Greens. Minister Rebecca Vassarotti and I have both been out to see Bluetts Block. We have both spoken in here repeatedly about the need for sound environmental studies on the western edge, and we have worked really hard to make sure there is greater information in the public domain about Bluetts Block and the whole of the western edge.

This petition requests the Assembly to call on the ACT government to ensure there are full ecological assessments done on these blocks before any decisions are made about development. It also seeks a declaration of a nature reserve, where appropriate, after these assessments have been done.

I would like to support this petition and ensure that these calls extend to all of the blocks named in the petition and for all environmentally significant areas in the western edge. I am pleased to see the voice of democracy in here in so many petitions that we have before us today.

### **Schools—maintenance—petitions 15-22 and 21-22**

**MR DAVIS** (Brindabella) (11.01): I am pleased to table the petition I have sponsored on behalf of the Lyneham Primary School P&C and the more than 500 concerned Canberrans who support it. The petitioners are rightfully very concerned about the state of their school buildings.

Every child in the ACT has a right to a comfortable and safe environment at school. The ACT government knows that there are a number of older schools that do have serious building quality issues, particularly those older schools concentrated in our booming inner north. Therefore, the petitioners' requests are reasonable and sensible.

They are asking for a comprehensive building condition report to be done at their school and for action to be taken on a risk-based program of maintenance. This is to respond to a number of issues they have identified, including but not limited to cracked walls, old and ripped carpets and, in particular, unhygienic bathrooms that no amount of cleaning can fix.

The Lyneham Primary School community, like all our school communities, cares deeply about the conditions that their students learn in. They are asking for the implementation of the recommendations of this Assembly's inquiry into the management of ACT school's infrastructure.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion—I sat on that committee—I endorse all of its recommendations. One recommendation I particularly endorse—and it is of particular stress to the people at Lyneham Primary School—is to ensure that libraries and other specialist teaching spaces are excluded from the school's capacity calculations.

We know in Canberra's inner north that our population continues to increase. In fact, many of us in this place were caught by surprise by the recent census that shows that all parts of Canberra continue to increase at rates that were not expected. If that is to continue in the inner north, particularly with more medium and high density urban infill development, which of course we Greens support, it stands to reason that there will be even greater student populations coming to some of Canberra's oldest schools. It is not unreasonable to expect that these schools are of the highest possible quality for our newest Canberrans. That starts with a detailed and comprehensive audit of the facilities at Lyneham Primary School and appropriate investments to ensure the maintenance of their school community long-term.

It has been put to me that the Lyneham Primary School community and their P&C should not have to petition government to ensure that their young people have a clean and safe place to send their kids to school, but I do think the petitioning process is an important and valuable opportunity for communities to highlight areas of necessary investment.

As you can imagine, Madam Speaker, as the Greens spokesperson for education, and the sponsor of this petition, I will be keenly inspecting the budget papers tabled by the Treasurer this afternoon to ensure that Lyneham Primary School and other schools are adequately invested in so they are safe, clean spaces for teaching and learning.

### **Environment—Bluetts Block-Piney Ridge—petition 11-22**

**DR PATERSON** (Murrumbidgee) (11.04): I wish to speak to the Bluetts Block-Piney Ridge petition. As a local member for Murrumbidgee, I am very proud and pleased to support this e-petition from the Conservation Council and residents across Canberra who are invested in the future of Bluetts Block-Piney Ridge.

The petitioners who signed the petition called on the government to ensure that a full ecological assessment is undertaken of Stromlo blocks 402 and 403. This e-petition was signed by 732 community members, with signatories outlining that the area provides important landscape connectivity from the Murrumbidgee River corridor to

Black Mountain, and that without connectivity many animal species cannot find food, shelter or space to breed.

The petitioners asked the government to ensure that Stromlo blocks 402 and 403 undergo full ecological assessment. They further asked to ensure that urban development is not pursued on block 12 section 1 Denman Prospect until there is sufficient information to decide on the environmental significance of the block.

Another point in the petition was to ensure that the ecological considerations of Stromlo blocks 402 and 403 and Denman Prospect block 12 section 1 included the impacts on threatened species, critically endangered box-gum woodland, old-growth trees, landscape connectivity, and consideration of urban edge effects.

Finally, the petitioners asked for, following full ecological assessments, assurance that areas that have nationally outstanding ecosystems and species, formed mostly by non-human factors, are declared as nature reserves.

For those who live in the Molonglo Valley and for ecologically minded Canberrans across the territory, the preservation of high-value environmental land is a major issue. The importance placed on environmental factors thus far in the process of the western edge investigation highlights exactly this.

As the blocks colloquially known as Bluetts Block sit within the western edge investigation area, it is integral that, as the investigation proceeds, thorough consideration is given to the environmental realities of the space to the west of Belconnen, Molonglo, Weston Creek and Kambah.

The 2021 census showed that Canberra is growing, and growing at a faster rate than expected. The nearby Molonglo Valley grew by about 250 per cent between 2016 and 2021. Canberra is growing, and that is why it is important that we undertake these assessments.

Several weeks ago, preliminary reports on the western edge area were publicly released. These preliminary reports provide an initial informed understanding of the area, ranging from water values and landscape character to bushfire risk and ecology. The reports outline what work should be done as the investigation proceeds to gain a more detailed understanding of the environment across the entire space, including Bluetts Block. They are a positive start to the thorough and detailed environmental investigations that are planned as part of this process.

The ACT government's commitment to planning for Canberra's future and investigating the potential future uses of land, such as potential urban areas, environmental protection areas and nature reserves is both welcome and necessary. Signatories of this petition will be eagerly anticipating the next steps of the investigation, including the capability and sustainability assessment of the western edge that is underway, as well as the further studies that will be conducted.

I am proud to have sponsored this petition on behalf of 732 community members about the future of Bluetts Block. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to sign this petition. I look forward to the minister's response, and I welcome the consideration of these matters by the committee.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (11.08): I would like to thank Dr Paterson for bringing forward the petition about Bluetts Block and Piney Ridge today. It is an area that I, too, have visited on a number of occasions, along with passionate local birdwatchers and bushwalkers. It is a beautiful area and it is home to many different animal species—to many bird species. I appreciate the significance that this area has for members of the community, not just those nearby but those across Canberra, who go there to look at the wildlife. Places like Bluetts Block remind us of how lucky we are to live in Canberra and what living in the bush capital is all about.

As with any government decision, there are tensions, because we all know that there is a very real housing crisis in Canberra. The Canberra Liberals have been pushing for the government to release more land and provide real options for Canberrans hoping to buy a home here. However, urban development and preserving key environmental assets can and must work together in order for Canberra to remain the bush capital.

We all know the literature and the research about the importance of preserving bushland and green belts in our cities—not just the environmental benefits and the connectivity but the health and mental health of residents. We are extremely supportive of calls for an ecological assessment of this area before any decision relating to development is made.

I would like to point out that I feel there has been some hypocrisy in the deliberate politicisation of this issue by the ACT Greens. The ACT Greens campaigned aggressively on this issue during the 2020 election campaign, promising voters that they would deliver nature reserve status to Bluetts. I am not quite sure where that has ended up. One minute the Greens have promised the world in the election campaign and in the next there has been a very subdued response from them. As part of their grab for power, we have three Greens in cabinet, one of whom holds the environment portfolio and another who represents the electorate of Murrumbidgee, where Bluetts Block is located. We have had a very subdued reaction from them.

I would like to acknowledge Ms Clay's work on this issue. But what are the Greens standing for here? They campaigned on it in the election; since then the ministers have gone very quiet on it. There have been some non-committing statements on their Facebook pages, despite being a part of holding the reins of power for Canberra. It is not as though there is some great divide with their Labor colleagues on the issue, either, because Labor seem to be very supportive of making Bluetts Block a nature reserve. Dr Paterson, a Labor backbencher, has tabled this petition today. Clearly, it is because despite those Greens promises, the Greens in government have once again failed to deliver. They should feel embarrassed about their efforts in this regard, despite all of the tools of government at their disposal and despite their election campaigning.

Perhaps the Greens should have a long, hard look at themselves, what they really stand for and their role in this government. They talk about delivering for government. What have they delivered for Bluetts Block-Piney Ridge so far? What have they done to protect this important area? What is it that they stand for?

Thank you, Dr Paterson, once again, for bringing this important petition to the Assembly.

## **Paper**

### **Out-of-order petition**

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (11.12), by leave: I present the following paper:

Petition which does not conform with the standing orders—Kaleen—Maintenance of playground between Woronora and Glenelg Streets—Ms Orr (21 signatures).

This is a great petition from a local resident in Kaleen, Marilyn, who, along with her neighbours, has shown a particular passion for a local playground near her street. Together they have come up with quite a few good ideas as to how it could be improved. I look forward to the petition going to the minister, and to having a chat with him in the future about Marilyn's great enthusiasm for this area and what can be done.

## **Petitions**

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the petitions and responses so lodged be noted.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Education—Affiliated Schools Program**

### **Ministerial statement**

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (11.13): I am happy to address the Legislative Assembly today on the Affiliated Schools Program, a nation-leading partnership between the ACT Education Directorate and the University of Canberra.

The Affiliated Schools Program is one way the ACT government is investing in teachers and supporting their learning, creating opportunities for new collaborations and building a leading public education system here in the ACT. It also demonstrates how much we value our teachers and the daily investments they make to help children and young people grow and learn.

The Affiliated Schools Program was launched in 2019 and is a key initiative under the ACT's Future of Education Strategy. There are 26 ACT public schools engaged in the Affiliated Schools Partnership. This program is developing quality teacher practice from pre-service education through to experienced teacher learning and development. It draws on leading practice nationally and internationally and is contextualised to our unique ACT setting.

The ACT government has invested \$4.5 million over four years towards the Affiliated Schools Partnership to further empower our experienced teachers and school leaders to develop and support our pre-service educators. The Affiliated Schools Partnership

involves several elements, bringing together the expertise of university staff, teachers and school leaders to improve student outcomes in ACT public schools.

The first element is an investment in the future workforce, with pre-service teachers working throughout the term at a public school with their lecturers in school-based teacher education clinics. This provides authentic, hands-on learning with the ability to receive feedback from lecturers and experienced teachers in a school-based context.

In addition to regular prac placements, this ensures our future teachers spend more time learning in schools alongside experienced educators and working directly with students in schools. This is fast proving to have a positive impact on pre-service teachers by ensuring they are classroom ready, providing a pathway to future school employment.

The second element of the partnership is the investment in our teachers and school leaders through the Master of Education Scholarships. We know that the quality of teaching practice has the biggest impact on student learning. The master's scholarships provide educators with the opportunity to analyse and conduct research relevant to the teaching profession, with units of study aligned to the ACT government's Future of Education Strategy.

The third element provides professional learning and research opportunities for existing teachers. Teacher professional learning is provided through a series of masterclasses delivered by UC academics and offered to all school classroom educators and school leaders. Research projects are celebrated and shared at the Affiliated Schools conference. The conference brings together the affiliated schools to showcase research projects undertaken by ACT teachers, UC-commissioned research projects.

It was my pleasure to be part of last year's conference through the presentation of the teacher mentor awards. Outstanding mentors are nominated by UC pre-service teachers in recognition of the investment that experienced educators make in supporting new educators. The Teacher Research Program delivers teachers as school-based researchers and enhances the understanding, knowledge and skills to participate in a small-scale project research within their own school. Affiliated schools' educators and school leaders work shoulder to shoulder with UC Faculty of Education researchers on large-scale research projects.

A highlight for me has been visiting our schools and talking to educators who are at the forefront of academic research and leading this exciting work. I joined teachers and students at Kaleen Primary School, where the years 1 and 2 team have been working with Dr John Williams, from UC, and Sophie Newton, a specialist physical education and health coach, to develop a student-centred approach to physical education. Dr Williams, Assistant Professor of Health and PE and Teacher Education at the University of Canberra, said that this project is a potential game changer for how physical education can be taught in early childhood classes. This approach focuses on developing students' ability to self-evaluate their fundamental movement and skills and choose approaches to enhance and achieve mastery of these skills. Danielle O'Connor, a year 2 teacher at Kaleen Primary School, says that the project fosters student independence and increases self-awareness in mastering fundamental

skills, and that seeing the different modes and avenues for the delivery of PE lessons has already influenced differentiation in her classroom practice. Well done to Danielle and all of the other teachers involved in this project on their commitment to the profession and their dedication to bring leading practice to the classroom.

Last year I visited Lake Tuggeranong College to see firsthand the Country as Teacher research project. This is happening across four ACT public schools. This project is building cultural integrity by engaging teachers and students with time on country to sit and be present. I was invited to be part of a yarnning circle, where teachers spoke about their time on country, led by UC researcher Ben Wilson. Helen Uren-Randall, a teacher involved in the research at Lake Tuggeranong College, says the program's focus on Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing gives teachers permission to sit and think about curriculum connectedness to country. The outcome was that the teachers were able to take this task back to their classrooms and share their experiences with their students across a broad range of subject areas. It was a privilege to participate and hear teachers speak passionately about the ways in which they have connected with country and learnt about from the local environment.

I look forward to visiting more schools to share in the incredible research our teachers and school leaders are conducting in partnership with UC to make the ACT school system nation-leading in teacher education and research. I commend the Affiliated Schools Program and thank the University of Canberra for their commitment to the program. Through it, you are making an important contribution to the future of education in the ACT.

Lastly, and most importantly, thank you to all of Canberra's teachers and school leaders. Your commitment to the development and learning of our children and young people is admired. It is your dedication to students and our future teachers that is driving the continuous improvement of teaching practice here in the ACT.

I present the following paper:

Investing in the future of education through the Affiliated School Program—  
Ministerial statement, 2 August 2022.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

### **COVID-19 pandemic—update Ministerial statement**

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH** (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (11.20): Thank you Mr Assistant Speaker. I rise to provide the Assembly with an update on the COVID-19 situation in the ACT and the actions being taken by the ACT government to protect the health and wellbeing of Canberrans.

Since my last update on 1 June 2022, the COVID-19 situation in the ACT has changed. As we continue to respond to high COVID-19 case numbers and move through the winter period, I again urge Canberrans to adhere to the COVID smart behaviours we are all familiar with.

This means being up to date with vaccinations, staying home if you are unwell, getting tested for COVID-19 and wearing a face mask when in high-risk settings or indoors where physical distance cannot be maintained. Mr Assistant Speaker, over the past eight weeks the COVID-19 situation in Australia has shifted.

All states and territories are experiencing high case numbers following the arrival of the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron subvariants. While it is difficult to predict the future, we expect that case numbers will remain relatively high over the coming weeks and this will see continued pressure on our healthcare systems and hospitals.

The ACT government continues to work productively with the commonwealth and other jurisdictions to monitor the COVID-19 situation across Australia. National cabinet most recently met on 16 July and will meet fortnightly as all jurisdictions continue to respond to this challenging winter period.

In the ACT, as at 8 pm on 31 July, there have been a total of 191,457 recorded cases since the start of the pandemic in March 2020. There were 4,968 active cases with 165 people with COVID-19 admitted to hospital, two of whom were in intensive care. Sadly, there have been 92 deaths since the start of the pandemic. The ACT government expresses its sincere condolences to the families and loved ones of these people.

As at 9 am on 1 August, the ACT had conducted 1,598 PCR tests in the previous 24 hours. There were also 1,152 individuals living in Canberra who had declared as household contacts. Household contacts continue to be required to quarantine for a period of seven days from the last time a person in their household tested positive for COVID-19, unless they can comply with specific risk mitigation requirements.

The Omicron BA.5 subvariant has become the dominant variant within the ACT, with more than 90 per cent of sequenced samples in the week to 24 July 2022, confirmed as belonging to this sub-lineage. The rapidly growing prevalence of BA.5 has been contributing to an increase in cases in the ACT, in large part due to its immune escape from people who have been vaccinated or previously infected with COVID-19.

Mr Assistant Speaker, despite seeing immune escape associated with the new variants, the ACT's world leading COVID-19 vaccination program continues to provide Canberrans with excellent protection from severe disease and hospitalisation due to COVID-19.

I am pleased to report that in the ACT, 80.6 per cent of 5- to 11-year-olds have been vaccinated with the first dose of vaccine, and 67 per cent are up-to-date with their vaccination having received a second dose; 97.4 per cent of all Canberrans aged five years and older have now completed their primary vaccination course; and 77.7 per cent of eligible Canberrans (16+) have now received a booster or third dose.



Mr Assistant Speaker, ATAGI, the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, has recently changed its advice on second winter booster doses, and now recommends a second booster for people aged 50 years and older. People aged 30 to 49 years can also now access a second booster dose.

We have seen strong demand for this added level of protection from eligible Canberrans. As of 31 July, 80,862 winter booster doses had been administered to eligible ACT residents. This includes 49.4 per cent of people living in the ACT who are aged 50-years and older. This is a great result, and I thank Canberrans for their continued eagerness to get vaccinated.

However, there is still room for improvement. There are more than 150 pharmacists and general practitioners located in the ACT who are available to provide COVID-19 vaccinations. I strongly encourage everyone who is eligible to come forward to boost their protection, especially those who are more vulnerable to severe illness. Vaccination continues to be the best protection you can offer yourself and our hospital system, as we grapple with our current health challenges.

Mr Assistant Speaker, it is vital that every Canberran has access to COVID-19 vaccinations regardless of their personal circumstances. In support of this, the ACT government's Equity to Access Program operated from September 2021 to 30 June 2022. The program provided vaccination to communities that experienced barriers to accessing health services and those likely to experience a disproportionate burden of disease.

During its operations the program administered 3,211 doses across 157 home visits, 71 clinics in community in-reach settings and 48 public pop-up vaccination clinics across the ACT. As vaccination rates have increased, demand for this service has declined, making this the appropriate time to wind down this specialist service.

The success of the program was due to an effective partnership with Aspen Medical, who provided a dedicated clinical team prepared to work in a wide range of environments to ensure we reached as many Canberrans as possible. The program also relied heavily on community sector partnerships to provide information about what was happening in their communities and to connect ACT Health with these communities.

I would like to thank the service providers who helped the ACT government to deliver this program including the Ted Noffs Foundation, Meridian ACT, Catholic Care Canberra and Goulburn, Sharing Places, Toora Womens Service, Australian Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul, Federation of Indian Associations, Salvation Army, Canberra Youth Residential Service, CCCares, Focus ACT, Hepatitis ACT, Yedding Mura Aboriginal Corporation, Directions Health Services, Karinya House, Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services, Interchange Health Co-operative and UnitingCare Canberra.

The program also relied on valuable partnerships with Canberra's specialist schools and the community organisations that hosted pop-up clinics, Turner Scouts and German Play Group, Charnwood Murrungundie Girl Guides, YWCA Canberra, Tuggeranong Link, and Community Services of Gungahlin.

To these schools and organisations, I also say thank you. Although the equity to access program has ended, the ACT government continues to provide world-leading access for people to receive their COVID-19 vaccinations at the Access and Sensory Clinic in Weston Creek.

The Access and Sensory clinic offers COVID-19 vaccinations to people who experience barriers to mainstream vaccination services due to a range of factors including disability or a mental health condition. If you know someone who may be eligible to receive a free COVID-19 vaccination, or indeed a free flu vaccination, from the Access and Sensory Clinic, please encourage them to contact the bookings team on 5124 3999, during business hours, to arrange an appointment.

Mr Assistant Speaker, Canberra Health Services has also continued its specialist vaccination clinic to ensure that people who are at high risk for allergic reaction to vaccines, a vaccine ingredient, or who have a medical history of concern, are able to be vaccinated. Patients who believe they may be eligible should speak with their GP regarding a referral to this clinic.

Mr Assistant Speaker, I would also like to take the opportunity to encourage Canberrans to come forward to receive their influenza vaccination. Influenza vaccines are particularly important this year, being the first year we have seen a significant number of flu cases since 2019.

The most recent data shows that the ACT has already seen one peak of influenza cases this year. However, the traditional flu season extends until October, so I urge Canberrans to remain vigilant against a possible second wave. The ACT government recognises that cost can be a barrier to vaccination for some members of the community. From 6 June, the Access and Sensory Clinic has provided free influenza vaccinations to concession card holders and people with a disability or mental health conditions.

Influenza can be deadly. The ACT has already received around 1,900 confirmed reports of influenza from laboratories this year. I strongly encourage Canberrans to protect themselves, their families and their community by making arrangements with their primary care provider for vaccination or making a booking with the Access and Sensory Clinic if that is applicable for their situation.

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) has been reviewing its current recommendations and statements in relation to COVID-19. On 10 June, AHPPC provided updated advice about the wearing of masks in airport settings, concluding that it is no longer proportionate to mandate mask use in airports. Following this advice, the Chief Health Officer removed the requirement for face masks to be worn in the Canberra airport terminal, with effect from 11.59 pm on 17 June 2022.

Despite this change, I remind Canberrans that face masks are still mandatory in the following circumstances: for household contacts 12 years and older in any indoor setting that is not their own home; on public transport, including a public bus, light rail vehicle, taxi, rideshare vehicle, hire car or demand responsive service vehicle;

if you are staff or a visitor entering a high-risk setting; when you provide a service to a person with a disability or through in-home and community aged care; and on flights into and out of Canberra airport. While not otherwise mandatory, the ACT government strongly encourages Canberrans to continue to wear face masks when attending busy indoor settings, where physical distancing may not always be possible.

In early July 2022, the AHPPC also provided advice on appropriate health protection measures to support the community. This advice noted that the BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants are associated with increased immune escape, which was likely to see rates of reinfection rise among individuals who had previously been infected with an earlier variant, and those who are up to date with their vaccinations. As reinfections could occur as early as 28 days after recovery from a previous infection, the advice from AHPPC noted that the reinfection period should be reduced from 12 weeks to 28 days.

As such, people who test positive for COVID-19 more than 28 days after their clearance from isolation should be reported and managed as a new case. The updated advice on the reinfection period was applied from 11.59 pm on 11 July in the ACT, through an amendment to the Public Health (Diagnosed People and Household Contacts) Emergency Direction.

Over the past month, our public hospitals have experienced their highest number of COVID-19 hospitalisations to date, peaking at 171 in patients in July. Increased COVID-19 related hospitalisations and the continued impact of workforce pressures is placing hospitals across the country under enormous strain.

Canberra Health Services is working productively with its private hospital and residential aged care partners to increase patient flow between facilities, where appropriate. While the numbers are small and care is being taken in this process, this is helping Canberra Health Services to create capacity so that acute hospital care can be provided at sites where we are seeing the bulk of COVID-19 admissions.

The Garran Surge Centre continues to provide much needed capacity for the health system. The COVID-19 clinic has seen a strong and sustained level of presentations of COVID-19 positive patients in need of non-urgent face-to-face health care. This important clinic is taking pressure off the Emergency Department without diverting ED resources. In addition, the surge centre continues to function effectively and efficiently as one of Canberra's public COVID-19 testing sites.

Mr Assistant Speaker, encouragingly, hospitalisation rates as a percentage of case numbers continue to fall, as do ICU admissions. From August 2021 to July 2022, there have been more than 170,000 infections documented in the ACT, with a hospitalisation rate of between 0.2 and 0.3 per cent. This rate is much lower than many other developed nations.

This is in no small part due to our high levels of vaccination and strong access to antivirals provided to Canberrans. I would like to remind all Canberrans who think they might be eligible for antiviral treatment, that they should make an appointment with their GP or register with the COVID Care@Home program as soon as they test positive to COVID-19 to ensure timely access to these treatments early in your illness.

Even better, they should plan with their GP of what they will do if they get COVID, so antivirals can be prescribed quickly and easily if required. Canberra Health Services' COVID Care@Home program has provided care and support to more than 113,000 patients since August 2021. More than 10,300 of these patients have had direct phone contact and subsequent medical assessment.

