



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

TENTH ASSEMBLY

13 October 2022

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Thursday, 13 October 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.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Reporting date

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (10.01): I move:

That, notwithstanding the provisions of the resolution of the Assembly of 2 December 2020, as amended, that established general purpose standing committees, the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety shall present its report on the Freedom of Information Amendment Bill 2022 and Freedom of Information Amendment Bill 2022 [No 2] by 1 December 2022.

In accordance with the Assembly resolution establishing general purpose standing committees, the Freedom of Information Amendment Bill 2022 and the Freedom of Information Amendment Bill 2022 [No 2] were referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety on 21 September 2022 and 23 September 2022, respectively.

At a private meeting on 29 September 2022, the committee resolved to undertake an inquiry into both bills. The committee called for public submissions on 30 September 2022. The committee is unable to schedule a public hearing until Friday, 18 November 2022, due to the Assembly sitting schedule, other committee hearings and annual report hearings.

The resolution of establishment for standing committees states:

- (5) all bills presented to the Assembly stand referred to the relevant standing committee for inquiry and report within two months from the presentation of the bill ...

The reference of the Freedom of Information Amendment Bill 2022 and Freedom of Information Amendment Bill 2022 [No 2] under this resolution means that the reporting date for these bills is 21 November 2022.

My motion asks that the reporting day on both these bills be extended to allow sufficient time to conduct the hearing and report on the findings, noting the other commitments of the committee in terms of a public hearing on another enquiry and the annual report hearings. The committee asks that the reporting date be extended to 1 December 2022, the last sitting day of the year.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Integrity Commission Amendment Bill 2022

Debate resumed from 9 June 2022, on motion by **Ms Burch**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (10.04): The government will be supporting this bill. The amendments provide clarity and certainty between the Assembly, the Integrity Commission, heads of public sector entities and anyone else who may be regarded as holding information that is potentially protected by parliamentary privilege.

This will result in an appropriate legislative mechanism to address the current tension where a public official may face being served with a notice to produce information, information that may be subject to parliamentary privilege, to the Integrity Commission. Currently, a public official directed to produce information that is subject to parliamentary privilege could be held in contempt of the commission if the individual fails to produce the information. Alternatively, if a person provides the information they may be in contempt of the Assembly.

The amendments will enable public officials to appropriately discharge their responsibilities. Now, of course, these matters are not isolated to the ACT and have been observed in other jurisdictions that have integrity commissions. This bill may indeed become a leading model for other jurisdictions that may wish to clarify the interaction and operation of parliamentary privilege with anti-corruption commissions or with similar legal jurisdictions. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (10.05): The Canberra Liberals will also be supporting this bill. This bill amends the Integrity Commission Act 2018 in relation to parliamentary privilege. It will ensure any requirement to provide information to the Integrity Commission is consistent with the ability of members, former members and anyone holding information on behalf of the Assembly, to be able to make a claim in relation to parliamentary privilege and to any claims for parliamentary privilege to be dealt with by the Assembly in line with standing orders.

Section 24 of the Australian Capital Territory Self-Government Act 1988 (Commonwealth) affords members of the Legislative Assembly and its committees the same powers, privileges and immunities as the house of representatives—a key immunity being freedom of speech, often described, Mr Deputy Speaker, as the most important of privileges. The immunity arises from the UK Bill of Rights 1688, which states that:

... the Freedom of Speech and Debates or Proceedings in Parlyament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any Court or Place out of Parlyament.

This privilege applies not only to members of parliament, it also applies to others taking part in proceedings in parliament, such as those who make submissions to or give evidence before committees. Not all words spoken or acts done by members of the Legislative Assembly are considered proceedings in parliament. Instead, it is only the words spoken or the acts done for the purposes of transacting the business of the Assembly that constitute proceedings, thereby receiving the protection of privilege.

The privilege of freedom of speech enables members to raise in the Assembly matters they would not otherwise be able to bring forward without fear of legal consequences. The privilege is a great one that carries with it a corresponding obligation that it be used responsibly. This bill seeks to clarify the Integrity Commission's information-gathering powers in relation to the Legislative Assembly to ensure that privilege is not breached.

The bill would not impede the commission from investigating matters related to MLAs or their staff and the commission will not be prevented from accessing information not protected by parliamentary privilege. Information sharing arrangements between the ACT public service and the Legislative Assembly could have potentially resulted in breaches of parliamentary privilege where, in the course of their duties, a delegate of the head of service divulged information to the Integrity Commission relating to the Assembly and its members, pursuant to section 89 of the Integrity Commission Act. This could result in public servants or others who are subject to the commission's information-gathering powers, being in contempt of the commission for refusing to provide privileged information, or in contempt of the Assembly for doing so. The provisions contained in this bill seek to address these potential scenarios by clearly defining Assembly information and establishing arrangements for handling that information in relation to the exercise of the powers and functions of the commission.

I note concerns raised by the Standing Committee on Justice and Safety in their legislative scrutiny role that:

... the Bill may require individuals to deal with Assembly information in a particular way in circumstances where they are not aware it is Assembly information.

The Canberra Liberals are satisfied that the proposed amendments, which narrow the ambit of what is considered Assembly information, address the unintended consequences as raised by the JACS committee scrutiny report. Finally, I thank the Speaker for the collaborative way in which she approached the introduction of this legislation, having consulted with me on behalf of the opposition, in addition to the Chief Minister, the leader of the Greens, the JACS committee, the ACT Integrity Commissioner and the Inspector of the Integrity Commission.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (10.09): I rise to state that the Greens will be supporting this bill for the reasons that have already been outlined by the Chief Minister and the

Leader of the Opposition. Also, I would like to personally thank the speaker and note the consultative way she has approached the design of this bill. I applaud the efforts. Thank you.

MS BURCH (Brindabella) (10.10), in reply: The objective of this bill is to prescribe additional arrangements in the Integrity Commission Act 2018 for the treatment and handling by witnesses, public servants, commission and others, of information that is potentially protected by parliamentary privilege, including information that the unauthorised release of may count as contempt of the Assembly.

Parliamentary privilege refers to unique powers and immunities enjoyed by the Assembly, its committees and its members in order to effectively perform their parliamentary functions. As has been mentioned, neither the Assembly's contempt powers nor the freedom of speech immunities are abrogated by the Integrity Commission Act. However, there are certain features in the act relating to provision of information that need some resolution. A statutory remedy is required to resolve the tension in the original bill so that it is clear how certain materials must be handled in the course of the exercise of the commission's powers and functions.

For those with an interest in this bill, I refer them to the *Hansard* of 9 June, when I tabled this bill for a more detailed explanation of the changes. This bill follows consultation with the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure, the committee of JACS, Chief Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Leader of the Greens, the Integrity Commissioner and the Inspector of the Integrity Commission, as has been mentioned. It provides additional arrangements to prevent any inadvertent breaches of parliamentary privilege and to provide clarity for persons including the ACT public servants of whom request, preliminary inquiry notices and examination summons may be directed. I thank members for their support. I will be moving amendments to the amendment bill shortly. I thank members in this place for their support.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

MS BURCH (Brindabella) (10.12), by leave: I move amendments Nos 1 and 2 circulated in my name together [*see schedule 1 at page 3128*].

These amendments are a response to the scrutiny report. They are very minor but they provide again that clarity about information that is provided through the bill. I commend the amendments and the bill to the Assembly.

Amendments agreed to.

Bill, as a whole, as amended, agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.14): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services relating to referred bills. The Transport Canberra and City Services Amendment Bill 2022 was referred to the committee on 21 September 2022. The committee notes that this is not a significant bill, and the committee considers that an inquiry would not add anything further to the topic. For this reason, the committee has resolved not to inquire into this bill.

Appropriation Bill 2022-2023

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023]

Cognate papers:

Estimates 2022-2023—Select Committee report

Estimates 2022-2023—Select Committee report—government response]

Detail stage

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate—Part 1.5

Debate resumed from 12 October 2022.

MADAM SPEAKER: I remind members that in debating order of the day No 1, executive business, they may also address their remarks to executive business order of the day No 2, and Assembly business order of the day No 2 relating to the Government response to the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023 report on the *Inquiry into the Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023*.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (10.16): Madam Speaker, I have spoken in detail about some of the great and grave concerns that we in the opposition, and of course also members of the community, have raised about this budget—it being the final one so far in a line of so many budgets that we have seen deficit after deficit after deficit.

Now, whilst the Chief Minister and the Treasurer continues to talk down what his fiscal mismanagement has been over the past decade, we know the impact and the outcome that we see in our community. Of course that goes to the lack of services that we see in our health, in our education, in our community safety, in our police and in our infrastructure.

We do see these outcomes and they have real impacts on real Canberrans. Only this week, so many members from across all parties have talked about the absolute long-term neglect of basic local services that have resulted in so many potholes. Whilst we see some of the humorous takes on some of these issues, the real impact is dangerous roads that create major safety hazards not only for motorists but also for

those riding two-wheeled vehicles including motorcycles and bicycles, and of course for pedestrians as well.

So we are talking about a government that has handed down another budget that sees a complete lack of respect for the Canberra community, all the way from basic local services through to the critical services that the Canberra community need. We know that this is not tenable. This is not sustainable and it will be our children and their children that will pay the price.

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) (10.18): I am here today to talk on the appropriation bill in regard to CMTEDD, in my portfolio responsibilities as Minister for Sport and Recreation. This year's budget funds several new initiatives and projects to continue our support of, and the development and growth of, sport and recreation in the ACT.

The ACT continues to have the highest participation rates in the country. The ACT continues its work to provide and support our sporting communities to ensure that they can continue to grow and thrive. Through this funding we have committed to in this year's budget, Canberrans will soon have access to an additional tennis facility in the Gungahlin region. The brand new tennis centre will be located in Amaroo. This \$9.4 million facility is part of the ACT government's plan to continue its support of a growing Gungahlin region.

Delivering needed sporting infrastructure to the local community is important for the broader community as well. The new Gungahlin tennis facility will include 10 full-size courts, two hotshot courts, a hitting wall, LED lighting, parking, as well as a pavilion. Consultation on the design for the new facility has concluded, with the feedback incorporated into the design of the project. I know Canberrans will be warming up for the chance to have a hit on the new courts once this facility is complete.

In terms of our aquatic facilities, over the next four years the ACT government will also begin scoping works for future upgrades to the Dickson and Manuka pools. This includes refurbishing of the toddler pool at Manuka, for families to enjoy in the summer months, as well as recent examples which have been seen at Dickson Aquatic Centre, with the inclusion of an accessibility ramp which will allow for easier ingress and egress from the pool for those with mobility impairment.

In addition, the ACT government will provide \$1.8 million over three years to support six local organisations to encourage more children and young people to get active and stay healthy. Providing these grants supports vulnerable and disadvantaged children to have the chance to participate in sport and recreational activities that improve their physical wellbeing, as well as their health and social skills.

This funding includes: \$600,000 for the Physical Activity Foundation to continue to deliver a range of programs that promote physical activity among children and their families, focusing on vulnerable girls and young women; \$300,000 for the Heart

Foundation ACT to help improve physical activity, reduce rates of chronic disease, and to promote social inclusion and connection; \$250,000 for Kulture Break to deliver a range of dance and music classes, and school programs to empower participants and promote physical activity and wellbeing; and \$225,000 for Pegasus Riding School to expand their services for young people with a disability to include a range of conditions such as autism spectrum disorder, and to assist young people disengaging from school due to family violence, poverty or neglect. In addition, \$225,000 will go towards Every Chance to Play to provide assistance so children can participate in organised sport and recreational activities who otherwise might not have the financial means to do so; and \$225,000 will go to Abilities Unlimited Australia to expand their local existing programs to ensure they have the chance to teach more children cycling techniques, as well as skills, road and water safety, movement skills and social development for young people with special needs.

These programs give our children an even greater chance to participate in sport and recreation activities to help improve their physical and mental health wellbeing. It is also another way that the government is addressing inequality within our community. COVID-19 has disrupted many people's ability to get out and stay active. These new facilities and programs will help encourage more people to get out there and participate in the sports they love.

The ACT government is committed to ensuring children and young people have the chance to play sport, which is so important for their physical health and mental wellbeing. We have provided funding in the budget to do that.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.23): I rise today to speak on the appropriation bill as it relates to the portfolio of arts. As we have previously noted in this chamber, the arts were one of the industries hardest hit by the pandemic, and the effects of this are still being felt in the community.

Here in the ACT, we are lucky to have such a vibrant, dynamic and resilient arts community. I would like to pass on my congratulations to the minister. We have seen a shift in the approach from the government during this Assembly with the new minister, who has released a range of policy documents in this space.

On the other hand, we have seen the previous minister appointed as CEO of the Cultural Facilities Corporation, and his previous chief of staff appointed to a new role at the Cultural Facilities Corporation, also a chief of staff position, which led to a series of questions in estimates. However, I will give the benefit of doubt—I am trying not to be too “Judgey McJudge-face”—because I believe the arts minister is making a great effort; although, I had some disappointment when I saw the total of the budget for the arts.

While we have had a range of glossy documents released about the arts in ACT, again, this budget has failed to deliver the investment required to help the struggling sector really get back on its feet after COVID. While a large proportion of the arts funding in this budget was very important, and I support it, it was infrastructure related, rather than supporting artists directly on the ground. It is important to make that distinction, because one type of funding helps artists in our community right now and the other helps them in several years' time. There must be a balance between those two.

Another issue with funding that may help in several years time is this government's track record of proven failure in delivering some of these infrastructure projects. Even when arts precincts or theatres finally get built and are operational, the problem is that there is no obligation on the operators to employ all, or mostly, Canberra-based artists to perform or put on exhibitions, as opposed to interstate talent. Arts infrastructure is absolutely necessary, but I want to make the point that it is not the same as direct funding right now.

We have seen the recent history of arts infrastructure projects: the Canberra Theatre expansion, which is a great project, has been on the table for close to a decade, and not a single sod has been turned—the same as the revitalisation of Civic Square, part of that same project. The Kingston Arts Precinct has had a troubled history and appears to be on a similar path. The ACT government terminated the contract last year following project delays and lack of proper stakeholder consultation. So we do not have a good track record in this arts infrastructure space. Despite this, the arts minister has the aspiration for Canberra to become the arts capital of Australia, an aspiration I support, but it is going to take more than what is currently on the table to achieve something even remotely close to that.

I know we have some grants projects and programs, and I appreciate that grants funding does provide real support to arts organisations. The 10 per cent boost is welcome, and that recognises the contribution to the ACT's economy as well as the wellbeing of residents. As one very small example, I went to Tuggeranong Arts Centre during the school holidays with some of my grandchildren to watch a show, and it appeared the show was sold out and this was fantastic to see. It was a very enjoyable show. The Tuggeranong Arts Centre is one of our key arts organisations that is always struggling—to renew and refresh the facility, and in putting on additional programs and exhibitions. They do a great job down there. I am sure you have been there many times yourself, Madam Speaker, and seen the great job that they do.

Speaking as someone who used to work in the community sector, which is another sector largely dependent on grants, the grants process itself is quite time consuming, especially for organisations run by a very small team, as many in the arts sector are. It is a huge investment of time for them. I know a lot of them have been going through a grants application process in the past few months. This is something that we all know is necessary, but it adds to uncertainty for employees in the sector, when they are unsure about the progress and the probability of the grant being agreed to. It can often lead to that churn of staff, as they move on looking for more secure areas to work in.

Once again, I reiterate that I appreciate the minister's good intentions in this space, and her absolute commitment to trying to improve the arts sector in the ACT. I really believe that that is the case. But I would like to see, in budgets to come, more direct and immediate support being provided to Canberra artists, and the delivery of arts infrastructure programs being absolutely on track and helping us to become Australia's arts capital.

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) (10.28): I am pleased to speak in support of this part of the budget through a number of areas within my portfolio responsibilities.

I want to begin by responding to some comments from the other side, namely from Ms Castley. The comments continue the theme for which they have established such a rich and widely acknowledged reputation: that is, being, at the least, ill-informed, if not wilfully ignorant. Ms Castley purports that there is little in the budget for business. It is worth reminding members that we had three hours of estimates hearings for the areas for which I have responsibility in business.

The shadow minister for business, Ms Castley, only bothered turning up for half. That is unusual. I do not know why she was not there, and perhaps she had a valid reason, but it is not like someone else was tapped on the shoulder and provided with Ms Castley's questions. I certainly appreciated that Ms Lawder was there, and she asked questions, but none of those strayed into the business space, and there were no questions on notice. On one level it is amusing, and on another it is quite offensive when Ms Castley comes in here and attacks me and attacks the budget, when she could not even bother to put in the work herself! It is what we have come to expect: empty words from an opposition without vision.

Ms Castley's contribution ignored the 11,000 businesses we supported through business grants in the pandemic, rapid cash injections, extension payments to provide continued support and top-up payments to provide additional support for our larger, employing businesses. She ignored payments to tourism, accommodation providers, arts, events, hospitality and fitness to provide additional support to businesses in these industries, recognising that they were particularly hard hit by ongoing COVID-19 restrictions.

She ignored the record investment in skills, which Minister Steel detailed for her benefit yesterday. She ignored that the government has continued to fund the Canberra Business and Advice Service. She ignored the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business Support Program—creating awareness of business support measures and grant funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses in the ACT, supporting them in gaining access to these support measures and, in doing so, supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to grow and recover from the impacts of COVID-19. I acknowledge that Mr Davis yesterday spoke at length in support of that and certainly recognised those efforts.

She ignored the significant body of work to ready the ACT for automatic mutual recognition of individual occupational licensing, which commenced on 1 July this year, making it simpler, quicker and less expensive for people to work across jurisdictions. She ignored the more than \$22 million in this year's budget to deliver initiatives focused on the development of our knowledge-intensive sectors, the commercialisation of research, investment attraction and facilitation, development of our innovation ecosystem, and the creation of new businesses and jobs.

She ignored that the government is responding to the needs of businesses and committing to addressing those needs, including through the continued development of a business hub as a seamless online point of entry for business, as well as the

delivery of a new Access Canberra website to provide government information and services according to customer needs. The delivery of these reforms will significantly enhance the business experience when interacting with government.

She wilfully ignored—and I can say this with confidence—the work of the Better Regulation Taskforce, because I know that she knows that it is funded over three years. It is delivering a proactive business support team through a concierge model; mapping the end-to-end business user experience for selected business types; developing options to better measure regulatory burden; reviewing the local industry participation policy; and developing options to improve existing regulatory arrangements, from short-term rental accommodation to employment agents licensing. We have already announced the changes to the training courses for interstate responsible service of alcohol certificate holders.

Then there is what else is in the budget for Access Canberra. Our one-stop shop, Access Canberra is interacting with a Canberran every five seconds and making a regulatory decision every 15 seconds. I am proud that in this budget our government is providing additional funding to strengthen Access Canberra's ability to provide responsive activities and services that positively impact the lives and wellbeing of Canberrans.

As a regulator, Access Canberra employs an “educate, engage, enforce” approach. The resources made available in this year's budget will provide additional opportunities to engage across business sectors to maintain the integrity and viability of industries that make the ACT a safe and attractive place to live, work, visit, study and invest. Access Canberra continues to implement important government initiatives that benefit our community. We are committed to reducing the social and health impacts from electronic gaming machines, enhancing road safety and increasing worker mobility, as I flagged before.

Our construction industry has continued to recover well from the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns, but I do acknowledge the very concerning incident from earlier this week. It was lucky—and it should not be relying on luck—that no one was injured with the shoring wall collapse.