Of all patients referred, more than 50,000 have accessed the optional MyChart phone app for home communication and care. Supply of oximeters and thermometers to those deemed moderate to high risk continues, as does antiviral therapy for COVID-19. This is in line with the COVID-19 National Taskforce guidelines.

The recent listing of antiviral medications on the pharmaceutical benefits scheme, by the commonwealth government has allowed community-based prescriptions to be written by GPs and I thank them for assisting our strong response to COVID-19.

Mr Assistant Speaker, the Post COVID Recovery Clinic based at the University of Canberra Hospital in Bruce has received more than 100 referrals since it commenced in March 2022 for people who have had COVID-19 more than 12 weeks ago but have been unable to return to their usual activities.

Initial clients of the clinic will soon be finishing their rehabilitation programs and I look forward to sharing outcomes of the clinic when they are available. I am sure that members will once again join me in offering our sincere appreciation to all the health professionals and staff who have worked exceptionally hard to help the territory achieve our world leading vaccination rates; to care for people with COVID-19; to provide Canberrans with access to testing; and to maintain the operations of the health system, across our hospitals, walk-in centres, community health centres, general practices, pharmacies, and allied health providers.

I know that there has been some criticism of thanking health workers for their work during these times, but it remains very important that we do keep saying thank you. It is important that we acknowledge the strain they have been under for the past three years, since the record flu season in the winter of 2019, and that we thank them for their invaluable service to the Canberra community.

But the ACT government is not just thanking healthcare workers with our words, we are investing in the future of our health workforce and our health services. Both through the budget and with a specific recovery project currently being developed with frontline staff. As I announced last week, the government will fund a multi-year, multimillion-dollar investment in health workforce wellbeing and recovery, which will support our public health workforce with the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic now and into the future.

This program of work will be co-designed with our workforce to ensure that what is delivered will be practical and specific to the individual areas of public health services and will support initiatives that will have a positive ongoing effect on recovery. The design of this investment will be informed by the health and wellbeing symposium, which I had the pleasure of opening yesterday.

This package will be finalised as soon as possible following the co-design process. I now table the Chief Health Officer's 28th and 29th reports on the status of the public health emergency due to COVID-19:

Status of the Public Health Emergency due to COVID-19—Chief Health Officer Reports—

No 28—1 July 2022, dated 6 July 2022.

No 29—28 July 2022, dated 28 July 2022.

The reports cover the actions taken by the Chief Health Officer and the ACT government's COVID-19 response for 60 days up to 29 July 2022. The Chief Health Officer will continue to review the epidemiological situation to ensure that the COVID-19 response remains appropriate.

Unfortunately, it remains the case that the current epidemiological situation is uncertain. While there is some positive news in relation to the pressure being faced by the ACT's health system, COVID-19 case numbers, while coming down at the moment, continue to remain high. This is consistent with the experience of other jurisdictions at present.

In her most recent report, the Chief Health Officer has advised the ACT government that the public health emergency declaration, currently due to expire on 11 August, should be extended for a further 60 days while the ACT continues to move through the winter period and responds to the BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants.

The government will consider the Chief Health Officer's advice and I will provide a further update on the extension of the public health emergency later this week. It is envisaged that once we move out of this current uncertain winter period, we will look to step down from a public health emergency declaration and transition to a COVID-19 management declaration framework while there continues to be a level of risk to the community.

The ACT has long been preparing for the winter period and the uncertain scenario we are currently facing. While we continue to see high case numbers, the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable in our community remains a priority. The ACT government has responded strongly to COVID-19 over the past two years, and we continue to do so.

The government appreciates that the community may be fatigued by the COVID-19 situation. However, I ask all Canberrans to continue to adhere to the public health advice and practice COVID smart behaviours to help keep themselves, and their loved ones, safe from COVID-19.

I present the following papers:

Coronavirus (COVID-19)—ACT Government response—Update—Ministerial statement, 2 August 2022.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Standing orders—suspension**

**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) (11.39): I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent:

- (1) any business before the Assembly at 5 pm on 2 August 2022 being interrupted to allow the Treasurer to be called on forthwith to present the Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023;
- (2) where business before the Assembly has concluded before 5 pm on 2 August 2022, the Assembly shall suspend proceedings and reconvene at 5 pm to allow the Treasurer to be called on forthwith to present the Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023;
- (3) at 5 pm on 4 August 2022, the order of the day for the resumption of debate on the question that the Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023, be agreed to in principle, being called on notwithstanding any business before the Assembly;
- (4) debate on any motion before the Assembly at the time of interruption being adjourned until the adjournment questions in relation to the Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023 are determined; and
- (5) where business before the Assembly has concluded before 5 pm on 4 August 2022, the Assembly shall suspend proceedings and reconvene at 5 pm to allow resumption of debate on the question that Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023 be agreed to in principle.

This is a routine motion. I thank Ms Lawder and Mr Braddock for their engagement on this.

Question resolved in the affirmative, with the concurrence of an absolute majority.

## **Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 18**

**MR CAIN** (Ginninderra) (11.40): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 18, dated 27 July 2022, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

**MR CAIN:** Scrutiny Report No 18 contains the committee's comments on five bills, 13 pieces of subordinate legislation and one government response. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

### **Scrutiny report 19**

**MR CAIN** (Ginninderra) (11.40): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 19, dated 1 August 2022, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

**MR CAIN:** Scrutiny Report No 19 contains the committee's comments on proposed amendments to the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

### **Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee Report 5**

**MS CASTLEY** (Yerrabi) (11.41): I present the following report:

Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee—Report 5—*Inquiry into memorialisation through public commemoration*, dated 1 August 2022, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

On 2 June 2021, petition 6-21, "Monumental Women", was presented to the Legislative Assembly and was subsequently referred to the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality for consideration, under standing order 99.

The petition concerned the disproportionately large number of public statues, suburbs and streets dedicated to or named after men and requested that the Assembly call on the ACT government to:

Look to promote equality and diversity in the people we recognize through public commemoration;

Increase the prominence of women in place naming conventions across the territory; and

Identify opportunities to increase the representation of women, especially of diverse backgrounds and First Nations leaders in our public statues.

On 15 June 2021 the committee resolved to conduct a widened inquiry into memorialisation through public commemoration, by self-referral. While the committee's inquiry expanded on the scope of the petition, the requests made by the petitioners to the Legislative Assembly formed part of the terms of reference. A total of 16 submissions were received by the committee in the course of the inquiry. The committee held a public hearing on 24 May and has made 12 recommendations.

These recommendations encourage the ACT government to address historical discrepancies in the commemoration of women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTIQ+ people and local community members, through greater consultation and education. The committee's recommendations also encourage the ACT government to review the existing suburb names to identify where imbalances exist and to look for strategies such as co-naming and additional information on signage commemorating individuals.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all submitters and all of those who participated in or otherwise assisted with this inquiry. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity—Standing Committee Report 4**

**DR PATERSON** (Murrumbidgee) (11.44): I present the following report:

Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity—Standing Committee—  
Report 4—*Inquiry into renewable energy innovation in the ACT*, dated 28 June  
2022, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

I was pleased to be part of the committee and to contribute to the report's recommendations. I look forward to the ACT government's implementation of the recommendations, in particular around commissioning innovative social science research and methodologies to understand the transition of sectors, particularly transport and gas for cooking, and parts of the community that may have significant infrastructure and behaviour change barriers to reducing their emissions.



I will also closely follow the support which the government may provide to the ACT Renewables Hub to ensure the long-term objectives and projects that focus on outcomes to address social, technological, environmental and labour market barriers, and innovation to support ACT leadership in renewable energy fields.

Another key recommendation from the report is for the ACT government to fund the Renewables Hub to conduct future mapping of the ACT renewables ecosystem, with a goal of identifying gaps and growth areas. The prioritisation and promotion of diversity and inclusion in the ACT's future renewable energy sector will also be important, and I look forward to the innovative ways that the government may address this.

The opportunity for the ACT government to deliver research and development programs and start-up grant schemes and funding to promote innovation and diversity in this sector is another recommendation that I am pleased to have helped inform. The ACT has a real opportunity to be a leader in the renewable energy sector. The inquiry highlighted that we are already leading the way nationally, but we need to continue to keep at the forefront of evidence-based policy and technological advances.

Being recognised as a leader in renewable energy positions us to attract some of the best, most innovative and creative minds to live and work in Canberra. I would like to thank all the people who contributed to this inquiry and my colleagues Ms Castley, Mr Braddock, who was on the committee at the start of the inquiry, and Ms Clay, who joined the committee for the report-writing process. Thank you very much.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Report 7**

**MR CAIN** (Ginninderra) (11.47): I present the following report:

*Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 7—Report into the Inquiry into Petition 32-21 (No Rights Without Remedy)*, dated 22 June 2022, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

**MR CAIN:** This is the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, tabled out of session on 22 June 2022. Petition 32-21 proposes changes to the Human Rights Act 2004 to enable a complaint about a breach of the Human Rights Act to be made to the Human Rights Commission for confidential conciliation and, if conciliation is unsuccessful, enable a complaint about a breach of the Human Rights Act to be made to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal for resolution. The report recommends that the ACT government support and enact the terms of the petition.

The committee acknowledges that ACT Policing already have many processes that adequately enable complaints, including those in relation to human rights breaches, to

be dealt with appropriately. Therefore, in supporting the petition, the committee recommends that the current approach to discrimination issues could be applied to human rights issues as well, resulting in no change for ACT Policing.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the inquiry. I would like to thank the other members of the committee, Dr Paterson and Mr Braddock, and I thank the secretariat for their professional assistance. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## Report 8

**MR CAIN** (Ginninderra) (11.49): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 8—*Inquiry into Terrorism (Extraordinary Temporary Powers) Amendment Bill 2022*, dated 22 June 2022, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

**MR CAIN:** This is the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community tabled out of session, also on 22 June 2022. The Terrorism (Extraordinary Temporary Powers) Amendment Bill 2022 extends the Terrorism (Extraordinary Temporary Power) Act 2006 for another five years.

It allows for the preventative detention of persons up to 14 days to prevent imminent terrorist acts or preserve evidence of recent terrorist acts.

A statutory review mechanism exists to ensure that the legislation strikes the right balance between managing terrorism threats in the ACT and the protection of human rights.

Given the extraordinary nature of these powers, the committee considered it should also independently review the bill to ensure that these powers are still required and that the human rights protections are appropriate.

Amongst other things, the committee recommends that the Assembly pass the bill with a recommendation that the ACT government review the treatment of children to ensure that they are treated according to the intention of the law.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this inquiry. I thank the other members of the committee, Dr Paterson and Mr Braddock, and I thank the secretariat for their professional support. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## Report 9

**MR CAIN** (Ginninderra) (11.52): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 9—*Inquiry into Community Corrections*, dated 27 July 2022, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

**MR CAIN:** This is the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, tabled out of session on 27 July 2022.

The report makes 13 recommendations representing a unanimous view of the committee on a range of issues. The committee notes that the Sentence Administration Board currently has to conduct all hearings virtually, rather than in the ACT courts precinct, which has led to problems, including outstanding warrants.

The committee has made a recommendation that the ACT government and the ACT judiciary work collaboratively to enable the Sentence Administration Board to sit within the court complex and that the Attorney-General report quarterly to the Assembly until this is resolved.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this inquiry. I thank the other members of the committee, Dr Paterson and Mr Braddock, as well as former members of this committee who reported to this report, Mr Hanson and Ms Clay, and I thank the secretariat for their professional support. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## Public Accounts—Standing Committee Report 9

**MR PETTERSSON** (Yerrabi) (11.53): I present the following report:

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 9—*Inquiry into Auditor-General's Report No. 7 of 2021: Procurement Exemptions and Value for Money*, dated 15 June 2022, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

**MR PETTERSSON:** This is the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for the 10th Assembly. The Public Accounts Committee examined the audit report and endorses all of the Auditor-General's recommendations. The committee

held one public hearing in December of 2021 and heard evidence from the ACT Auditor-General and his staff; Special Minister of State; and Procurement ACT.

The committee made nine recommendations as part of this inquiry. The report's recommendations include that the ACT government mandate that every procurement includes whole-of-life costs factored into value for money assessments and a signed declaration of conflict of interest; improve and strengthen procurement documentations processes; put in place assurance schemes across its directorates and implement the System of Management Action for Breaches of a Procurement Framework; ensure that procurements are accurately reported on the ACT government contracts register; and publish further guidance on the role of, and relationship between, Procurement ACT and the government Procurement Board. The report also recommends that Procurement ACT provide more support for ACT government entities that procure infrequently.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank those who contributed to the committee's inquiry. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## Report 10

**MR PETTERSSON** (Yerrabi) (11.55): I present the following report:

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 10—*Inquiry into the Auditor-General's Report No. 1 of 2021: Land Management Agreements*, dated 15 June 2022, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

**MR PETTERSSON**: This is the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for the 10th Assembly.

The Public Accounts Committee examined the audit report and endorses all of the Auditor-General's recommendations. The committee held two public hearings in May and June of 2021 and heard evidence from the Minister for Planning and Land Management; senior officials of the Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate; the ACT Auditor-General; and staff from the ACT Audit Office.

The committee made seven recommendations as part of its inquiry. The report's recommendations include that the ACT government should ensure that ACT government entities are: reporting and referring all potential noncompliance with land management agreements and are more proactive in monitoring for compliance; investigating referred reports of noncompliance and taking enforcement action where appropriate; and each land management agreement is fit for purpose and contains a clause stating that the agreement must be reviewed and replaced, if appropriate, every five years.

The report also recommends that updates are made to the committee on the number of referrals of potential noncompliance made, the compliance action taken and the development and implementation of the strategic framework, as recommended in the Auditor-General's report.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank those who contributed to the committee's inquiry during its two public hearings and those who made a submission to the inquiry. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee**

### **Statement by chair**

**MS CASTLEY** (Yerrabi) (11.57): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality. As members will recall, pursuant to standing order 216, the committee resolved on 14 April 2022 to inquire into housing and rental affordability. The committee informed the Assembly of its decision on 3 May 2022. The committee also announced its call for written submissions on this day.

The committee had originally called for submissions by Friday, 29 July 2022. At its meeting on 28 July 2022, the committee resolved to extend the deadline for submissions until after tabling of the ACT budget for 2022-23. The committee has made this decision to allow interested community groups and individuals to consider the implications of the budget when making a submission to the inquiry. The new deadline for submissions is 5 pm on Monday, 8 August 2022.

### **Statement by chair**

**MS CASTLEY** (Yerrabi) (11.58): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality relating to statutory appointments, in accordance with continuing resolution 5A. I wish to inform the Assembly that during the period 1 January 2022 to 31 June 2022, the standing committee considered seven statutory appointments. In accordance with continuing resolution 5A, I now table a schedule of statutory appointments considered during this reporting period:

Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—10th Assembly—Period 1 January to 30 June 2022.

## **Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee**

### **Statement by chair**

**MR PETTERSSON** (Yerrabi) (11.59): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Education and Community

Inclusion relating to statutory appointments, in accordance with continuing resolution 5A. I wish to inform the Assembly that during the applicable reporting period, 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022, the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion considered a total of eight appointments to the following bodies: the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies; the Council of the University of Canberra; the ACT Teacher Quality Institute Board; and the Board of the Canberra Institute of Technology.

I now table a schedule of the statutory appointments considered by the committee during this period:

Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee—Schedule of  
Statutory Appointments—10th Assembly—Period 1 January to 30 June 2022.

### **Health and Community Wellbeing—Standing Committee Statement by chair**

**MR DAVIS** (Brindabella) (11.59): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing relating to statutory appointments, in accordance with continuing resolution 5A. Continuing resolution 5A requires standing committees which consider statutory appointments to report on a six-monthly basis and present a schedule listing the appointments considered during the applicable period.

The schedule is required to include the statutory appointments considered and, for each appointment, the date the request from the responsible minister for consultation was received and the date the committee's feedback was provided. For 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022 the committee considered four appointments to two statutory bodies. I accordingly table a schedule of statutory appointments for the period 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022, as considered by the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing. This schedule is in accordance with continuing resolution 5A:

Health and Community Wellbeing—Standing Committee—Schedule of  
Statutory Appointments—10th Assembly—Period 1 January to 30 June 2022.

### **Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Statement by chair**

**MR CAIN** (Ginninderra) (12.00): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, in accordance with continuing resolution 5A. During the reporting period 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022 the committee considered a total of five appointments and reappointments to the following bodies: the Legal Aid Commission Board; the Official Visitor for the Disability Services Act 1991; the Official Visitor for the Children and Young People Act 2008; the Official Visitor for the Mental Health Act 2015; and the Official Visitor for the Housing Assistance Act 2007.

I now table a schedule of statutory appointments considered during this reporting period:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—10th Assembly—Period 1 January to 30 June 2022.

## **Public Accounts—Standing Committee**

### **Statement by deputy chair**

**MR PETTERSSON** (Yerrabi) (12.01): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. In March 2022 the chair of the committee advised the Assembly that the committee had resolved to conduct an inquiry into Auditor-General's report No 13 of 2021, *Campbell Primary School Modernisation Project Procurement*.

The committee notes the ongoing investigation by the ACT Integrity Commission into alleged misconduct in ACT government procurement, including the Campbell Primary School modernisation project. As well as evidence from public hearings and submissions, the committee will draw on such complementary work in compiling its final report. The committee has also resolved not to conduct public hearings or publish submissions until the Speaker has tabled the ACT Integrity Commission's final investigation report. The committee expects to report to the Legislative Assembly on the report as soon as it is practicable.

### **Statement by deputy chair**

**MR PETTERSSON** (Yerrabi) (12.02): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in relation to the following Auditor-General's Reports: Auditor-General's report No 1 of 2022, *Management of detainee mental health services in the Alexander Maconochie Centre*; Auditor-General's report No 2 of 2022, *Fraud Prevention*; Auditor-General's report No 3 of 2022, *ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme*; and Auditor-General's Report No 4 of 2022, *Governance arrangements for the planning of Parkwood, Ginninderry*. The committee has resolved to inquire further into the four audit reports and will undertake a new inquiry, titled inquiry into Auditor-General's performance audit reports January 2022 to June 2022.

Until now the committee has undertaken standalone inquiries into selected reports of the Auditor-General. Moving forward, the committee has resolved to inquire into all performance audit reports jointly. The move towards jointly inquiring into audit reports draws on the established practices of other Australian jurisdictions and will allow the committee to undertake more self-referred inquiries into matters of public importance.

The committee will continue to address the concern raised in the report of the inquiry into the review of the performance of the three branches of government in the ACT against Latimer House Principles, Ninth Assembly—that is, that too few performance audit reports had been inquired into previously. The committee expects to report to the Legislative Assembly on the audit reports as soon as it is practicable.

**Sitting suspended from 12.04 to 2.00 pm.**

## **Questions without notice**

### **Public housing—dwellings**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, is it correct that in 2011 there were 11,063 public housing dwellings, and in 2021 there were 10,859 public housing dwellings?

**MS BERRY:** I think those figures are correct.

**MS LEE:** Minister, is it correct that in 2011 the number of public housing dwellings per 1,000 people was 30, and in 2021 it was 24?

**MS BERRY:** I think I know where the Canberra Liberals are going to here, and I have explained a number of times in the Assembly about the public housing growth and renewal program. For some time during the implementation of this program, housing numbers will decrease, as Housing ACT moves tenants and demolishes older houses that are no longer fit for purpose, in order to build better and more sustainable homes—

**Ms Lee:** A point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Ms Lee, a point of order?

**Ms Lee:** Madam Speaker, the question was very clear. It was: is it correct that in 2011 the number of public housing dwellings per 1,000 was 30 and in 2021 it was 24? The answer to the question is yes or no.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I will not direct the minister to give a yes or no.

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, I have made a ruling. There is no point of order. Minister, you have time left to answer.

**MS BERRY:** Again, I will describe the circumstances that we are going through with regard to the growth and renewal program in the ACT. Numbers in the housing space will be lower for a period of time, but there will then be an increase as the ACT—

**Mr Hanson:** A point of order on relevance, Madam Speaker. The question was whether it was lower, not why it was lower. To be directly relevant, the minister was simply asked whether it is lower, rather than the excuses that she is offering.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, please resume your seat. The minister is in order.

**MS BERRY:** Madam Speaker, as I say, through the program you will see, as we get towards the end of the program, the numbers of public housing increase over time. The ACT government has committed to an additional 400 public housing dwellings.



With the addition of the federal government's commitments to public housing, we will see more public housing dwellings built in the ACT—more than we have ever seen.

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, it is hard to hear the minister respond to your questions if there is so much chatter.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, is it correct that there were 1,770 applicants on the waiting list in 2017, and in 2021 an additional thousand—2,880 applicants?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** I will respond to that. In terms of the waiting list figures, I will make sure that I give you the exact data. I do not have the data for 2017, but I can confirm that, on 30 June 2022, total applications on the waiting list were 3,060.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members! You have a comment or you have a question? I will accept the question, not the comment.

**Ms Lee:** I have the next question. It is a question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Ms Lee.

### **Government—land release program**

**MS LEE:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, last year you put out a land release program—this is the 2021-22 to 2025-26—with a target of 16,434 dwellings over five years. The indicative land release program for 2022-23 to 2026-27, released this year, has a target of 16,417 dwellings over five years. That is 17 fewer dwellings than last year. Minister, can you explain why the number of dwellings in your government's planned land release program is now lower than last year?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Gentleman, you are responding to this as planning minister?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. The ILRP sits with me, to design each year with my cabinet colleagues. The 2022-23 budget delivers a range of important housing initiatives, including the government's indicative land release program. The program plays a strategic role in catering for our population growth, building a compact, livable city, attracting investment in ACT land and of course strengthening our economic advantage in the ACT region.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members! It is getting close to being enough.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** The 2022-23 to 2026-27 indicative land release program

continues to deliver land for residential, mixed use, commercial, industrial and community—

**Ms Lee:** Point of order. The question was very specifically why the number of dwellings in the planned land release program is lower than last year. I ask that the minister be directly relevant.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Given that you called a point of order 30 seconds into the answer, the minister has more time to answer.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was coming to the numbers. The ILRP for the next five years targets the land release for over 16,000 new homes. This consists of the land release to support 4,743 single residential dwellings and 11,674 multi-unit dwellings. So 72 per cent of all releases in 2022-23 are set within the existing urban area, in line with the government's goal for 70-30.

*Mr Parton interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Parton, if you need to remove yourself to gather your thoughts, please do.

**Mr Parton:** I'm sorry, Madam Speaker. That was too far.

**MS LEE:** Minister, in last year's land release program you promised 850 single dwelling blocks and you have revised that down to 799 this year. Why?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Each year we have a look at the ILRP. It is an indicative land release program. We look at the population growth across the ACT.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members!

**MR GENTLEMAN:** As population growth has continued, we have increased the land supply across the territory, including looking at the pressures on the ACT for—

**Dr Paterson:** Point of order. Madam Speaker, I can't hear the minister speak over the Canberra Liberals.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, I remind you of the standing orders. If someone is on their feet, they will be heard in silence. Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, there were some issues with the rollout of the land release program, particularly in Jacka, because of the continued challenge to the government by people challenging the ILRP in the ACAT.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Questions without notice. Mr Davis?

**Mr Parton:** Supplementary?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No. You missed out.

### **Homelessness—services**

**MR DAVIS:** My question is to the Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services. Minister, yesterday marked the beginning of National Homelessness Week, where we learn and reflect on the more than 116,000 Australians who sleep rough every night. Here in the ACT, Mission Australia released a report last week that found that nearly one in 20 people aged between 15 and 19 experienced homelessness in our city for the first time during the pandemic. What is the ACT government doing to help young people specifically who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** Thank you, Mr Davis, for the question. Once again, reading some of the statistics, particularly from the Mission Australia report, was really distressing, particularly when we hear of young people experiencing homelessness. This report specifically looked at the issues through the COVID-19 pandemic, which was particularly difficult for many Canberrans, including young people. Throughout the pandemic, the ACT government worked with community partners to provide a range of different services to ensure that people were not in a situation where they needed to sleep rough or experience homelessness. One of the programs was some flexible funding.

I think the member would be really interested to know about how the pandemic created a situation where community organisations were able to come together to look at different ways of providing accommodation to young people. A good example is that of two organisations that were working to support two transgender young people. They were able to come together and bring a different expertise in order to provide services.

There is a range of services that are being funded through the ACT government. This includes funding to Barnardos Australia, the Salvation Army, the Ted Noffs Foundation, CatholicCare, St Vincent de Paul, the Conflict Resolution Service and the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation. My colleague Minister Stephen-Smith is also working on Safe and Connected Youth to support young people who are at risk of homelessness due to family conflict. There is also work going on right now in terms of the CIT Youth Foyer. That will provide stable accommodation for young people at risk of homelessness as they study and develop lifelong skills.

**MR DAVIS:** Minister, you mentioned a lot of organisations that the government is working with. What have those organisations told you, through the commissioning process, that they need to better deliver these services?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** Thank you, Mr Davis, for the question. We are working in close partnership with homelessness services around a commissioning process. This is a codesign process where we are working to identify the particular issues that are being faced by people across the continuum, including young people. We have been working closely with them to understand not only the challenges being faced around shelter but also what we need to do to support them to live, learn, grow and work in the community.

Throughout the commissioning process, we have been doing deep dives with specific subsectors, whether it be youth services, LGBTI services, First Nation services and services working particularly with culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This is a process that we are still working through. We have collected lots of great ideas and we will be working to bring that all together in order to enter into new service agreements in 2023 which will provide stability and really look at plugging the gaps, particularly for vulnerable groups in the community.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, how much pressure is put on those homelessness numbers by the growing public housing waiting list that you referred to in an earlier answer?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** Housing affordability across the spectrum is presenting a risk for all of our community partners and particularly our homelessness services. That is why we have provided a sustained, enhanced commitment to homelessness services. With the announcements that have been foreshadowed as part of this budget, which will be announced today, we are up to \$12 million in the last 18 months in terms of providing more flexible funds, more emergency accommodation and embedding community mental health services to help people address the issues of rough sleepers.

This has been a process where we have worked really closely with our community partners and our specialist homelessness services, and we have been able to enhance the capacity of these services that are dealing with the increased pressure because of housing affordability, the impacts of the pandemic and the increased complexity in people's lives.

### **Canberra Hospital—services**

**MS CASTLEY:** Thank you Madam Speaker. My question is to the Health minister. On July 28, you were quoted in an ABC article, after the death of a five-year-old girl at the Canberra Hospital saying:

... our thoughts are with the family at this really, really difficult time.

I also want to assure people that the staff that were involved in this are receiving support and the hospital is very conscious of ensuring that those staff receive the debriefing and support that they require.

Minister, the family, who are watching now, want to understand why they were not contacted by anyone from Canberra Health Services until yesterday.

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Thank you very much Madam Speaker and I thank Ms Castley for the question. I start by again expressing our deep condolences to the family. This is a very, very tragic circumstance and I do not think any of us here can imagine what this family is going through at this time. So, to them, if they are watching, I am so deeply sorry for the experience that they have had and the loss they are feeling right now. It is my understanding that the family were receiving some support, which had been organised by Canberra Health Services. I recognise it may not have been what they were experiencing. Therefore, when I heard the family's comments through the media that they did not feel that they had been appropriately supported and that they did not feel that they had been contacted by Canberra Health

Services, I immediately contacted Canberra Health Services and asked them to make contact at a very senior level, which they have done, to offer a meeting with the family at that senior level. My understanding is that the family did have the contact details of another senior staff member, a medical staff member, with whom they had had interactions and with whom they were familiar. The contact information for that person had been passed on to the family should they require it. Recognising the family clearly did not feel appropriate support and contact had been made, I have asked for that contact to be from the most senior level of the organisation. This is why the Chief Operating Officer has written to the family and offered a meeting with the family with the Chief Operating Officer or the Chief Executive Officer if they would like that. Of course, if the family would like to meet with me, I would be very open to that.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, why was the family not offered a debriefing before now?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Again, that was not my understanding. I am very happy to have a conversation with Ms Castley about this. I recognise and I understand Ms Castley has met with the family. The family has not sought to meet with me. But again, if they would like to, I would be very open to that. It was my understanding that the family had received some support, and I had been briefed on that, but I do not want to have a conversation about that publicly, in this place. I recognise that the family are expressing their experience, and they are free to do that, and absolutely my sympathies are 100 per cent with them. If there is anything that they need, I would strongly encourage them to reach out to my office, to respond to the Chief Operating Officer and to reach out to them. It is my understanding the family has contact details as well for social workers. I would strongly encourage them to reach out to the contacts that have been provided to them to seek that support. It is available to them.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, why did you use an ABC article to express your condolences rather than contacting the family yourself?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** People experience terrible events in different ways. They grieve and respond in different ways. I do not have a personal relationship with the family. I do not know the family. I am a stranger to them. I have not been invited to reach out to them and they have not contacted my office. I would find it very weird—I think I would find it weird—if I were in these circumstances for someone I didn't know to reach out to me. I am very open to speaking with the family, if that is what they want, but for a stranger to reach out to someone who has just lost a child, I did not believe that was an appropriate thing for me to do. But, of course, if they want to talk to me about their experience, I would absolutely want to listen to what they have to say.

### **Dickson College—safety**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, in June this year WorkSafe ACT officers closed parts of Dickson College due to areas being unsafe and unhygienic. They issued three further improvement notices throughout July. Last week the *Canberra Times* reported those parts were still closed under the headline, “Faeces, urine and black mould: parts of Dickson College still closed”. Minister, how was a major school in the ACT allowed to get so bad it was issued four WorkSafe orders for issues with faeces, urine and mould?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Mr Hanson for his question regarding Dickson College. I can happily report today that all of the priority improvement notices have been lifted by WorkSafe, and all of the work that was required under those notices has been completed; however, one of the spaces, which is the theatre at Dickson College, is being refurbished as well as the work that was required to meet the requirements under WorkSafe, so that particular space is closed for further refurbishment.

Unfortunately, Dickson College has had a number of issues with regard to possums who are calling Dickson College their home, and that is leading to some complications around issues with regard to faeces and urine from possums. There is a possum rehoming plan that is being developed, which I understand is being supported by the school community.

With regard to the mould, one of the issues we have been facing across the ACT community, and our schools are not immune to this, is that the increase in wet weather has led to circumstances where mould has increased and grown at a very fast rate, and managing it has become more challenging. However, we have encouraged schools to make sure that they report those issues immediately, where they become known, so that they can be managed immediately. With issues like black mould, if it is not jumped on immediately and resolved, it can spread very quickly, as people will know. As I said, I can very happily report that that notice has been lifted today, and we continue to work with WorkSafe across our schools.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, why did it take an inspection by WorkSafe ACT for these matters to be addressed?

**MS BERRY:** I am very pleased to be working with WorkSafe across our schools to ensure that we are meeting the highest standards of work health and safety for our school teachers and staff, as well as our school students. In these circumstances, as I said, we have some complicated issues with regard to possums calling Dickson College their home, and with the issues around black mould because of the wet weather that we have been experiencing in the ACT. However, I say again, we are very happy to meet with WorkSafe. WorkSafe are doing their job, and the ACT government as an employer is also responsible for and has to respond to issues that WorkSafe raise. The Education Directorate are continuing to work very closely with WorkSafe ACT to make sure that we meet those requirements. We want to be leaders in that space, and we are certainly doing our very best to make sure that our schools are safe for everybody.

**MR DAVIS:** Minister, why is it important that WorkSafe ACT continue to be empowered to inspect ACT public schools, and how does this differ from the approach in other jurisdictions?

**MS BERRY:** I will respond to that with regard to our working relationship with WorkSafe as far as our schools are concerned. WorkSafe is the responsibility of Minister Gentleman, and so he would be more appropriate to respond to the second part of that question. However, it is important to make sure that our workplaces are safe, and it is important that we have an independent body like WorkSafe operating in our community, both in our government and private sector, to ensure the safety of

workers across the board. We are always in the ACT government keen to continue our working relationship with WorkSafe—to understand and hear from their expertise and to have a different set of eyes on our workplaces so we can ensure we are meeting the requirements under the work safety act. That is what we are seeing from WorkSafe. It is absolutely vital that there is an independent organisation like WorkSafe to continue that work. It saves lives, and it means that our workplaces are safe, regardless of where they are in our community.

### **Education—public schools**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the minister for education. Minister, how is the ACT government ensuring that every family has access to a great local public school, especially as our city grows?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Ms Orr for her question and her interest in public schools across the ACT. Of course, we are absolutely committed to making sure that every family has access to a great local school. Education is one of the most significant factors in ensuring equal opportunities for everyone, no matter their life background or circumstances. For this reason, the ACT government is investing in expanding capacity at public schools, renewing schools and building new schools across the community to meet Canberra's needs.

The ACT government is modernising and expanding Majura Primary School by up to 300 places, as growth in that region increases demand. The government is also increasing school capacity through the installation of three modular learning centres and re-using eight existing modular learning centres across ACT public schools to meet projected enrolment growth and classroom needs.

Investing in flexible, high-quality modular learning centres means that the ACT government can meet changing demand across the ACT public school system. This initiative builds on more than 20 modular learning centres funded through the 2021-22 budget and the August 2020 economic and fiscal update.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Ms Berry:** Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes, Ms Berry?

**Ms Berry:** I am standing very close, and whilst there is perspex between us, I can hear the interjections by the deputy opposition leader, as well as the giggling of the Leader of the Opposition. Their behaviour is embarrassing for themselves, and their constant interjections are making it difficult for me to respond to this question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I remind members that, with respect to interjections, very soon you will be warned.

**MS BERRY:** More and more families are choosing our public schools. The ACT government will continue to build more schools and invest in our world-class public

education system, delivering on our election commitments and meeting the needs of the Canberra community.

**MS ORR:** Minister, what other new schools has the ACT government committed to building?

**MS BERRY:** The ACT government is building new and expanded schools in growing communities to ensure that every student has a place in their local public school. Over the coming years the ACT government will deliver a new P-6 primary school in Whitlam. This school will have capacity for up to 800 primary school students and will also have an early childhood education centre with 130-place capacity. Design and planning work is continuing for Molonglo's third public school, which is scheduled to open in time for the 2025 school year.

The ACT government will also build a new school in north Gungahlin, due to open in 2024, and which will accommodate up to 800 high school students. The high school will deliver sport and recreation spaces for students and the community, and will include a double gymnasium, performing arts spaces and hard courts. There will also be general and specialist learning areas, small group programs, a library and an interactive learning area.

The ACT government is investing in the most ambitious school infrastructure program in the history of the government, and will continue to deliver great public schools across the Canberra community. This will also create jobs in delivering projects and working to ensure that there are opportunities for everyone—for example, of course, by ensuring that the new primary school being built in Strathnairn is led by a 100 per cent women site management team.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, how will having a women-led project for the new public primary school in Strathnairn promote gender equality in the construction industry?

**MS BERRY:** Thank you, Dr Paterson, for that supplementary question. The ACT government is committed to ensuring gender equality and women's participation in the construction industry through promoting more inclusive and gender-diverse hiring practices. Having a women-led construction project for the new primary school in Strathnairn sends a strong message to the community that we should keep working together to break down gender barriers in male-dominated industries such as construction.

The new school in Strathnairn is an election commitment, scheduled to be completed by 2025, and will ensure that families moving to Ginninderry have access to a great local public school. This \$62.4 million ACT government project will be delivered with a tender that has a 100 per cent women site management team, as well as women's representation in every trade subcontractor.

Women and gender-diverse people should be assessed based on their skills, abilities, training, expertise and capacity to do the work in the construction industry. Gender bias leaves so many capable workers and 50 per cent of the population locked out of an industry they could be working in. The ACT government is committed to ensuring that while delivering on our infrastructure commitments, we are also delivering on



gender equality by ensuring that good jobs are available for everyone. By putting gender on the tender, I cannot wait to see the group of women construction workers leading this project, and allowing women and girls to see what they could be.

### **Light rail stage 2A—economic analysis**

**MR PARTON:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, it took an FOI for the Mecone report into urban infill in light rail stage 2 to be released. Aspects of the business case for stage 2A have been questioned by the Auditor-General, among others, and despite a clear recommendation a revised business case has not been done. How can you claim that your government has been transparent with the light rail project when something as simple as “How much is it going to cost?” has been hidden at every opportunity?

**MR STEEL:** It has not. As I have said many times in this place, we have been transparent and have shown an unparalleled, unprecedented level of transparency as a government undertaking a project of this size by releasing the business case and also releasing the net present value figures to the Auditor-General, as part of their performance audit of the light rail stage 2A business case. So we have been up-front about that by releasing the detail. It was a point in time, several years ago, that we undertook that business case. The government has already made a decision to get on and commit to bringing this project down to Woden. It sounds a lot like the Liberals do not support bringing light rail to Woden.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, how much is light rail stage 2A going to cost?

**MR STEEL:** As Mr Parton is well aware, we are currently engaged in procurement with Canberra Metro for the extension of light rail to Commonwealth Park, as part of stage 2A. The costs will be determined through that procurement process. When we can announce that, we will.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, when will you tell Canberrans how much light rail stage 2A is going to cost—before or after you have signed the contract?

**MR STEEL:** The final cost is determined in the contract, so once the contract is signed. We are in procurement for stage 2A with Canberra Metro, and we are not yet at the point where we can determine that. The business case of course provides some costings, but things have moved on significantly since the business case was undertaken. There are requirements that have been placed on the territory by the National Capital Authority in relation to wire-free running, as well. Those will have extra costs. Those will, of course, be procured through the tender process that is underway with Canberra Metro.

### **Environment—government policies**

**MS CLAY:** My question is to the Minister for Emissions Reduction. Minister, I am really pleased to see that we have a lot of policies and programs that reduce our emissions, like our 100 per cent renewables, our new EV strategy, our ‘getting off gas’ policies and our progress towards zero emissions transport. But a truly sustainable future and sound adaptation really need systemic change applied to every

decision about how we live and how we spend our money. What tools do we have and what tools do we need to make sure that all of our government and budget decisions are helping us make that systemic change?

**MR RATTENBURY:** It is an interesting question as we work through transitioning our way of living and our community towards our goal of net zero emissions by 2045 or earlier if we can achieve it. The sorts of systemic issues that Ms Clay raises are good ones. We are looking at a range of indicators. The government has started to use the Social Cost of Carbon as one tool to examine decision-making. Similarly, for example, major infrastructure projects above \$10 million are now required to go through an ISCA rating process to examine their performance. Also, of course, we have wellbeing indicators built into the budget. These are the sorts of systemic tools that help us make better long-term decisions and make sure that we are considering the true long-term costs as well as perhaps the costs that are not necessarily traditionally considered or obvious to people in these decision-making processes.

I think there is undoubtedly room to continue to develop these tools and to make sure they are more thoroughly implemented and possibly look at new tools as they are developed. So I think this will be an evolving area. An example would be looking at scope 3 emissions. The government commissioned the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment to look at these measures. She has given us a range of recommendations which the government is now seeking to follow through on. All of these kinds of tools will help us make better decisions into the future.

**MS CLAY:** Minister, can you give me any examples of how you would use some of these tools in decision-making in your portfolio, or how you have seen them used in other portfolios?

**MR RATTENBURY:** Light rail would be an example. I know that Major Projects Canberra is looking at, for example, whether we can procure lower carbon concrete for the development of the infrastructure that goes with light rail. I think this is a really good example of where the consideration of scope 3 emissions and the application of the ISCA tool are helping and shaping the way that decision-making is being undertaken in that very significant project. That would be a large-scale example. There would be many other smaller-scale examples through the ACT government, and I would be happy to provide Ms Clay with some more.

### **Light rail stage 2A—vehicle fleet**

**MR PARTON:** Thank you Madam Speaker. My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, as part of Stage 2A of light rail, the government has committed to acquiring four additional CAF Urbos 3 LRVs. What does the government expect the unit cost of these additional vehicles to be? How much higher is it anticipated to be than the original vehicles?

**MR STEEL:** Madam Speaker, I have corrected Mr Parton on this before. We are not talking about four; we are talking about five. I have already corrected him—I think in Question Time or in a debate here about that before—and he consistently brings it up as if it is a different number. We are in active procurement for this at the moment. We are trying to achieve a cost for the light rail vehicles. We can then contract for them so

that they can be delivered in time for the operational beginning of Stage 2A. Once the procurement comes to a close we can then provide the public and Mr Parton with the information about the cost of those vehicles.

**MR PARTON:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Minister, given the cracking issues that have emerged in several jurisdictions worldwide in the CAF Urbos 3, irrespective of whether it is three or five vehicles, have other vehicles been investigated for the new acquisition?

**MR STEEL:** As I have said before, we are negotiating with Canberra Metro. We are talking with them and part of their consortium. They have CAF, the Spanish light rail vehicle and train manufacturer, so we are working with them through the procurement. When I can announce the procurement of light rail vehicles I will.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, can you detail the benefits of getting light rail to Woden?

**MR STEEL:** Thank you Madam Speaker and thank you Dr Paterson. The whole point of this is to build a better public transport system—to build a more sustainable, vibrant and connected city with a light rail system that connects our city north to south. We have a very successful stage 1 route from Gungahlin to the City and we want to—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, Mr Hanson, Mr Hanson—enough.

**MR STEEL:** extend the same benefits to the constituents in Murrumbidgee that Dr Paterson and I represent—and that Mr Hanson should be representing. We want to provide those benefits to the rest of the city, for Tuggeranong residents who will be connecting with light rail in the future, and for other parts of the city. So, this is a significant project and we need to get on with the job. You have to wonder at what point will the Canberra Liberals support this project? Will it be when the light rail vehicles roll into Callum Street for the first time Madam Speaker? Maybe even—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR STEEL:** then they will be questioning the benefits, as thousands of people will no doubt use these, as they did for stage 1, when we opened that system, and it has seen significant increase in patronage across the corridor.

### **Roads—safety**

**DR PATERSON:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister. What infrastructure investments is the government making to improve road safety across the ACT?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Dr Paterson for her question. The ACT government is investing in making our roads safer. I was very pleased to recently announce the significant infrastructure investment that we will be making in this year's budget of \$24 million to improve road safety across the ACT. These works will add to the already significant pipeline of infrastructure works that are underway. We will be investing in

upgrades to five significant intersections across Canberra's south, delivering on our election commitments in Weston Creek and in Lanyon. Further work will be undertaken to improve active travel connections and to make sure that our vulnerable road users remain safe on our roads. This includes new pedestrian crossings and the further extension of the Belconnen Bikeway project on Haydon Drive from Battye Street through to the Calvary Hospital. Making roads and our road users safer is a significant priority for our government, and our collaborative work with the Commonwealth government will ensure the ACT can continue this important investment that makes our community safer and creates good-quality local jobs along the way.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, what improvements can our constituents in Murrumbidgee expect to intersections on the south side as part of this investment?

**MR STEEL:** I am very pleased that our constituents in Murrumbidgee will benefit from these intersection upgrades which will improve safety. The intersections on Streeton Drive, in particular at Namatjira Drive and Heysen Street in Weston, will benefit from upgrades which will include the installation of traffic lights and will improve safe crossings for pedestrians and cyclists, and will also improve the surrounding path network at the same time. We know that 20,000 vehicles are using the road network each day between Weston Creek, Tuggeranong and Woden, and these two Streeton Drive "seagull" intersections are becoming increasingly busier, with difficulty being experienced by vehicles turning right from the intersecting collector roads. It is important that as this region grows we work to improve safety for all road users, especially those who are most vulnerable—pedestrians and cyclists.

We are also—and Madam Speaker, you will be particularly interested in this—working on other south side intersections. In Lanyon we will be doing that at Norman Lindsay and Tharwa Drive near the Lanyon Marketplace, a very poorly performing intersection with 38 crashes over the last seven-year period, and we will be improving in Theodore the Tharwa Drive and Lawrence Wackett intersection with traffic lights—I know that is a matter that has been brought to the assembly before, subject to a petition. We are very pleased we are getting on with that work as well as addressing one of Canberra's worst intersections, which is Hume Circle at the corner of Canberra Avenue, Wentworth Avenue and Sturt Avenue. It has had 370 crashes over the last seven years, and we will be undertaking designs funded in the budget to improve safety for all road users.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, is the ACT government planning new intersection guidelines and designs for best practice to improve pedestrian and road safety in Canberra?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. Of course, as part of an active travel plan, which we are currently consulting on, as we invest in improved intersections in streets across Canberra for pedestrians and cyclists, we want to make sure from the very beginning through design that they are safe for those users. We will be consulting with the community on a new best practice design guide for intersections and streets across Canberra. This will particularly address issues of lines of sight around intersections; it will provide new intersection design recommendations which will be incorporated into the Municipal Infrastructure Standards going forward;

and it will see new intersection designs delivered throughout Canberra which are more reminiscent of European cities—that are safe for walkers and cyclists. We hope that this will encourage more people to take up active travel in the future.

### **Tharwa—water**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, at the end of the last Assembly the government agreed to work with the people of Tharwa and conduct a co-designed consultation process to address their water supply, especially for fire services. Has this process begun?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Mr Milligan for the question. It is an important piece of work on which government has been working with the local community, and identifying a site for some new water tanks at Tharwa. There was some resistance from the Tharwa community about the location of those tanks, so this piece of work has been continuing since then. I will ask my directorate for an update on that and provide some more information for Mr Milligan.

**MR MILLIGAN:** When will this process actually be completed, and on what areas of consultation have you spoken to the community?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** It will be completed once the work is done. We want to make sure that we have the community on board as we deliver this. I have been working with them, too, and I know they were concerned about that location. They did provide some other opportunities for us, but it would be incredibly costly to bring water across, for example, from the other part of Tuggeranong to Tharwa. We will continue that work, and I will provide Mr Milligan with an update on that.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, for how much longer will the people of Tharwa have to live without adequate potable and non-potable water, notwithstanding the fire-fighting issue?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Let me make it very clear that Tharwa is a rural village. It does not have water piped from the territory to the village. It uses rainfall, usually caught on rooftops across the area, for its water. Of course, that is the use for water in those rural villages. We do not pump water to those rural villages.

### **Multicultural communities—swimming lessons**

**MR BRADDOCK:** My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, learning to swim is an important life skill for all Australians, including those who have come here from abroad whose religious and cultural beliefs preclude them from attending general swimming classes with the public. Has the government given consideration in this budget for women-only swimming lessons, to teach this life skill in a culturally appropriate way?

**MS BERRY:** The budget will be released later on this afternoon by the Treasurer and Chief Minister. What I can say is that in the past the ACT government has provided funding to organisations to support migrants and refugees to learn how to swim, particularly with women-only learn-to-swim programs through the Royal Life Saving

Society. Muslim Sisters also got funding to provide those programs.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Minister, will the recommissioning of the Gungahlin pool provide the opportunity for the government to reconsider providing permanent funding in this space?

**MS BERRY:** Those are considerations that the government will consider. They will be announced as future arrangements within the government's budget processes.