We are dedicated to ensuring that Canberra's homes are structurally safe, and that homeowners are protected from that poor building quality. I am pleased that this budget, again, provides additional resources for Access Canberra to have the capacity and technical expertise to respond quickly and proportionately. There are five extra staff, including inspectors and investigators, being funded through this budget, and there is extra funding to enhance our inspection and investigation systems that proactively identify and address building quality issues at all stages of construction.

We are a place of natural beauty that connects and sustains our community, and we are investing in the delivery of a modern environment protection system in the ACT. Two additional environment protection officers have been funded in this budget to provide additional proactive and reactive environmental compliance monitoring.

As part of this year's budget, we have also increased the number of positions in customer facing and processing areas by 16. This includes five concierge positions at

Access Canberra service centres, who will act as knowledgeable first points of contact for customers. It also adds 11 people to the Working with Vulnerable People Team in this financial year. A WWVP registration is an essential requirement for many jobs, as well as for volunteering in the ACT, with close to 130,000 registered people. The WWVP scheme, as we term it, provides additional checks and balances to protect a wide range of vulnerable Canberrans, including children, those in hospital and aged care, or those who need support and assistance to complete their daily activities.

The funding provided in this budget supports Access Canberra to deliver regulatory and consumer protections and to maintain accessible and responsive customer services that give Canberrans back valuable time. It ensures that Access Canberra continues to do its remarkable work to support our city to be one of the most liveable in the world.

Before I move to the arts, I want to reflect very briefly on Ms Castley's comments on business survival rates. Very seriously, I know that Ms Castley comes to this place with lived experience of running a business and the very personal lens that she views things through. She has detailed and certainly understands that very personal cost to running a business in many ways, and I certainly have a lot of empathy with that.

I want to reflect that we also have that personal and very human role in looking at what those figures are telling us in business entry and exit rates and interpreting that data. It is not that we are only looking at the data or only thinking about the business experience; we can do both. What the facts tell us is that businesses here in the ACT are growing and growing at an extraordinary rate, and that is very pleasing.

It is not to say that the business exit rate is not something we are looking at and wanting to understand better, but I can say that it is non-employing businesses that make up the largest proportion of total non-surviving businesses every year and for the four-year period to June this year. That does skew the overall business exit result, and I certainly think that is worth reflecting on.

Again, we do want to undertake work to understand that better overall, but I think Ms Castley's appreciation or understanding of what the experience is overall is not necessarily accurate—however much I absolutely understand that very personal cost for people if they do make that decision to close or end their business, for whatever reason.

Moving to the arts, and I acknowledge Ms Lawder's contribution before and thank her for what is a genuine interest, understanding and valuing of the arts in Canberra. I also appreciate that Ms Lawder really gets what we are trying to do and where we are trying to take the city with the arts.

I do not think we have had any representations from you before, Ms Lawder, about the grants process, but I am very happy, through you, Madam Speaker, to have that conversation about any ways we can make it simpler or more straightforward. We have certainly been working on that, but if there are other suggestions the door is open. I am very willing to have that conversation.

We do have the ambition for Canberra to be recognised as Australia's arts capital. To support this, in July we released our new Arts, Culture and Creative Policy for the

period of 2022-2026. That is the roadmap we will take to achieve the ambition. Alongside the policy, I released a new Arts Organisation Investment Framework and guidelines. The framework will meet the changing needs of the ACT arts community, reset the arts sector and increase vibrancy, relevance and sustainability.

In the context of these significant policy developments, I am genuinely delighted that our budget contains significant new and ongoing investment in our arts and cultural sectors. The ACT arts fund is being boosted by more than \$3 million over four years, including \$720,000 indexed and ongoing from 2025-26 for ACT arts organisations to provide programs, services, expertise and infrastructure to support and develop the arts and engage with the local community.

With this increase, over \$7.9 million per year will be provided to Canberra's leading arts organisations, effectively a 10 per cent increase. This will enable new arts organisation entrants that are meeting community needs to be funded for the first time in many years. We are also providing additional operational funding for Belconnen Arts Centre of \$150,000 per annum and Ainslie and Gorman Arts Centre of \$125,000 per annum for two years to 2023-24, addressing immediate operational costs pressures and building on the support we provided in previous budgets.

Through this budget, we are investing \$8 million in the major heritage restorations and critical building upgrades at Gorman Arts Centre, as well as a strategic framework for the future management of government arts facilities. Arts facilities are important places for community and cultural engagement, providing pathways for participation in the arts and affordable, specific spaces to develop, produce, display and promote contemporary arts.

This investment in Gorman Arts Centre will enhance accessibility, safety and energy efficiency and deliver major heritage restorations in time for the centre's 100th birthday in 2024. This initiative continues the support provided by the government for the upgrade of arts facilities, including through the initiative in 2019-20 of upgrading local arts facilities. This budget backs in the government's ambition for the arts, and I commend this part of the appropriation bill to the Assembly.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (10.44): I think I might be the final speaker in this area so I will get underway. The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate covers an enormous area of policy and programs. I could spend the rest of this week speaking about it, but I will spare the Assembly that!

I do want to highlight a number of priorities and then I will endeavour to respond to some of the issues that have been raised by other speakers, including some interesting new policy positions that have been brought forward, but I will get to that in a moment.

This government, through its budget, seeks to deliver on the priorities of this community, to deliver on the election commitments that the government has made and to manage the territory's finances in a prudent manner. We are focused on delivering high-quality services for our growing population, the fastest-growing state or territory

in Australia for a decade. We are focusing on addressing cost-of-living pressures, continuing to invest in Canberra's people and places and embedding a long-term plan for the delivery of services and infrastructure.

There are risks in the short, medium and long term that our economy will face. At this point in time we have the strongest labour market in Australia. We have, as I have mentioned, the fastest-growing population, and we continue to see very significant supply-side pressure within our economy.

This budget aims to improve the territory's overall wellbeing and to drive economic growth and jobs into the future. We are focused on ensuring that we have the public health facilities that can meet the needs of our growing population and that we are investing in our education system. There has been some remarkable Australia-leading growth in educational attainment in our jurisdiction that I will touch upon shortly. We are boosting our investment in protecting our natural environment and programs to reduce our carbon emissions and reliance on fossil fuels. We are investing in infrastructure, the largest-ever infrastructure program in the territory's history.

We recognise there are supply chain and labour constraints, and that is why we are refreshing our infrastructure plan. We are working with the commonwealth on shared priorities and focusing on a diversified program of asset acquisition, construction and of course significant investment in ICT projects.

There are pressures around cost of living at the moment, particularly given the high rate of inflation and increases in interest rates, as the Reserve Bank normalises the cash rate. There is an ongoing need to secure more affordable housing for Canberrans. The budget includes measures designed to alleviate these pressures, to provide real and accessible housing choices, and to enhance wellbeing across the territory.

On fiscal policy, the government has balanced the need to continue to improve our fiscal position with the need to invest in services. The path back to a balanced budget is a path we have trodden before in recovering from significant economic shocks. It is a path we will tread again. But I want to highlight to the Assembly—because it was completely glossed over by some contributors—that the strength of our economic recovery has led to a significantly better than expected fiscal position.

In the fiscal year just past, the budget deficit shrank by 40 per cent—a \$370 million improvement over what was forecast in the 2020-21 budget. This improved fiscal position is expected to continue in the coming years. This budget outlines a deficit that is lower than previously estimated and progressively reducing to a little over \$200 million in fiscal 2025.

Relative to last year's budget, all key balance sheet metrics for 2022-23 and the outyears—net debt, net financial liabilities and net worth—have all improved. Net debt is \$350 million lower than the 2021 budget estimate. Net financial liabilities are \$1.25 billion lower than the 2021 budget estimate. The territory's net worth is \$3.6 billion higher than the 2021 budget, with net worth approaching \$19 billion.

Throughout our budget deliberations we are using our wellbeing framework to help us measure progress and to assist the government to make better decisions on

investments and programs that will best contribute to improved quality of life. We have commenced consideration of gender responsive budgeting and we are exploring how government can further mature its consideration of gender impacts within the budget process.

In infrastructure, we have updated the capital framework, which was launched in September, to guide business case development for next year's budget and onwards. The updated capital framework provides an enhanced and fit-for-purpose guidance to support ACT government agencies in undertaking analysis of infrastructure projects to inform government investment decisions.

Our fiscal strategy remains one of continuous improvement. The government has, as I have said, balanced the need to improve our fiscal position, which we have done this year and across the forwards, with the need to invest in services. The economic and fiscal strategy has underpinned consumer confidence, and it has seen our economy bounce back as public health social measures have eased, ensuring that our economy is in the best possible shape to move forward.

The economy performed more strongly in 2021-22 than was expected at the time of last year's budget. Private sector activity has progressively recovered since some of the COVID public health social measures were eased. A bounce-back in state final demand in the December quarter of 2021 continued into the March and June quarters, demonstrating the resilience of the territory economy.

It is here I want to point out that we have had 32 consecutive years of economic growth. No other jurisdiction, at a subnational level in Australia, has achieved 32 consecutive years of economic growth. We were the only state or territory to not go into recession during the COVID pandemic.

Our population has grown more strongly, the fastest of all states and territories. Growth in gross state product for the ACT is expected to remain robust, at around three per cent per annum in real terms across the forward estimates. As we ease off public stimulus, private sector growth will make an increased contribution to the territory's total economic growth. But the government's infrastructure investment program will also contribute to ongoing economic activity and job creation, as will the return, and we are seeing it already, of international students and tourists.

Let us talk about tax reform. We are at the forefront of tax reform in Australia. For more than a decade, we have been undertaking a tax reform program to make our tax system more efficient, fairer and more stable. We are the only state or territory in Australia that has abolished tax on insurance. Revenue from stamp duty as a share of all ACT government taxation continues to fall.

In this budget, we have continued to reduce residential and commercial stamp duty tax rates as part of stage three of tax reform. We have raised the lowest stamp duty threshold for residential owner-occupiers from \$200,000 to \$260,000. This reduces duty on all homes in the territory that are purchased between \$260,000 and \$1.45 million by a further \$1,120.

We have increased the Home Buyer Concession Scheme income eligibility threshold from \$160,000 to \$170,000, noting that, if the household has children, that income threshold increases by \$3,330 for each child up to a maximum of five. So a household with five children would have an income eligibility threshold approaching \$187,000. At the other end of the age spectrum, we have increased the deferred duty level and the Disability Duty Concession Scheme price for stamp duty eligibility from \$750,000 to \$1 million.

During the five years of the stage three tax reform, which, I remind members, commenced in 2021, we have kept the increase in average general rates for residential and commercial properties to 3.75 per cent. We are continuing to reduce stamp duty in every territory budget. Stamp duty reductions will be greatest for those purchasing lower value new land, lower value off the plan units and lower value homes. This is a deliberate policy intervention aimed at stimulating new affordable housing construction. Residential stamp duty tax rates are set out each year in the budget. We will continue this reform, as I outlined in response to a question this week. On the commercial side, we are increasing the commercial stamp duty tax-free threshold each year, it will reach \$2 million in fiscal 2025.

I want to take a moment to talk about debt and debt. This is perennial debate in Australian fiscal policy, and so it should be. But all we have heard in response to this budget is concern about debt and deficit, but then a series of speaker after speaker demanding more expenditure and less taxation and somehow those two factors combining to reduce deficit and debt.

Mr Davis absolutely nailed it yesterday, pointing out that that is just ‘magic pudding’ economics and that it is simply a continuation of the same policy theme that we have heard from those opposite for a decade. Are we are going into election No 4 on this ‘magic pudding’ economics? It would seem so. What we need is a clear position from those opposite that, if they want smaller deficit, where are the cuts?

We know the Leader of the Opposition wants a commission of audit. So did Campbell Newman, so did Tony Abbott and so did Joe Hockey. In fact, every incoming conservative administration has gone down that path. Commissions of audit are code for cuts. Everyone knows it. Everyone has seen it play out in every state and territory.

Mr Parton: You do you, Andrew.

MR BARR: You know when you have hit on a raw nerve when they start interjecting.

Mr Parton: Is that how you know?

MR BARR: That is how we know.

Mr Parton: So, when you start, is that how we know that we have got to you?

MR BARR: As this fiscal debate crystalises over the remaining two years of this parliamentary term and we go into the next territory election, there will again be a choice on how the territory budget is managed and what the priorities are. That is as it

should be. But let us be clear that, if the opposition go to the 2024 election with the same promises of less tax and more spending, then there is zero credibility in their arguments about debt and deficit.

The other areas of this very large series of government outlays and policy responsibility, include climate action. I want to touch briefly on the success of the Sustainable Household Scheme, which has delivered nearly \$100,000 million in loans for Canberra households. Around five per cent of eligible households in Canberra have now taken up an offer under that scheme for rooftop solar, solar and battery, for switching off gas heating and cooling, for battery storage, new appliances, electric vehicles and electric vehicle charging points at home. It has been one of the most successful award-winning government programs, and I look forward to its continued success.

The Big Canberra Battery project continues. There are projects under construction and more to be procured that will ensure that the territory can store the renewable energy that we generate. We have outlined our gas transition plan. The forward work on adaptation and resilience, as part of the ACT climate change risk assessment, has been commissioned. The budget provides funding for the Office of Climate Action, continued capital funding for the Big Canberra Battery, support for bushfire resilience and further living infrastructure plans to reduce urban heat.

The Everyday Climate Choices website is achieving a great deal of interest and cut-through, and we continue to support the community's desire to make the transition to net zero emissions.

In the economic development stream of my portfolio responsibilities, we are particularly focused on economic growth and our new economic development priorities, outlined through CBR Switched On.

The budget commits over \$22 million in funding to support the Future Jobs Fund. This is comprised of \$12 million in expense funding and \$10 million in capital funding. The Future Jobs Fund will continue to prioritise investment attraction, innovation, commercialisation of research, and growing our entrepreneurial ecosystems and initiatives that will attract and retain a skilled workforce.

Funding has been allocated to support innovation co-investment grants, the establishment of a venture capital fund to support ACT based start-ups; space sector development in the territory and the development of a space hub; a renewed commitment to the Canberra Cyber Hub to support its operations; business communications; maintaining high levels of engagement through recovery and development of new government programs; maintaining engagement with key industry bodies; and enhancing opportunities for businesses to grow and succeed.

In the investment attraction area, the ACT is seeking to attract higher levels of responsible business investment to accelerate the territory's knowledge-based economic growth. This initiative includes attracting high-value investment in areas of competitiveness for the territory. It involves working with our universities to attract targeted investment that benefits research and development for local small and medium enterprises.

It also includes attracting investor interest in priority territory projects, the workforce attraction and retention activities to understand barriers in our labour market, and to work with local business to address skills shortages. There is no doubt that attraction and retention of a talented and skilled workforce is a key driver of a sustainable economy, with investment in programs that create skilled job opportunities in key sectors that will enable emerging talent from our higher education sector to be retained in our city and also programs to support Canberra to attract new skills through migration. There were a number of important outcomes from the Jobs and Skills Summit held here in Canberra last month that we will take advantage of.

We are pursuing values-based economic growth and investment. We have developed Canberra as the knowledge capital of Australia and a hub for innovation and creativity. We will continue to encourage and incentivise stronger relationships between our tertiary education and research sectors, business community and government. That includes supporting the Canberra Cyber Hub, the Space Hub and the ongoing success of the Canberra Innovation Network. Each of these areas and programs, as well as those that Minister Cheyne mentioned, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business Support Program, are designed to achieve those values-based economic growth objectives and further diversification of the territory's private economy.

We continue to engage with the university sector. I want to highlight particularly our commitment and our partnership with the University of New South Wales Canberra towards their city campus, which will bring significant benefits to the territory economy by creating more jobs, both during the construction of the campus and when the campus is operational, attracting more students, researchers and professionals into our education landscape. This campus will diversify and enhance the scope of higher education offerings available in the ACT.

Higher education in our single biggest export industry. We have had a decade-long war waged by the Liberal Party against universities at a national level. That war is now over, and this is the best opportunity this century for rapid growth and higher education in Australia—the best opportunity in this century. We are part of that, and we are working with our existing higher education institutions, UNSW Canberra, ANU, the University of Canberra and the Australian Catholic University, and through our investments in our own Canberra Institute of Technology, to further grow opportunity for students and for employment, research and development in this sector.

Touching on my tourism portfolio responsibilities, we seek to rebuild our tourism economy. Prior to the pandemic the industry contributed more than 18,500 jobs and delivered \$2.5 billion to our territory economy. With every \$152,000 spent by visitors in our economy, there is a job created for a Canberran. So what we need is to work with the federal government, which we are doing, on both international tourism recovery and domestic tourism recovery. We are seeing that strength, particularly in the domestic market, and we are also focusing on aviation connectivity to improve our international opportunities.

That brings me to international engagement, another area of responsibility within this portfolio stream. We will continue our trade mission program, and we will continue to support inbound delegations from overseas. Our International Business Engagement

Program, including a partnership with the Canberra Business Chamber, delivers a series of educational information, networking, and research activities to help ACT businesses in their export journeys. We provide trade-start adviser services. We have an in-market business development manager in Singapore. And the Office of International Engagement will this year bring online a customer relationship management system, which will bring all of the great work of the office to the fore and provide a more streamlined way of capitalising on the opportunities that we are generating.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the winner of the 2022 ACT Chief Minister's Export Awards, Nominal Systems—and I think you were actually at the event, Mr Assistant Speaker Cain. Nominal Systems will be representing the national awards, which are being held here in Canberra next month. But, as we look to opportunities for economic growth, we must look beyond the borders of the territory. That is where we will see the greatest economic opportunity.

I know I have been speaking for a while, but that is a brief snapshot of this entire output class and the work that is underway.

I will just speak briefly in response to some of the issues that were raised by other speakers during the debate. When it comes to business development, the numbers are very clear. The territory has gone from 27,500 businesses in 2018 to 33,918 in 2022. In most fiscal years between 2018 and 2022, the ACT has had the fastest rate of business growth in Australia.

Ms Castley asked what is in the budget for business. I have given a long outline of business development programs and activities within my areas of portfolio responsibility. I want to highlight two others. Each year we publish a Tax Expenditure Statement. It outlines the extent of tax concessions provided by the territory government to different sectors, to business, to charities and to low-income households. It is a very comprehensive statement. It is on the Treasury website. The biggest single tax expenditure that is undertaken by the territory government is \$160 million of benefit to small and medium enterprises through the payroll tax threshold arrangements that we have in place—\$160 million and growing each and every year, directly into the pockets of small and medium businesses. That is a very, very significant direct contribution that the ACT's payroll tax arrangements put in place.

I would also draw Ms Castley's attention to the fact that ACT businesses—small, medium and large—receive the lion's share of a billion dollars of infrastructure and ICT projects that the government provides in the budget each year. That is a very significant proportion of the total territory budget, which is a little over \$7 billion. There is a billion dollars of infrastructure spend and \$160 million of payroll tax benefits through the high payroll tax threshold, not to mention all of the other programs that both myself and Minister Cheyne have touched upon.

Mr Milligan talked about sports infrastructure and seemingly indicated a change in position from the Canberra Liberals in relation to AFL in the territory. I was a bit surprised by that contribution, given what Mr Coe said in this place when the campaign to get the Giants to Canberra was in full swing. He said:

I think getting behind the GWS for ACT campaign will help build the base of AFL support here. It will be good for football everywhere. GWS is giving Canberra an opportunity to play a meaningful role in the AFL. The success of this campaign will give junior players in the ACT better chances of playing competitive Aussie Rules. The success of the ACT for GWS campaign will also ensure that the ACT sees a meaningful presence of an AFL club and promote the sport more thoroughly in the region.

He even went on to say he had a pledge pad here and that people can come to his office and join the campaign, saying, “The more people we get the better, of course,” and he commended all of the people at AFL Canberra for the work they were doing to get the team here and asked all Canberrans to get behind the ACT for GWS campaign.