**MS CLAY:** Minister, what other aquatic programs might be on offer when that pool is operational again?

**MS BERRY:** The normal aquatic programs that occur at that pool, once it is opened. The 50-metre pool is scheduled for reopening this month. The 25-metre programs pool has been reopened, with the repairs completed. We have also been working on upgrades to ensure that there is better lighting and doing acoustics work at the pool. We had feedback from users of the pool, particularly water polo clubs, that the pool was quite a noisy space and that the lights were not appropriate for their sport. We have made upgrades to put better lighting in so that it works better for those aquatic activities. We will also be working with acoustic engineers to make sure that that pool can work better for aquatic activities like water polo.

### **Hospitals—staffing**

**MS CASTLEY:** My question is to the Minister for Health. The *Canberra Times* reported on 31 July 2022 that corridor nursing has become common practice at Canberra Hospital. Nurses went on to say that many senior staff had left or cut back their hours, meaning that junior nurses had to undertake work they previously would not have to do until they had been working in the profession for several years. This included working in the resuscitation bay of the emergency department. Minister, how common is it for junior nurses to work in the resuscitation bay in Canberra Hospital?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I will take the detail of that question on notice.

**MS CASTLEY:** How many senior nursing staff have left the emergency department team?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I will take the question on notice, but I do want to assure the Assembly that, while there are obviously some skills mix challenges right across the health services in the ACT, as there are across the country at the moment, the average tenure for nurses working in the emergency department at the end of May 2022 was 5.68 years and, for the period from July 2020 to 25 May 2022, the headcount for nursing staff in the emergency department at Canberra Hospital, which was the subject, I think, of the question—I do not have the number for Calvary—showed an increase of 36.8 per cent in nursing staff in the ED. So there has been a significant increase in the number of nursing staff recruited. Our hospital system and healthcare workforce have been under significant pressure, as have every hospital and healthcare workforce right across the country and, indeed, in many other countries as well.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, how will senior nurses leaving and reducing their hours affect the placement of students at the hospital and the workforce of the future?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mr Hanson for the question. This is, of course, an ongoing topic of conversation. In fact, just the other day I had a conversation with the Calvary Regional CEO about clinical placements. Clinical placements for both nurses and midwives are a really important part of ensuring that we can grow our workforce. I was pleased to hear that Calvary is working very closely with the University of Canberra, particularly around our midwifery student clinical placements, to grow our midwife workforce. In terms of graduate recruitment at Canberra Health Services, I can advise that the Canberra Health Services RN graduate workforce recruitment number was 88 in 2021 and in 2022 it was 116. So we are clearly able to take on those graduates.

There has also been a lot of work done to bring students into the workforce mix, both through clinical placements and through the new student nurse and midwife classification that was introduced into the enterprise agreement with the update of the enterprise agreement last year. That initially was around ensuring that we could bring nursing students and other students into the vaccination workforce but also enable them to transition into the wider frontline healthcare workforce. The chief nurse and midwife is working with the union at the moment to develop the descriptions for those positions so that those students can come into the workforce and perform at their maximum scope of practice.

### **Arts—government investment**

**MR PETTERSSON:** Thank you Madam Speaker. My question is for the Minister for the Arts. Minister, how is the ACT government investing in ACT arts, culture and creative sector?

**MS CHEYNE:** Thank you Madam Speaker, and I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. Last week I released a suite of initiatives, including the ACT government's *Arts, Culture and Creative Policy*, which provides the roadmap to achieve the ambition for Canberra to be recognised as Australia's arts capital.

The policy is accompanied by an action plan which outlines activities, both ongoing initiatives and targeted discrete projects, to deliver on the ambition, as well as *Remuneration Principles and Practices for Artists and Arts Workers* to promote fair remuneration for artists and arts workers.

Following extensive consultation with the community, our new *Arts Organisation Investment Program* framework and guidelines have also been released, with applications now open for arts organisations to apply for funding for up to five years.

It will also specifically provide an opportunity for new arts organisation entrants that are meeting community needs to apply for funding.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that through the Budget, the annual funding envelope for arts organisations will increase by around ten per cent, providing an

increased total of over \$7.5 million per year, to Canberra's leading arts organisations to support arts organisations' operational costs and contribute to the costs of their activities.

This significant funding announcement is supported by investments in this Budget in key arts infrastructure at Canberra Theatre Centre, Lanyon Homestead and Gorman House Arts Centre, critical to ensuring our creatives and cultural audiences are supported by fit-for-purpose facilities and venues in the ACT.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Minister, how will these budget and policy initiatives support ACT artists and arts organisations?

**MS CHEYNE:** Thank you Madam Speaker. The ACT government recognises that a thriving arts, culture, and creative sector comprises an interconnected ecology, and economy, of artists, arts organisations and cultural facilities. This Government is committed to growing and to improving opportunities and outcomes for artists in the ACT by supporting and elevating the entire arts sector, including investment in arts infrastructure, that reflects who we are as a city, and importantly, where we want to be. This budget does exactly that.

To make sure our artists can develop secure and sustainable careers in the ACT, we need to grow the capacity and the capability of our arts sector. This is one of the three key strategies of the Statement of Ambition to position Canberra as Australia's arts capital.

This is why we have listened closely to ACT artists and arts workers about the need to increase support for the backbone of our sector, ACT arts organisations.

The delivery in this budget of around a ten per cent increase to ongoing funding for arts organisations, supported by our new policy and investment program, will have a real impact on the lives of ACT artists who work, create, develop, exhibit, perform, collaborate and seek valuable support through our network of arts organisations.

We know that for Canberra to be recognised as Australia's arts capital, the ACT arts sector needs to be competitive on a national level. This speaks directly to the targeted investments we are undertaking in this Budget to improve the safety, functionality, and accessibility at several arts venues across the Canberra region.

Through this comprehensive suite of budget and policy initiatives, the ACT government is significantly investing in the growth of opportunities and outcomes for our local artists, arts organisations and cultural facilities.

**MS ORR:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Minister, can you please detail the arts infrastructure investments in the 2022-23 budget you mentioned earlier?

**MS CHEYNE:** Thank you Madam Speaker, and I thank Ms Orr for the question. This Budget recognises the important contribution of the arts sector to Canberra's culture, our sense of community, our wellbeing, and to our economy. We will continue to support a flourishing and sustainable arts sector by investing in quality arts spaces and infrastructure.



Through this budget, we are investing \$28.447 million to develop detailed design and undertake extensive stakeholder and community consultation for the expansion of the Canberra Theatre Centre, including a new major theatre.

We will invest a further \$2.393 million to commence essential workplace health and safety upgrades to the current Canberra Theatre Centre and to provide the required resourcing to support the evolution of the Canberra Theatre Centre.

And this budget invests in one of our beloved ACT Historic Places: we are providing almost a million dollars over four years to improve the Lanyon Homestead, including tree removal and replacement, and conversion of the Nolan Gallery into a fit-for-purpose administration space.

One of the most exciting announcements has been the investment of \$8 million in major heritage restorations and critical building upgrades at Gorman House Arts Centre to celebrate the site's centenary in 2024, which also delivers on a parliamentary and governing agreement commitment.

This funding also includes the development of a strategic framework for the future management of government arts facilities, ensuring that we understand the unique needs of these assets, many of which are heritage-listed.

Madam Speaker, these investments contribute to developing the capacity and the capability of the ACT arts sector in supporting artists and audiences, and they help bring us one step closer to our ambition for Canberra to be recognised as Australia's arts capital.

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

### **Supplementary answer to question without notice Canberra Hospital—services**

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** In recognising the interest that Ms Castley and others have expressed in the incident of the death of a five-year old at Canberra Hospital recently, I want to confirm, further to my earlier answer, that Canberra Health Services, of course, has processes in place to monitor safety risks and respond to incidents through their clinical governance structures. That includes completing rapid incident assessments to ensure that any immediate risks are identified and to inform further internal reviews through clinical review committees.

I can confirm that Canberra Health Services is conducting a clinical review, as is the usual process following an unexpected death. As has also been reported publicly, the case has been directed to the coroner for their review, and Canberra Health Services is fully cooperating with the coroner.

We recognise that these processes are not always transparent to families. I have asked that this be looked into. I can advise that the chief operating officer is undertaking a review of the process of engaging families when the internal investigation, known as a root cause analysis, is underway.

**Answers to questions on notice**  
**Question Nos 805, 830, 833 and 835**

**MS CASTLEY:** Under standing order 118A, I have a few overdue questions on notice. I would like to get statements as to why they are late.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Can you direct them to the minister, with the question numbers?

**MS CASTLEY:** Certainly. Question 805 to the health minister, and questions 830, 833 and 835 to the health minister and the mental health minister.

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I can advise Ms Castley that, in relation to question 805, we are awaiting input from Calvary Public Hospital to complete the response to that very detailed question.

In relation to 833, which is another extremely detailed question from Ms Castley, we are again awaiting input from Calvary Public Hospital. In relation to question 835, a draft has been received in my office, but I found it confusing. So I returned it for further clarification so that the answer that I respond with can be understood by any person in this chamber.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Are there other answers to questions that are delayed?

**MS CASTLEY:** I am wondering how long it will take Calvary to answer. Can we get an estimated time?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No, I think she has responded. That is the result; she is awaiting information from Calvary.

**MS CASTLEY:** The answer from the mental health minister is to question 830. We received the other two; thank you.

**MS DAVIDSON:** For that particular question, we are waiting on some details from Calvary, and we will send it through as soon as we receive those details.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Both ministers' offices are alerted to the need to get information back from Calvary, Ms Castley.

**Papers**

**Madam Speaker** presented the following papers:

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to subsection 17(5)—Auditor-General's Reports—

No 3/2022—ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme, dated 14 June 2022.

No 4/2022—Governance arrangements for the planning of services for Parkwood, Ginninderry, dated 29 June 2022.

Canberra Institute of Technology—Consultancy contract—Copy of letter from the ACT Auditor-General to the Speaker in relation to the resolution of the Assembly of 7 June 2022, dated 20 June 2022.

Ethics and Integrity Adviser for Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory, pursuant to Continuing Resolution 6A of the Assembly of 10 April 2008, as amended 21 August 2008—Report for the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, dated 22 July 2022.

Bills referred to Committees, pursuant to resolution of the Assembly of 2 December 2020, as amended—Bills—Not inquired into—

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Amendment Bill 2022—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity, dated 15 June 2022.

Integrity Commission Amendment Bill 2022—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, dated 15 June 2022.

Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, dated 15 June 2022.

Workplace Legislation Amendment Bill 2022—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality, dated 24 June 2022.

Standing order 191—Amendments to the:

Education Amendment Bill 2022, dated 17 June 2022.

Public Health Amendment Bill 2021 (No 2), dated 17 June 2022.

**Mr Gentleman** presented the following papers:

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to subsection 21(2)—Auditor-General's Reports—

No 1/2022—Management of detainee mental health services in the Alexander Maconochie Centre—Government response, dated August 2022.

No 2/2022—Fraud Prevention—Government response, dated 1 July 2022.

Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act, pursuant to section 22—Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment—State of the Lakes and Waterways in the ACT, May 2022.

COVID-19 Emergency Response Act, pursuant to subsection 3(3)—COVID-19 Measures—Report No 15—Reporting period 1 April to 30 June 2022, dated 29 July 2022

**Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)**

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act and Financial Management Act—ACT Teacher Quality Institute Board Appointment 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-90 (LR, 16 June 2022).

**Agents Act—**

Agents (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-164 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Agents (Qualifications and Experience for Licences) Declaration 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-149 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Agents (Transitional Provisions) Regulation 2022—Subordinate Law SL2022-9 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Agents (Qualifications and Experience for Registration—Assistant Property Agents) Declaration 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-148 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Agents Amendment Regulation 2022 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2022-10 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Animal Diseases Act—Animal Diseases (Varroa Mite Import Restriction) Declaration 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-172 (LR, 5 July 2022).

**Animal Welfare Act—**

Animal Welfare (Advisory Committee Member) Appointment 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-57 (LR, 23 May 2022).

Animal Welfare (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-58 (LR, 26 May 2022).

Architects Act—Architects (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-118 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Associations Incorporation Act—Associations Incorporation (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-130 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act, Emergencies Act, Road Transport (General) Act and Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act—Emergencies, Road Transport (General), Waste Management and Resource Recovery (Embassy and Diplomatic Residence Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-100 (LR, 23 June 2022).

Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act—Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-88 (LR, 16 June 2022).

Building Act—Building (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-119 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Canberra Institute of Technology Act and Financial Management Act—Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT Board Deputy Chair) Appointment 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-93 (LR, 20 June 2022).

Casino Control Act—Casino Control (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-131 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Cemeteries and Crematoria Act—Cemeteries and Crematoria (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-171 (LR, 1 July 2022).

**City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act—**

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency (Agency Board Chair) Appointment 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-76 (LR, 6 June 2022).

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency (Agency Board Deputy Chair) Appointment 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-75 (LR, 6 June 2022).

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency (Agency Board Member) Appointment 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-72 (LR, 6 June 2022).

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency (Agency Board Member) Appointment 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-74 (LR, 6 June 2022).

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency (Agency Board Member) Appointment 2022 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-73 (LR, 6 June 2022).

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency (Authority Board Deputy Chair) Appointment 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-98 (LR, 22 June 2022).

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency (Authority Board Member) Appointment 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-99 (LR, 22 June 2022).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Act—

Civil Law (Wrongs) Law Institute of Victoria Limited Professional Standards Scheme 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-108 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Law Society of South Australia Professional Standards Scheme 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-111 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Queensland Law Society Professional Standards Scheme 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-109 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Civil Law (Wrongs) South Australian Bar Association Professional Standards Scheme 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-110 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Act—  
Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-132 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act—

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction (Council Member and Chair) Appointment 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-94 (LR, 20 June 2022).

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction (Council Member) Appointment 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-95 (LR, 20 June 2022).

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction (Council Member) Appointment 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-96 (LR, 20 June 2022).

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction (Council Member) Appointment 2022 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-97 (LR, 20 June 2022).

Clinical Waste Act—Clinical Waste (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI-2022-59 (LR, 26 May 2022).

Community Title Act—Community Title (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-147 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act—Construction Occupations (Licensing) (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-120 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Co-operatives National Law (ACT) Act—Co-operatives National Law (ACT) (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-133 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Court Procedures Act—Court Procedures (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-105 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Cultural Facilities Corporation Act and Financial Management Act—

Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-167 (LR, 1 July 2022).

Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-165 (LR, 1 July 2022).

Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2022 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-166 (LR, 1 July 2022).

Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2022 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-168 (LR, 1 July 2022).

Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2022 (No 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-169 (LR, 1 July 2022).

Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2022 (No 6)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-170 (LR, 4 July 2022).

Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Act—Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Fees and Charges Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-82 (LR, 9 June 2022).

Dangerous Substances Act—Dangerous Substances (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-83 (LR, 9 June 2022).

Domestic Animals Act—Domestic Animals (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI-2022-60 (LR, 26 May 2022).

Duties Act—Duties (Deferred payment of duty—Eligible property) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-156 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Duties Act, Land Rent Act, Land Tax Act and Rates Act—Rates, Land Tax, Land Rent and Duties (Certificate and Statement Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-161 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Electoral Act—Electoral (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-71 (LR, 6 June 2022).

Electricity Safety Act—Electricity Safety (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-121 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Emergencies Act—Emergencies (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-104 (LR, 23 June 2022).

## Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement Act—

Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement (Energy Savings Contribution) Determination 2022, including a regulatory impact statement—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-151 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement (Energy Savings Target) Determination 2022, including a regulatory impact statement—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-150 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement (Priority Household Target) Determination 2022, including a regulatory impact statement—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-153 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement (Shortfall Penalty) Determination 2022, including a regulatory impact statement—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-152 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Environment Protection Act—Environment Protection (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-122 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Firearms Act—Firearms (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-92 (LR, 20 June 2022).

Fisheries Act—Fisheries (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-140 (LR, 27 June 2022).

## Gaming Machine Act—

Gaming Machine (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-134 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Gaming Machine (Payment from Gambling Harm Prevention and Mitigation Fund—Minimum Community Contributions) Guidelines 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-87 (LR, 16 June 2022).

Gas Safety Act—Gas Safety (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-123 (LR, 27 June 2022).

## Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Act—

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Advisory Council Appointment 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-54 (LR, 18 May 2022).

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Advisory Council Appointment 2022 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-55 (LR, 18 May 2022).

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Advisory Council Appointment 2022 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-56 (LR, 18 May 2022).

Guardianship and Management of Property Act—Guardianship and Management of Property (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-127 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Health Act—Health (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-69 (LR, 29 June 2022).

## Heritage Act—

Heritage (Council Deputy Chairperson) Appointment 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-175 (LR, 19 July 2022).

Heritage (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-124 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Juries Act—Juries (Payment) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-107 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Labour Hire Licensing Act—Labour Hire Licensing (Fee) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-78 (LR, 9 June 2022).

Land Titles Act—Land Titles (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-135 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Legal Aid Act—Legal Aid (Disclosure of Information) Guidelines 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-86 (LR, 16 June 2022).

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Act—

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Members' Salary Cap Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-174 (LR, 4 July 2022).

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Speaker's Salary Cap Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-173 (LR, 4 July 2022).

Liquor Act—Liquor (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-136 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Lotteries Act—Lotteries (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-137 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Machinery Act—Machinery (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-79 (LR, 9 June 2022).

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008—Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods (Vaccinations by Pharmacists) Direction 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-77 (LR, 7 June 2022).

Nature Conservation Act—Nature Conservation (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-125 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Official Visitor Act—

Official Visitor (Housing Assistance) Appointment 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-163 (LR, 4 July 2022).

Official Visitor (Mental Health) Appointment 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-53 (LR, 19 May 2022).

Partnership Act—Partnership (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-139 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Planning and Development Act—Planning and Development (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-112 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Plastic Reduction Act—

Plastic Reduction (Public Event) Declaration 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-85 (LR, 14 June 2022).

Plastic Reduction (Single-use Plastic Products) Exemption 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-67 (LR, 2 June 2022).

Plastic Reduction (Single-use Plastic Products—Special Circumstances) Exemption 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-68 (LR, 2 June 2022).

Plastic Reduction Regulation 2022, including a regulatory impact statement—Subordinate Law SL2022-7 (LR, 2 June 2022).



Public Health Act—Public Health (Monkeypox—Temporary Notifiable Condition) Declaration 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-64 (LR, 27 May 2022).

Public Place Names Act—Public Place Names (Whitlam) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-84 (LR, 14 June 2022).

Public Trustee and Guardian Act—Public Trustee and Guardian (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-128 (LR, 29 July 2022).

Public Unleased Land Act—Public Unleased Land (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-61 (LR, 26 May 2022).

Race and Sports Bookmaking Act—

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-91 (LR, 20 June 2022).

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-102 (LR, 23 June 2022).

Rates Act and Taxation Administration Act—Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Rates) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-162 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Registration of Deeds Act—Registration of Deeds (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-141 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Retirement Villages Act—Retirement Villages (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-142 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Road Transport (General) Act—

Road Transport (General) (Parking Permit Fees) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-66 (LR, 2 June 2022).

Road Transport (General) (Pay Parking Area Fees) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-65 (LR, 2 June 2022).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2022 (No 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-106 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Road Transport (Offences) Amendment Regulation 2022 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2022-8 (LR, 9 June 2022).

Scaffolding and Lifts Act—Scaffolding and Lifts (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-80 (LR, 9 June 2022).

Security Industry Act—Security Industry (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-144 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Sex Work Act—Sex Work (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-145 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Stock Act—

Stock (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-113 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Stock (Levy) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-114 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Stock (Minimum Stock Levy) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-115 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Surveyors Act—Surveyors (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-116 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Taxation Administration Act—

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Disability Duty Concession Scheme) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-159 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Duty) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-155 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Home Buyer Concession Scheme) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-157 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Land Rent) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-154 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Pensioner Duty Concession Scheme) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-158 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Taxation Administration (Betting Operations Tax—Rate) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-160 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Traders (Licensing) Act—Traders (Licensing) (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-143 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Tree Protection Act—Tree Protection (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-62 (LR, 26 May 2022).

Unit Titles (Management) Act—Unit Titles (Management) (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-129 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Unit Titles Act—Unit Titles (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-117 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Unlawful Gambling Act—Unlawful Gambling (Charitable Gaming Application Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-146 (LR, 29 June 2022).

Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act—Utilities (Technical Regulation) (Operating Certificate Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-89 (LR, 16 June 2022).

Utilities Act—Utilities (ACT Retail Electricity—Transparency and Comparability Code) Variation 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-103 (LR, 23 June 2022).

Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance) Act—Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance) Amendment Regulation 2022 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2022-11 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Victims of Crime Regulation 2000—Victims of Crime (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-101 (LR, 23 June 2022).

Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act—Waste Management and Resource Recovery (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-63 (LR, 26 May 2022).

Water and Sewerage Act—Water and Sewerage (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-126 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Water Resources Act—Water Resources (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-138 (LR, 27 June 2022).

Work Health and Safety Act—

Work Health and Safety (Fees) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-81 (LR, 9 June 2022).

Work Health and Safety Amendment Regulations 2022 (No 1), including a regulatory impact statement—Subordinate Law SL2022-12 (LR, 30 June 2022).

Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act—Working with Vulnerable People Background Checking (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-70 (LR, 6 June 2022).

## Environment—lakes and waterways

**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) (3.05): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act, pursuant to section 22—Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment—State of the Lakes and Waterways in the ACT

**MS VASSAROTTI** (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (3.05): I am pleased to table the investigation report on the state of the lakes and waterways in the ACT, recently completed by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment.

In March 2021, as ACT Minister for the Environment, I directed the Commissioner to undertake an investigation on the state of Canberra's urban lakes and waters. The investigation was to consider water quality and ecological health, the effectiveness of monitoring and management practices, and the role of the community and other stakeholders. I am tabling this report today as the minister responsible for investigations undertaken by the Commissioner.

I commissioned this report because Canberra's urban lakes and waterways play a vital role in the function of our city and the health and wellbeing of our community. The last review was conducted ten years ago, and it was time to inquire again. It was a recommendation of the 2019 *ACT State of the Environment* report and an election commitment of the ACT Greens. This review was timely, as we knew that a lot of good work has been done since that time to improve our waterways, particularly through our Healthy waterways investments; but there was more work to be done.

We know that as a community we have had changing expectations around the functions of our urban lakes and waterways. As well as serving a specific function to control pollution, they are also places we love; where we recreate, where we enjoy

nature and enjoy our neighbourhood amenity. Through commissioning this inquiry, we gain an independent perspective on the work that still needs to be done to protect and enhance our urban lakes and waterways, and to test proposed approaches in relation to water governance, compliance and policy responses.

I thank the Commissioner for comprehensively engaging with these issues and providing recommendations that will assist us with the work ahead. Our urban lakes and waters trap and control pollution, assist with flood mitigation, provide habitat for flora and fauna, and offer recreational opportunities. They form a central aesthetic component of Canberra's urban design. We know that our urban lakes and waterways are under increasing pressure from climate change, increased urbanisation and a growing population.

We also know that the values that we hold for our lakes are not necessarily always complementary. For example, when a lake effectively traps pollution and prevents contamination from reaching waterways downstream, it may impact the lake's aesthetic value or interfere with recreational use. Balancing these competing priorities is understandably complex for our management agencies.

To help inform our management practices, this investigation considers waters that are within or flow through the Canberra urban environment. A significant portion of this report is dedicated to the state of Canberra's three lakes—Lake Burleigh Griffin, Lake Ginninderra and Lake Tuggeranong—and the various pressures impacting these lakes.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the agencies across government portfolios for delivering policy, planning, programs and compliance that support our urban environments. This work is multifaceted, at the forefront of available science, and we are responding to legacies and emerging challenges. These challenges are not easy to address. Importantly, we have dedicated professionals that exhibit a strong commitment to their work.

Reviews conducted by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment are really important for providing us with a reality check of what we are doing well and where we really need to improve. They are a critical piece of information to help us better manage our urban and our natural environments. This report will further improve the management of our lakes and waterways.

The Commissioner draws attention to key management issues related to governance, coordination and resourcing. This government is responding. This report has re-affirmed the need for specific investments and work over the next few years that will ensure that our urban lakes and waterways continue to serve their functions in an evolving city and with changing climatic pressures. The report acknowledges the significant investments that have been undertaken to ensure the health of our waterways.

The Healthy Waterways program is one of the cornerstone initiatives that is being supported by government for delivering tangible, on-the-ground improvements in water quality. The focus of the Healthy Waterways program is to address pollution from its source, through strategic catchment planning, targeted scientific investigation and ongoing community education. The investment in this program has been significant and is continuing.

In February 2021 the ACT government committed \$1.5 million to begin planning for a broader program of work in stage 2 of the program. This was further supported with a \$5 million investment in October 2021 for ongoing staffing and construction, and a further \$14 million in March 2022 for additional preservation and restoration work across our city. New assets are being planned for construction to target known areas of stormwater pollution in the catchments of Village Creek, Fadden Pond, Tuggeranong Creek, Kippax Creek and Emu Creek.

The report provides an important reflection on water governance arrangements that align with the government's perspectives on how we can improve them, and highlights the importance of the government's recent commitment to establish the office for water. The new office will help deliver holistic, coordinated and community-focused approaches to water issues. My colleague, Minister Rattenbury, recently announced \$4.2 million funding to establish the office of water as part of this budget.

The Commissioner's report also highlights that ensuring that our waterways and lakes are clean and healthy is integral to delivering a healthy environment for all Canberrans and underscores the need to do more to protect them from human sources of pollution.

This government agrees, and Minister Cheyne and I are working in partnership to deliver two important initiatives. The first is the work to enshrine a right to a healthy environment in the ACT Human Rights Act. This important reform recognises that our health and the health of our environment, including our lakes and waterways, are intertwined.

We also recognise the need to review and boost our environmental protections and settings. That is why Minister Cheyne and I have also funded in this budget a review of the Environmental Protection Authority, to ensure that we have a fit for purpose EPA that reflects that right to a healthy environment in its structure, reporting, enforcement and compliance activities.

While the review is underway, we have also boosted the number of on-the-ground EPA staff carrying out enforcement and compliance activity so that we can better prevent and respond to pollution incidents that impact our waterways and lakes. A total in this budget provides \$700,000 to review and boost the on-the-ground capability of the EPA.

Water-sensitive urban design is another key policy that this government has invested in heavily to protect and improve the health of our waterways and lakes. The Commissioner has provided a rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of our water-sensitive urban design policies and projects to date for improving water quality.

The findings do give cause for reflection and renewed focus. Recommendations have relevance across multiple agencies, covering responsibilities for policy refinement; strategic planning; urban design; construction and establishment; compliance and operation; and maintenance. The Territory Plan reforms currently underway will help to strengthen the effective implementation and compliance of the water-sensitive urban design policy.

Climate change is identified by the Commissioner as one of the most significant environmental challenges facing urban water management. The ACT government has long been a leader in addressing the challenges of climate change, and it is important that we continue to carry this forward into our water management and urban design.

The Commissioner has provided 12 recommendations for the ACT government to address the issues outlined in the report. These recommendations relate to improvements in governance arrangements, cross-agency coordination, strategic planning, water-sensitive urban design and resourcing. Responsibility for these broad-sweeping recommendations extends across multiple agencies. Developing a management response that addresses the recommendations will require a coordinated response. A full government response to the recommendations will be prepared and presented to the Assembly at a later date.

Once again, I thank the Commissioner for her important contribution to the adaptive management of our urban environment and the ongoing improvement that will aid our response to the emerging threat of climate change. I commend this report to the Assembly.

**MR DAVIS** (Brindabella) (3.15): I thank Minister Vassarotti for tabling the report. In particular, I thank the commissioner for the preparation of the report. There is more happening in this term of government to support healthy lakes and waterways than ever before, and there are more Greens in government than ever before. Mr Assistant Speaker, I do not think that those two things are mutually exclusive.

I have been delighted to see, in some of the pre-budget announcements that I trust the Treasurer will elaborate on further this afternoon, that there is already a substantial amount of additional investment targeted towards cleaning our lakes and waterways in the ACT. I am particularly excited about them as a member for Brindabella. It would not surprise colleagues and other members for Brindabella that Lake Tuggeranong is often remarked on, unfortunately, as one that is suffering from some of the worst water quality in the ACT. Over the last few months the situation has only been getting worse, as the commissioner outlines in the report.

This was one of the reasons why, prior to my election to this place, I ran on a platform, along with Minister Vassarotti and Minister Rattenbury, to substantially increase investment in the Healthy Waterways program. We saw some of that in Lake Tuggeranong in particular about a year ago. I know many of the Tuggeranites who live on the border of the lake in Greenway were very excited to welcome their new neighbours, in the form of the floating wetlands. I joined Minister Rattenbury and the Tuggeranong Community Council in launching those. Initial reports from the University of Canberra which have been reflecting on the efficacy of those floating wetlands is proving positive. The Healthy Waterways initiatives announced by Minister Rattenbury as minister for water, as part of this budget, go a substantial way to increasing the amount of floating wetlands that we can expect to see on Lake Tuggeranong.

In particular, I want to commend the efforts of the Leaf Collective, who have been doing a lot of community-based work at the ground level with Tuggeranites to educate and inform the community about some of our social responsibilities, to make sure that what is going down our stormwater drains is keeping our lake clean and tidy.

I also want pre-emptively to commend my colleague Ms Clay, who has a motion on the notice paper which I have already had the chance to read, which speaks about mowing. I understand that is more of a conversation to be had with the Minister for Transport and City Services. It would be remiss of me not to note that mowing, not just by private households but by government, is contributing to the problem we are seeing in my electorate at Lake Tuggeranong. I recall seeing a particular remarkable image on Ms Lawder's Facebook page—if I am not mistaken, Ms Lawder—of a council mower mowing with the catcher pointing directly into the lake, which was one of those stark images. So it is timely that my colleague Ms Clay is bringing a motion to the Assembly to talk about how the government, on the whole, maintains its own assets and how complementary works are making sure that we can maintain the water quality of the lake.

Of course, it is difficult, Mr Assistant Speaker; I have had it put to me by a few constituents that, while people want to do the very best they can all the time, sometimes it can feel like a bit of a hard pill to swallow when you are educated and informed about how you can best manage your own behaviour to keep lakes and waterways clean and tidy, when, conversely, you see with your own two eyes, in some instances, where perhaps the government is not implementing best practice itself. I have had it put by my constituents that sometimes that can be a bit challenging to see.

I also want to commend the initiative in the budget by the minister for water to set up an Office for Water. It might not appear to many outside this chamber as one of the big, sexy, exciting announcements as part of the budget, but it certainly interested me. One of the things I have observed over a period of time, not just as a member of this place but as a resident of Tuggeranong who has been actively engaged in the conversation about our water quality, is the risk that sometimes the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. Even though the intentions of the left hand are as good as those of the right hand, streamlining and creating synergies amongst those processes, making sure different parts of different directorates who are working on not dissimilar projects are collaborating and working together, will achieve better outcomes for ratepayers. We will be able essentially to save money and do more work by bringing those things together.

It is something that the minister for water himself is certainly too humble to say in the same way that I will, but I think it is a good example of one of those tangible and effective, but maybe not front-page, ways that the Greens influence government and exercise their responsibilities in the executive.

This is one of the most exciting and interesting water quality announcements from the government for some time. While establishing a new office might not catch most people's attention, I am excited about the possibility of bringing people together and getting stuff happening quicker, simply because people are working in the same office, and sometimes even physically in the same office in the same location. That is particularly exciting as well.

I will wait with bated breath to see how the government responds to some of the commissioner's recommendations. I trust that other members for Brindabella, in particular Ms Lawder, and our beloved Tuggeranong Community Council will be

very interested to find out the government's response to some of those recommendations as well.

For the first time in a long time, between the additional investments in the Healthy Waterways package and the establishment of an Office for Water—both delivered by Greens and government, and enacting ACT Greens election commitments—I am excited that we will see some big structural changes in the water quality in Lake Tuggeranong, and that is exactly what my constituents have been calling for.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (3.21): I want to make a few brief comments about the report from the commissioner. Before we congratulate ourselves too much on the great work that has happened over the last few years—and I acknowledge that there has been some fantastic work in our lakes and waterways—I point out once again that the CHIP report showed that Tuggeranong had its worst result ever for water quality last year. I repeat: the worst result ever for water quality.

While some people say, “It was La Niña and all of the rain,” I personally would be of the belief that most of the other lakes and waterways in Canberra would also be subject to the same rain, so why is it Tuggeranong that is singled out? Other lakes and waterways have ovals and sportsgrounds near them as well. Other lakes and waterways have gutters and kerbs leading into the stormwater system. It is not as simple as saying that, and Tuggeranong residents deserve better.

I am hopeful that the recommendations in the report will lead to an improvement in the water quality in all of our lakes and waterways. Mr Rattenbury and others will know that I have an interest in this area, and I would like to thank them very much for all of the effort they put in to answering my many questions on this topic. I know there have been a lot and that it has taken quite a bit of work, but I am very grateful for their assistance in that matter.

Throwing money at something does not always give you the best result. Often it does not hurt, but we must make sure that we are building the right water quality assets, not just building water quality assets. I look forward, with great hope, to water quality improvement in all of our lakes and waterways across the ACT.

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

### **Alexander Maconochie Centre—mental health services**

**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) (3.24): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to subsection 21(2)—Auditor-General's Report No 1/2022—Management of detainee mental health services in the Alexander Maconochie Centre—Government response.



**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) (3.24): I rise to speak briefly on the government's response to the ACT Auditor-General's report No 1 of 2022, *Management of detainee mental health services at the Alexander Maconochie Centre*, which was circulated out of session. This report made 19 recommendations. The ACT government has carefully considered all of the recommendations and agreed to 10 recommendations, agreed in principle to eight recommendations and noted one recommendation.

It is important to note that Canberra Health Services, the ACT Health Directorate through Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services, and the Justice and Community Safety Directorate—specifically ACT Corrective Services—each have roles and responsibilities in the provision of mental health services at AMC.

A commitment to partnership between these interconnected agencies will support a co-design approach to sustainable improvements that will ensure the provision of safe and high-quality mental health care for detainees within the AMC. The re-established Health Advisory Group will initially concentrate on establishing roles and responsibilities within AMC, with a focus on clarity between clinical and non-clinical roles. While reviewing service delivery and implementing plans to improve the quality and safety of health care to detainees are core business-as-usual practices, the government welcomes the recommendations from the ACT Auditor-General.

Further, Canberra Health Services will lead the development of a justice health strategy. The justice health strategy will be undertaken in close collaboration with the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, ACT Health Directorate and Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services. This work will complement the implementation of the government response. The justice health strategy will be finalised by the end of this year. The strategy will guide the planning and direction of justice health services to ensure that the governance structures, future direction and service improvements are robust, sustainable and aligned to the overall principles of effective and efficient service delivery.

The key themes of the Auditor-General's recommendations relate to governance, strategic planning, staff training, education and support, culturally appropriate and safe services, and clinical service improvement. I will summarise the thematic actions committed to by the ACT government in addressing the agreed recommendations. The ACT government response, circulated out of session, will further outline the proposed implementation time frames, as will the justice health strategy.

There are six recommendations that relate to governance. Recommendations 5 and 9 will be addressed by updating the current JACS and CHS arrangements document to outline the current shared care arrangements as well as the linkages between governance groups. Recommendation 6 will be addressed by improving ACT Health's oversight of Winnunga service arrangements, and strengthening inter-agency partnership and co-design approaches to service delivery.

Recommendation 10 will be addressed by reviewing the Health Advisory Group's purpose, membership and responsibilities, including the development of further key

performance indicators and updating the terms of reference to reflect this. Recommendation 15 will be addressed by developing the comprehensiveness of the high-risk assessment team meeting minutes to ensure that sufficient detail is captured.

There are three recommendations relating to strategic planning. Recommendation 1 will be addressed by developing a Canberra Health Services justice health services clinical services plan. Recommendation 7 will be addressed by finalising the Canberra Health Services custodial mental health services operational guide. Recommendation 16 will be addressed by identifying any gaps in documentation for operational and clinical procedures to be undertaken for detainees who fall outside the criteria for treatment by CHS Custodial Mental Health Services.

There are three recommendations that relate to staff training, education and support. Recommendations 4, 12 and 18 will be addressed by reviewing the current training modules provided, including exploring what additional resources may be required to enhance the current supports, and developing guidance material to further support team members.

Of the three recommendations that relate to culturally appropriate and safe services, recommendation 15 will be addressed as part of strengthening governance, including the feasibility and creation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health workers' roles. Recommendation 19 will be addressed as part of improving clinical services. Recommendation 17 will be addressed by exploring what enhancements can be made to increase Aboriginal liaison officer roles within the AMC.

There are six recommendations that relate to improving clinical services. Recommendation 2 will be addressed by implementing a new Canberra Health Services record-keeping system, called Digital Health Record, which is due to go live in November 2022. Recommendation 3 will be addressed by defining how equivalency in mental health care for people in the AMC can be expressed, measured and monitored.

Recommendation 13 will be addressed by strengthening the visibility of self-referral pathways for people in the AMC, including access to information sources such as the detainee handbook. Recommendation 14 will be addressed by improving the comprehensiveness of collaborative care plans for all people in the AMC with psychiatric risk ratings. Recommendation 19 will be addressed by finalising discharge planning and release planning procedures that not only describe the process for people in the AMC but also establish clear consultation pathways between each of the previously mentioned agencies.

Recommendation 11 also relates to improving clinical services; however, the ACT government has noted this recommendation. The ACT government agrees that a validated suicide assessment tool for use in a custodial setting is vital for the effective screening of people at risk of suicide or self-harm. There is a new SAFETool called Connecting with People that is being rolled out across CHS. This will replace the suicide vulnerability assessment tool.

While the justice health strategy will guide a large amount of this work, some of the actions I have mentioned here can be implemented prior to the strategy being finalised.

Work has already commenced on updating the arrangements document between Justice and Community Safety and Canberra Health Services, reviewing and updating governance meeting terms of reference, developing the Canberra Health Services Custodial Mental Health Services operational guide, and preparing for the go-live of the Canberra Health Services Digital Health Record. This work will ensure that immediate improvements are evident in this space.

In conclusion, it is recognised that people within the AMC are members of some of our most vulnerable communities. The ACT government is committed to delivering a completed implementation of the agreed recommendations by 31 December 2023. The ACT government is also committed to ensuring that the implementation of these actions ensures the delivery of culturally appropriate and safe services.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

### **Auditor-General's report No 2/2022—government response**

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

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to subsection 21(2)—Auditor-General's Report No 2/2022—Fraud Prevention—Government response.

### **COVID-19 pandemic—government response**

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

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

COVID-19 Emergency Response Act, pursuant to subsection 3(3)—COVID-19 Measures—Report No 15—Reporting period 1 April to 30 June 2022.

### **Leave of absence**

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

That leave of absence be granted to Mrs Kikkert for today for personal reasons.

### **Budget—government**

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (3.33): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) under the current Treasurer, the ACT Government has posted a budget deficit per the Uniform Presentation Framework every year since the 2012-13 financial year, despite repeatedly promising to return the budget to surplus;
- (b) the Territory's deficit was forecast at nearly \$1 billion in the 2021-22 financial year;

- (c) the Territory's net debt has grown from -\$736 million in 2011 to \$5.36 billion in 2022, and is forecast to be more than \$9 billion by 2024-25;
  - (d) the rate of growth in net debt and operating budget position is unsustainable. At this rate, the Territory must continue to borrow more to fund future liabilities as they fall due;
  - (e) the Treasurer's fiscal strategy for the Territory is not in compliance with the provisions of the *Financial Management Act 1996* regarding prudent fiscal management; and
  - (f) the Treasurer's mismanagement of the Territory's finances will impose enormous costs on future generations of Canberrans; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) commission an independent budget audit to investigate and report on the Territory's finances, to be completed by the end of the 2022 calendar year, with the following terms of reference:
    - (i) analyse the Territory's actual capital and operating expenditure for the financial years 2012-13 to 2021-22;
    - (ii) examine the long-term sustainability of the Territory's finances, with particular reference to its persistent budget deficits and the underlying causes for those;
    - (iii) examine the Territory's debt position and long-term debt retirement strategy;
    - (iv) present recommendations to urgently address the Territory's structural budget issues, improve the Territory's financial position, alternative stable fiscal strategies, and an eventual return to surplus; and
    - (v) the audit may invite submissions and seek information from any persons or bodies;
  - (b) consult with the Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Public Accounts on the personnel appointed to conduct the audit; and
  - (c) table the results of the audit in full to the Assembly on the first sitting day of 2023.

I am calling for this independent budget audit because, after 21 years of Labor and the Greens, the ACT is in the worst financial position since self-government. The territory's net debt has grown from a manageable negative \$736 million in 2011 to \$5.36 billion in 2022 and is forecast to be more than \$9 billion by 2024-25—and this is of course before we have had this year's budget handed down! The rate of growth in net debt is unsustainable and getting worse. The government must continue to borrow to fund future liabilities as they fall due. This cannot go on forever, and the Treasurer has no plan to fix it. In fact, the Treasurer has not once delivered a budget surplus according to the uniform presentation framework agreed to by all Australian governments in 1991.

The promised surpluses in recent years are an accounting sleight of hand, relying on strong returns to superannuation fund investments. Regardless of the Treasurer's spin,

like his usual lines about COVID and low interest rates, the fact of the matter remains he has been steadily and consciously vandalising the ACT's budget for over a decade. The ACT went into the COVID pandemic in the worst financial position of any state or territory in this country and, like many of the current failures across a number of portfolios, COVID has exacerbated the problems that were there long before the pandemic.

My motion today is very simple and calls on the Labor-Greens government to commission an independent budget audit to investigate and report on the territory's finances by the end of the 2022 calendar year. It is especially prudent now to undertake this comprehensive audit as we enter this new COVID recovery phase for our economy and as our community faces incredible challenges with the increasing cost of living. This independent audit would not only examine the long-term sustainability of the territory's finances but also look at the territory's debt position and long-term deficits and their underlying causes. It would present recommendations to improve the territory's financial position, suggest alternative fiscal strategies and provide a long-term plan for budget repair, for an eventual return to surplus.

A further and crucial purpose of this independent budget audit is to provide much-needed transparency to this Labor-Greens government's budgets. We know that the government is big on spin, big on announcements; it knows how to talk the talk. But when you look into the detail, when you look at the deliverables, it is a cold, stark reality of failure after failure after failure. This is a government that has a blatant disregard for the public and it tries, each year, to pull the wool over the eyes of Canberrans in its presentation of the budget. This government regularly changes output classes, line items and reporting periods. It re-scopes and re-profiles projects that are not meeting the performance indicators. Any layman's review of the budget becomes an apples to oranges comparison.

My motion is self-explanatory, and if the Treasurer is the prudent economic manager that he thinks and touts that he is, he should have no problems supporting it. It was disappointing to hear his comments to the media yesterday, with a tirade of irrelevant and hyperbolic personal attacks on me to deflect from the root of the problem here—which is of course that maybe he is not quite the prudent economic manager that he wants everyone to believe he is, because the numbers do not lie.

What do we have to show for our record net debt of over \$5 billion? We have seen real cuts to health funding, and nurses and doctors at breaking point crying out for more staff on the front line. We have new schools which are not keeping up with population growth and our existing schools that are being shut down due to horrific levels of violence and bullying, a teacher shortage, poorly maintained classrooms and hazardous materials. We have some of our most vulnerable in public housing that has been neglected for years. We have the lowest police numbers per capita across the country. We have footpaths and potholes not being fixed, mowing not being done and even rubbish not going to be collected weekly. For the record debt of over \$5 billion, what do we have to show for it?

This Treasurer inherited a surplus, a surplus that was gifted to him by his predecessors, and he has gone and put the ACT's finances into the worst position since

self-government! Our net debt of \$5 billion is forecast to be over \$9 billion by 2024-25.

What this means for Canberrans—from Banks to Bonner, from Molonglo Valley to west Belconnen and everyone in between, all of us Canberrans—is a real impact on the hospitals, which we are being told to stay away from because they cannot cope. It means a real impact on schools that our children are being banned from because of shocking violence and toxic materials; a real impact on our safety, with police not even being able to attend crimes when they are reported; a real impact on the pride we have in our city, a city that is befitting of the nation's capital, when we see potholes on our roads, cracks in our footpaths and grass waist high because this government cannot even get the basics right. Over \$5 billion in net debt is forecast to be over \$9 billion by 2024-25.

Whilst the Chief Minister is on a scare campaign, perhaps he should realise that independent budget audits have been employed by many governments of all political stripes and colours across the country to do what all prudent, responsible governments should do, and that is to be fiscally responsible with taxpayers' moneys. The most recent subnational government to do so was the Northern Territory, under a Labor government in 2019.

The government that is undertaking a very similar exercise right now is the federal Labor government, under the helm of the ACT's own senator, Katy Gallagher. In fact, days after being sworn in as the Minister for Finance, Senator Gallagher said that she will "go through line by line the budget to see where there are areas we can make sensible savings and return that money back to the budget". Even Senator Gallagher seems to understand that any prudent, responsible government must know that racking up record levels of debt cannot continue forever.

Mr Cocks, in his inaugural speech this morning, reminded us of a time when the Treasurer, at least when he entered this parliament, also valued fiscal responsibility in government. I quote him again because I think it is very worthwhile. In his inaugural speech, Mr Barr said:

There is no point in being in government if you cannot make people's lives better. And you cannot do that if you are not paying attention to the economy. Good governments manage the economy responsibly, and that good management leads to benefits for all the community. It is what underpins the delivery of the services that Canberrans want and need.

Running a surplus operating budget provides intergenerational equity. It means that each generation of the ACT community pays for the government services they are receiving. A surplus budget is vital to maintaining the territory's AAA credit rating. A surplus budget also provides the basis for managing the risks and uncertainties that will inevitably arise in the future. That is the reason why this government has delivered successive budget surpluses totalling \$250 million since coming to office.

It seems that the years have not been kind to the Treasurer's sense of fiscal responsibility, because those words are in stark contrast to what we have been hearing from the Treasurer in the last few years—and particularly the last few days.

If this Labor-Greens government has nothing to hide in the way it manages the Territory's finances, in the way it has managed the territory's finances, it must support my motion. As the privileged custodians of taxpayers' money, of taxpayers' trust and of taxpayers' faith, it is incumbent on any government to be as open and transparent as possible about the way it spends their money. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (3.42): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing forward this motion today. Usually it is the practice of the Liberal Party to wait until they have won an election and then to spring a commission of audit on the community as an excuse to drive deep cuts to expenditure, to employment, and, indeed, to government programs, services and infrastructure projects. That has been the pattern that Ms Lee identified.

If you go back through the history of these, I understand that the first one was undertaken in 1873 in Western Australia. If we go to modern history and look at the last 30 years, it happened with incoming Liberal governments in Victoria in the 1990s and again in 2011-12; in Western Australia in the 1990s and again in 2008-09; with the Liberal government of New South Wales in 2011-12; and with the Country Liberal Party government in the Northern Territory in 2012-13. Of course, who could forget Campbell Newman's infamous commission of audit from 2012-13, and then the mother of them all, the Abbott-Hockey commissioned National Commission of Audit in 2013-14?