So, if Mr Milligan, in his comments, is signalling a change of policy, that the Canberra Liberals no longer support AFL in Canberra through the Giants arrangement, which is the only possible interpretation of what he said, it needs to be clarified today by either Mr Milligan or the opposition leader if what was a tripartisan consensus in this place 10 years ago to bring the team here is now no longer. AFL fans in Canberra need to know. So what is the position of the Canberra Liberals in relation to this matter? Do you or do you not support there being AFL games in Canberra through the Giants arrangement?

You will have the opportunity to clarify your position, but I will need to know this because, if this is going to become a partisan issue ahead of re-signing with the Giants, if the Liberal Party’s position has changed, I think it is important that the Giants and the AFL know this ahead of the signing of the next deal. We went into this with all parties agreeing. If that is no longer the case, we need to know.

A couple of Greens speakers spoke about tourism and about the sustainability of aviation. We have certainly had a debate on that matter in estimates. What I can advise Ms Clay, in particular is that, as I indicated in the estimates debate, there is quite a lot of work underway across the world and, indeed, in Australia on improving the sustainability of aviation and decarbonising the industry.

I had the opportunity to meet with the Sustainable Aviation Fuel Initiative on Tuesday this week. I understand Minister Rattenbury has also been briefed by this industry group, which is representative of airlines, airports and biofuel producers. There is a pathway to more sustainability in aviation, and we will be playing an active role. Although we are not a jurisdiction that produces aviation fuel, we may well be able to contribute over time in research and development and in encouraging other states and territories to play a greater role here.

I am confident that there is a pathway to more sustainability in the aviation sector. So I will be redoubling my efforts to improve aviation access to Canberra, both domestically and internationally. It can and will be done sustainably. It is important for our tourism industry—and I have touched on why and the employment that it generates. Canberra has one of the best domestic networks it has ever had since COVID. I want to commend Canberra Airport for the work they have done in partnership with the government to have more airlines flying direct to Canberra from more locations than before.

The task before us now is to rebuild our international aviation network. We are working in Asia, the Middle East, New Zealand and the Pacific towards improving that connectivity—east, through the Pacific and New Zealand to North America; to the north and the north-west through Singapore, to Europe and to the subcontinent; and west, through the Middle East, on to Europe in particular. They are our priorities. We can do this in a sustainable way.

On that note, I think I have covered everything that was raised by colleagues in this portfolio area and given a comprehensive outline of what this appropriation will deliver for Canberra's economic development, for our fiscal policy, and indeed the management of our response to climate change.

I commend this part of the budget to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate—Part 1.6

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.17): On the occasion of looking at the next 12 months of funding for Transport Canberra, I would like to start by thanking all the bus drivers and all those who keep our bus service running. They are essential workers. They certainly have managed to keep this town moving, and they have done so in a pretty tough period. So, on behalf of the Canberra Liberals, thanks to all of the staff, who have done a great job.

The drivers and the other staff have delivered a great service for Canberra, but it is embarrassing that on many levels the government have not. The government have failed to deliver what they said they would for the bus service in their last budget, and they have failed to deliver any inspiration to improve that service in this budget.

The government said they would bring in a new ticketing system this year. They have not. We do not have enormous amounts of detail on when it is going to be delivered. The government said they would move away from the interim timetable, and they still have not. They have signalled that they sort of will, but it is not really going to be a full timetable. The government said they would listen to Canberrans to improve the bus service and, by their own admission, they have not.

This is a common theme with this government: failure after failure; failure to deliver with no end in sight. This government said they would bring in a new ticketing system by 30 June this year, and it is now October. The government spruik that they want to increase patronage and that a new ticketing system would increase patronage. Yet, after years and years of talking about it, there is no detail on when it is coming.

When I asked about all this, they gave us lacklustre excuses about why it has not been done. The government are not really serious about delivering this for Canberrans. It is hard to find a store that sells a MyWay card. It is questionable if they have any stock. The government have taken away car parks in Civic. The minister is quoted in the newspaper as saying he wants to force people to change their habits, assumingly to use public transport. It is a pity that the government cannot be forced to change their

habits and implement a better ticketing system. This government is all announcement and no detail and no delivery. The government even called it, at some stage, a 'next gen' system, and we wondered why. It is probably because it will not arrive until the next generation of Canberrans are old enough to use it!

In New South Wales, public transport travellers can use their Opal card or their own personal credit card to catch a bus. Why has this government taken so long to implement something that New South Wales delivered a long time ago and that we have been working on for such a long period of time?

What is in the budget for an updated ticketing system? Money being moved in the forward years. When I explicitly asked when the updated system will be delivered, there was no information on which month and the year it would arrive, not even a quarter it might arrive—and the lack of delivery continues.

The government has failed to deliver anything other than an interim bus timetable. The interim bus timetable has been operating for years. It has actually been going for years. I thought the government were just going to change the name of the timetable, because it has become such a permanent fixture. I do recognise that the government is going to try and bring in what the minister refers to as a full timetable next year. But, of course, the minister already conceded in question time that it is not a full timetable at all, and we do not have definitive detail on when it will begin.

Indeed, based on the minister's answers to questions in question time yesterday, it would appear that the government is not even sure that it will be able to hire the number of drivers needed to deliver the fake full timetable. The minister said that he was optimistic about his ability to hire those staff—I am assuming as optimistic as he was about having a new ticketing system up and running by 2022! Perhaps he was optimistic about having light rail arrive at Commonwealth Park by 2024 and optimistic about light rail arriving in Tuggeranong in this half of the century!

By your department's own admission, you are thinking about when to bring people back to public transport. How about now, now that you have taken more than 650 Civic car parks away and—to quote you directly, as we said earlier—you want to force people to change their commuting habits? Traffic disruption is occurring now, but we are waiting months and months to update the timetable.

This timetable business is just another example of the government grabbing a headline that actually lacks a substantial improvement for Canberrans and the lack of delivery continues. In the government's own survey, one in five people were unsatisfied with the transport service and, when I asked why, the minister was not able to explain. The government was not able to explain, so much so that the government response to the estimate's recommendation to ask customers why they are dissatisfied, has been agreed to, which is good. So I am glad that the government took on board the recommendations from the committee but how has it gotten to this, how is this not the core business of government?

Are they asleep at the wheel? We all receive regular surveys from vendors asking us for our feedback and our experience. I receive more engagement from KFC asking me how my experience was. It is embarrassing that the government cannot even engage

with Canberrans. This budget just shows the government asleep at the wheel. I thought the aim for the government would be that they should be actually trying to get public transport outcomes out of the directorate—to actually get public transport outcomes delivered on the ground to encourage Canberrans to use public transport. But that is clearly not what is going on here. Instead, this appropriation actually demonstrates that this government is doing not much when it comes to our bus services. As the wheels on the bus go around and round, the cogs in the minister's office are going more slowly, and slowly around.

This government has failed to deliver for our bus service since the last budget. They are on track to fail again, as the moneys move further and further into later years. It shows a lack of confidence that the government has in itself to deliver for Canberrans. This government is failing Canberrans. We need to keep Canberra moving, so we will support this basic appropriation. But come on: more inspiration and dedication to deliver is needed.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.24): I would like to speak in my capacity as the ACT Greens spokesperson for transport, active travel and the circular economy. We welcome this budget. It does not introduce a lot of new funding in the way of transport investment, but it is seeing through a number of important, already committed projects, and that is great to see.

We have the procurement of new zero emissions buses, with a target of 50 zero emissions buses in operation for 2022-23, and a target of 90 zero emissions buses in this term of government. We have the Woden interchange, including futureproofing of light rail 2 to Woden. There is the raising of London Circuit—important enabling works for light rail. There is the procurement of a next-generation ticketing system. There is the provision of bus services to Whitlam, which have already commenced, and to Lawson, which we will see at the start of next year.

We also have the Woden bus depot construction and electrification. That project, in particular, has been long-awaited. I was interested to see the Public Transport Association of Canberra submission on this particular project, in which they reiterated their call for further investment in project delivery capabilities at Major Projects Canberra and Transport Canberra and City Services, to ensure that all of our budgeted projects are actually delivered and not continually “re-profiled” into the future. They said:

The 2021-22 budget re-profiled over \$26 million in transport-related capital works, including the new Woden bus depot for the 5th year in a row. These are significant investments the Canberra community is missing out on, and failing to deliver them undermines the ACT Government's public transport vision.

Those are not my words; those are words from experts who are working in the public transport advocacy field. Actually, they are just making a really plaintive call that we need more staff. A lot of work is being done, and more people are needed to do this work. Canberra can be a nation that leads in our public transport. Our light rail system is gold standard with respect to reliability, frequency and ridership, and, frankly, in popularity.

The second lot of census data came out yesterday. We have not had a chance to look at it thoroughly yet, but a couple of stats caught our eye. We saw that, of the 15,611 people who travelled to work via public transport on census day, around 42 per cent caught light rail. That is pretty surprising. That is an astonishing rating from the people who are using that service. We only have light rail in one region of Canberra, and it is already almost half of our public transport use. That is a very successful public transport project.

Of course, every district of Canberra needs access to the best quality public transport system. Out in Belconnen, we have a long wait for light rail. We will be very excited to see it, but it will be a while. We need to make sure that our buses are performing at that same standard, to complement light rail. It needs significant investment in expanding those services and electrifying the fleet to make sure that we can do that.

It is good to see that the raising of London Circuit has begun. That will enable works for the alignment of light rail 2A and it will improve the walkability of central Canberra. We hope that it makes the middle of Canberra look a little bit less like a highway and a little bit more like a city centre, which would be great. Possibly these works should have been done a long time ago, while we were building light rail 1. We would like to see enabling works like this for future stages to be done, rolled out and prioritised, whilst we are building the rest of light rail, so that we do not have such long delays and such staggered delivery on this major, city-shaping project.

I welcome the completion of the Woden interchange. I cannot wait to see light rail roll into that interchange. I am pleased to see that the procurement of a new ticketing system to replace MyWay is coming soon. Hopefully, that will bring us into line with other jurisdictions where you can pay by credit or debit card. That will be much more convenient.

It was good to see Whitlam's bus service start this year. It was fantastic news; we called for that, and it was great to see it come about. It is a shame that our planning in Lawson meant that they were without a bus service in the suburb for a long time. Particularly given the layout of that suburb and where they are located, they really would have benefited. We are glad to see that that is coming now.

We would like to see a bit of a change in the way we do this. It is important that, on day one, when people move into a suburb, they have good active travel connections and good public transport access from that first day. If they do not, they will tend to go out and buy a car. They might be driving that car for another 15 or 20 years. They might have made school and job choices based on that pattern of travel. So it is much better if we can do it from the very start.

We are looking forward, hopefully, to getting a lot of people switching back onto the bus in Lawson and Whitlam. Once we have stage 2 progressing, maybe local shops, and direct access to Aikman Drive and the Belconnen town centre, a lot of those journeys can be made without a car.

The Greens would also like to see a much more rapid transition to a fully zero emissions bus fleet. Ideally, we would like to see that by 2030. That would be in line with the seriousness of the climate crisis, and that is what we called for in our original

policy platform. We also need to expand our bus fleet. We are growing as a city. We have an extra 10,000 people each year, so we need more buses as we grow. We also need to be doing as much as we can in the ACT, and in our discussions with the federal government and parliament, to progress future stages of light rail, including getting more funding for this really important project.

As always, I will chat a little bit about active travel. I am always concerned that we are not investing enough to encourage enough people to use active travel in line with the targets we have set there. We did get some really good projects in this budget. We have the extension of the Belconnen bikeway. We have replacement of the bridges at Umbagog District Park. That is great. It is probably not enough to get the kind of mode shift we are looking for, away from private motor vehicles, and to encourage more people to walk and ride, but it is really great progress.

We are still featuring a lot of missing active travel links. I was pleased to see some policy work come out to identify that work. We need to make sure that we have the right investment so that when people are walking and riding they do not have a network that disappears halfway through, they do not have cracked and broken pavements and they do not have paths that are too narrow for good use.

I was pleased to see the \$77 million proposed for active travel, but we are still a bit concerned about how we are counting active travel. It looks like a good, big, solid amount. It looks like almost \$20 million a year, which is great for the pipeline. But a fifth of that is a sealed shoulder on the Monaro Highway upgrade. That is a great project; there is nothing wrong with that project. But we think that is more of a road than active travel. When we think about active travel, and dedicated funding for it, we think that dedicated funding should be for dedicated active travel. We need to be spending on more than just sealing shoulders. We need to dedicate more money to that separated active travel network.

Our investment in new transport infrastructure needs to reflect that general desire to shift away from private motor vehicles. We will always have cars in Canberra. Of course we will. But we cannot afford to have every single adult driving everywhere they need to go. We know what will happen in a city of our size if that is the only viable mode of transport that we have. We will all be stuck in traffic all of the time.

I want to chat briefly about waste and recycling. There is quite a lot in this budget on waste and recycling in the circular economy. We are getting a lot of new policy work, too, which is fantastic to see. I was pleased to note that we have committed to the commencement of the procurement for a new materials recovery facility and for our FOGO facility, our food and garden organics facility. I am particularly pleased to see that we got federal funding for that. Well done; that is great.

It is also really good that we are building those two facilities together. I hope that means we can move to a place where all of the standard packaging can go into one facility or the other, as we phase out plastics. If our standard packaging cannot go into one of those facilities, we need to be phasing out production of that packaging altogether. It needs to be recyclable. We are building two brand-new facilities. If we cannot recycle it, we actually should not be using it.

We are excited about the ongoing progress with the FOGO. We are looking forward to having an open procurement and to seeing how our existing businesses will fit into that landscape. There are a lot of opportunities regarding household, commercial and business recycling, and it will be great to see that all woven together. I am also pleased by how well that trial is going. I am excited to talk about some of the issues that have already come up, like nappies, large families and apartments. These are long-ongoing problems. I think there are a lot of solutions. We have some inquiries and a bit of research going on, and I am confident that we will be able to solve the issues. We need to make sure that we get the detail right on that.

I put out a little circular economy paper earlier in the year. I am very much looking forward to seeing the minister's circular economy strategy. I think that will be great. We have a lot of challenges and opportunities at the moment. It was great to hear in estimates recently that waste audits will recommence soon. I hope we will get those published. That will help everybody to see what is going on, and it helps businesses to identify new opportunities in the market so that it is not just a matter of government having to do this. We know we have a lot of issues with product stewardship, and that is a great way to tackle our problems, but there is slow progress. We have a lot of general problems with a high-consuming society. I am looking forward to seeing all of these different strands woven together in a comprehensive circular economy vision.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.34): I rise to speak to the Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 as it relates to my shadow responsibilities in city services. We have had many discussions in this place about city services, and it will be no surprise that my view is that this Labor-Greens government have long taken a lazy, reactive approach to municipal services. Doing the bare minimum suits the government and, quite frankly, they are very good at doing that. Why invest properly in our basic municipal services when they can strip them down, starve them of money and then throw money at them when people start to notice and make a bit of noise—when people start to see that the grass is waist high, and when people start to see damage to their cars from potholes?

Before I go on, I would like to express my appreciation to the staff who work in this area every day, whether it is at DAS, in our libraries, on our maintenance and road crews, on our mowing crews et cetera. They are doing their very best. They are out there every day, often under difficult circumstances. But the government is starving them of the resources they need. Every year we are adding more suburbs, more streets, roads, footpaths, waterways and stormwater systems—everything in our city. But we are not commensurately increasing the budget for our City Services staff. All the time, year after year, they have to do more with less until, as I said, there is a blitz announced or there is a sudden injection of funds when people start to make a bit of noise.

People are always telling me, and many of my colleagues, that they feel the state of their neighbourhood is worsening. They talk about the lack of pride in their suburb because of the amount of overgrown grass or issues with footpaths. It is shameful how little the government seems to care about these basic municipal services. You do not have to take my word for it; you just have to look at the estimates report recommendations, which show quite clearly that I am not the only one who thinks that things can be done better. Recommendation 112 states:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government commit increased ongoing funding to mowing resources.

Does that sound familiar? Maybe that is because following last year's budget we had two mowing recommendations, which called on the ACT government to: (a) match mowing services to the prevailing weather conditions, including in very wet years; and (b) investigate alternative mowing solutions. How many times do we have to recommend these things before the Labor-Greens government starts listening?

Streetlights also got a run in the recent estimates report. Recommendation 119 states:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government fund an expansion of the streetlight infill program.

Similarly, recommendation 120 states:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government work towards ensuring that the same timeframe for broken streetlights to be fixed is applied across the ACT.

Who knew that delivering working streetlights could be so difficult? These seem to be simple things, but they make a world of difference to residents every day—or, in the case of streetlights, every night. Every night they are concerned about their streetlights that have not been fixed for quite some time. I have been contacted by residents whose entire street is dark because not a single streetlight is working. Here we are in Canberra, the nation's capital, and this Labor-Greens government cannot even keep the lights on for its residents.

Recommendation 121 is another one of my favourites. It calls on the government to listen to community feedback and ensure that weekly rubbish collections continue for households Canberra-wide under the FOGO rollout. Really? Asking this government to listen to community feedback? It might be asking for a bit too much, Mr Assistant Speaker! I refer you to a recent question I asked about the redevelopment of the Tuggeranong foreshore area. According to the Excel spreadsheet that I got under a freedom of information request, more bins was the fourth most commonly requested item, if you searched by basic terms. It is the fourth most common item, yet this government is not going to produce more bins.

They can consult all they like, but they do not actually listen to community feedback. They might collect it, but they do not do too much about it. Why would the government retain a weekly rubbish collection to help larger families and people with medical rubbish needs when they can introduce a cheap, cost-cutting measure in the name of recycling? We all support FOGO recycling. It is a great initiative. But when people were supporting it initially, they did not realise that it would come at the expense of their weekly rubbish collection.

The government might not be good at the service delivery side, but they are excellent at the spin. Last year, it was about overgrown grass. This year, it is potholed roads. They continue to let Canberrans down when it comes to basic municipal services.

Of course, there is a lot more to city services than mowing and basic maintenance. There is the exciting stuff that we all love to see and use—new dog parks, playgrounds and local shopping centre upgrades, the delivery of which take years. I can assure you, Mr Assistant Speaker, that the excitement over a new playground can wear off quickly when you trip over a broken footpath on your way to the playground and break your arm, or you get to the playground and you cannot really use it because the grass is so overgrown that you are worried there are snakes in the grass that will bite your children. The playground itself is great, but there is more to it than these shiny, new, bright things that you get to announce.

There are other things that I look forward to watching out for, such as the Molonglo library and community hub, the ACT NoWaste FOGO facility, the new RSPCA facility, and the southern memorial park. Before the last election a great big sign was put up, saying, “We’re going to build the southern memorial park, a cemetery, here.” That sign has gone. I guess it has been put into storage so that it can be trotted out again prior to the next election, because we still will not have a southern memorial park. Not only has the sign gone; when the sign was put up, it was put up in the wrong place. It was put up in front of a reserve that is maintained by one of our environmental groups. They can’t even get the placement of the sign correct, let alone give us the southern memorial park, which has been promised for so many years.

Another one is the Athllon Drive duplication, from Sulwood Drive to Drakeford Drive. There was another great big sign put up, of course, for that one, but it has on-road cycling paths, as far as I can work out from the diagrams, which I would not have thought was the preferred solution for those people interested in active travel. We hear a lot about safety and that separate bike lanes are safer for cyclists.

It is my hope that this government will start with the priorities, get the basics right, and focus on delivering value for money for ratepayers in the local maintenance areas.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (11.42): It is no secret to everyone in the Assembly that I love trees. It is pleasing to see a sustained focus on planting trees in our urban footprint, which will see many benefits accrue to our city through increased resilience to climate change, addressing the heat island effect and improving the liveability and amenity of our suburbs.