It is straight from the modern Liberal Party playbook: "Let's call for a commission of audit. Let's outsource the policy work to then outsource everything else. Outsource and downsize the public sector, cut public service jobs, reduce funding to health, education, community services, police and emergency services—all of the things that the community relies upon."

In looking at Ms Lee's motion today, she is effectively asking for taxpayers, through the government, to fund the policy agenda and determine the policy agenda that the Liberals would seek to take to the 2024 election. Ms Lee, my answer to this is: no, taxpayers will not be funding your policy development work. You have stated and you clearly acknowledge that the ACT government is spending too much. You then, in the second half of your speech, went through a laundry list of areas where you would like the ACT government to spend more money. It is now incumbent upon you, having put this on the table and stated that this is the Liberal Party policy position, that this is what you would like to see. I credit you with doing it now and not after an election, so that we can now, for the next two years, have the debate about what the Liberal Party will cut, what it wants to cut.

Clearly, you think we are spending too much and you are concerned about the territory's debt levels. That is fair enough. That is a legitimate public policy position to hold, and it is consistent with the Liberal Party's world view that government should be smaller and it should do less, that there should be fewer public servants and there should be fewer services provided to the community. That is your party's underlying political philosophy; it has been in modern times. So I am not surprised that you have brought this forward. It is entirely consistent. It is the same old Liberal

Party, the same story, and it has been done in every state and territory led by an incoming Liberal government, and at the commonwealth level, in modern history. There is nothing new about what you are calling for here.

What you are asking for is taxpayers to present recommendations to you on alternative fiscal strategies and ways to improve the territory's financial position. Well, I am sorry; you are the shadow treasurer. If you are not happy with the current government policy direction then it is incumbent on you to develop a policy alternative. I want you to, because I think it is important that there is a debate on this and that when people vote in 2024 they can choose to vote for your alternative agenda, which is that you are concerned about expenditure and debt. Presumably, you will outline the series of areas of expenditure that you would cut and the ways that you would seek to reduce debt, if it is of such concern to you. That is fair enough; that is what should happen in a democracy.

I encourage you to spend the next two years as shadow treasurer developing those policies. Then put them before the people of Canberra in October 2024 and outline in detail across health, education, community services, emergency services, housing—all of the portfolio areas within the ACT budget—what you will cut in order to achieve your fetish around debt and deficit reduction, which is clearly what this is all about. It is a bizarre focus on an issue that has been canvassed extensively across the commonwealth and at a state and territory level.

The motion asks for an explanation as to why there have been deficits. I think we have had that debate every year that there has been a deficit—and why. That has been presented in budget speeches, in the annual budget papers of the territory. The reasons are very clear. Ms Lee quoted my inaugural speech that talked about shocks and unexpected outcomes that can influence budget positions. Yes, of course I stand by what I said in my inaugural speech. We have experienced those shocks. They have included the global financial crisis. They have included the 2014 federal budget, the Mr Fluffy asbestos crisis and then a global pandemic.

What you do see in the history of the headline-led operating balance of the territory is that we experienced those shocks and then we recovered our fiscal position: to balance the budget and then indeed have surpluses before the pandemic hit. The budget I released last year and the budget I will table later this afternoon demonstrate the path back to balance and a trajectory of lower debt than was forecast in last year's budget, as a result of an improved fiscal position. One of the factors that has driven that improvement is increased revenue. That is particularly important because, in my view, the challenge at a state and territory level, and indeed at a commonwealth level, is more of a revenue challenge than an expenditure challenge.

Again, I understand that that will be contested, and it is a good thing that it will be contested. If the Leader of the Opposition and shadow treasurer believes that the answer to debt and deficit is austerity and cuts, that is fine; it is intellectually consistent with the Liberal Party's world view. But you need to identify the areas where you want to cut, Ms Lee, and bring that forward to the election. Then we will have a contest of ideas and put before the people of the Australian Capital Territory which fiscal policy path should be pursued.



We will not be supporting this motion today. The first part contains many factual errors and information that is out of date—and will be by 5 o'clock this afternoon. The second part is effectively the outsourcing of the Liberal Party's policy work to taxpayers. As for the idea that we would find someone independent, I know John Barilaro is looking for something to do at the moment, but he is not someone who we would appoint to such a role—and we will not be, to be very clear.

What we have we seen with the previous Liberal government audits—I think it was former federal Treasurer Peter Costello who was hauled in to do Campbell Newman's—is that there is an interesting trend in all of these. They tend to be one-term governments that undertake these sorts of exercises, springing on the electorate, after an election, their agenda to cut public services and public service jobs. I will credit Ms Lee with being prepared to say it before the election—that that is what she stands for—but I will remind her now, and every day until the election, that if she does not provide these answers then it is very clear that she will be hiding what her true intent would be, were she to be the Chief Minister and Treasurer.

So from today, Ms Lee, you are on notice that you must outline in detail every single cut that you will make, or else everything that you have said in the first part of your motion, and all of the concern that you have expressed, is meaningless because you will not act on it. If you are concerned about debt and deficit, outline the cuts you will make. Do it now. You can start on Thursday in your budget reply. You will have two days to look at the budget. Tell the community and tell this place which funding you do not support, which infrastructure projects you do not support. Because in the end that is what it comes down to: what will you not fund, what would you sacrifice, in order to meet some arbitrary debt and deficit target that you have set? What will you cut? That is the question that every Canberran will want to know the answer to between now and October 2024. The government will not be supporting this motion today.

**MR RATTENBURY (3.53):** I welcome the opportunity that Ms Lee has provided to discuss these matters today. I listened to Ms Lee's remarks very carefully, and I felt that she blended the notions of transparency and policy decisions in an interchangeable and confused way. The reason I say that is that, certainly, in Ms Lee's press release yesterday and in comments that she made, she talked about the need for the government to be transparent about its spending decisions and for there to be proper scrutiny of the way that the government is operating its fiscal strategy. I think that is absolutely true and absolutely fair.

In preparing for today's discussion, I reflected on the many mechanisms that are available for that transparency and scrutiny. The budget will be published; there will be an annual estimates process in which members will have two weeks, 10 working days, and all of the hearings, to scrutinise both ministers and the public servants that work with them on the matters of substance in the budget. Of course, there is an independent organisation contracted every year to examine the budget on behalf of the estimates committee. In recent years, that has been a group called Pegasus, who has provided an economic analysis—maybe call it an audit—of the budget and has given the estimates committee an external, independent analysis to help them with their scrutiny of the budget process. All of these things already exist. When it comes to scrutinising the budget, we have a range of pretty effective mechanisms and, if there

are other improvements to the Assembly process, let us hear about it. But I think Ms Lee is proposing something quite different. When it comes to the transparency side of the equation, I think that the Assembly is well empowered to do that.

There is, of course, all of the external scrutiny that goes on—the stakeholder groups, the industry representative groups and the media commentary. Access Economics will probably provide a commentary; there will be the analysis at the Canberra Business Chamber’s annual lunch. All of these things take place. So when it comes to transparency and scrutiny, a range of mechanisms already exist.

As I listened to Ms Lee’s remarks today—and the Treasurer picked up on this in a slightly different way to what I was thinking about, but I think there is a similar point—it became clear to me, and the text of the motion goes to this as well, that Ms Lee is actually saying that she wants the audit to identify different policy decisions. At the end of the day, that is what a budget is about—it is a series of policy decisions and prioritisations about how resources are allocated.

Having listened to Ms Lee’s remarks and having read her proposed motion, I was reminded of Mr Coe’s efforts at the last ACT election, and what I considered at the time to be a degree of magic pudding economics. It was all about, “We’re going to provide better services and cut spending.” That is what Mr Coe ran at the last election. There were all sorts of things, claiming that that would be the case. But when he was asked about it, he struggled to answer the question. He would mutter vaguely about finding efficiencies, but he never actually answered the question about what that meant and what it looked like.

To some extent the Chief Minister has hit the nail on the head in his challenge to Ms Lee today, in that what we are hearing from Ms Lee is very similar magic pudding economics. She is saying, “We’re going to make it better for you, whilst at the same time cutting expenditure,” and it just does not add up.

The reality is that these decisions are about priorities. From the Greens’ point of view, we have been clear in recent years that our priority has been about people and the planet. During the pandemic we have had to step up and support our community. The government as a whole—certainly, our part of it—have been very clear that we have chosen, opted, agreed to and made the decision to spend at a time when spending was needed. There were some things on which we had no choice. The necessary expenditure around the pandemic has been really important, and the expenditure around community support services, I would say, has been essential. In some ways. I do not think there has been a choice, but I guess you could have opted not to do those things.

The government has spent a lot of money supporting the community during the pandemic. At other times—and I will pick up Ms Lee’s point that it is not all about the pandemic—when we have chosen to make important investments to support our community, whether that is by providing a range of community services, health services or education services, all of these things invest in people in our community.

Of course, the other side of the equation is the planet side. It is not that these two things are unlinked; but, in trying to analyse the discussion, we have chosen to

significantly invest in tackling climate change, in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, in improving our waterways, in investing in biodiversity protection and in tackling invasive weed species. These are the choices that we have made in the budget. We have been very transparent about that, and I think that is appropriate.

I pick up on the Chief Minister's point. If Ms Lee does not think that these expenditure choices are appropriate then she should say so. My lived experience of being in this place is that, in almost every sitting week—in fact, probably almost in every week, but certainly in the sitting weeks—we get a couple of motions in here from the Liberal Party calling for more expenditure on certain things. That is fair enough; that is a policy position that you are allowed to put. But every week the government is urged to spend more money—and probably in other weeks as well, in the various press releases and online video clips that Liberal members put on their social media pages and the like.

The other point that it is important to reflect on in this debate is that the Greens do not endorse a blinkered focus on deficit and surplus. It is a concern that, in this challenging environment we are living in, with so many issues in the budget and the community that we need to address, Ms Lee is particularly focused on some artificial number around surplus or deficit. The apparently magical surplus milestone is routinely used in a political way. A surplus must be good and a deficit must be bad. That is the traditional analysis that we get. I do not know whether “analysis” is the right word; it is the traditional ideology that we get from the Liberal Party. If a government budget is in deficit, it must be a failure. Of course, deficit sounds bad; so it is an easier way for the opposition to attack a government.

That is narrow and dangerous thinking that ignores the fact that budgets must reflect the needs of the community, to respond to the challenges that we are facing and invest for the future. I do not support a narrow fiscal lens that just sees the budget as a ledger of numbers and, if it does not achieve a surplus, it must be a failure. There are times when you need to invest in the community and make sure that we are preparing to deal with the current challenges and prepare for the future.

Do not get me wrong. You cannot just put it all on the credit card all of the time, but we are battling through a pandemic and we are facing a housing crisis. We are responding to the growing consequences of climate change, and spending on these issues, including the prudent use of the government's borrowing power, is an option for a responsible government.

It does not mean that we are proposing flagrant or careless spending, but we should not over-dramatize a deficit as if it is a poisonous failure. Governments can borrow at low interest rates, and they can use these borrowings to grow the productivity of the economy, invest in our people and build skills. These are all things that government has a job to do and can deliver through the budget.

The comments made by the Chief Minister about the Liberal Party seeking to outsource their policies was an angle that I had not reflected on, but I think that adds to our conviction that we will not be supporting this motion today. To pick up Ms Lee's theme of transparency, we believe there are a significant number of mechanisms already in place, and that the estimates process and various others will

provide those opportunities. I presume that a firm will be contracted this year to provide the estimates committee with technical and intellectual support to help them to analyse the budget. I think that is very appropriate.

From the transparency side, we believe that there are significant mechanisms already in place. We do not believe that an external auditor should come in and tell us what our policy priorities should be. That is something that the government works through, and the opposition is here to put the alternative views in debate. The *Canberra Times* will debate that, as will the various media outlets. I think that process will also deal with this question of what should be prioritised. We will not be supporting this motion today.

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (4.02), in reply: It is extraordinary that the Treasurer has described my “fetish” with debt and deficit. I implore him to recall when we were going through the COVID pandemic whether I raised any concern about the measures that we were putting in place. He had my full support to ensure that our community was looked after during the time when they needed it the most.

To say that I have a “fetish” with debt and deficit is extraordinary and just downright weird. This comes from a Treasurer who, when he entered this place, spoke about the importance of good government being economically responsible. It was important enough for Mr Barr, when he entered this place, when he was given the privilege of being elected to this place, to put it in his inaugural speech.

He spent the entire debate deflecting from the substance of my motion because, of course, he cannot refute what is in black and white. He cannot refute the numbers that are outlined in his own budget, in his own forecasts and in the stunning failures in delivery that are all laid bare.

The leader of the Greens must be clutching at straws when the main thrust of his argument was to talk at length about what happened last term and into the last election. I also do not know where he is going with this. On the one hand he talks about a magical number, a magical deficit and “We won’t be talking about an arbitrary number,” and in the next breath he says, “Of course, that doesn’t mean that we put everything on the credit card,” and, “It’s not about careless spending.” So what is it? You cannot have your cake and eat it too, Mr Rattenbury.

Let us talk about Mr Barr’s statement that, “Yes, we have been through some shocks,” and he outlined several. He said, “But we’ve recovered. We’ve recovered.” Let us talk about the “recovery”. This is the Treasurer’s eleventh budget and it is his eleventh budget deficit, as per the uniform presentation framework. The result of these deficits is more and more debt. The Treasurer has taken the territory’s net debt position of negative \$736 million to \$109 million in 2012-13, \$910 million in 2014-15, \$1.65 billion in 2015-16, and \$2.22 billion in 2018-19. This was all well before COVID. That is because, before the pandemic, the Treasurer had delivered seven budget deficits, pushing our net debt to \$2.22 billion!

When the pandemic did hit, we were already on the backfoot—so much so that, after the election in 2020, ACT treasury, his own directorate, in the incoming brief said that

while there was a case for supporting Canberra's economy in the short term during COVID—and I quote:

The current gap between spending and taxation is not ... sustainable over the medium term, and as soon as practicably possible the government will need to put in place a more detailed strategy to return the budget to balance and start repaying debt.

It is not just the Canberra Liberals who are saying that the budget position created by the Treasurer is unsustainable; the Treasurer's own directorate has warned about it. It went on to say:

... continuing to run deficits will reduce the government's capacity to respond to any future economic shocks and if sustained lower the ACT's capacity to access market finance putting at risk the government's capacity to deliver services.

Standard & Poor's indicated—and I again quote:

... downward pressure on future ratings could emerge if the ACT's deficits turn out to be larger or more prolonged than expected, resulting in a steeper rise in the debt burden than currently forecast.

Of course, that is exactly what has happened. In 2019-20 our net debt ballooned to \$3.3 billion. In 2021 it climbed to \$4.36 billion, and in 2021-22 it was \$5.36 billion, and forecast to be over \$9 billion by 2024-25. It is not sustainable.

The Treasurer also liked to talk about cuts, so let us talk about those cuts. The Treasurer was the education minister who closed 23 schools before COVID. He reduced funding to ACT schools by over three per cent every year between 2011 and 2020. He systematically cut funding for health since 2015-16—again, before COVID—to the point where our health frontline staff are at breaking point and we have people dying in the corridors of our hospitals.

The Canberra Hospital expansion announced in 2011 under Katy Gallagher will not be delivered until the late 2020s—15 years for this government to extend an existing hospital. We also know that the ACT has the lowest police per capita and the lowest funding per person for police, and that there are less public housing dwellings in 2021 than in 2011. We know about this Treasurer's cuts, so if he wants to talk about cuts, let us make sure that we add those to the mix.

If the only argument that this Treasurer has is to compare me to Campbell Newman, Joe Hockey or Tony Abbott, he is literally clutching at straws. These references are over 10 years old. If that is the only thing that he has, to compare me to Campbell Newman, Joe Hockey and Tony Abbott, seriously, where are we going to be?

It is clear that he will not listen to his own directorate, that he will not listen to the opposition, that he will not want to listen to an independent voice on a budget, and that he will not listen to the community that is crying out regarding making sure that public housing is okay, making sure that our health system is okay and making sure that our education system is okay. It begs the question: who will he listen to?

The simple fact is that you cannot trust a budget handed down by this government. Year after year, we see the budget make the same grand promises over the forward estimates. Year after year, we see this government fail to deliver on those promises, and year after year we see this government re-scope, re-profile and re-announce brand-new promises, under the guise of brand-new promises. This is the pattern that we have seen for over a decade. Why should the community believe anything that this Treasurer says in the budget?

The simple fact is that this is a government that stopped listening to the community a long time ago, and this is a government that stopped governing in the best interests of the Canberra community a long time ago. Today this government have demonstrated once again, in rejecting and voting against my motion, that they will not change. It is a real shame, because at the end of the day it is the Canberra community that pays the price.

Question put:

That **Ms Lee's** motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7		Noes 14	
Mr Cain		Mr Barr	Ms Orr
Ms Castley		Mr Braddock	Dr Paterson
Mr Cocks		Ms Burch	Mr Pettersson
Ms Lawder		Ms Cheyne	Mr Rattenbury
Ms Lee		Ms Clay	Mr Steel
Mr Milligan		Ms Davidson	Ms Vassarotti
Mr Parton		Mr Davis	
		Mr Gentleman	

Question resolved in the negative.

## Environment—urban conservation areas

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (4.17): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes there are several new and recent planning, consultation, inquiries and budget announcements about urban land management including:
  - (a) a City Services budget announcement for \$1.2 million in 2022-23 for a one-year pilot rapid mowing response team;
  - (b) an Environment budget announcement for \$10 million in 2022-23 to support nature conservation with a focus on restoring urban open spaces and enhancing our capacity to adapt to climate change;
  - (c) as part of the \$10 million Environment budget, \$3 million over two years will be utilised to bring back more nature into the city and maximise biodiversity connectivity and wildlife corridors through the

enhancement of 20 local sites and the production of habitat and connectivity maps;

- (d) a Play Space Strategy launched earlier this year;
  - (e) a planned review of Public Land Management Plans for urban open spaces including dryland ovals in 2022;
  - (f) an Adopt-a-Park program which provides grant funding to support community-led initiatives on urban open area land including micro-forests and grassy woodland restoration;
  - (g) a committee inquiry into environmental volunteerism;
  - (h) a Biodiversity Conservation Forum to foster connections between different land managers and community members; and
  - (i) a landscape guide to support biodiversity and a climate resilient capital called Gawari Ngilanmanyin, or “remembering the bush” in Ngunnawal;
- (2) further notes that:
- (a) Canberra’s environment, habitat and wildlife are under increasing pressure from climate change and urban development;
  - (b) the ACT Government is committed to supporting nature in the city as one means of addressing this and understands the need to protect connectivity and conserve and restore grasslands and habitat;
  - (c) bushfire abatement zones exist and there are several strategies, including mowing, that are used to mitigate risk and this motion is not intended to affect any bushfire abatement practices;
  - (d) the ACT Legislative Assembly recently reaffirmed its commitment to work collaboratively to protect, connect and restore biodiversity across the Territory through an Executive motion by Minister Vassarotti in the last sittings;
  - (e) local stewardship and a genuine community and government partnership model is a powerful means of protecting our environment, including through volunteer programs like the Urban Parks and Places “friends of” groups and urban landcare groups;
  - (f) different members and groups in our community value different aspects of our urban environment including nature, amenity and recreation, and some of these uses can come into conflict, often leading to complaints about mowing by members of the public or landcarers;
  - (g) a variety of people look after our urban spaces including staff from different ACT Government directorates, mowing contractors and volunteer landcarers, and some routine practices and goals come into conflict with one another; and
  - (h) some mowing-related issues affecting conservation at the moment include mowing over planted areas that should be conserved, mowers spreading weed seeds, and mowers contributing to grass clippings and leaf litter entering into our waterways; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) ensure all relevant government and community stakeholders participate in existing forums and groups, like the Biodiversity Conservation Forum;

- (b) support training, education and signage for the community to better understand the role of urban habitat and grasslands conservation and restoration;
- (c) support training, capacity building and other tools like barriers or fencing to assist ACT Government employees who maintain our urban land, particularly those involved in mowing, to ensure they understand the ecological benefits of grassy ecosystems and how to protect them;
- (d) investigate and implement options to structure new contracts and train contractors to ensure that conservation areas are not mown, that mowers are not spreading weeds, and that grass clippings and leaf litter are not sent into our waterways; and
- (e) report back to the Assembly on progress on this motion and any resources needed to better protect urban habitat and grasslands by the last sitting week in 2023.

I rise today to speak about the motion circulated in my name on protection and maintenance of urban conservation areas. I am happy to bring forward this motion which will support our environment and our amazing Landcare volunteers, and make sure that we get the right mowing in the right place.

We have had a lot of rain this year. It has been a La Niña year, and the ACT is the lushest we have seen it in ages. Climate change is bringing us more extremes—more droughts, more floods, more heat and less predictability. It is affecting our urban environment, our weeds, our grasses and our bushfires. We are seeing this all over the world at the moment, and right here in Australia. It is really important that we support our local environment through this.

I have had the privilege of spending time with a number of Landcare groups in Belconnen and all around Canberra. I have joined working bees with Emu Creek Landcare, Friends of Aranda Bushland, Friends of Bruce Ridge, Friends of Mount Painter, Friends of Black Mountain, Umbagog Landcare Group, North Belconnen Landcare Group and Croke Place; and in Lawson, McKellar and Gossan Hill. I was really happy to stand with Karissa Preuss from Landcare ACT and John Giacon from Emu Creek last week to discuss this motion and hear from the Landcarers themselves about their experiences and what they need.

I have been out there weeding, planting trees and digging holes. I am known for my hole digging. It requires no skill and great energy, and I find I am well suited to this! I have eaten a lot of morning teas and I have heard a lot about the practical realities of Landcare on the ground. This motion is inspired by all of those people and all of that time. But it is also about our changing climate and the everyday impact this is having on the ground. It is about supporting our people to conserve what we have and what we love. It is also inspired by our biodiversity crisis and the increasing pressures we have on Canberra's environment, on our habitat and wildlife, as a result of urban development.

Sometimes our contractors are mistakenly mowing in areas that are no-mow conservation areas. Sometimes they are spreading weed seeds into conservation areas that are looked after by our Landcarers. Some of our practices are sometimes leading to grass clippings entering our waterways, and some of these practices can destroy the



habitat where our wildlife live. We need to protect these and make sure Canberra is and remains a biodiversity haven, and we need to honour the work of the volunteers who are looking after the area with such love.

My motion is long. I apologise for that. We seem to write quite long ones in our office. But the measures I have suggested are really simple. The motion sets out a lot of ACT government and Assembly work that is already underway or that has been recently announced. I am happy that I had so much to list.

We are delivering funding to support nature conservation in urban open spaces. We are delivering a one-year pilot rapid mowing response team. We are exploring and enhancing nature in the city, and we are working on biodiversity, connectivity and wildlife corridors, with the enhancement of 20 local sites and the production of habitat and connectivity maps.

We are reviewing the public land management plans for urban spaces, including dryland ovals, like the one in Florey, which has just opened for community consultation, thanks to another motion that I moved last year. We are funding an adopt-a-park program to support community-led initiatives on urban open land. We had a play spaces strategy launched earlier this year, and there is a biodiversity conservation forum that is designed to foster connections between all of our different land managers and all of our community members working on the land. There is a landscape guide to support biodiversity and our climate-resilient capital. Environment Minister Vassarotti's executive motion last week highlighted the commitment to work collaboratively to protect, connect and restore biodiversity across the territory.

This motion today extends all of these initiatives. It puts an eco lens on all of the work that we are doing, to make sure that we are doing that work in the right way. It is about doing the right mowing in the right places at the right times. It is about adapting urban Landcare management for our changing city and putting an ecological filter on all of our urban land management. It is about listening to the concerns from the community and feeding them in to the way we do things.