We need to ensure that we select the right trees in the right locations, with the appropriate follow-up care to ensure that our trees not only survive but thrive. There is a large difference between a tree that grimly survives in a stunted form and one that thrives, providing copious shade, developing habitat for other species and actively improving the air in the surrounding area. We need to select species, should they become loose or seed in other areas, that do not become weeds. Finally, we also need to ensure that we have genetic diversity within a species to improve resistance to disease and reduce the risk of die-off.

It is not all about trees when we talk about what is important for our city; it is also about shrubs, ground cover and permeable surfaces. Through these, we need to improve soil quality, reduce sediment and erosion, create habitats for a wider range of fauna, and reduce the cost of maintenance. Therefore, we need to measure what

makes our living infrastructure great and include metrics on the planting of ground cover and shrubs.

I would like to move on to lighting, which Ms Lawder touched on earlier, and how we light our city and suburbs. I recently received correspondence from a constituent comparing the top of a streetlight to a decapitated *Star Wars* battle droid. I applaud the creative interpretation and the Photoshop skills that matched that. I also appreciate the concern that lies behind the comparison and the concern about the look and feel of their suburb.

Lighting can enable Canberra to provide comfortable, enjoyable and meaningful experiences at night, whilst accentuating the distinct features and characteristics of our city. It also has the ability to unlock the potential to celebrate our city's identity, improve after-dark wayfinding, improve walkability and cycling routes, and improve the ability for people to interact with their public spaces. It also enhances the experience of people in the night-time precincts and visually improves the public spaces which they pass through.

The focus of TCCS has been on a bulb replacement program to reduce energy usage across the lighting network. This is a worthwhile aim, but we need to lift our ambitions regarding what we want to achieve out of the lighting of our city. I also applaud the solar path lighting trial around Yerrabi Pond, the smart lights that are powered by solar panels, and I wish to see more lighting that activates our local areas like this.

An examination of the Canberra Safety Map highlights where Canberrans have already identified concerns about the level of lighting. I recommend that we take more specific and scientific action and undertake a dark spots study to comprehensively identify where our lighting is deficient.

I also call for the identification of past-approved TCCS decorative post-top fittings with old lighting technology. We should identify where we can find like-for-like LED products that can be approved for use and updated in the guidelines so that we are able to replace fittings with a product that has a similar look and feel. I also support the creation of a lighting strategy or lighting master plan that outlines the objectives, action plans and implementation for the lighting of Canberra.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (11.47): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the 2022-23 budget relating to the Transport Canberra and City Services portfolio. The ACT government is delivering the infrastructure, services and opportunities our growing city needs to ensure that the Canberra of 2030—and indeed beyond that—continues to be one of the most liveable cities in the world.

Through the 2022-23 budget the government is continuing to deliver a strong pipeline of transport and suburban infrastructure projects that will create and protect local jobs. We are working to deliver the biggest upgrade to suburban facilities in Canberra's history, including new infrastructure and upgrades to existing facilities to ensure that they can continue to meet the needs of our growing community. Ms Lawder referred to these as "shiny new things", but this is actually about maintaining the

assets that we have by upgrading the existing facilities, many of which are ageing and need a bit of TLC.

We know that many Canberra families enjoy our local playgrounds, and the government is delivering on the commitment that we made at the election to build a new destination-style playground and recreation park for the inner north, at Watson, to cater for a range of age groups. It will be co-located with the Academy of Interactive Entertainment in Watson. I know the community is very eager to see this destination play space delivered close to other community facilities in the area.

In addition, the budget provides investments for improvements to the Charnwood group centre, with upgraded pavements, landscaping and new furniture, creating a safer and more accessible environment for visitors and businesses in the precinct. The preliminary designs have recently been shared with the local community, with construction expected to commence next year. Again, it is not a particularly shiny upgrade; it is just maintenance that we do need to some of our ageing assets, including our local shops. It is really important work and our government is investing in it.

Public space upgrades at our local shops in Kaleen are due for completion very soon. Construction work is also ongoing at Duffy and Campbell local shops, with consultation on upgrades at Cooleman Court's main street, Brierly Street, in Weston, and Kippax group centre recently undertaken with the local communities. These designs will now be finalised, ahead of construction commencing next year.

The government is also jointly funding the replacement of three ageing timber bridges at Umbagog District Park, with Commonwealth support, following their closure in early 2021 due to safety concerns that were identified. Following community feedback, a new lookout will be built at one of the bridges. We are currently preparing procurement documentation, with construction activities planned to commence later this year, weather permitting.

The budget also commits funding to undertake a community co-design process for a new library and community facility to deliver our election commitment to the growing Molonglo Valley area. This process will provide an opportunity for the community in the Molonglo Valley to determine their priorities for the future facility, along with a range of other community facilities currently being developed in the region. These works will continue to support local jobs and businesses across Canberra, and also deliver on our commitments to Canberrans. By involving the community in our planning, we are ensuring that the infrastructure that we deliver meets the changing needs of local communities.

We are continuing to move projects through the planning system. A new green waste processing facility and landscape depot will be built in west Belconnen to replace the existing facility on Parkwood Road in Holt. This facility will reduce the amount of material sent to landfill and promote more beneficial re-use through composting of both commercial and residential green waste.

Given that a key priority of this government is to increase safety for all road users, we have also committed through the budget to upgrading five intersections to improve safety and add better connections for active travel. These intersection upgrades

include the installation of traffic signals, safer road conditions and traffic-calming measures to protect all road users. This project will be supported by \$3.65 million from the commonwealth through the National Partnership Agreement on Land Transport Infrastructure Projects.

These improvements build on funding provided through successive budgets for intersection improvements, and design and scoping studies to improve intersection safety across Canberra. This package of works includes the intersections of Heysen Street and Namatjira Drive with Streeton Drive in Weston, delivering on our election promises, and the intersections of Lawrence Wackett Crescent and Norman Lindsay Street with Tharwa Drive in Lanyon Valley, in Tuggeranong, the latter being an election commitment as well, following a feasibility study.

We are also continuing to improve road safety and promoting active travel by delivering a range of local projects in partnership with the commonwealth government. These works include the construction of stage 2 of the Belconnen bikeway project, which is currently underway and expected for completion later on this year; the delivery of raised pedestrian crossings at Gold Creek High School and St Mary MacKillop College to improve the safety of our kids; the installation of audio tactile line marking and safety barriers on Brindabella Road and Long Gully Road; the delivery of safety barriers on Canberra Avenue; and other small-scale road safety upgrades. These projects have been jointly funded with the commonwealth government and build on funding provided through the 2020-2021 budget initiative Moving Canberra—Road Safety Improvements.

We are certainly continuing to build on our pipeline of active travel infrastructure improvements. As Ms Clay mentioned, there is around \$77 million in that pipeline over four years. We are continuing that pipeline as we progress with new initiatives, including those that are pedestrian and active travel facilities within strategic road transport corridors, so that as we build strategic road transport corridors we are not just building them for motor vehicles and freight; we are also building them for other forms of transport.

Public transport uses the road system, in particular, but we know that cyclists also use these corridors, so that is factored into costs and there is an additional investment in those strategic road corridors. It should not be discounted. These are important facilities that we provide through this. I do not think we should just put them aside and not count them in our investment; otherwise we simply would not be making those investments at all.

The ACT is leading the country in taking a responsible approach to managing climate change and our environment. This budget continues the transition to a zero emissions public transport fleet by delivering on our election commitment through funding the purchase of 90 battery electric buses and the associated infrastructure needed to successfully operate those buses. These buses will replace existing compressed natural gas and diesel buses and they will significantly reduce emissions within the Transport Canberra fleet. Savings are expected to be generated from reduced running costs and, of course, they will provide cleaner, quieter transport, which will encourage people to use our public transport system.

Under the initiative, we will install electrical infrastructure at the Tuggeranong and Belconnen bus depots to house the additional 12 battery electric buses that are being leased. We will also plan for further transition in the fleet by undertaking a feasibility study on a future fourth bus depot in Canberra, in addition to the new bus depot planned for Woden, and the technical studies on upgrading existing depots to ready them for more zero emissions buses coming into the fleet as we move towards our target of transitioning our whole bus fleet by 2040 or earlier—well ahead, I should say, of other jurisdictions like New South Wales. I think they are currently scheduled for 2047.

I note Ms Clay's comments in relation to the Woden bus depot. I disagree with her comments. We made a deliberate decision to electrify the bus depot, based on the Zero-Emission Transition Plan for Transport Canberra. That was the right decision to make in relation to the design of that. That has, as a result, taken a little bit longer to complete. I think that was the right decision to make. If she has comments about that, I encourage her to come and speak to me and get a briefing on how those things are progressing, ahead of putting out media statements and statements in the Assembly on those issues. These are really important decisions and they have been informed by expert technical guidance. I think they are the right decisions to make to support the zero emissions transition, which I know that she supports in principle. But it is important that she supports the technical transition pathway as well.

The government will continue the weekday flexible public transport services to support accessible transport needs for eligible Canberrans, including through the continuation of part-time drivers and support staff. This will ensure that services are maintained while we complete an evaluation of the service and a feasibility study on options to deliver an improved on-demand service model, which, again, was an election commitment which we are getting on with.

Through the budget we are also continuing to invest in our city maintenance program to keep our city looking good. We are piloting a rapid response mowing team to address community feedback about the importance of keeping Canberra tidy. This is an extra investment in mowing that we are making during this very wet period. The team of 10 increases the existing mowing capacity and targets areas where extra maintenance is needed, based on community feedback through the year. This is a reactive program, in addition to the regular, scheduled, planned mowing that occurs throughout the year. This one-year pilot will test the rapid response model for possible future expansion on an ongoing basis.

We will also expand the City Services depot in Holder to enable an increase in our agenda to plant 54,000 trees by 2024. The expanded depot will support staff in the expansion of the urban treescapes unit and the facilities will ensure that the City Services team can continue providing services like weeding, litter picking and cleaning of local shops as our newer communities like the Molonglo Valley continue to grow. We continue to increase funding for these services, with the growing city. That is part of the City Services budget, which Ms Lawder mischaracterised in her statements.

This record investment in community infrastructure and public transport that we are making is really important for our growing and evolving city. I look forward to

continuing to deliver on our record \$65 million pipeline of suburban infrastructure, delivering on our commitment to better suburbs right across our city. I am very pleased to commend this part of the budget and our commitment to continuing to provide great services for the ACT community.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Debate interrupted in accordance with standing order 74 and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for a later hour.

Sitting suspended from 12.00 to 2.00 pm.

Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (2.00): Minister Gentleman will not be present in question time today. Minister Steel will assist members with questions on planning and land management, police and emergency services, and corrections. I will endeavour to assist members with questions relating to industrial relations and workplace safety.

Questions without notice

Budget—interest payments

MS LEE: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, in your *Budget at a glance* document for 2022-23, there is a doughnut chart that explains the proportion of expenses in each portfolio area. A similar chart is also used on Canberrans' general rates notices. Your government's debt repayments, estimated to be \$335 million this financial year, have not been included in this chart, even though this amount is more than expenditure in the portfolios of environment and climate change, transport, housing and justice. Treasurer, why are interest repayment costs left off this chart as an expenditure category?

MR BARR: It is not an expenditure category and would be accounted for in 'other'.

MS LEE: Treasurer, will you include the interest repayment portion on future versions of the doughnut chart on Canberrans' rate notices?

MR BARR: No.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, why are you hiding the truth about \$355 million of taxpayer funds, given that the interest repayments make up the same expenditure as the entire justice portfolio?

MR BARR: The government is not. If the Liberal Party's position is that there can be no public debt, then they ought to state that—and be very clear about the implications.

Mr Parton: That is not what the question is about. The question is about transparency.

MR BARR: The fact that you can even ask the question to the precise dollar tells you how transparent the government is. It is there in the budget papers. The government publishes our net debt and our net financial liability as well as our net worth, the \$20 billion of net worth that the territory has. Our assets far exceed our liabilities. We have an AAA credit rating, and we continue to improve the budget position, as I outlined in my comprehensive presentation on this area this morning—a \$380 million improvement on the previous fiscal year and more than \$800 million of fiscal improvement over the forward estimates period.

Mr Parton: There are some Eskimos looking for ice out the front!

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Parton, next time you will be warned.

MR BARR: Once again, if the opposition believe that there is too much debt or deficit—

Ms Lawder: Point of order, Madam Speaker. Under standing order 118, the minister is not to debate the topic but to answer the question. He is talking about what we may or may not do.

MADAM SPEAKER: I believe he is responding to the question appropriately.

Ms Lawder: Not really.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, Ms Lawder.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on the point of order, if there was a question asked and the Chief Minister talks about, “This is the opposition’s position and this is our position,” that is clearly debating the issue, which is not consistent with the standing orders.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I believe he is in order. Chief Minister, your time has expired.

Mr Barr: Madam Speaker, on the point of order, you may not have heard—but I would advise you to check the *Hansard*—Ms Lawder’s reflection on your ruling, which was most unparliamentary.

MADAM SPEAKER: I did note it, Mr Barr.

ACT Policing—Operation TORIC

MR HANSON: My question is to the acting minister for police. Minister, of the individuals arrested by police under Operation TORIC, how many have since been granted bail?

MR STEEL: I think Mr Hanson knows that I will have to take that question on notice, in order to get the exact detail from the work that ACT Policing is doing under that operation.

MR HANSON: Minister, you might need to take this on notice as well: what is being done to monitor those repeat offenders who are granted bail, to ensure future compliance and prevent reoffending?

MR STEEL: I will take that on notice.

MR CAIN: Minister Steel, can you provide this: can you resource TORIC at current levels as a permanent part of policing without sacrificing other areas of operation?

MR STEEL: I refer the member to answers given by Minister Gentleman in question time yesterday, when he talked about the fact that this is an operation that is going on for the period of time that it needs to go on; then there will be other operations that need to take place, depending on what the operational needs of ACT Policing are, based on the direction of the Chief Police Officer.

Community services—technology upgrade fund grants

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Minister for Veterans and Seniors, and Minister for Mental Health. Minister, the Tuggeranong Men's Shed provides a very valuable service to older men in my electorate, providing connection and meaning to people—two incredibly important attributes to acknowledge during this Mental Health Month. I note that the Tuggeranong Men's Shed has received some funding to purchase IT equipment under the technology upgrade fund. Can you tell me exactly how much money they have received and what upgrades are planned at the Tuggeranong Men's Shed and across the Tuggeranong community?

MS DAVIDSON: I thank Mr Davis for the question. The Tuggeranong Men's Shed have recently received grant funding of \$1,964, which they are using to buy android tablets and an iPad for their men's shed. This is part of the technology upgrade fund grant program. This grant program is specifically aimed at reducing digital exclusion in our community and supporting our community sector to upgrade the equipment that they use when they are supporting their members and clients and making sure that people can stay connected. With everything that we have been through over the past few years, it is really important that we are able to support people to stay socially connected. Our community sector organisations, like our men's sheds, are a fantastic place for this to happen.

Quite often, when men want to have a talk about what they are going through, it is a lot easier to do that when you are working on something side by side with someone, rather than going in and sitting down specifically for that conversation. The conversations that people have about their wellbeing just in the general course of doing things that they enjoy doing together are really important for social connection, for wellbeing and for that sense of belonging that is such an important thing that we all need.

We have a number of other things that have been happening in Mr Davis's electorate of Brindabella as well. The South Canberra Veterans Shed have also received a grant under that fund for printing equipment, a camera for online training and a digital read-out system for CAD, which will really help them to enable people to do online

training for some of the specialised equipment that they have there, without having to necessarily come into the shed to do it.

Diversity ACT have received a grant to upgrade their phone system and their network switches and software. One of the things that we know about our community sector is that they do not get the chance to upgrade their equipment as often as they would really like to.

MR DAVIS: Minister, in this Mental Health Month, why is it so important to support organisations like the Tuggeranong Men's Shed and other men's mental health organisations?

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you for the question. The theme for Mental Health Month this year is "Awareness, belonging and connection". Our community sector are absolute experts in supporting that sense of belonging and that sense of connection. Quite often, when we have been through a natural disaster like the fires of 2019-20 or the pandemic that we have been going through over the past couple of years, it is our community sector who are the first to respond and step in and provide support and help to our community. That is because they often have really deep relationships with the people who are most impacted by these things. They are in a position to understand what it is that people need, what they need from the ACT government and whether there is support to deliver that.

Providing something like the technology upgrade fund grants enables our community sector to do the job that they know best how to do and supports them at a time when our community is most in need. That is really important for rebuilding that sense of community cohesion and resilience as we come out of the situation that we have been in—rebuilding those connections with each other and supporting people to come back out and get together in person again, in COVID-safe ways, doing the things that we all love doing.

MS CLAY: Minister, can you tell me how the technology upgrade fund has benefited people in Ginninderra?

MS DAVIDSON: Yes. Thank you for the question. The Belconnen Men's Shed have also received a grant for ICT equipment so that they can manage their activities and communicate more effectively with members. They received a grant of \$6,356. It is not just men's sheds that have received funding under these grants. Belconnen Little Athletics Centre have received a grant for an iPad, a webcam and a tripod so that they can record and review photo finishes at their 100-metre sprint track. That sounds really exciting to me and I hope that they are having a great time with that.

I know that Ms Clay has a really strong interest in the creative arts and how important they are for rebuilding social connection and recovery, after everything that we have been through. The stories that we are able to tell about our experiences really help us to give meaning to what we have been through together and to recover from that and strengthen our resilience. Rebus Theatre have received a grant for Mac Minis and MacBook Air.

Education—Future of Education equity grants

MR PETTERSSON: My question is the to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the progress of the ACT Labor election commitment to support families experiencing disadvantage with their educational expenses?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. Members will know that last month I launched the expanded Future of Education equity fund. This was a key Labor commitment of the 2020 election. We know that not every child has an equal chance at a great education. This fund, though, replaces the secondary bursary scheme, and is now open for all Canberra school students experiencing financial disadvantage. It provides \$400 for pre-schoolers, \$500 for primary school students and \$750 for high school and college students.

The executive officer of the P&C Association, Veronica Elliott, said that this scheme would be a welcome relief for struggling families, and she is right, because, so far, we have seen 1,800 families accessing the fund to help with things like uniforms, excursions and sporting equipment as well as music lessons. We know that not every child comes to school from an equal place, but this fund is about changing that.

MR PETTERSSON: I have a supplementary question. Minister, how can my constituents apply for the Future of Education equity grants?

MS BERRY: This is a really important question, and I encourage members to provide this information to their constituents across the ACT. We have made sure that the application is extended for another four weeks, and will now be open until 31 October so that families can get their applications in before the end of the year. You can go to the Education Directorate website and search for the Future of Education equity fund, or you can check in with your school directly if that works better for you. I also remind members that public, Catholic and independent school students can apply to this fund.

DR PATERSON: Minister, what other initiatives is the ACT Government implementing to reduce inequality in our schools?

MS BERRY: The government's Future of Education strategy has equity at its core. We know that addressing inequality in our schools is the most powerful way to ensure that every child gets the best possible start to a great education and the life chances that flow from that. It is why the ACT government has funded the Labor election commitments to trial breakfasts and lunches across five public schools in the ACT. We are currently working with schools and stakeholders to get the trial started, and I know the positive impact that this will have on young people. You cannot learn on an empty stomach.

The ACT government is also continuing to fund Chrome books for all public high school and college students, making sure that all students have equal access to the technology that they need to learn. This government will continue to put equity first so that we can keep delivering a great education for every child regardless of their background.

ACT Health—elective surgery

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. In question time on Tuesday Minister you confirmed that some elective surgeries will be moved from the public to the private system due to the implementation of DHR. However, during estimates in August you said there were capacity constraints in the private system, leading to reductions, for example, with the elective joint replacement program. Will shifting surgeries into the private system, where there are capacity constraints, mean that other types of surgeries will be reduced this year and if so, which ones.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Castley for the question. I would have to go back and review the Hansard to be sure, but my recollection of the context of the conversation in the estimates hearing was that we were talking about the elective joint replacement program specifically and the fact that some elective joint replacements had been brought forward to last financial year and a lower number are going to be performed in this financial year, but over the two years the same number will be performed. I think the context was probably the capacity constraints were discussed when asked if we could do more elective joint replacements in the private system,. Part of that conversation was around the fact that we were transferring other elective surgeries into the private system to ensure we keep up with our elective surgery commitments while we implement the digital health record. That meant there would be a constraint on the capacity to further increase the number of elective joint replacement surgeries as well as the additional other elective surgeries that we were already planning to move to the private system. It is a whole picture that we are looking at here, Ms Castley. We have a plan that has been put in place by territory-wide surgical services to meet our commitment of 14,800 elective surgeries in this financial year. That is a combination of public: Calvary, Canberra Hospital and—

Ms Castley: I understand the minister has mentioned the elective joint replacement, my question was which other surgeries. Not that there are others, but which, and if she could answer in the next twenty seconds.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think she is answering the question.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am trying to explain to Ms Castley there are not other elective surgeries that are going to be affected by these capacity constraints. The capacity constraint is created by the fact that we have already scheduled different types of elective surgery into our private provider program.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, can you rule out that patients being moved to the private system for the elective surgeries will wait one day longer for the procedures due to the capacity constraints in the private system? Will it cause further delay?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Madam Speaker, I cannot rule out that someone will have to wait an additional day or period for an individual elective surgery in any system because it may be that the day on which their surgery is scheduled their surgeon is sick, or their anaesthetist is sick or something else happens that means their elective surgery cannot be performed on that particular day. But as I have already explained to Ms Castley, we have a plan working with our valued private provider partners to

deliver our elective surgeries this financial year, despite the impact of the digital health record and it has been worked through very carefully with the private providers to ensure that that agreement with them is achievable.

MR COCKS: Minister, how many patients will be shifted into the private system for their elective surgeries and how long have these patients already been waiting?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Cocks for the supplementary and I will take the question on notice to provide the detail about the break-down and how many surgeries are going to be performed through the private provider program, the high value surgery program and the elective joint replacement program with our private partners.

ACT Health—dermatology unit

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the health minister. I refer to an April 26 briefing note to you, obtained by the Canberra Liberals through an FOI request, revealing the ACT has not met demand for dermatology, with only 3.8 FTE dermatologists when we need more than double. Acting CEO of Canberra Health Services, Cathie O'Neill, warns there is no workforce plan to recruit dermatologists and the problem will reach "unmanageable levels" in two years. She warns waiting times could also blow out, with 1,048 patients already on the list and 969 waiting for their first appointment.

When will you employ eight FTE dermatologists, which in the briefing note is the estimate of what Canberra needs to meet community demand?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Castley for the question. The dermatology unit at Canberra Hospital, through Canberra Health Services, treats people with a wide range of skin diseases, including some very rare conditions that require specialist treatment. Most dermatologists work across the public and the private system though.

I can advise Ms Castley that Canberra Health Services has recently employed additional medical staff to work within the dermatology unit. The unit is undertaking service planning to ensure that the service does run well, into the future and its function is not dependent upon individual staff members, which has been one of the considerations here.

I have met with members of the dermatology unit to discuss their concerns in relation to the capacity of the unit. Infrastructure works are also about to commence to enhance the clinical environment for the dermatology unit. That will provide additional clinic space, shared with the rheumatology department, which is a sharing that makes sense in terms of the clinical engagement between those two areas.

In addition, I can advise that some existing visiting medical officer staff have agreed to transition to staff specialist positions to further support this service. The dermatology unit was scheduled to transition and has transitioned to the division of cancer and ambulatory support on 1 October, aligning dermatology, rheumatology and immunology together, which will allow the existing teams who specialise in systemic inflammatory diseases with clinical needs that span across a range of specialist areas to be an integral part of the care team.

This is a broader approach to ensuring that we take the opportunity to maximise expertise to provide a holistic approach that will improve access, will deliver contemporary services and will ensure shared input into the development and delivery of future models of care as we continue to work to expand these services.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, how long have the 969 patients been waiting for an initial appointment to see a dermatologist?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take that question on notice.

MR COCKS: Can you guarantee the situation will not reach those unmanageable levels within two years, as you have been warned?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thanks to Mr Cocks for the supplementary question. I think I have outlined in my first answer to Ms Castley the work that is ongoing to ensure that the dermatology unit can support the people of Canberra and the surrounding region appropriately, and that model of care work will continue to ensure that that is the case.

Environment—e-waste recycling

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for City Services. Last June, the Assembly passed my motion on recycling general electrical appliances, solar panels and large EVs and building batteries that power EVs, including doing more to advocate for recycling of these items through the national product stewardship scheme. The Standing Committee on Planning, Transport, and City Services also made similar recommendations as part of its annual reports inquiry. Minister, when will we see solar panel recycling in the ACT and what are the barriers there?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. The ACT government continues to advocate to the commonwealth to introduce product stewardship schemes and extended producer responsibility schemes for a range of different products, including solar photovoltaic systems, lithium-ion batteries and general electrical appliances.

The government has been consulting on what products should be included in the minister's priority list for future product stewardship schemes, and we have been advocating for those schemes to go ahead, particularly for solar PVs as soon as possible. I recently wrote to the new federal Minister for the Environment, Tanya Plibersek, and I also met with her and raised this issue with her in person—about making sure that we get on with the delivery of the solar PV product stewardship scheme by the deadline of June 2023, which has been set. I have asked her for assurance about those time frames and whether they will be met and what steps are being considered by the Australian government if the deadline is not met.

It is really important that more of these schemes are extended to more products. We do not want to see the cost of disposal being placed on Canberrans at the point of disposal. It should be paid at the point of sale. That would see a far better outcome for recycling. It would mean that the processing would be put in place through the product stewardship scheme to make sure that we can extend the life of these valuable resources.

I was just reading in the *Financial Review* today that around 50 per cent of the cost of a solar photovoltaic cell is made up of the cost of silver, which is—(*Time expired.*)

MS CLAY: Minister, when will we see electrical appliance recycling, and what are the barriers there?

MR STEEL: That is something that we have been advocating to the commonwealth to establish. The Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020 is a commonwealth piece of legislation which enables the establishment of these schemes. We would like to see those schemes extended to more products, including those larger electrical appliances, so that people do pay for the cost of disposal at the point of sale and not at the end. There is an IT product stewardship scheme in place, but that does not extend to many of the electrical appliances that I think you are referring to, Ms Clay. We would like to see far more of those captured under these extended producer responsibility arrangements.

Very soon the government will be going out for consultation on a draft circular economy strategy, where we will be asking the community about what they would like to see in terms of how the ACT could support product stewardship schemes going forward, those national schemes being put in place and what we can be doing here at a local level to support those, and we have had of those discussions in this place.

We do have national markets, and there are some constitutional issues with the ACT government introducing our own schemes and putting in place excise taxes, for example, on goods, on consumer goods, that are sold into a national market as part of national commerce. But there may be some things that we can do here to support the schemes that are getting underway, whether its drop-off or whether it is making sure that those items do not find their way into landfill. So we will be going out and having that conversation with the community very soon.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, when will we see EV and large battery recycling potentially included in those schemes?

MR STEEL: There is a battery product stewardship scheme already in place. We would like to see that extended to those largescale batteries—those that are found in households—and also electrical vehicle batteries and, of course, those largescale batteries that we are of course looking into introducing here in the ACT, with the Canberra Big Battery.

That is something that I think is being considered actively at the moment with the commonwealth around how that scheme could be extended. That is obviously a decision that would have to be made nationally, and we will continue to advocate to make sure that those arrangements are put in place as soon as possible.

As I was almost touching on before, there are very valuable materials in these batteries that can be recycled. Those resources can be reused into the future. Whether it is the silver in solar PV cells or the lithium and other rare metals that are found in batteries, these can be reused and be used in remanufacturing of new products.

Canberra Hospital—ward conditions

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the health minister. I refer to a letter to the editor in the *Canberra Times* on 23 September from a woman who was admitted to the Canberra Hospital. The lady states that beds were not made during her four-day stay, meals were inedible and she was in a four-bed ward with a locked bathroom. The bathrooms that were available were “continually in an unhygienic condition” and, in one case, a bathroom had faeces and urine on the floor and toilet for in excess of 24 hours. Minister, why are bathrooms locked in a four-person ward and how often does this happen?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Obviously, I cannot speak to why that might have been the case in this individual matter, and I would not be expected to have the information about how often that might be the case. Given that it might be the case for a short period of time or a longer period of time, it is probably impossible to get that information.

I can assure Ms Castley that, on reading that letter in the *Canberra Times*, I raised that matter with Canberra Health Services. I would strongly encourage people who are concerned about their experience at either of our hospitals to make a complaint directly to the health service, but if they want to, also to write to me, and we follow up those complaints.

I have had a number of conversations with Canberra Hospital about some of the feedback that I have received recently in relation to cleanliness of the facilities, and that is an ongoing conversation in relation to that matter. I can assure Ms Castley that I read that letter, I was concerned, and I did raise it with Canberra Health Services. But I would strongly encourage both individuals in the community and members of this place, if they receive that kind of feedback, to pass it on to my office so that we can follow up the specific circumstances. It is quite hard to do that when there is no indication of what specific ward it was or the dates and times of admission. That makes it quite difficult to follow up.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, why are hardworking nurses and doctors forced to put up with working in these conditions?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I would reject the premise that these are the standard conditions that people experience, either patients or our hardworking staff. I would say that our cleaners across Canberra Hospital, and indeed Calvary Public Hospital, work very hard to ensure that our facilities are cleaned appropriately, and our nursing staff ensure that people have appropriate supports and facilities in place. Our commitment is to continuous improvement in this space. I certainly would not want any of this to be seen as a reflection on the cleaners, who do a fantastic job at Canberra Hospital and are absolutely part of the team at Canberra Health Services.

MR COCKS: Minister, why do Canberrans feel that they have to resort to letters to the editor to report that they have found Canberra’s hospital in a dirty and disgusting state?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I cannot possibly speak to why people choose to write letters to the editor instead of or in addition to making complaints or writing to me or one of their local MLAs. But we live in a democratic city with freedom of communication, and if people want to write to the editor, it is absolutely their right to do so.

Woden—development

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Skills. Minister, how is the ACT government progressing the delivery of a world-class CIT campus and new public transport interchange in Woden?

MR STEEL: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. The ACT government is getting on with delivering a world-class and sustainable CIT campus and new light rail ready transport interchange in the heart of Woden. Last week I made the exciting announcement that work has begun on the new temporary bus interchange in Woden. This will allow for the old interchange to be demolished, to make way for the new CIT campus.

Located on the existing bus layovers east of the Matilda Street car park, the temporary bus interchange will allow for bus operations to continue until construction of the new light rail ready public transport interchange is complete. Once the temporary bus interchange begins construction, we will demolish the old interchange and begin main works on the new CIT campus, which will deliver state-of-the-art simulated learning environments, smart classrooms, commercial kitchens and hands-on training spaces that will help students to achieve their full potential across a range of different training areas, including IT, cyber, hospitality and business.

The new public transport interchange will incorporate an improved and expanded bus interchange, along with the Woden light rail stop, as we get on with the work of delivering light rail to Canberra's south, which is already reshaping the town centre for the better.

DR PATERSON: Minister, how will these game-changing projects power the regeneration of Woden town centre?

MR STEEL: Light rail, the new Woden transport interchange and the CIT campus are game-changers for Woden. We have heard that from stakeholders in the Woden town centre. We are seeing people moving to Woden already, with many new housing developments, and we are seeing significant private investment taking place in the town centre that has been spurred on as a result of these major public investments in major infrastructure which are reshaping the entire precinct.

We have been consulting with the community as the design progresses, including on features of the campus like the multipurpose hall; the centre of the main CIT building, with 575-metres-squared floor space, catering for a range of different events; two new public parks, including potential intergenerational fitness equipment, based on what we hear from the community; together with more planting and canopy cover so that the town centre is transformed away from what has been characterised as a concrete jungle in the past towards new green spaces that people will use.

There is progress on the design response to the need for shelter, particularly around the edges of the building, as well as providing improved connectivity and safety around the campus and the interchange. Community and commercial facilities will complement activated common areas across the Woden town centre and the new campus. A youth foyer with up to 20 units will be delivered to support young people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The foyer will provide accommodation, support services and connection for those residents who are pursuing education and training, co-located with the campus.

MS ORR: Minister, how is the public transport system being supported while this project is underway?

MR STEEL: Thank you. As I have been talking about this week, a new bus timetable will commence as work begins on the CIT Woden campus project, on raising London Circuit, as well as improvements based on community feedback. The new timetable will be released ahead of term 1. When it commences, next year, it will use our full bus fleet and our full number of available staff, including those who we are recruiting, as we move away from the current interim timetable. Bus timetable and network updates coincide with the opening of the temporary interchange, which has been planned to ensure that there is as little disruption as possible to public transport users.

Infrastructure at the temporary interchange includes temporary bus shelters and platforms, safe access and pedestrian pathways for those who are moving to and from the temporary interchange, secure CCTV monitoring equipment and public announcement speakers, parking for Transport Canberra operations vehicles, and storage space for the operations and emergency traffic management equipment. These measures will support the bus network to continue to deliver reliable services for Canberrans during this period of heightened construction as we build these significant transport facilities for the future of our city and the future of Woden.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—legal services

MRS KIKKERT: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Attorney-General. Between 2015 and 2019, the ACT government funded the Aboriginal Legal Service to coordinate an Interview Friends program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people brought into police custody. Before this, the program was run by the Aboriginal Justice Centre and JACS.

The 2022-23 budget includes funding to “re-establish the Interview Friends program”. This initiative was proposed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to help address overrepresentation in the justice system. Attorney, what gap or deficiency in the justice system will the new Interview Friends program fill or improve?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Mrs Kikkert for the question, because I think this is a very important program. The advice that we have received—and the reason that I took this proposal to the budget process—was that we should address the views put forward that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who find themselves in touch with the justice system can find it difficult to make their case. They can find it a bit difficult to represent themselves well in the system. The purpose of having an

interview friend is to provide a degree of support, particularly cultural support, in what is a really stressful situation for them.

MRS KIKKERT: Attorney, are you confident that all Indigenous interview subjects had adequate access to a suitable interview friend between 2019 and 2022, even though the Ombudsman found that the ACT government “does not keep statistics regarding the use of interview friends”?

MR RATTENBURY: As I indicated in my previous answer, my view is that it is worth bringing this program back because I think there has been a gap. Whilst I was not involved in the closing of the program previously, my view is that this is a worthwhile investment on behalf of the ACT government to support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, who are overrepresented in the justice system.

MR CAIN: Attorney, why does the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Services and Programs section of the JACS website twice state that the Aboriginal Legal Service currently provides an interview friend service, when in fact the scheme was discontinued in 2019 after the government cut off funding for it? I can show you on my laptop now where it is referenced.

MR RATTENBURY: As tempted as I am to wander across the chamber and look over Mr Cain’s shoulder—

Mr Cain: It is very friendly over this side.

MR RATTENBURY: Perhaps, after question time we can go into the anteroom and have a look together. I am unsure of why that is the case, but I will take Mr Cain’s question as a prompt, and I will check that situation.

Planning—Gungahlin town centre

MR BRADDOCK: My question is for the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, can you please provide an update on the precinct design for the Gungahlin town centre east area?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Braddock for the question. I know members for Yerrabi will be interested in the consultations that have been occurring so far to complete the Gungahlin town centre. Those consultations have been going on for some years now, and of course Gungahlin has grown significantly over the past decade. Currently the eastern district precinct is largely undeveloped. It is the equivalent size of Dickson group centre. This will be released by the Suburban Land Agency over the coming years. However, there are still a number of ways that the community in Gungahlin can be engaged in the consultation process around this work. This includes conversations with the community around a design process as well as the establishment of the Gungahlin community panel and extensive community engagement activities. There are engagement opportunities this weekend at the Celebrate Gungahlin Festival on Saturday; there is a drop-in session for that. There is also a drop-in session at Yerrabi Pond for Gungahlin residents to be able to participate in those conversations as well, around Gungahlin. I think it is important that the Gungahlin community gets to have a say on the kinds of things that they want to bring to their community. It is a growing

community. Once we get this information back from the community, we will be able to shape Gungahlin and find the final puzzle piece, which is that piece of land, and continue with the Gungahlin centre upgrades and growth.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, how will the precinct design ensure the right mix of land uses are made in the Gungahlin town centre east?

MS BERRY: Thank you. I think the important part of making sure we do achieve as much as possible for the Gungahlin community is to go through this consultation process. So that is exactly what the Suburban Land Agency is doing. It is making sure they have these engagement opportunities and have these community consultations before any detailed precinct designs are developed because we want to make sure that the facilities are genuinely community led and designed. At this stage, any idea is welcome.

MS CLAY: What will the precinct design deliver for Gungahlin?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Clay for the supplementary. As I said, those conversations and consultations are occurring right now. So any idea would be welcome. I encourage Gungahlin MLAs to support members in their community to drop into those consultation sessions as well as perhaps joining up with the consultation groups and panels to work on what the precinct will look like.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—human rights breach

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, the estimates committee is of the view that the government is vulnerable to a legal challenge over a potential breach of human rights with respect to its accommodation of sentenced and unsentenced detainees in the same facility. They base this on the views of our Human Rights Commissioner and our Inspector of Corrective Services.

This would not be the first time you have presided over a breach of human rights at the AMC. Your tenure as corrections minister last term oversaw a breach so significant that six detainees have now taken the government to court over it and one has already won their case, costing the taxpayer over \$100,000 in legal costs and counting.

Attorney, how will you learn from your mistakes as corrections minister and ensure the ACT is compliant with human rights to ensure we do not keep getting sued?

MR RATTENBURY: I assure Mrs Kikkert and her colleagues I have the humility to learn from things and to seek constant improvement. That is the way I approach my job every day I turn up here.

MRS KIKKERT: Attorney, were you aware that there was some doubt about the government's compliance with human rights with respect to the management unit before the issue was taken to court?

MR RATTENBURY: I am not sure of the answer to that question. I will take it on notice and advise Mrs Kikkert.

MR CAIN: Attorney, where else are we vulnerable to a human rights-based legal challenge that you are aware of?

MR RATTENBURY: I think that question is possibly outside of the standing orders, but nonetheless I will endeavour to answer it.

The strength of our human rights jurisdiction is that people are able to pursue matters if they feel there is a breach of their human rights. There is obviously a large number of areas contained in the Human Rights Act, where rights are spelled out and Canberra citizens, if they feel their human rights are being breached under those areas, have the opportunity to pursue it.

It is impossible for me to speculate where people may seek to pursue those options, but I do celebrate the fact that they have that opportunity if they think their human rights are not being respected as they think they should be.

Roads—Coppins Crossing

MR COCKS: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, I wrote to you on 17 August asking specific questions relating to risk management for Coppins Crossing. In your response three weeks later you ignored these questions, and so I am forced to ask again today: was there a plan in place to manage the predictable impacts of flood events before that closure?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. There has been in place for a number of years automatic gates which close when the Molonglo River rises above a certain level, causing safety issues at the crossing. So those automatically close. Based on community feedback as the Molonglo Valley has grown in terms of the population who are using this stretch of road, we have also put in place a range of other measures to address the issues and to provide them with forewarning of the automatic closure of those gates and the closure of the road during heavy rainfall events like we have had. It was closed just recently with the rainfall, but I believe that it has now been reopened.