This motion is not about road safety. I have done a bit of work on road safety in other capacities in this Assembly. This motion will not affect long grass or lines of sight around traffic. It is also not about bushfire management, which needs a separate, careful approach. My motion will not affect either of those things. It is about protecting Landcare areas that have already been agreed to and marked out by ACT government.

Different members of the public and different members of our community value different aspects of our urban environment. Some people love the neat look of mown grass. That is great in certain areas, but it is not suitable for recognised habitat areas. More education, more signage about what lives in different areas and the benefits we get when we start protecting this habitat in the right way and more conversation on this topic will help us all to work out what we want and where.

As well as providing habitat, having grasslands that are protected provides a huge amount of amenity for the community in terms of cooling and urban conservation. I am also keen to see training, capacity building and other tools for the ACT

government employees involved in our urban land management to ensure that they have what they need to understand the ecological benefits of our grassy ecosystems and how best to protect them.

I am pleased to bring forward this motion calling for greater education and different tools for the government and community to learn and share about the values of urban habitats, particularly our grassy ecosystems. I am excited to see all of the different people involved and the different agencies sitting around a table and talking together about the best outcomes for environmentally sound urban land management in the ACT.

I am excited to see better protection for our urban conservation areas and to see mowing done in the right way and in the right places. I am looking forward to the community conversation, the education and the signage that will show us what we have, how amazing it is, the different creatures that live there and the different species that we have here, some of which we have only in this region and nowhere else.

I am looking forward to hearing the results of this work and what resources government needs for even better protection by the last sitting week in 2023. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

**MR STEEL** (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (4.24): I rise to speak on Ms Clay’s motion about urban land care and the importance of promoting and preserving biodiversity and our urban conservation sites. The ACT government is strongly committed to caring for urban land management, but we recognise that the community has expectations of government to keep their city tidy and ensure safety and amenity. We must strike the important balance of keeping Canberra’s public open spaces enjoyable for everyone and taking care to protect and conserve the local environment at the same time.

That is why the government carefully designates conservation areas and marks them with clear bollard signs, ensuring that our mowers do not mow those areas, for critical environmental and biodiversity benefit. Transport Canberra and City Services works closely with the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to identify areas with conservation sites that do not need to be mown, with careful work undertaken to identify safe mowing regularity, timing and height to ensure the best outcomes for the flora and fauna on site. It is really important to say that this is not a simple question of “mow or don’t mow”. There are many sites that actually do require mowing in order to support the conservation of those sites and some of the rare or endangered species that may exist on those sites as well.

All conservation sites are clearly identified on our mowing map, for the awareness of all mowing staff and contractors. The mowing crew do take steps to reduce the impact that they have on the local environment, with clear guidelines to reduce the inadvertent spread of weeds. This includes regular cleaning and washing down of mowers, mowing contractors engaged in directional mowing where appropriate and moving from areas with a low quantity of weeds to higher quantity areas, to reduce spread. Contractors also make regular efforts to prevent clippings from entering stormwater infrastructure and collecting on roads and paths.

Ms Clay refers to the review of public land management plans for urban open spaces. I am pleased to advise the Assembly that the ACT government is currently preparing a single urban open space land management plan that will cover the whole of Canberra's urban open space network and will replace the existing five land management plans. As part of this new land management plan, the ACT government will build on previous plans, with an increased focus on our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and land management practices, community, sustainability and climate change, and recognising the important role that our community volunteers play in the management and maintenance of our public spaces.

The new plan will address the protection of areas that are not designated as conservation sites but where there is still volunteer planting activity occurring. It will consider the role of signage and other measures to protect the work of volunteers in these areas. They may not be a designated conservation area that is clearly marked with a bollard; nonetheless, we want to work on what are the opportunities to better protect those areas in the future and manage the land management practices around them. It will provide a number of strategies to support volunteers in their work.

The draft urban open space land management plan will be made available for public comment later this year. Key stakeholders, such as the volunteer groups, will be invited to provide comment as part of that process. Transport Canberra and City Services works closely with a variety of stakeholders when it comes to addressing land management issues, including EPSDD, the ESA, the Environment Protection Authority, the City Renewal Authority, developers, residents, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative bodies. Working collaboratively is important to understand where our efforts to ensure safety and amenity meet with our obligations to promote and preserve biodiversity.

The engagement of the ACT government with local volunteer groups is really important, as Ms Clay refers to in her motion, particularly referring to the work of our adopt-a-park program, which is supporting the volunteer groups. I really welcome the opportunity that these grants give to those volunteer organisations, and for them to work collaboratively with government to foster biodiversity and promote different ways to think about land care and management in our urban footprint.

As a government, we must manage a range of priorities when it comes to urban land care, especially with regard to mowing. The current mowing program manages a range of issues, including public and staff safety, heritage and culturally significant sites, emergency management, infrastructure, amenity and of course management of the local environment. We cannot and should not place a single interest over any other in the way that we manage this program. A balance is required. There are many priorities in the system that we need to manage when it comes to mowing.

The last few years have been difficult with the mowing program. We have moved from drought to large amounts of wet weather. It has been difficult for our mowing team to achieve the amenity desired by the community. We have had that discussion before in the Assembly: when it is wet, you cannot mow, but then when you can mow you often have to do multiple passes of the same area in order to get the same

outcome. We have seen a huge ramp-up in our mowing passes over the last few years and we have provided surge funding in each of the last two years.

I am very pleased that, as part of the budget which the Treasurer will be handing down this evening, we will be funding \$1.2 million for a rapid mowing team, which will be provided for a year, in a pilot, to tackle some of the pressures that our mowing team has faced over recent years and to be more responsive to the community. It will involve new staff across three teams, which will add to our mowing capacity. These dedicated teams can be deployed to any part of Canberra where additional pressure exists or hotspots that might be identified by the community, or by other means, to make sure that we can get our mowing done during this very wet season, which is due to continue, based on the advice of the bureau.

I acknowledge the great interest that Ms Clay has in mowing and conservation. I thank the teams within Transport Canberra and City Services for the dedicated work that they are doing to ensure that our mowing teams keep our city tidy, while respecting the importance of biodiversity in our urban areas. This is a conversation that I and Minister Vassarotti have been having with TCCS and EPSDD for some time. I was very pleased to be able to update Ms Clay on, particularly, our interest in looking at the options around signage for the non-conservation areas where we want these areas to be protected from mowing. It is great to see that picked up in the motion today, so we are very pleased to support it.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (4.31): I thank Ms Clay for bringing forward this motion today. I think all of us in this chamber have become aware of how passionate Ms Clay is about our local environment and biodiversity and I appreciate that this motion is coming from a genuine place. It is quite a wordy motion, so I am not going to go through everything in the motion. I will just summarise it by saying that it calls for better collaboration between the teams at EPSDD and TCCS on matters of environmental and urban importance. I know from my own interest in improving our lakes and waterways that the maintenance practices in our city services space can be improved to further the environmental outcomes that we are all looking for.

Sometimes—not always, but sometimes—these changes can be low cost and easy to implement. It is therefore confusing and disappointing when we see a left-hand and a right-hand approach, with one area of the ACT government doing something to improve our environmental outcomes, while another area of the government is contributing to the very problem that we are trying to fix. For example, we have all seen gutters full of leaves that are not being swept from the street, or gutters not swept frequently enough. We have seen examples of mowing where we have grass clippings that seem to go straight into the gutters and kerbs, to be left there until the next rainfall washes them down into our stormwater system.

I have had many pieces of correspondence with the minister about this, about mowing practices, including, more recently, sending photos of mowing at Lake Tuggeranong with grass clippings over the surface of the lake, the clippings going directly into the lake. This is very disappointing for locals; it is very disappointing for people who are interested in water quality. We are spending millions of dollars to improve water quality, but, on the other hand, the actions of some of our own people are contributing to the problem.

In many instances where there have been failures of government, residents and other local and volunteer organisations have stepped up. Organisations such as the Leaf Collective are a great example of this. They promote the use of leaf towers in our community to help prevent leaves from entering and polluting our waterways. This is where locals take responsibility for sweeping up leaves in their own streets and neighbourhoods and then the leaves are collected in a sort of a bin and taken away for mulching.

I have seen some people in this place post on Instagram pictures of so-called beautiful scenes in Canberra where whole streets are covered in autumn leaves. While some people might see that as very beautiful, I see that as an enormous nutrient load waiting to enter our lakes and waterways. It should not be something that we are celebrating. Initiatives like the Leaf Collective, the Tuggeranong lake carers, the Tuggeranong Community Council and the Sea Scouts doing clean-ups around their lake demonstrate the character of Canberrans and how people are ready to step up and help their own community, help the environment, and do what they can to improve and celebrate biodiversity and preserve our beautiful bush capital.

The motion calls for the ACT government to investigate and implement options to structure new contracts and to train contractors to ensure that conservation areas are not mowed. I acknowledge that grassy ecosystems can significantly benefit by not being mown. There are people in our community who are particularly passionate about these environmental initiatives. They put a huge amount of effort into planting and regenerating areas in their own neighbourhoods, and we should support and celebrate and acknowledge that. But I do want to go back, briefly, to the question of mowing. Most Canberrans simply want to see the grass mowed on time.

Last year we had a La Niña event, and this did impact our mowing schedule. But I can tell you that, in the 10 or so years I have been in this place, mowing has been an issue every year. Mowing is an issue every year. For many of us it is one of the most frequent complaints we get from constituents. So I am looking forward to the budget announcement which has already been foreshadowed about funding for a rapid-mowing team. Even though we have been told, on my recollection, over the past 10 years that “we are doing everything we can”, it is something that we should see as a positive thing.

We simply want to see the grass mown on time, where we can. It is not a huge ask, but the government makes it seem like it is. It is a basic local municipal service. What I have seen happening here over 10 years or so is that the government has failed to adequately address and resource our mowing capabilities. When there is something like unprecedented rain—and I have a spreadsheet with all of the media articles which have listed unprecedented rain over the past 10 years—then they make an eleventh-hour budget announcement about how they are going to put extra money into the budget to do more mowing, even though they have starved the area of resources over time.

According to my constituents and the complaints that I get, long grass, overgrown grass, is an issue. It is about a fire hazard; it is about harbouring snakes. It is an issue of reducing visibility at roundabouts and intersections. It also looks terrible. It looks untidy. People like to feel pride in their own area. When your area is looked after and

looks nice, you are more invested to keep your area looking nice. When your area is a bit rundown and grubby, people take less pride in their local area and are less likely to do things like picking up rubbish. So it is important that we do these basic maintenance issues well.

I go back to the “no mow” aspect of Ms Clay’s motion. It is an important thing, and there are so many people who are really keen to do these in their areas. I have visited a few of them myself. Some other people in the area have expressed concerns about bushfire safety. This is, as Ms Clay has already mentioned, handled separately. It is still important that bushfire safety is managed. So I think residents can have their concerns allayed in this area. Some residents also feel it looks untidy, but I think we could and should become used to the natural beauty of these areas. We are using native plants and providing habitat for the animals in our areas. I look forward to hearing more about what is in the budget for suburban maintenance today.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge once again and thank the many groups, formal and informal, government and non-government, who are looking after our urban spaces, our grasslands. They are regenerating native plants and habitats and beautifying our landscapes in a sustainable way. They deserve our support for their efforts. It must be disappointing and dispiriting for them when they come home or go down to their local space and find it has been, accidentally or otherwise, mowed. I am supportive of Ms Clay’s suggestions in her motion today. These groups may have their hard work undone by the mowing. So I agree with her suggestions in her motion, and, as such, we are happy to support her motion today.

**MS VASSAROTTI** (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (4.40): I am really pleased to support this grassroots land care community-led motion by Ms Clay, which will take us another step forward towards making Canberra an urban biodiversity haven, delivering benefits for both wildlife and people.

The ACT Greens took a comprehensive urban biodiversity platform to the election, all the way back in 2020, and it has been wonderful today to reflect on how much progress has been made towards achieving these goals. We will forgive you for your very long motion!

As outlined in the motion, one of these that has been discussed already is that, as part of the budget that we will hear about shortly, there will be \$10 million to support nature conservation, with a focus on restoring open urban spaces and enhancing our capacity to adapt to a changing climate. As part of this, almost \$3 million over two years will be utilised to bring back more nature into the city and to maximise biodiversity connectivity and wildlife corridors through the enhancement of 20 local sites and the production of habitat and connectivity maps to shape the city’s development. While we often talk about our urban forests in this Assembly, this motion is not about the trees; it is about the life underneath them and the importance of the understorey—or, in plain speak, the grass and the shrubs. These serve as critical habitat and connectivity, as there is no storey without the understorey.

It may seem a little odd to those outside of the environment portfolio, but I do spend a lot of time talking to government and community stakeholders about the grass and shrubs. How we manage these environments has implications for biodiversity. The recent release of Australia's *State of the Environment* report, which documents further declines in the health of our incredible plants, animals and ecosystems, has sharpened this focus for me.

I would like to turn to Ms Clay's motion now and talk about some of the great work that is already happening and that this will strengthen and improve. The first call of this motion is to ensure that all relevant government and community stakeholders participate in existing forums and groups, like the Biodiversity Conservation Forum. Community volunteers provide important stewardship of many public assets and add tremendous value to the Canberra environment and aid in the protection of biodiversity.

There are a range of ways that stakeholders can already engage with the ACT government to provide input on these matters. One of these is the Biodiversity Conservation Forum, which is a joint group between ACT government officials and peak community environment group representatives. The diverse community representation includes a long list of more than 17 organisations, which I will not list here, due to time constraints, but am happy to provide more information on. I established this forum a year ago and, after a successful first year of operating, this group is reviewing how to improve the operations of the group and making sure that all the right people are at the table to help shape better decisions.

Some of the other ways that the community can engage include the ACT government's YourSay website, where they can comment on important government action plans or pieces of legislation or community forums, such as the weed forum facilitated by Landcare ACT in November last year.

The second and third "calls" of this motion are centred around supporting training and capacity building, education and signage and other tools, such as barriers or fencing. While we already have the ACT Environment Grants Program to support and empower the community to play an important role as stewards, helping to conserve, promote and protect the environmental values of the ACT, this motion provides an opportunity to build on this work.

There are great examples of this throughout Canberra where the community has worked hand in hand with land managers to help protect, support and enhance grassy ecosystems of importance. I am really happy that the ACT government is currently commencing an experiment of 12 urban sites to trial differing management techniques, to determine if more biodiversity friendly land management actions can both save money in ongoing maintenance and provide better environmental outcomes. This collaboration, enhanced by this motion, will enable the building of relationships, and the learnings from this project can be incorporated into future contracts and advice regarding mowing, going forward. I am really enjoying the collaboration, particularly with Minister Steel and TCCS and EPSDD, on how we can do this better.

To conclude: as in society, diversity is important in our urban ecology. What does this mean in a practical sense? It might mean allowing space for remnant grasslands or

planting shrubs under the trees, similar to some of the great examples of bird-scaping in my electorate of Kurrajong, or the texture in the grasses planted around my beloved Dickson wetlands. This motion helps to build our capacity to do this.

The name of the initiative that I spoke of earlier, “Connecting Nature, Connecting People” is a bit of a spoiler, because managing for nature and the environment in the city delivers benefits for people as well. The wellbeing benefits relating to time connected with nature are embedded into our wellbeing framework and hence are central to the decision-making of this government. As this motion shows, sometimes we do not need grand and sweeping “calls on government”. Rather, we can do a lot by tweaks, by strengthening and building our capacity and learning from each other, and by more effectively working together to achieve shared goals. Thank you. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (4.47), in reply: Madam Speaker, this was a really, really pleasant way to end the day and it was so good to hear so many people being so supportive. The Minister for Transport and City Services has talked us through conservation, mowing and the work that he is doing in the urban space land management plan. He has really embraced the opportunities to better protect our urban environment. I would like to voice my appreciation. He spent a lot of time with our office and with a lot of people working in this field. He is definitely strongly committed to this and it is really, really good that he has such deep commitment to working with our volunteers and to working collaboratively. He has a really detailed understanding. He has taught me quite a lot about things I did not know about how our city services mowing is done, and our conservation mowing, and it is really good to see all of that knowledge and all of that enthusiasm.

It was lovely to hear from Ms Lawder, who is also really, really committed to this. It is great to hear her talking about the natural beauty of our grasslands in Canberra. I think we environmentalists have understood for a long time that it is quite easy to get people interested in trees, or in certain of our charismatic animals. It is actually harder sometimes to get people to appreciate the beauty of our grasslands and some of the smaller creatures and critters around and about. I am also perfectly happy to wear the criticism that this motion is a bit too long, although perhaps it reflects the amount of commitment that we are going to see put into the implementation of it, so that is okay.

It was great to hear from our environment minister, Ms Vassarotti, who has talked us through the Greens’ urban biodiversity platform that we took to the 2020 election. Sometimes that results in quite big funding announcements, like the \$10 million for urban biodiversity and wildlife corridors, and sometimes it leads to subtler things, like putting an urban eco lens on all of our land management and looking at what we are doing and working out how we can do it better.

I love hearing that there is no storey without the understorey. I sort of want to see a rap song coming out about that soon. There is a suggestion, in a quiet moment, for you, Ms Vassarotti. It was really good to hear, too, one example of the scientific way that this government likes to do our ecology and our environmental protection, where we trial 12 sites, we look at citizen science and we test different ways of doing things in government. That is absolutely essential. Particularly as we are moving into



changing times, a changing environment, a changing climate, we need to learn and we need to be able to test things out and see what is working and what is not working.

All round, it is great to hear so many different connections. I know that TCCS staff work really, really hard. It is good, I think, to recognise their work, to thank them for that work, and to give them better tools and better support to do that work. It is great to hear, when I am out in the field, about the work that PCS does. Sometimes they are doing work quite close in Canberra's urban environment. The patches are quite close; they overlap. We have got a lot of really, really dedicated and committed people in Canberra, both volunteers and paid staff, and of course our volunteers are doing such great work on the ground. We have over 70 Landcare sites here in Canberra. We can have more. Apply. Jump in and contact your local group or set one up if you would like to.

It is great to think about what we get from motions like this and from moments like this. We are part of nature and we understand that we are part of nature. I think a lot of the environmental destruction we are seeing is when we forget that. Also, we get so much from being part of nature. We all know what we lose when we are disconnected from nature. We know that that leads to health problems, mental health problems and environmental destruction. But I think we have sometimes forgotten what we gain from the connection to nature and the amazing experiences we have out in the world and out in the environment and the amazing benefits we get from talking to people and working alongside people. I am really looking forward to seeing a bit more of an eco lens on all of our practices. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Radiation Protection Amendment Bill 2022**

Debate resumed from 24 March 2022, on motion by **Ms Stephen-Smith**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

**MS CASTLEY** (Yerrabi) (4.52): I rise today to support the amendment bill moved by the health minister. The bill amends previous legislation to ensure that radiation sources in the ACT are regulated and licensed. We are all aware that radiation incidents can have catastrophic impacts on our community. Through a briefing with the directorate, I was told that there are 1,600 people in the ACT who hold a licence to deal with radiation and there are more than 750 radiation sources throughout Australia, ranging from X-ray machines to more complicated medical equipment.

Individuals that hold a licence and operate these machines include our incredible frontline health workers, as well as other private health related businesses. In 2018, the legislation was reviewed and recommendations were made to the minister to modernise radiation legislation and ensure that the ACT had a nationally consistent framework for radiation protection. Under these amendments, the Chief Health Officer will be the decision-maker in relation to approving applications and licences for dealing with radiation sources. The Radiation Advisory Committee, which previously held this power, will be retained as an expert advisory body, with members appointed for their expertise.

This bill also gives the power to establish and maintain a public register of licences and radiation sources that exist in the ACT. If the Chief Health Officer believes that a licence or radiation source is in the public interest then it will be published on the register, to ensure further transparency. This bill also enables the minister, in extreme cases, to temporarily exempt people from the ACT, following a radiation incident and consultation with the Radiation Council.

This act strives to bring our legislation into line with the national practice, where the expert council advises the Chief Health Officer. In addition, it adopts a risk averse approach to radiation in the ACT and received broad support in 2018 and 2021 from stakeholders. The amendments provide appropriate checks and balances to ensure that community safety is enhanced. The Canberra Liberals will be supporting this legislation.

**MR DAVIS** (Brindabella) (4.54): I would like to thank the minister and the health directorate for their work in preparing the Radiation Protection Amendment Bill 2022. The ACT Greens will be supporting this bill and the associated amendments circulated by the minister in May. Radioactive materials are essential in our healthcare system, yet, if not managed properly, can pose serious risk to those who handle them and the broader community. This bill implements the recommendations of the review of the Radiation Protection Act report, which made 20 recommendations to improve radiation safety and consistency across jurisdictions in the management of radioactive materials.

A core responsibility of government is to ensure that the community and our workers are kept safe. The amendments to this act seek to do just that by updating our legislative framework to strengthen regulations around the use of radiation sources, including licensing and registration, and to bring us into line with other jurisdictions. This amendment clarifies responsibilities, making the management of radioactive materials and the consequences for failing to do so more transparent to delegates and to the broader community.

I would like to thank the stakeholders who participated in the development of these amendments for their work in advising government on the impacts of this legislation on the operation. The ACT Greens are pleased to support this work and the consequent bill.

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH** (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (4.56), in reply: I forecast that I will move two amendments to this bill during the detail stage.

The first is a minor and technical amendment that will provide the bill commence one month from its date of notification, whereas initially it was two months. This is a result of the slight delay in the passage of the bill.

The second amendment will be to the Public Health Act 1997, enabling the Chief Health Officer to delegate functions under the Radiation Protection Act. The delegation of Chief Health Officer functions is critical to ensuring the ongoing

performance of statutory functions and minimising associated business disruptions. The delegation of these functions is consistent with other state and territory radiation laws, as well as other ACT laws that assign functions to the Chief Health Officer. I note that the standing committee had no comment on this amendment when it considered it in its report of 6 June.

I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety for their comments on the Radiation Protection Amendment Bill 2022 as part of *Scrutiny report 15* of 27 April. The committee sought information regarding the Chief Health Officer determination about Radiation Safety Officer qualifications and how this legislation might incorporate a law or instrument of another jurisdiction.

A Chief Health Officer determination about Radiation Safety Officers would carefully consider how radiation safety principles can be supported and any other impacts from such a decision, including impacts for businesses. As a technical safety matter, I am satisfied that the Chief Health Officer, in consultation with the Radiation Advisory Committee, is best placed to determine if any minimum qualifications should apply to persons performing the functions of a Radiation Safety Officer by notifiable instrument.

Several provisions of the bill provide that a law or instrument of another jurisdiction may be adopted by the ACT. In the Radiation Protection Act, the adoption of laws or instruments is aimed at providing a nationally consistent regulatory framework for radiation protection to the greatest extent possible. An ongoing commitment to strive for national uniformity in radiation safety regulation was first established in 1999 by the former Australian Health Ministers' Conference.

Any law adopted by the Radiation Protection Act is further taken to be an incorporated document for which the Director General may publish an incorporated document notice in the ACT Legislation Register. Incorporated document notices improve regulatory transparency by reducing the risk of ambiguity about requirements incorporated by the Radiation Protection Act. Section 118 of the Act further provides that copies of incorporated laws are available for inspection at no cost.

I thank the standing committee for these comments. I have submitted a revised explanatory statement to the bill in response to the matters raised by the standing committee. I note that the standing committee had no comment on this amendment to the Public Health Act, as I have said. Subject to the passage of the bill by the Assembly, the ACT Health Directorate will write to stakeholders to advise them of their obligations under the act and to outline the key changes that have been made.