We have been putting communication up through various message signage in the lead-up to the river, which has dealt with the risk of cars needing to turn around at the very last instance near the gates. So they know earlier when it will be closed. We are trying to make sure that we get better at communication through a range of other channels as well.

We did a lot of work to clear the debris that had come down the river. There was not a huge amount. With the most recent rainfall, we have had contractors available to do that. Sometimes that takes a little bit longer than we would hope. I am pleased that we were able to clear that fairly quickly. We have put up barriers on the bridge itself to stop that debris going over the bridge. We are also looking at further measures, and I am happy to expand on those in the supplementary.

MR COCKS: Minister, why did the Molonglo Valley residents spend 12 of the 14 days without this vital public amenity waiting for you to find a contractor?

MR STEEL: I think we were able to respond much quicker than what we had advised and we were able to open that road. The reality is that that road has been in place for many decades and it does flood. It is a crossing that is very close to the level of the river and, when there are large rainfall events, it can cause flooding over the road, which is why there are those risk mitigation measures in place if needed. And there are other ways to get in and out of the Molonglo Valley, like John Gorton Drive.

We are in the process of procuring a contractor to build the new bridge, which will extend John Gorton Drive 500 metres on a new bridge over the Molonglo River and will connect the northern part of Molonglo with the southern part. That work is well underway and we are getting on with that job.

We are also looking at what the opportunities are, knowing that there will be major construction happening adjacent to Coppins Crossing. The construction delivery partner, in addition to public traffic, will need to use Coppins Crossing, and we are looking at how we can work into the contract and discuss with them making sure that Coppins Crossing remains open as much as it can be directly after those flooding events so that it can be accessible by the broader community and for the construction workforce that will need to use it to deliver the build of that bridge.

MR HANSON: Minister, what do you say to Molonglo Valley residents who have expressed concerns that the completion date for the bridge will be delayed yet again?

MR STEEL: It is on track, and we are still expecting it to be delivered in 2025. We are in procurement at the moment, and we will get on with the job of design and construction once that procurement has been finalised.

Homelessness—services

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services. Minister, I refer to the recent Australian Institute of Health and Welfare specialist homelessness services 2020-21 report which was mentioned in question time yesterday, and which found that the number of people experiencing repeat homelessness was rising in the ACT. The report also found that the number of people experiencing repeat instances of homelessness was falling across Australia as a whole. I note that yesterday you answered what the government was doing to eliminate homelessness, but what I want to know today is the reason for the increase. Minister, why is the number of people experiencing repeat episodes of homelessness rising steadily in the ACT when it is steadily falling across Australia as a whole?

MS VASSAROTTI: Thank you, Mr Parton, for the question. It is a really good question. Certainly, with respect to this data that was provided to the ACT government, it is concerning data, particularly given the level of investment that we have been putting into the homelessness sector. We talked yesterday about the significant investment that is being put into the area of homelessness and housing services.

We are trying to understand what is going on and we are working closely with our community partners, particularly in the specialist homelessness sector. We have seen increased pressure on our homelessness services. We know that pressure across the homelessness sector—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on a matter of relevance.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, Minister.

Mr Hanson: The member's question was pretty simple. It was: why is it increasing in the ACT? We have heard a lot of waffle, but we have not actually heard an answer yet.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, there is no point of order. She is saying that she is working with the community sector to understand it. That, I think, is answering the question.

Mr Hanson: So she doesn't know? Is that the answer?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, no more, please.

MS VASSAROTTI: We actually know that COVID-19 has placed additional pressure on the ACT community, and it is one of the drivers—

Opposition members interjecting—

MS VASSAROTTI: I am trying to answer the question. It is a complex question, and it is one to which we do not have all of the answers. We are working with the sector to try and understand what is going on, particularly given that we have been providing additional investment and additional services.

I am sorry that this wicked problem does not have easy answers. If we had easy answers, we would be solving it. I know that every single person in this chamber wants to eliminate homelessness in the ACT.

MR PARTON: Minister, to what extent do residential tenancy changes and high property taxes feed into housing being unaffordable for low income earners, which leads to homelessness? What impact is that perhaps having on the problem?

MS VASSAROTTI: Thank you, Mr Parton, for the question. The issue of housing stress in the ACT and across Australia is a complex one for which there is a range of drivers. In terms of some of the work that is happening around residential tenancy changes, which is being led by my ministerial colleague Mr Rattenbury, it is looking at how we can protect tenants' rights and support tenants to be able to live in a safe and secure home. That is the aim of these proposed changes.

There is a lot said about the issue of land tax in the ACT. We continue to say to landlords, particularly socially minded landlords who are concerned about the issue of homelessness and housing affordability, that there is a program right now and, if you access that program, you would not have to pay any land tax, if you were prepared to provide your house for affordable housing. So there are ways to minimise some of these costs to landlords, if they are interested in taking those up. We would encourage people to do so.

MS LEE: Minister, what is the delivery date for your pre-election promise of a home for all?

MS VASSAROTTI: Thank you, Ms Lee, for the question. As we have talked about many times in this chamber, since I came to the role, we have not put a date on delivering that promise. We never did. We were very clear that it was actually talking about an aspiration, in that we want every person to have a decent home. I hope that it would be an aspiration of members opposite as well, because I actually believe that all members in this chamber care deeply about ensuring that all members of our community have access to a safe and affordable home.

As we have talked about before, and as I know that we will talk about this afternoon, the ACT government does not have all of the levers. Certainly, in terms of the levers that we have, we are working hard and putting record investment into ensuring that everyone does have a decent home, and particularly focusing on those at the lower end of the market.

Employment—hospitality

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. Minister, what is the ACT government doing to remove barriers to employment in the hospitality sector?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Orr for the question. The ACT government has invested, and will continue to invest, in a range of initiatives to support economic recovery and to assist in rebuilding our growing tourism and hospitality sector. As our economic recovery progresses, the government continues to look for opportunities to make it easier for businesses to open, to grow and to support workers in those businesses as well.

One recent example of this is that last month we amended the regulatory processes for responsible service of alcohol certification and training, making it easier for interstate hospitality workers to be employed in the ACT. Interstate RSA certificate holders can now complete the ACT refresher course, instead of the ACT full course, when their interstate certificate expires. Now that an interstate worker only has to do the refresher course, it will cost them less and take fewer hours to complete, making our hospitality industry a more attractive place to work.

MS ORR: Minister, what does this mean for small hospitality businesses in Canberra?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary. What it means is that an individual who has already completed approved RSA training will no longer have to complete the full course in the ACT on the expiry of their home state RSA certificate. By streamlining the time that businesses, and particularly our small businesses, and potential employees spend on government administration, we hope to make it easier to do business and to work here in the ACT.

We hope and expect that this simple reform will have a positive impact on hospitality businesses by making it easier to hire and retain staff, as they continue to work

through a significant skills shortage, coming off the back of some of the most challenging months and years for the sector in living memory. If the response at the AHA awards night is anything to go by, where we announced this, we are very pleased at how well it has been received.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how does this reform tie into the work of the Better Regulation Taskforce?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary. This is a regulatory change that is part of the ongoing work by the Better Regulation Taskforce to put in place the best regulatory settings for business recovery and growth here in the ACT. The task force has been working with the business community to break down barriers to doing business in the ACT. Reviewing and amending the RSA certification regulatory process was identified as just one way to support businesses, particularly those in the hospitality industry.

Cross-border regulation is something that the business community has highlighted as an issue when it comes to getting workers in the ACT. By reducing and removing unintended barriers to occupational mobility, we hope to support local business as they look to recruit and retain qualified staff. The reciprocal recognition of licences to support occupational mobility from interstate is identified in the better regulation report.

Automatic mutual recognition has been an enormous undertaking for the task force over the past almost two years. The better regulation report provides the agenda for ways that government can support businesses in the ACT. It is about finding the right balance between regulatory settings and good outcomes for business, consumers and the community. Reviewing the interstate reciprocal recognition of licences is just one of many steps that we are taking to streamline processes and approvals to make it easier to start up, run and grow a business in the ACT. I am very pleased, as I flagged, that this change has already been received positively by the hospitality sector.

Mr Barr: Madam Speaker, further questions can be placed on the notice paper.

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 15—Annual Reports—2021-2022—

ACT Electoral Commission, dated 4 October 2022.

ACT Integrity Commission, dated September 2022.

ACT Ombudsman, dated 7 October 2022.

Inspector of the ACT Integrity Commission, dated 7 October 2022.

Office of the Legislative Assembly, dated October 2022.

Bills referred to Committees, pursuant to resolution of the Assembly of 2 December 2020, as amended—Bills—Not inquired into—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner Bill 2022—

Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, dated 12 October 2022.

Freedom of Information Act, pursuant to section 67—A report on the operation of the *Freedom of Information Act 2016*—ACT Ombudsman—Annual Report 2021-2022.

Ms Cheyne (Acting Manager of Government Business) presented the following papers:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 13—Annual Reports—2021-2022—

ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority, dated 21 September 2022.

ACT Gambling and Racing Commission, dated 23 September 2022.

ACT Health Directorate, dated 29 September 2022.

ACT Human Rights Commission, dated 6 October 2022.

ACT Inspector of Correctional Services, dated September 2022.

ACT Insurance Authority, dated 29 September 2022.

ACT Long Service Leave Authority, dated 21 September 2022.

ACT Policing Special Purposes, dated 7 September 2022.

ACT Policing, dated 19 September 2022, in accordance with the Policing Arrangement between the Commonwealth and Australian Capital Territory Governments.

ACT Public Service—State of the Service Report, dated 4 October 2022.

Canberra Health Services, dated 30 September 2022.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (Volumes 1, 2.1 and 2.2), dated 4 October 2022.

City Renewal Authority, dated 29 September 2022.

Community Services Directorate, dated 27 September 2022.

Cultural Facilities Corporation, dated 29 September 2022.

Director of Public Prosecutions, dated 7 October 2022.

Education Directorate, dated 26 September 2022.

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, dated 30 September 2022.

Icon Water Limited, dated 16 September 2022.

Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission, dated 28 September 2022, including a corrigendum, dated 12 October 2022.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate, dated 29 September 2022.

Legal Aid Commission (ACT), dated 4 October 2022.

Major Projects Canberra, dated October 2022.

Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, dated 9 September 2022.

Office of the Work Health and Safety Commissioner, dated 14 September 2022.

Public Trustee and Guardian, dated 1 July 2022.

Suburban Land Agency, dated 28 September 2022.

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, dated 7 October 2022.

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to subsection 17(5)—Auditor-General's Report No 3/2022—ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme—Government response, dated October 2022.

Children and young people lens of the ACT Wellbeing Framework—Statement—Minister for Families and Community Services, dated October 2022.

Civil Law (Wrongs) Act, pursuant to subsection 4.56(3), Schedule 4—Professional Standards Councils, Annual Report 2021-2022, dated September 2022.

Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act, pursuant to subsection 38 (4)—Assumed Identities Annual Report 2021-22—Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, dated 7 September 2022.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—

Report 9—Inquiry into the Auditor-General's Report No. 7 of 2021: Procurement Exemptions and Value for Money—Government response, dated October 2022.

Report 10—Inquiry into the Auditor-General's Report No. 1 of 2021: Land Management Agreements—Government response, dated October 2022.

Official Visitor Act, pursuant to subsection 23DA(2)—Official Visitors Scheme—Annual report 2021-2022, undated.

Status of the Public Health Emergency due to COVID-19—Chief Health Officer Report—26 September 2022, dated 28 September 2022.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Animal Diseases Act 2005—Animal Diseases (Varroa Mite Import Restriction) Declaration 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-214 (LR, 8 September 2022).

Architects Act 2004—

Architects (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-206 (LR, 29 August 2022).

Architects Board (Commercial Lawyer Member) Appointment 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-212 (LR, 7 September 2022).

Architects Board (Community Interest Member) Appointment 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-213 (LR, 7 September 2022).

Associations Incorporation Act 1991—Associations Incorporation (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-204 (LR, 31 August 2022).

Electoral Act 1992—Electoral (Electoral Commission Member) Appointment 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-211 (LR, 5 September 2022).

Electricity Safety Act 1971—Electricity Safety (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-207 (LR, 29 August 2022).

Environment Protection Act 1997—Environment Protection (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-208 (LR, 29 August 2022).

Firearms Act 1996—Firearms (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-195 (LR, 5 September 2022).

Fisheries Act 2000—

Fisheries (Fishing Closures) Declaration 2022, including a regulatory impact statement—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-222 (LR, 23 September 2022).

Fisheries (Recreational Fishing) Declaration 2022, including a regulatory impact statement—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-221 (LR, 23 September 2022).

Gas Safety Act 2000—Gas Safety (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-209 (LR, 29 August 2022).

Government Procurement Act 2001—

Government Procurement (Non-Public Employee Member) Appointment 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-196 (LR, 29 August 2022).

Government Procurement (Non-Public Employee Member) Appointment 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-197 (LR, 29 August 2022).

Land Titles Act 1925—Land Titles (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-200 (LR, 31 August 2022).

Liquor Act 2010—Liquor (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-201 (LR, 31 August 2022).

Motor Accident Injuries Act 2019—Motor Accident Injuries (Internal Review) Guidelines 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-219 (LR, 15 September 2022).

Partnership Act 1963—Partnership (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-203 (LR, 31 August 2022).

Plastic Reduction Act 2021—

Plastic Reduction (Public Event) Declaration 2022 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-198 (LR, 26 August 2022).

Plastic Reduction (Public Event) Declaration 2022 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-223 (LR, 23 September 2022).

Public Place Names Act 1989—Public Place Names (Whitlam) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-220 (LR, 15 September 2022).

Public Trustee and Guardian Act 1985—Public Trustee and Guardian (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-199 (LR, 31 August 2022).

Security Industry Act 2003—Security Industry (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-202 (LR, 31 August 2022).

Taxation Administration Act 1999—Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Land Tax) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-218 (LR, 15 September 2022).

Terrorism (Extraordinary Temporary Powers) Act 2006—

Terrorism (Extraordinary Temporary Powers) Public Interest Monitor Panel Appointment 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-215 (LR, 13 September 2022).

Terrorism (Extraordinary Temporary Powers) Public Interest Monitor Panel Appointment 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-216 (LR, 13 September 2022).

Terrorism (Extraordinary Temporary Powers) Public Interest Monitor Panel Appointment 2022 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-217 (LR, 15 September 2022).

Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1927—Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-205 (LR, 29 August 2022).

Water and Sewerage Act 2000—Water and Sewerage (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-210 (LR, 29 August 2022).

Water Resources Act 2007—Water Resources (Fees) Determination 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-194 (LR, 29 August 2022).

Reproductive health—menstruation and menopause

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (3.04): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) gender inequality, including reproductive health stigma and discrimination, has been impacting women and people who menstruate in Australia and around the world for centuries;
- (b) reproductive health refers to menstruation, menopause, fertility care, pregnancy, post-partum health complications, miscarriage, and termination of pregnancy;
- (c) a significant proportion of the workforce experience reproductive health matters yet our workplaces often do not have policies or conditions in place to enable people to manage their needs at work and at the same time complete their work commitments;
- (d) with the introduction and potential passing of the Period Products and Facilities (Access) Bill 2022, the ACT has begun to address barriers which prevent the full participation due to menstruation of members of our community in daily activities;
- (e) increasingly workplaces are developing policies which provide a range of measures to support people and reduce the shame and stigma in workplaces associated with reproductive health matters;
- (f) workplaces with these policies report increased employee satisfaction and a decrease in the workplace of menstruation shame and stigma;
- (g) increasingly leave is being incorporated into the policies to support people to manage their period and period pain, menopause symptoms and pregnancy needs; and

- (h) the initiatives of the Period Products and Facilities (Access) Bill 2022 would be complimented by the development of workplace policies and conditions that enable workers to manage their menstruation as well as all reproductive health matters and at the same time complete their work commitments; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
 - (a) develop, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, a Menstruation and Menopause Policy for the ACT Public Service that enables employees to meet their work commitments and manage the impacts of menstruation and menopause in the workplace;
 - (b) develop, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, an education and awareness campaign to reduce the stigma of reproductive health matters in the workplace and support the Menstruation and Menopause Policy;
 - (c) prepare a report to the Legislative Assembly which advises how menstruation and menopause leave could be implemented within the ACT Public Service;
 - (d) consider ways existing provisions could be further enhanced to support other reproductive health needs such as fertility care, pregnancy, post-partum health complications, miscarriage, and termination of pregnancy; and
 - (e) provide the report in part (2)(c) to the Legislative Assembly by May 2023 together with a report on the progression of parts (2)(a) and (b) and the findings of considerations of part (2)(d).

I am very pleased to move this motion in the Assembly today. Periods have been taboo and stigmatised within our own society and culture and indeed within most, if not all, societies and cultures over the centuries. This has included taboos to do with the discussion of periods, particularly in the presence of, or directly with, men; undertaking certain daily activities; spouses sleeping in different beds in cultures where they would normally sleep together; religious cleansing rituals and even banishment from the community for the duration of menstruation every month.

Although some of these practices still occur in different places around the world and they even occur here, from my perspective the one that is still the most present in our society is the taboo on discussion, particularly in the presence of, or directly with, men. When you do speak up, you are often chastised or ridiculed. But this is a serious matter, with significant social and health impacts, and we need to start responding to it with an openness and a maturity that centuries of shame have prevented.

I attended the Global Period Poverty Forum just this week, organised by Share the Dignity. The event brought together a range of change-makers from across the globe to talk about where we have come from, where we are and where we are going in ending period poverty. At the forum, one of the many pamphlets that was available that you could pick up was a great little book called *Sanitary Secrets*. The pamphlet was an overview of an exhibition of period product ads over the past 100 years. I commend the work by Dr Jane Connory from Swinburne University which shows how the content and design of these ads has contributed to the harmful norms that society has placed around menstruation.

Sanitary Secrets shows the codification of menstruation through the use of the colour blue to represent blood; an association with high fashion modelling and the colour white to imply a need for purity; the confinement of women to domestic situations in traditionally female spaces—because, heaven forbid, a period happened in a place that was not feminised; as well as an oversexualisation of young women. The ads also modelled and reinforced secretive behaviour between female friends, with males, and between mothers and daughters, in the images and texts presented and through the product design.

The ads are a stark example of how we continue to reinforce the entrenched stigma and taboo of periods. However, they are by no means the only example. One of the greatest cultural phenomena of my younger years was the Harry Potter series. Young people around the globe flocked to the books and their youth empowerment message. I was, however, and still remain, amazed that, in the seven years of saving her friend's family, unwitting muggles in the wizarding world, from the dementors and death eaters and the evil Lord Voldemort, Hermione Granger never once experienced a period cramp. This oversight sticks out even more as, through the series, Hermione grows from a young girl to an adult and goes through every other adolescent experience.

You cannot be what you cannot see, and the way we sanitise menstruation out of our day-to-day existence makes it very difficult to be a person who menstruates and can just get on with it—it being a normal bodily function that affects half the population on a regular basis. Removing obstacles to period management and reducing the stigma associated with periods are themes that I have been doing a lot of work on through this term of government. I have heard from and spoken to countless constituents, Labor Party members, stakeholders, friends and family about these topics.

I have run a survey in conjunction with the Period Products and Facilities (Access) Bill, and I was pleased to be invited to be a guest speaker at the Share the Dignity Global Period Poverty Forum on Monday this week, in Brisbane, which was a great way to begin in a week in which I am also moving this motion here in the Assembly. The actions that this motion calls on the ACT government to undertake fit well within the broader body of work I have been doing this term and I am pleased to present it to members today.

The discussion about the idea of menstrual leave has been on the rise within the organised workforce and civil society in Australia for a while. The survey that I have been running in conjunction with the Period Products and Facilities (Access) Bill has shown that 85 per cent of respondents support the idea of investigating the potential for paid menstrual leave. Fundamentally, the interest in this issue arises because of the impact that pain, complications and management associated with periods can have on those who menstruate, primarily women, in the workplace.

Almost half of the population may need to use their personal leave or other leave entitlements due to the management needs of their periods at some point in their career. For those who regularly have more painful periods, this can have a large impact on their leave entitlements. This can subsequently lead to a loss of pay and superannuation if personal leave is exhausted.

A less prominent but equally important topic is the impact that menopause can have on the working life of those experiencing its symptoms. This can be particularly accentuated in case of medically induced early menopause, or early menopause which occurs for other reasons. Early menopause can be particularly crippling for those who go through it, and in many cases those who experience early menopause experience stronger symptoms. The Australian Institute of Superannuation Trustees compiled data and estimates that menopause costs Australian women billions in lost earnings and superannuation each year. They calculated that if 10 per cent of women retired early because of menopausal symptoms it would equate to a loss of earnings and super higher than \$17 billion.

I should also note that, when I say we do not talk about the impacts of experiencing menopause on working life, we also just do not talk about menopause in general. In fact, someone confided in me just this week that, when they saw the motion, it started quite a conversation at their workplace because they did not actually know what happens in the office when menopause happens and thought that they probably should, as they would most likely experience it. They are not alone. Lots of people are making this point to me, the more we talk about this topic.

If workplaces in this country could be more accommodating, understanding and flexible regarding those experiencing these changes and the associated symptoms, fewer women and people who menstruate would be likely to be part of a cohort who miss out on income and superannuation, either due to leave exhaustion or the need for early retirement. This would have great benefits not only for those individuals but for the economy as a whole. Part of the increased accommodation for both those experiencing period pain or menopause symptoms would include provisions to help avoid leave entitlement exhaustion. However, that is not just a simple fix. Education awareness and some cultural change would aid immensely in improving the experience of those going through symptoms in the workplace.

The motion that I have presented to the Assembly today calls on the government to do a number of things to help alleviate these pressures. The first is to develop a menstruation and menopause policy within the ACT public service, in consultation with relevant stakeholders. The intent of this policy is to help employees within the service to meet their work commitments while managing the impacts of menopause and menstruation. Examples of these policies could be to have flexible working from home arrangements, the availability of heat packs in office first-aid kits, the ability to work flexible or shorter days, and workstation changes being made available. All of these potential policy adjustments have the ability to help individuals continue to work in different capacities while managing period pain or menopause symptoms.

Additionally, the motion calls on the government to develop an education and awareness campaign. This is aimed at the reduction of stigma around reproductive health matters in the workplace and generally, to work in concert with the ACTPS menstruation and menopause policy I just mentioned. Without this kind of awareness-raising and education, the stigma and judgement around periods in workplace settings can continue to cause people who might need to take leave or make workplace adjustments to just persevere or take personal leave instead. This has been shown internationally, in places where there have been longstanding forms of menstruation leave already. The biggest method of beginning to break down the

stigma is to talk about periods or even to just acknowledge them in the workplace. Formal education and awareness campaigns can facilitate this discussion.

Any additional leave entitlements or changes to such entitlements must be, rightly, bargained for between the ACT government and the ACT public service workers and their representatives. As such, there is no inclusion of a call to include such provisions for ACT public service workers in this motion. However, I think it would be prudent for the government to do the work to look at how it could be implemented if it were to be brought forward through the bargaining process. As such, the motion also calls on the government to report back to the Assembly on how such an implementation could be done.

Finally, the motion calls on the government to consider how existing provisions for other reproductive health needs, besides menstruation and menopause, could be enhanced. These include fertility care, pregnancy, miscarriage and termination of pregnancy. It is important to continue to examine policy settings for these reproductive health needs on an ongoing basis.

When women were first permitted to enter traditionally male industries and employment, they essentially had to pretend to be men and to not have caring responsibilities, including being married, to not fall pregnant, to not talk about reproductive care and miscarriage, to not discuss menstrual management and to not discuss menopause symptoms. To improve the emancipation of women, which has been fought for over decades, we must continue to improve our reproductive health policies in the workplace—in the ACT public service in this specific circumstance.

It is time for workplaces to adapt to women, rather than for women to continue to adapt to workplaces in which half of the population is employed. For centuries women were kept out of the workforce because of their reproductive roles in society and, while we have seen this change in what is still a relatively recent time, there remains much to do to achieve true equality in employment, including how to support women's reproductive health in the workforce.

Acknowledging and responding to the impacts of menstruation and menopause is one more step we can take to support the full participation of women and people who menstruate across our workforce. People who are menstruating or experiencing menopause are not sick or injured, yet the only way they can get support at the moment to manage the impacts of their period or menopause is to treat them as though they are. It does not have to be this way, and we can do better.

Reform and progress when it comes to reproductive health is something that I am very passionate about. After decades of women struggling for equality within the workplace and equal pay, to remain in the public service once married, and for freedom from discrimination, we are finally at a point where we can have this conversation about reproductive health and begin to change workplaces to improve outcomes for all workers.

I am particularly pleased to be able to move this motion in this place today. As I noted earlier, my private member's bill, the Period Products and Facilities (Access) Bill, is also sitting before the parliament. The actions in this motion and the implementation

of my bill, if passed by this Assembly, represent complementary policies which will go a long way to dealing with the inequality caused by the stigma, lack of access to period products and facilities, and work-life impacts and reproductive health issues.

Before I finish, I would also like to note that this week we saw the International Day of the Girl Child. I would like to see a world where workplace culture is supportive, a world where women and those who menstruate have access to period products when they need them. It would be excellent if we could create a world where every girl knows that, as she grows into adulthood, she will be supported in both her personal and her professional life to manage her reproductive health. The reporting date for progress on the actions within my motion is by May 2023. I commend the motion to the Assembly and look forward to the work that it brings about.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (3.16): I would really like to thank Ms Orr, through you, Mr Assistant Speaker Davis, for bringing forward today's motion. I really congratulate her for advancing women's rights in this area. She has been doing some great work here and it is really great to see it progressing. We are pleased to see that there is a bit of a menstruation revolution going on in society. People are now openly talking about menstruation and menopause as part of the normal human experience that will affect half of us at some point in our lives. This willingness to reduce the stigma of bleeding simply by making it visible is really becoming mainstream. It is great to see.

Ads were pretty notorious historically. I grew up watching ads that demonstrated pads and tampons using blue liquid. I remember being really confused. I did not know what this blue liquid was. I did not know who these people were. I did not understand quite what was going on. It is really good to see that we have moved a bit beyond that stage where apparently period blood is so horrifying that we cannot even show the colour that it is. We can now actually depict something slightly closer to what goes on, and be more informative. Quite a lot of companies are keeping it real. They are using red, which is great, and a bit of humour.

Educators have made realistic anatomical models to try and demonstrate how menstrual cups work and how menstrual discs work. We are seeing on YouTube and TikTok quite a lot of video demonstrations. Some of these are really fun, and all of them are really informative. This kind of graphically demonstrated peer-to-peer education is something that has never been available on this widespread scale before and it is allowing conversations and de-stigmatisation to permeate society.

I do not have a lot of time to scroll through social media, but I do tend to click when a mate sends me something. There was a TikTok trend recently with men experiencing period pain through a simulator. It was quite entertaining. We had a little look at it in our office today. There is a company in Canada that goes out to various places, hooks people up to a little machine that uses electrical impulses on pads that attach to the skin, and that stimulates muscle contractions. It is meant to show you a little bit of how period pain works.

The ones I have seen online and the one I demonstrated today go up to eight or 10 levels. We see people trying to engage in their normal activities—trying to talk or sell a house or give a speech—while using this machine on different levels. Level 5 is the

average for a lot of period pain, although quite a few women who calibrated this machine would say, if they had endometriosis, that maybe they would regularly get pain at level 8 or 10, which is frankly quite horrifying.

I would encourage you, if you do have a bit of time, to jump on to TikTok and have a little look at them. There is a cowboy at a rodeo who collapses and says, "This is awful," at level 8. He is twitching at level 9, and he cannot get his big manly "yee-haw" out at level 10. There is a real estate agent who is trying to do his normal spiel about a fictional house and he collapses in pain at level 4, and then at level 7 he says, "Oh God! It's coming in waves. I feel like I am going to rupture!" Another woman comes in and calibrates it for her partner. She said level 7 was an average cramp, and her partner was in a sweat at that level. Then we have got some couples who are doing their simulations together and quite a lot of them are pretty horrified at what is the normal experience for an awful lot of women every month.

There are also some other simulators that are quite fun, with politicians being asked to wear vests that simulate menopausal hot flushes. Again, we get the same visual where it is really quite difficult to engage in your normal activities whilst experiencing something that an awful lot of women have to deal with regularly in their lives, in their workplaces, as they are going about their caring duties, as they are going about all of their responsibilities. It is fun to have a giggle at this stuff, but I think it is actually a really good lesson in empathy too. I think some of these quite entertaining TikTok demonstrations are a good way for us to see what it feels like to be somebody else and what it feels like briefly to share somebody else's experience.

As Ms Orr has pointed out in all of her work, there are so many issues that are exclusive to women. There are so many issues with reproductive health, with menstruation, with menopause, that are intrusive. They are quite difficult to manage. We have a lot of issues to deal with as women. At different points in our lives we will deal with menstruation, we might deal with pregnancy, we might deal with loss, we might deal with breastfeeding, and we might deal with all of the pre-partum and post-partum health complications that go with all of those issues.

I have a lot of lived experience of some of these things. Obviously, I talk about these issues with my friends on a regular basis. But it is really, really good to open this conversation up to be more of an acceptable conversation generally, to be more of a normal workplace conversation and to get some genuine support to deal with all of these issues. I am really pleased to see this revolution coming in women's health matters. I am really, deeply empathetic to anybody who is experiencing difficult symptoms from any of these things. Please do speak up. Go and chat to your doctor or your health carer. I am hoping we have a more supportive society soon that normalises this stuff and just helps all of us deal with it.

I think we will be passing this motion today. I do not want to get ahead of the debate, but I suspect this one might go sailing through. I would really like to thank Ms Orr for introducing this. It was good that we had a little chat about this and we introduced a few extra bits into it to deal with some of the post-partum complications. I think that was really good too. I am pleased to be part of a parliament that can deal with issues like this and take some small steps to make a lot of people's lives better.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (3.23): As shadow health minister, I am pleased to contribute to this discussion about the challenges for women in workplaces associated with reproductive health matters. The Canberra Liberals believe that women in the paid workforce should be supported to manage their menstruation, menopause and issues associated with reproductive health.

For most women these are intensely private issues, but they are also very real and often very traumatic. Women need to feel that they can discuss this with their employer, if they choose to or need to. The Canberra Liberals would also hope to see that this support is extended to our girls, to our female students, at school. It is particularly difficult as they manage their periods at a challenging and really confronting time. I am sure our schools and teachers do a terrific job supporting our teenage girls, and our younger girls too, as they face these issues.

I was interested to note an ABC report on 4 May this year which referred to new research showing that women's and girls' periods cause a range of adverse personal impacts, with shame and stigma exacerbating the burden that they can feel. The University of Western Australia contributed to this research, compiling data from more than 10,000 people from both high and low income countries. The lead researcher, Dani Barrington, said that social stigma was a huge barrier to menstrual health. Dr Barrington said:

This stigma, it's all-encompassing around the world, and it's having really negative impacts

It is interesting to note that this academic identified the key to change as people talking honestly about menstruation and, as we have discussed, menopause and reproductive challenges. She said that open conversations could foster more menstruation-friendly environments, especially in workplaces. Dr Barrington added:

We need to try not to be embarrassed to talk about it.

She said:

It's about creating an environment where women who have periods feel they can leave when they need to ... making sure they have facilities, that they can leave meetings if they need to because they've had an event where they desperately need to get to a bathroom.

The Canberra Liberals do not oppose this motion. We support women in the workplace as they manage menstruation, menopause and reproductive health issues, while maintaining their commitment to their work and their employer.

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) (3.25): I am pleased to talk to this motion today and to recognise Ms Orr's continued advocacy for equitable access to menstrual products in the ACT.

As Mr Orr has highlighted, a significant proportion of the workforce experiences reproductive health issues, such as menstruation and menopause. For many people, health issues such as period pain and menopause symptoms, can be uncomfortable—most of us here can attest to that, that’s for sure!—or even debilitating. As Minister for Women, I am happy to have had the chance to speak to this motion today and acknowledge the Period Products and Facilities (Access) Bill, which is before the Assembly. This motion—like the member’s bill—is a positive step in the conversation we are having in our community about how we can better support individuals who are unable to access menstrual products, and who are experiencing menstruation-related health issues.

Like any other health issue, this can understandably affect an individual’s ability to concentrate or focus, or even attend work all together. It is important that all workplaces and the broader community continue to destigmatise reproductive health matters. I was interested—and it did bring a smile to my face—to hear Ms Orr’s experiences of watching the Harry Potter program and wondering why Hermione did not ever get a period cramp. I was trying to think of a movie where that happened. And it did happen, and there was blood, in *Puberty Blues*. That was well before Harry Potter. We just somehow missed a step in all of that and did not continue the story for the young people of today, so that they are able to see the experiences of young women just like them on the big screen.

As a queenager experiencing the delight that is called “the change”, I am particularly pleased that Ms Orr has mentioned menopause in this motion, because it definitely does bring a change—sweats, hot flushes, fogginess, inability to concentrate and weight gain. It is definitely a change—and a part of life that really actually sucks—but I am happy to talk about it, and I am glad that it is something that we are talking about as a result of this motion. The community can gain confidence from hearing us talking here, in a public way, about these issues and the things that women go through, so that people in the community can feel more comfortable talking about that with dignity.

Through the ACT government’s progressive, consultative and inclusive approach to industrial relations and enterprise bargaining with trade unions and our workforce, we have continued to improve the terms and conditions of employment which are enjoyed by the government’s workforce. In the last round of bargaining, we introduced leading and innovative leave provisions, including to cover disability, surrogacy, miscarriage, and gender affirmation, and this has been supported by our ability to introduce change, and attract and retain the best possible people to provide services in the ACT.

The important topic of reproductive health, including menstruation and menopause and fertility care, has also been discussed during the current round of bargaining. Any claims in relation to this topic, and more broadly, will be part of some of the bargaining discussions that we have. I know that Ms Orr’s aim here is to raise the awareness of the government and members of this place about these important issues. The government recognises that some members of our workforce, unfortunately, for a range of reasons experience reproductive health-related challenges, and need to be supported in their workplace in this regard. The ACT government is a progressive leader in social policy, including gender equity and women’s full economic participation. Our 2021-26 Women’s Plan articulates our commitment to removing

barriers to enable women and girls to reach their full potential and have access to safe and inclusive workplaces.

In the ACT government, 65 per cent of the workforce are women and it is important that we create and promote workplaces that normalise menstruation and menopause. As to the suggestion of heat packs, they are all through my office upstairs. As well, there are fans for people like me who need to cool down numerous times during the day and remove ourselves from those tropical summers so that we can concentrate on some of the important work that government does.

I know that a number of organisations, including the Victorian Women's Trust have introduced this type of leave arrangement. Reports indicate a high uptake as well as increased productivity. Introducing the policy in the ACT is likely to decrease or eliminate social isolation and potential embarrassment of employees requesting leave, and it will further normalise menstruation and menopause. The government will continue to learn from other places and organisations. We will listen to women and girls and people who menstruate, as well as people who experience perimenopause or menopause, and learn from organisations who have implemented these leave entitlements, to ensure that we get the right approach here in the ACT. I really thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion to the Assembly today.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Berry. And thank you for getting the word “queenager” on the *Hansard*!

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (3.31), in reply: In closing, and very briefly, I would like to thank all the members for their support today. I appreciate that some of the male members might have thought that this was something that the women should be able to speak about, but I encourage them to get involved, as that is how we break down the shame and the stigma. I would also like to thank Ms Clay for bringing the words “menstruation revolution” to the *Hansard*! I think that that will go down as one of the great contributions of this term, and it is certainly an expression that I will be using more and more.

I also refer to Ms Clay's point about the blue blood. It was actually in our advertising standards that we could not show blood as red; for quite a long time it had to be blue. It would probably shock most people to learn how recently it was removed. Just for the record: blood is red, and I think it is very good that we have stopped confusing people about that.

I would also like to thank Ms Castley for her comments and for noting what the growing academic research is showing. This goes again to the stigma and the taboo. The fact that we just have not been talking about this means that we have very little understanding and awareness, particularly in a formalised sense, as to what the impacts are. I look forward to us continuing to work together to change that and hopefully to being able to do more than watch *Puberty Blues*. While that movie is very important in Australian's cultural history, it is one movie, and perhaps we will have more than one movie that will show the entirety of what it is like to be a person who menstruates—a woman in our society.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Canberra—cost of living

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (3.33): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) estimates that 38,000 Canberrans live in poverty, including 9,000 children;
- (b) in its submission to the ACT Budget 2022-23, ACTCOSS also reports:
 - (i) that the ACT has the highest rate of rental stress among lower income households in private rentals;
 - (ii) over 25,000 people living in low-income households experience food stress; and
 - (iii) households in the lowest income quintile spend over 55 percent of their income on housing, food and transport;
- (c) recent cost of living increases hit lower income Canberrans the hardest; and
- (d) 16-22 October 2022 is Anti-Poverty Week; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) commission an independent inquiry into the prevalence of poverty in Canberra, with the following terms of reference:
 - (i) the rates and drivers of poverty;
 - (ii) the relationship between economic conditions (including fiscal policy, rising inflation and cost of living pressures) and poverty;
 - (iii) the impact of poverty on individuals in relation to:
 - (A) employment outcomes;
 - (B) housing security;
 - (C) health outcomes; and
 - (D) education outcomes;
 - (iv) the effects of poverty in different demographics and communities;
 - (v) the relationship between income support payments and poverty;
 - (vi) mechanisms to address and reduce poverty; and
 - (vii) any related matters; and
- (b) table the report of the inquiry in the Assembly by the first sitting day of 2023.

From this Sunday, the ACT, along with the rest of Australia, will recognise Anti-Poverty Week. Since 2002, the organisers behind Anti-Poverty Week have sought to promote greater action toward to tackling poverty in the community. Last year, their campaign called on parliamentarians around Australia to better support those experiencing poverty. It was also in February last year that the Canberra Liberals put forward a motion to establish a poverty taskforce to investigate the ongoing causes of poverty in the ACT.

Every member of Labor and the Greens voted against that motion, with the responsible ministers stating that they were well aware of, and they understood very well, the root causes of poverty and disadvantage in the ACT. Ms Davidson said that the ACT government had already committed to addressing poverty in Canberra through a number of different levers. Yet, close to two years on, the problems of poverty and homelessness in the ACT have not improved. In fact, the problems are arguably worse now than they were then. If where we are now is what addressing poverty looks like, and if where we are now is a result of what this Labor-Greens government knows and understands about addressing poverty, then I hold very serious concerns for the large number of Canberrans who are doing it very tough!