ACT Health will also continue to consult and work with the radiation council regarding transitional arrangements for council members, as well as seeking their input and expertise on policy documents required to give effect to the provisions proposed by the bill. ACT Health will also update the content of its website to reflect the changes and ensure that the necessary implementation materials, such as forms and policy documents, are finalised prior to commencement of the changes proposed by the bill. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

### **Detail stage**

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH** (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (4.56), by leave: I move amendments Nos 1 and 2 circulated in my name together [*see schedule 1 at page 2215*], and table a supplementary explanatory statement to the amendments.

Amendments agreed to.

Bill, as a whole, agreed to.

Bill agreed to.

### **Appropriation Bill 2022-2023**

**Mr Barr**, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and the following supplementary papers:

Explanatory statement to the Bill, incorporating a compatibility statement, pursuant to section 37 of the *Human Rights Act 2004*.

Budget 2022-2023—Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 10—

Budget Outlook.

Budget Statements—

A—ACT Electoral Commission | ACT Executive | ACT Integrity Commission | Auditor General | Office of the Legislative Assembly.

B—Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD), together with associated agencies.

C—ACT Health Directorate | Canberra Health Services | ACT Local Hospital Network.

D—Justice and Community Safety Directorate | Legal Aid Commission (ACT) | Public Trustee and Guardian for the ACT.

E—Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate | City Renewal Authority | Suburban Land Agency.

F—Education Directorate.

G—Community Services Directorate | Housing ACT.

H—Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate | Transport Canberra Operations | Cemeteries and Crematoria Authority.

I—Major Projects Canberra.

Indicative Land Release Program 2022-23 to 2026-27.

Financial Management Act, pursuant to subsection 62(1)—Statements of Intent—2022-2023—

ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority, dated 20, 25 and 29 July 2022.

ACT Long Service Leave Authority, undated.

Title read by Clerk.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (5.00): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

### **Introduction**

The budget comes at a critical time for the territory.

We are continuing to respond to a rapidly evolving global pandemic; our city is growing, and growing faster than any other part of Australia, as is demand for public services; and after injecting billions of dollars in emergency assistance and economic stimulus into the territory economy over the past two and a half years, this budget steps up the pace of fiscal repair.

We are investing in our rapidly growing city. We are delivering for Canberrans now and into the future.

This budget creates more jobs than we have ever had before, supporting a city where more and more people want to live, growing faster than anywhere else in the country.

Our investments will ensure that Canberra remains an attractive place to live, to work and to invest.

This budget, like the last five economic updates I have provided to the Assembly since the start of the pandemic, continues to adapt our response to the evolving health situation, while remaining true to the principles that have guided our successful response so far. These include investing in health care and essential services; keeping Canberrans employed by supporting businesses and the economy; and protecting our most vulnerable.

Like every state and territory around Australia, there are pressures across our hospitals and health facilities.

As we have done throughout the pandemic, the government are increasing resources across our health system so that our doctors, nurses, midwives and allied health care workers can deliver the high-quality free public health care that Canberrans need.

We are investing in our education system, promoting new opportunities in the knowledge economy, and creating new jobs through diversification and encouraging skilled migration.

We are protecting the natural environment and funding programs that will further reduce our carbon emissions and our reliance on fossil fuels.

We are delivering infrastructure that is built for Canberra.

And we are putting in place the settings to create more jobs in our economy. We are on track to deliver our target of 250,000 jobs across the territory economy by 2025.

### **Economic overview and strategy**

The last two years have not been easy, but the ACT economy has outperformed expectations and demonstrated resilience and flexibility.

The government's pandemic response has underpinned consumer confidence and contributed to the territory's "V-shaped" economic recovery.

### **Labour market**

Part of the reason why our economy has been so resilient over the last few years is the strength of our labour market. We have the strongest labour market and the lowest unemployment rate in the country.

For almost 12 months now, the number of job vacancies in the ACT has exceeded the number of unemployed people in the territory.

Weekly Australian Bureau of Statistics payroll jobs data from June indicates payroll jobs are nearly seven per cent higher than their level at the start of the pandemic and we have a high workforce participation rate of over 70 per cent.

The sustained performance of our labour market indicates that we are in an environment that is either at or very close to full employment.

This is a good thing, Madam Speaker. This is what governments strive to achieve. We want secure employment for as many Canberrans as possible. But we know that full employment creates short term pressures.

To capitalise on our opportunities for knowledge-based economic growth, we need to ensure our workforce has the right skills for the in-demand jobs in our economy.

We want to remain in a full employment environment; let me be very clear about that. We want to drive real wages growth for workers, particularly after the current global inflationary peak passes.

To ensure a tight labour market is not a constraint on the capacity of the ACT economy to grow, we will invest in increasing participation, increasing productivity

and having the right services and infrastructure in place for the territory's growing population.

In the coming years, jobs and skills demand will be highest in the health and care economy, in IT, in advanced manufacturing, in education and training, and in professional services.

This budget invests in those jobs by directly hiring and investing in skills development and partnerships with industry and with our education providers.

### **Sustainable economic growth**

Through sensible economic management the ACT has avoided a recession during the pandemic—the only state or territory to achieve that. Given the negative impacts elsewhere, it is worth noting that, since the pandemic commenced, ACT state final demand has grown by five per cent.

When the national accounts are released later this year, we expect them to show that we have had 32 consecutive years of economic growth in the Territory—continuing to grow through a once-in-a-century pandemic, the global financial crisis, the tech-wreck recession, the election of the Public Service-cutting Abbott and Howard governments, and even recording positive growth in the 1991-92 recession.

Looking forward, we expect growth in our gross state product to remain robust over the next four years, rising at around three per cent per annum in real terms across the forward estimates. That is an incredible economic growth story over more than three decades.

But we recognise that we face economic challenges, particularly in the short-term, with a softening of the national economic outlook as both consumer confidence and business confidence are impacted by the short-term inflation spike and the lifting of the cash rate by the Reserve Bank of Australia, and there was an increase of a further 50 basis points announced this afternoon.

Additionally, there is ongoing uncertainty from the pandemic and continuing shocks from recent geopolitical events.

We expect these to be short-term economic headwinds, though. Government emergency support will step down as confidence improves, allowing private consumption and investment to make an increasing contribution to growth. We will, of course, throughout this continue to support the most vulnerable members of our community.

We understand that for our lowest income households the short-term inflationary pressures will make life hard, which is why we are providing an \$800 concession on energy bills for over 31,000 low-income households through this budget.

We are also investing in our labour market, which will ultimately drive up real wages, which will support improved living standards through 2023 and beyond.

**Population**

After the recent release of the 2021 census data, the ABS had to rebase the size of the ACT population by almost 22,000 people. The reality of that was that our population was five per cent larger than previously estimated and that this was not being accounted for in the federal financial relations system.

So, in the simplest possible terms, for most of the past five years, the ACT has not been receiving its true population share of national funding. That will now change, and that is reflected in this budget.

In light of certain commentary—over the years and recently—about the desirability of living in Canberra, it is worth repeating that we have experienced the fastest population growth of any jurisdiction in the nation over the last 10 years. Canberra is a great place to live. Our population has grown from 370,000 to 455,000 over the last decade.

People have voted with their feet. They want to live in Canberra, and we expect strong population growth to continue with a further 30,000 people expected to be living in Canberra over the forward estimates period of this budget.

**Fiscal outlook**

When I released the Budget Review in March this year, I expressed cautious optimism about our city's economic outlook and the budget bottom line.

I acknowledge that we are still living in an uncertain economic environment and the need for caution remains, but the strong economic recovery and the population growth have led to an improving fiscal position.

Since the 2021-22 budget I delivered in October 2021, the ACT budget position has improved by over \$800 million over the four years that were reflected in last year's budget.

The general government sector headline net operating balance continues to improve each year over the forward estimates, demonstrating a steady trajectory of fiscal repair over time.

I repeat what I have said throughout the pandemic: now is not the time to embark on austerity budgeting and indulge in a failed, ideologically driven, debt and deficit fetish espoused by the right wing of the Liberal Party.

The government will stick to our plan: to return the budget back to balance over the medium term, meanwhile investing in the services and infrastructure that the fastest-growing state or territory in the nation needs.

That is why, through the 2022-23 budget, the government has focused on: delivering high quality services for our fast-growing population; addressing cost of living pressures; continuing to invest in Canberra's people and places; and delivering our long-term plan for services and infrastructure.



## **Investing in the wellbeing of Canberrans**

We are the first jurisdiction in Australia, and one of the first in the world, to embed a wellbeing framework in our budget process.

This budget puts community wellbeing at the centre of decision-making, and the benefits are obvious.

This is the third ACT budget since the wellbeing framework was released. Embedding the Wellbeing Framework in the budget process has improved consideration of the types and distribution of impacts that initiatives will have across the community.

The wellbeing dashboard and the indicators that sit behind it are progressively improving our understanding of where further targeted assistance is most needed.

The wellbeing framework is also helping the government measure progress and assisting us in making the best decisions on which investments and programs are going to contribute to our quality of life. It is helping to make our city more inclusive and to ensure we are prepared for new challenges and can grasp the opportunities that present themselves.

## **Health**

The budget includes a boost in services across the health portfolio. There is \$390 million in new investment. This is the largest area of expenditure in the budget—\$2.2 billion.

Through this investment, our public hospitals are funded to deliver 60,000 elective surgeries over this term of government, and we are funding an additional 900 endoscopies each year for the next two years.

Our significant investment in public healthcare means: better mental health and early intervention support; specific initiatives to strengthen community-based and public health responses; better equipment and facilities for our healthcare workers; strengthened alcohol, drug and suicide prevention programs; and more support for young people, women, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Through this budget, we also deliver on our commitment to employ 400 additional health care workers—two years ahead of schedule.

We will continue to work with staff and their unions to ensure our health services are positive places to work, so they can do what they do best—delivering high-quality health care for Canberrans and the broader region.

Additionally, the government is investing a further \$30.6 million in the ACT Ambulance Service—hiring 30 new staff, including extended care paramedics, and adding two new front-line ambulance vehicles.

Canberrans can trust that we will continue to invest in our healthcare system as our city grows. We invested heavily during the worst of the pandemic, and this budget demonstrates that we will continue to invest.

**Education**

Education is the second-largest area of expenditure in the budget. We recognise that, as our city grows and as we focus on the delivery of our election commitments, we will need to build new schools and invest in our world-class public education system.

So this budget sees an additional \$240 million invested in education and lifelong learning.

We are investing more to improve safety across our schools, to support students with additional needs, and to strengthen cultural integrity through promoting the integration and understanding of local Ngunnawal language and culture.

Overall, we are investing more than \$985 million in 2022-23 delivering the quality public education that the children of Canberra deserve and that their parents and guardians expect.

We are undertaking the most ambitious school infrastructure program in the territory's self-governing history. We are building new schools and upgrading and expanding existing schools in areas of the city that are experiencing rapid population growth.

There are nine major school infrastructure projects completed or under construction already in this parliamentary term, and another five major school builds already scheduled to start in the next four years.

In totality, this program will increase student places in growth areas of Canberra by over 5,000, ensuring world class facilities are available across the ACT.

**Housing**

In this budget the government delivers a comprehensive package to tackle housing affordability and supply. From further targeted stamp duty cuts through to the construction of hundreds of new public housing dwellings, we are taking the steps necessary to ensure more Canberrans have access to affordable, safe and secure homes.

As we have indicated publicly, the government is planning for an increase of around 30,000 dwellings in the territory over the next five years. That will take the number of dwellings in the ACT from around 180,000 dwellings to 210,000. Around two-thirds of those 210,000 dwellings are detached houses on single blocks. The balance—the remaining third—will be a mixture of dual occupancies, duplexes, row houses, terraces, townhouses, villas, walk-up apartment buildings and taller apartment blocks.

In short, a growing Canberra needs a variety of housing choices to meet changing demographic needs.

The ACT government has been building more affordable homes per capita than the national average. This budget invests another \$87 million into the growing and renewing public housing program to expand that program by a further 140 dwellings, as well as an additional investment in public housing maintenance and repairs.

We are also supporting more build-to-rent projects. The government will be pursuing institutional investment in these projects over the coming years with the recent release of the build-to-rent investment prospectus to chase that investment.

### **Infrastructure**

This budget sets out a \$7 billion infrastructure program over the next five years—a balanced and sequenced program of large, medium and small projects to provide for the needs of our rapidly growing city and create thousands of jobs.

As I have made clear at the outset, now is the time to invest in our city, in infrastructure that is built for Canberra, to ensure that we remain one of the most liveable cities in the world, as our population grows.

Our capital investment priorities continue to be in health, education, public transport, public housing, climate action and urban renewal.

Through this budget, we are delivering the biggest program of upgrades to suburban facilities in Canberra's history.

Some of projects in this budget include the ongoing expansion of the Canberra Hospital in Woden; the Woden CIT campus; and, importantly, beginning work on the Canberra Theatre Centre precinct redevelopment. These are some of dozens and dozens of projects in progress and soon to be shovel-ready.

The government will also undertake a rolling update of the territory's long term infrastructure plan. I released that plan in 2019.

Recognising our greater-than-forecast population, the impacts of the pandemic and medium-term supply chain and labour constraints, that we expect to last into the medium term, the government will work with our commonwealth colleagues and community stakeholders on shared priorities across health, education, transport, city services, climate action as well as arts, entertainment and sports infrastructure.

### **Climate and environment**

Canberra is the renewable energy capital of Australia. Canberrans are justifiably proud of our reputation as leading the nation on climate action. After a stark decade of federal inaction, what we are doing has been so important.

This budget further strengthens our reputation, with more than \$100 million in new investments as we transition to a zero emissions future.

We are boosting investment in protecting our natural environment and policies that will reduce our carbon emissions and reliance on fossil fuels.

Programs like the Sustainable Household Scheme, which is proving to be one of the most successful schemes in the history of self-government, allow more households to

participate in the transition, and reap the financial benefits from lower energy and fuel costs, while at the same time creating jobs in our community.

### **Community support**

We also recognise community sector organisations are crucial in supporting the diverse needs of people across our community. This pandemic is highlighting how challenging times affect some in our community much more than others.

This budget provides more than \$230 million for new initiatives to improve community support, social inclusion and safety.

This includes \$24 million for new or expanded programs and actions to prevent and respond to sexual assault and to family and domestic violence. I thank the Deputy Chief Minister for the extensive work she has undertaken across government, with ministerial colleagues and with stakeholders to take action to prevent and respond to sexual assault and sexual violence.

Through the budget, we are also: funding the establishment the independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner; investing in measures to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system; delivering support for people with variations in sex characteristics; and providing additional indexation funding across the community sector.

### **Jobs and skills**

Jobs and skills are going to be critical over the next four years. Through this budget, we are making longer term investments to strengthen our labour market.

Around \$126.3 million in funding will be provided in 2022 for apprenticeships, traineeships and other vocational education activities, including through the User Choice and Skilled Capital programs, and total recurrent funding for skills and training in 2022-23 will be more than \$180 million.

These investments will be critical to make now for the long term security and strength of the ACT labour market.

### **Working with the federal government**

Since 21 May, a lot has changed in this country. There is a very important opportunity to work with the new federal government, and it is providing a renewed way forward for many ACT projects and policies.

If the first two months are any indication, there are significant opportunities for the territory to productively engage on issues that have been stalled for close to a decade.

With a federal government that has an ambitious climate agenda, a federal government that will return to evidence-based infrastructure investment and a federal

government recognition of the shared responsibilities across levels of government, I am as optimistic as I have been in my political career that we can tackle some of the systemic and structural issues that our nation faces, through our Federation. That will lead to increased economic prosperity, social inclusion and opportunities for Canberrans. This is an important era of work in our nation.

### **Conclusion**

Canberra's future—our recovery from the pandemic, and the next four years—presents many exciting opportunities.

The government recognises these opportunities and is taking them, through this budget, as we continue to invest in our growing city.

Delivering for Canberrans, now and into the future. I commend the budget to the Assembly.

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

### **Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023**

**Mr Barr**, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and the following supplementary papers:

Explanatory statement to the Bill, incorporating a compatibility statement, pursuant to section 37 of the *Human Rights Act 2004*.

Budget 2022-2023—Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 20AC—Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023—Departures from Recommended Appropriations—Statement of Reasons.

Title read by Clerk.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (5.26): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Mercifully, a shorter speech on this piece of legislation!

I am pleased to be able to table the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-23. As members may be aware, the bill is the mechanism for the appropriation of monies for the coming fiscal year, for the Office of the Legislative Assembly and officers of the Assembly, the Integrity Commissioner, the Auditor-General and the Electoral Commissioner.

The bill provides for appropriations for the Integrity Commissioner, the Auditor-General, the Electoral Commissioner, and the Office of the Assembly, in

relation to net control of recurrent payments, capital injections and payments to be made on behalf of the territory.

The bill contains appropriations of \$20.9 million for the Office of the Legislative Assembly, \$4.1 million to the Auditor-General, \$8 million to the Integrity Commissioner and \$4.9 to the Electoral Commissioner.

And with that, I commend these appropriations to the Assembly.

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

## Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

## Community events—SiTara's Story

**DR PATERSON** (Murrumbidgee) (5.29): I attended an event a few weeks ago run by SiTara's Story. This was an awards ceremony for a competition they had run over a few months. It was a poetry and writing competition to understand the community's perceptions of COVID-19 and its impacts.

The event was beautiful and really engaged with the multicultural community, in the ACT but also more broadly. The evening saw awards handed out for each of the categories, and I commend all the writers for their creative creations.

But there was one that particularly stood out, and that was a poem by Audrey Miller. I would like to read that poem this evening. It is called *Ticks and Crosses*. Audrey is a health worker that supported our health system through the pandemic.

Ticks and Crosses mark our standing and sitting  
Thrice daily updates slowly slowing to daily updates  
Charts, stats, maps and epidemiologists consume us  
Stark headlines in print, opening newsreader statements full of doom  
Covid normal?  
Physical and emotional exhaustion throughout healthcare staff, but we did not  
lose our jobs!

Masks, N95, P2, surgical, 3 ply make it home and Bill Shorten sock mask  
Folk who won't wear masks and those who can't  
Check in, check out and 1.5m rule  
Social distancing or physical distancing?  
TicTock research replaces WHO and ATAGI experts  
Freedom and anti vax protests v folk who just want some form of normality

Random acts of kindness  
Neighbours helping isolating neighbours  
Images of love through residential aged care windows

Borders reopening  
Families reunited  
Airport smiles, hugs and tears of joy  
Reflection of what is really important...  
Social interaction once again

Thank you. I would like to thank Audrey for her beautiful poem and for allowing me the opportunity to read that in the Assembly.

### **Arts—Rebus**

**MR BRADDOCK** (Yerrabi) (5.32): I just wanted to draw attention to Rebus and their Cultural Diversity in Canberra Arts workshops, which just wrapped up over the weekend.

This project, which was funded by the ACT government's 2021-22 participation in multicultural grants program, was a project that was a huge success, with over 20 participants from a wide range of cultural and artistic practices and backgrounds. They came together and shared stories and discussed the challenges of practising art as a migrant or as culturally and linguistically diverse artists in Canberra and Australia. There were artists from Latin America, which included El Salvador, Mexico and Colombia, as well as France, Fiji, India, China, Indonesia, Iran and Palestine—ranging from writers to actors, visual artists, photographers, cinematographers, painters, musicians and much more.

The process was led by Rebus associate artist Anaïs Maro, who led participants through a series of story-sharing and brainstorming activities. The group found many points of common ground and developed plans to continue working together to advocate for increased cultural diversity in the artistic landscape that is Canberra and Australia as a whole.

I would just like to give my congratulations to Rebus and their director Robin Davidson for what was a fantastic program. Thank you.

### **Federal government—territory rights**

**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) (5.34): I have lost count of the number of times I have spoken in this place about territory rights, but tonight, I hope sincerely, is the last.

For decades we have been hamstrung. We have had our democratic rights restricted by a federal parliament which has behaved in a way that is, at best, paternalistic and, at worst, crushing. The persistence of the Andrews bill, passed 25 years ago, withdrew the ability of the ACT and Northern Territory residents to participate in a crucial democratic process on an issue that is so important to so many Canberrans. This is hard to fathom in and of itself, especially that this situation still persists today in 2022.

But the persistence of this legislation has also meant that citizens in one part of the country have different rights, simply by virtue of some citizens living in a territory rather than a state. It is made all the harder to believe when you realise that citizens living in close proximity, a mere 20 kilometres from this very place, have different rights to us. It has always been unconscionable, but it became increasingly untenable as states began legislating for voluntary assisted dying, first in 2017, another in 2019, three in 2021 and then, finally, the state that surrounds us, New South Wales, in 2022.

In all that time, we have raised our voices time and time again, sometimes as individuals but more recently in this place as a collective, and we have got louder and louder. It has been an extraordinary effort from so many and for so long, but persistence does pay off. The issue has gone from something that received the attention of the Senate very occasionally—very, very occasionally—in the last 25 years to an issue that has finally captured national attention.

Indeed, when I first joined the Assembly in 2016, I found one of the greatest challenges was raising awareness that this was even an issue, that our rights had been removed back in the 1990s. People were shocked, and rightly so. Then in 2018—Madam Speaker, you will remember well—the Senate vote on the issue was lost 34 to 36. The next day we made history in this place by passing a remonstrance against the Senate, and soon after you, Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister and I joined with our Northern Territory colleagues in delivering that remonstrance and meeting with the then President of the Senate. Madam Speaker, I think you and the Chief Minister were very polite at that time, but I could not hide my face and my sheer embarrassment at what was occurring in his response. If you want a definition of ‘paternalistic’, it was that discussion, when he said to us that he felt he had a certain responsibility as a senator to protect the territories from themselves. Regrettably, Madam Speaker, a member in the House of Representatives today has said the very same thing. It is codswallop. We make our own laws all the time; we are a mature parliament representing a highly engaged community, and we deserve the same rights as any other citizen in this country.

But we were not dismayed and we raised this issue time and time again, including in a joint letter from the Northern Territory Attorney-General and I to the Commonwealth outlining numerous human rights issues that were engaged with the persistence of this legislation, and then a tripartisan motion in this place. But even while attempts were made in the House of Representatives and the Senate to try to get this overturned by numerous members, including our ACT representatives, it was the Commonwealth government then blocking debate or, worse, intervening to exclude the ACT from attempts, like Senator Seselja did. We said it would be an election issue and it was.

With the election we saw a stark contrast to the obfuscation that defined the previous federal government: leadership from the federal ALP, confirmation that a bill, debate and a vote would happen. And the new federal government made good on its promises in its first sitting fortnight, with Alicia Payne and Luke Gosling introducing legislation yesterday. It was an honour for the Chief Minister and I to be there to witness that momentous day—one, I hope, is the first of a few, as this proceeds to a vote.



I implore federal members, many of whom are participating in the debate right at this second, so many of them representing the interests of a state and not our territory, to set aside their own personal feelings about voluntary assisted dying, ones which we respect and know are deeply held, and realise that what this is about is allowing all citizens in our country to participate in democracy equally. Would they want the citizens in the state they represent to have fewer rights? Would they accept that? I think not. So why should we? *(Time expired.)*

**The Assembly adjourned at 5.40 pm.**

## Schedule of amendments

### Schedule 1

#### Radiation Protection Amendment Bill 2022

##### Amendments moved by the Minister for Health

1

##### Clause 2

Page 2, line 5—

*omit*

2 months

*substitute*

1 month

2

##### Schedule 1

##### Proposed new amendment 1.2

Page 42, line 6—

*insert*

##### **[1.2] New section 11 (e)**

*before the note, insert*

(e) the *Radiation Protection Act 2006*.

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