According to the most recent ACT Council of Social Service, or ACTCOSS, cost-of-living report, the poverty rate of the ACT is currently estimated to be approximately nine per cent. That figure comprises more than 38,000 Canberrans living below the poverty line. More than 9,000 of those Canberrans that have been left behind are children. The ACT also has the highest rate of rental stress in Australia among lower-income private-rental households. This means that more than 73 per cent of Canberrans residing in households of this classification are spending more than 30 per cent of their gross household income on housing.

As Canberra continues to suffer from the Labor and the Greens' heartless policy of deliberately strangling land supply, and an inaccessible rental market that is the most expensive in Australia for both houses and units, these figures are unsurprising yet deeply concerning. None of this is new information of course. Despite many words and promises from this Labor-Greens government, these figures have not improved. In fact, according to ACTCOSS more than two-thirds of Community Services senior staff in the ACT have reported that levels of poverty and disadvantage amongst vulnerable groups have actually increased over the past year.

Whilst the ACT may still have the highest median income of any Australian jurisdiction, and one of the lowest unemployment rates, these figures cannot be used to justify complacency and stagnancy on the part of this Labor-Greens government when tackling the issue of poverty. The numbers do not lie, and the divide between the haves and the have-nots under this government has continued to widen. Yet this government continues to have the hubris to act as if it has not been responsible for years of neglect in the housing and community services sectors.

Even within the most recent 2022-23 budget, community services continued to remain "chronically underfunded", as the CEO of ACTCOSS has previously characterised it. The level and scope of their investment has been the equivalent of what ACTCOSS says is treading water. This Labor-Greens government is out of touch with Canberrans, and they deserve so much better.

My motion is very simple, and calls on the government to commission an independent inquiry into the prevalence of poverty in the ACT and examine the rates and drivers of poverty; the relationship between economic conditions—including fiscal policy, rising inflation and the cost of living pressures—and poverty; the impact of poverty on individuals in relation to employment, housing security, health and education outcomes; the effect of poverty in different demographics and communities; the

relationship between income support payments and poverty; and mechanisms to address and reduce poverty.

I urge all members of this chamber to consider this motion and provide our most vulnerable Canberrans with the necessary recognition and support to tackle the issue of poverty that impacts their lives. I brought this motion forward today with a genuine belief that an independent inquiry will produce much needed insight and outcomes with respect to the effects of poverty in the ACT, and that this will provide a greater number of pathways—with directionality for future government responses—to tackle the issue that affects so many Canberrans.

Each of us in this place is privileged to make decisions on behalf of, and for, the community. If we cannot prioritise the needs of some of the most vulnerable members of our community then we have failed. Let us not continue to fail these Canberrans. Let today be the day that Labor and the Greens accept that more can be done to support Canberrans living in poverty. I ask for their support. 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) (3.38): I move the following amendment:

Omit all text after “That this Assembly”, substitute:

“(1) notes that:

- (a) 16-22 October 2022 is Anti-Poverty Week;
- (b) poverty is an issue across Australia, requiring a collaborative approach across the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments;
- (c) low-income levels and a lack of employment opportunities are major contributors to poverty;
- (d) overall, Canberrans enjoy a high standard of living, with access to free quality health care and education, and well-planned and delivered infrastructure; and
- (e) unemployment in the ACT is currently very low;

(2) notes that the ACT Government is:

- (a) investing in the ACT’s health system to ensure Canberrans have increased access to free high-quality public health care when and where they need it, including:
 - (i) the Canberra Hospital expansion;
 - (ii) planning for a new northside hospital; and
 - (iii) expanding the ACT’s network of nurse-led walk-in health centres and community health centres;
- (b) investing in good quality public education, including building new schools and upgrading existing schools; and supporting families experiencing disadvantage with their education expenses through the Future of Education Equity Fund;
- (c) implementing policies to accelerate the delivery of additional affordable rental dwellings, including through the promotion of the Build-to-Rent

- scheme, the expansion of the Growing and Renewing Public Housing program, and supporting social and affordable housing developments – most recently Common Ground Dickson; and
- (d) expanding the capacity of the ACT specialist homelessness sector with an additional \$18 million over four years to mid-2024, with Housing ACT working collaboratively with community sector partners to deliver housing and support for Canberrans experiencing or at risk of homelessness;
- (3) notes that the ACT Government is delivering a range of ongoing supports for households to help address cost-of-living pressures, including:
- (a) rates deferral schemes for eligible low-income households and property owners aged 65 years and older;
 - (b) \$475,000 over four years to support the establishment and maintenance of a Food Security Network to develop a fit-for-purpose database that is managed by a dedicated project coordinator in the community services sector, including funding for secretariat support and development of a communications strategy;
 - (c) the pensioner rates and Fire and Emergency Services Levy (FESL) rebate schemes, supporting 15,800 eligible households with a 50 percent rates rebate up to \$750 per year, and a \$98 FESL rebate per year;
 - (d) the Utilities Concession, supporting 31,200 eligible low-income households with an \$800 contribution toward their energy and water bills in 2022-23;
 - (e) conveyance duty concessions, with an up to 100 percent discount on conveyance duty payable, supporting 6,600 eligible households per year;
 - (f) the Utilities Hardship Fund, supporting vulnerable consumers with access to \$100 vouchers through an eligible energy retailer;
 - (g) the Spectacles Subsidy Scheme, supporting eligible Canberrans with up to \$200 on spectacle purchases every two years, assisting in the purchase of 9,900 spectacles in 2022-23;
 - (h) the Taxi Subsidy Scheme, providing assistance for people with a disability or significant mobility restriction, to make an estimated 86,200 trips in 2022-23;
 - (i) motor vehicle registration concessions, providing up to an 100 percent discount on motor vehicle registration fees for 66,000 eligible registrations;
 - (j) driver licence concessions, providing an up to 100 percent discount on driver licence fees, supporting 7,900 eligible drivers in 2022-23;
 - (k) public transport concessions with reduced or free fares on Transport Canberra bus and light rail services, supporting an estimated 5.5 million trips in 2022-23;
 - (l) the Vulnerable Household Energy Support Scheme, with \$50 million over the next five years to deliver a range of measures to reduce energy hardship for low-income homeowners, and public, private and social housing renters;
 - (m) the Home Energy Support Program, with rebates of up to \$5,000 for eligible homeowners to install energy-efficient products and undertake sustainable upgrades; and

- (n) the Low-Income Home Energy Program, supporting vulnerable and low income households to improve the thermal comfort of their property and reduce energy costs;
- (4) further notes that the Commonwealth Government is implementing a range of important cost-of-living policies and indexation measures to support individuals and families including:
 - (a) an increase to the Child Care Subsidy since 11 July 2022;
 - (b) for the first time in its 75-year history, a fall in the maximum cost of general scripts under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme from 1 January 2023; and
 - (c) the largest indexation increase to the pension in 12 years, and the largest indexation increase to welfare payments in more than three decades, from 20 September 2022; and
- (5) calls on the ACT Government to:
 - (a) continue investing in measures to support low-income Canberra households to reduce their cost of living; and
 - (b) contribute to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee inquiry into the extent and nature of poverty in Australia.”.

As Ms Lee has indicated, next week is National Anti-Poverty Week. Poverty is an issue across Australia, and it requires a collaborative approach across commonwealth, state and territory governments. The major drivers of poverty are low income levels and lack of employment opportunities. As Ms Lee indicated, overall, Canberrans enjoy a high standard of living—the recent census data has once again confirmed that—with access to free quality healthcare and education, and, indeed, well planned and delivered infrastructure. As Ms Lee indicated in her remarks, unemployment in the ACT is currently very low. A low level of unemployment means a higher level of employment, which contributes in a positive way to the reduction of poverty.

My amendment outlines in some detail the range of initiatives the ACT government is pursuing, but I note that this issue has, in fact, become the subject of a national inquiry in the Senate. It was a Greens and Labor initiative in the federal Senate—one that was opposed by the Liberal party in the Senate. *Hansard* reflects their opposition to the nature and terms of reference of the inquiry. I had a look at the terms of reference of the Senate inquiry, and noted that Ms Lee has, in fact, cut and pasted the entire thing, in all of its federal context, into her motion. So there is no originality in the contents of Ms Lee’s—

Ms Lee: No originality?

MR BARR: No; no originality. It is a direct lift from the Senate’s terms of reference. In light of that, we have an inquiry into these matters at a national level. These issues are national, and the terms of reference that Ms Lee has cut and pasted reflect the national issues—fiscal policy, rising inflation, cost-of-living pressures, employment outcomes and the like, all of which are relevant across the nation.

So, my amendment highlights the work that the ACT government has undertaken and commits the government to continue to invest in measures that support low-income

Canberra households, and to contribute to the Senate committee. So, rather than setting up a parallel inquiry in the ACT, with exactly the same terms of reference as the Senate one, costing taxpayers money and diverting resources that could otherwise be applied directly to supporting low-income households, it is the government's view that we can contribute positively to the Senate committee that is undertaking this review with exactly the same terms of reference. Ms Lee has just cut and pasted them!

There will be nothing different in an ACT inquiry—nothing!—from what is being undertaken at a commonwealth level about issues that we all know are largely driven by commonwealth income support measures. How do we know that? We know that because when income support was lifted for a period during the pandemic, there had been no single measure in living memory that did more to lift more people out of poverty than those increases to income supports. In the end, the measure that we are all using—ACTCOSS, ACOSS, the Canberra Liberals, the government, the federal government, all of the academic research—talks about a poverty line. That is, indeed, a level of income that we would strive to get more Canberrans, and more Australians, above.

There are a number of ways that that can be achieved. Clearly, the level of commonwealth income support payments is one of those ways. Strong labour markets and full employment is another way. But, certainly, our side of politics acknowledges that even having a full-time job will not lift some above the poverty line because, for 10 years in this country, the active economic policy—the stated intent of federal Liberal government economic policy—was to suppress wages growth.

When, in this chamber and in estimates, I have mentioned the fact that wages will have to lift in this full employment market, those opposite have started heading for an apoplectic fit. Ms Castley, in particular, was beside herself at the thought that wages would increase, because small business would have to pay the wage increase. Well, yes, business will have to contribute through higher wages to poverty alleviation. That is a fact. What this country needs after 10 years of anaemic wage growth is for income levels to rise. For those in the workforce, and particularly those on the lowest of salaries or wages, that is incredibly important and makes a practical difference.

We know that. We do not need an inquiry to tell us; we already know it. That is why economic policies that support a restoration of decent wage growth are fundamental to addressing part of the poverty challenge. We also recognise that beyond commonwealth income support payments and having more people in employment, what has historically been called the “social wage”—like access to free health care and free education, and access to more affordable childcare, access to opportunities and concessions for low-income households—is fundamental as part of a total picture.

My amendment goes to the detail of what the ACT government is doing. Part 3 of my amendment talks about the food security network, concessions and rebates, utility concessions, conveyance duty concessions, the utility hardship fund, the spectacles subsidy scheme, the taxi subsidy scheme, motor vehicle registration concessions, driver licence concessions, public transport concessions, the vulnerable household energy support scheme, the home energy support scheme, and the low-income home energy support program. There is a long list of ACT government programs and projects that constitute a direct wealth transfer to more than 30,000 low-income

households in the territory—exactly the same households that we have been talking about. They are the householders that ACTCOSS has put the number on, and that Ms Lee referred to in her remarks.

We are already actively in the business of transferring tens of millions of dollars in income support, fee relief or concessions to those very households at a territory government level. Clearly, things like commonwealth rent assistance and the rates of other commonwealth statutory payments are fundamental for those people who rely on those payments in order to meet their costs of living. Lifting those payments lifts more people out of poverty. More people in employment receiving higher wages lifts more people out of poverty. So we know what we need to do.

I want to acknowledge three other important things. The commonwealth government's increase to the childcare subsidy, and its further plans to make childcare more accessible, is particularly important for single-parent families, providing them with opportunities to work more and earn more, and to lift more single-parent families out of poverty.

For the first time in its 75 year history, we have seen a fall in the maximum cost of general scripts under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, providing more assistance there. And the largest indexation increases to pensions in more than a decade and the largest indexation increases to welfare payments in more than three decades kicked in on 20 September this year, reflecting the fact that we are in a period of higher inflation. So, across the ACT government supports, and those three important initiatives from the commonwealth—noting that it still needs to do more on the level, of rent assistance in particular, which is an important discussion point that needs to be raised—practical things can and should be done. They are the sorts of things that we would be contributing towards this Senate committee and its national inquiry with exactly the same terms of reference as has been proposed. We also commit to continuing our program of measures to support low-income households to reduce their costs of living.

My amendment is comprehensive. It outlines what the government is currently doing and what we intend to do in the future. I commend it to the Assembly.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (3.49): I rise in support of the Chief Minister's amendment. In doing so, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the opportunity to speak to the lived experience of people living in poverty in this city. I do so on behalf of the 9.5 per cent of my constituents who live in households with a total household income of less than \$650 a week. I do so as somebody who has lived much of my life in poverty, and I do so as somebody who represents a global political movement that is committed to the pillar of social justice and, therefore, by extension, the global elimination of poverty.

I appreciate Ms Lee's endorsement of the work of my federal colleague Senator Larissa Waters, and the committee mentioned by the Chief Minister. This was an Australian Greens federal election commitment—to initiate a national inquiry into the rising rates of poverty in Australia and the rising cost of living. It is chaired by Senator Janet Rice, our spokesperson for social services and chair of the Community Affairs References Committee. I have confidence that, under her leadership,

a forensic and line-by-line scrutiny of poverty and cost-of-living pressures on Australian households will be looked at from the federal level.

While I have no doubt that this contribution will elicit guffaws and scorns from the opposition, just as it did the last time Ms Lee brought a not-dissimilar motion to the chamber, the reality is that the major contributor to the rising rates of wealth and income inequality, and in particular poverty, in this city is the political decision made by the two old parties to keep the poorest in Australia living below the Henderson Poverty Line—the absolute refusal to raise income support payments above the Henderson Poverty Line, to give people dignity, to give people respect and to give people the tools that they need—literally money—to be able to get themselves out of poverty and be able to contribute to society, access education, provide care to family and contribute in their community.

It actually is not that hard, Madam Speaker, when you get right down to how to fix poverty in this country. I may be accused of being simplistic, naive or even idealistic, but the simplest way to help people who do not have money is to give them some money! That is not a policy lever available to this Assembly or to this government. If it were, I can assure you it is one I would be advocating strongly for us to be pulling, as would my Greens colleagues in cabinet. Fortunately, there are three of my Greens colleagues in cabinet, who, alongside their Labor colleagues, have invested hundreds of millions of dollars throughout a range of different directorates, with a range of different budget initiatives designed to eliminate poverty in this city.

Has it gone far enough? No. Poverty has not gone away. Scooping water out of a boat that is sinking is the job of subnational governments of all political persuasions at the moment, while federal governments of both political persuasions refuse to do what the evidence tells them to do, and that is to raise income support payments to at least \$88 a day, above the Henderson Poverty Line.

I know that there are people in this chamber from all three political parties who agree with me. I challenge them to say that. I challenge them to call out their federal colleagues and say the quiet part out loud. Tell your colleagues on the hill and tell the constituents that you represent in this place that you get it, that you understand that them not having enough money is the reason that they are in poverty, and demonstrate the leadership that you are prepared to advocate on that issue.

I appreciate that is tough. I have been a member for two years and I have, perhaps more regularly than I should, extended my political capital to upset my colleagues when I have felt that the government has not gone in the right direction on certain policies, because I have had the conviction that that is my responsibility when I can see pressures on my constituents.

When the pressure of poverty weighs most heavily on those in our community who are least able to advocate for themselves, the responsibility of members of this Assembly becomes even greater—to put your head above the parapet, advocate for an immediate rise in income support payments to above \$88 a day, and join that Greens campaign. If you cannot bring yourself to call it a Greens campaign, join the literally hundreds of community service organisations, faith-based organisations and even

scouting groups—everyone who is on board with the Greens nationally on this issue—in saying that that is a way to solve this wicked problem.

Just yesterday we saw a very disappointing announcement from the federal finance minister, Katy Gallagher, that the federal Albanese Labor government will ignore the requests of this Assembly—all 25 members and all three parties—to waive the ACT's historic housing debt. That is in spite of the ACT government's commitment, through Chief Minister Barr, to ensure that all of that money would be redirected, dollar for dollar, back into the construction—

Ms Lee: All three parties.

MR DAVIS: Ms Lee, if you do not mind, I will continue my remarks—

Ms Lee: I am egging you on. I am saying it is all three parties. That is right—exactly.

MR DAVIS: You will have to forgive me, Ms Lee, because, through you, Madam Speaker, given the opposition's willingness to bring this motion back either as a rehashed version of a failed election policy or as a copy-and-paste federal Greens election policy, it shows that there is no great appetite amongst the conservative side of Australian politics to deal with the structural issues that impact on wealth and income inequality and poverty. It is a natural consequence of the economic model supported by the Canberra Liberals, the federal Liberals and Liberals everywhere—the trickle-down neoliberal con—that creates poverty.

The Liberals here—this is not personal; this is political; this is pure ideology; this is what this political party stands for: wealth, enterprise, opportunity. And good for them. But the natural consequence of the lack of regulation on the capitalist system, which has got away from us, is increased rises in poverty. It serves Ms Lee's political purpose to pretend that it is all the fault of Chief Minister Barr, ACT Labor and the Greens. We see Mr Parton in here regularly giving my colleagues a hard time—everybody does not have a home yet, and therefore we are liars.

I want to pick up on a point that Minister Vassarotti made most articulately today while she was under attack from the opposition; that is, I would hope every member of this Assembly—all 25 of us, all three parties—aspired to all Canberrans having a home. I think it is very telling that only the ACT Greens went to the last election saying that everyone should have a home in Canberra, as if that was radical. If that is a radical policy, call me radical. I am proud to wear that badge of honour if it is radical to say everyone deserves enough money to live, everyone deserves a roof over their head, and everybody deserves supports when they are down.

I want to take particular issue, though, with the Leader of the Opposition's questionable and politicised selective quoting of the ACTCOSS report. I would like to quote at least three paragraphs of the ACTCOSS report, Madam Speaker, if you will forgive me. I am not going to selectively quote for political purposes; I am going to give you what ACTCOSS have actually said is a driving force of poverty—

Ms Lee: The whole report—are you? You are going to quote the whole report?

MR DAVIS: Ms Lee's interjections demonstrate the motivations behind today's motion. I quote from the report:

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic we saw poverty and inequality reduce in a time of recession and rise during the period of economic recovery. As we observed in our *2021 ACT Cost of Living Report*, despite the deepest recession in a century and record high unemployment, income inequality and poverty declined during the first wave of the pandemic due to robust income supports in the form of the JobKeeper Payment and the Coronavirus Supplement.

In the ACT this meant that while the number of people receiving JobSeeker and Youth Allowance ... more than doubled, our poverty rate dropped from a pre-COVID estimate of 8.6% to 5.2% by October 2020. The withdrawal of JobKeeper and the Coronavirus Supplement saw the poverty rate in the ACT increase to approximately 9.0%, representing—

and this is the part that has been quoted in Ms Lee's media release—

an estimated 38,300 Canberrans—including approximately 9,000 children.

This report tracks changes in income and the cost of living for low-income households in the ACT from December 2020 to December 2021. During this period the Coronavirus Supplement was phased out and despite a permanent increase to JobSeeker of \$50 per fortnight from 1 April 2021, the payment returned to well below the poverty line. By December 2021, a single person without children on JobSeeker had an income that was \$138 below the poverty line of \$457 per week—for a single person on Youth Allowance ... their income dropped to \$197 below the poverty line per week. For a single parent with two children, the JobSeeker payment dropped to \$108 below the poverty line of \$731 per week.

These are the experts that the ACT government should rely on and the Canberra Liberals should rely on when forming policy solutions to the wicked problem of wealth, income inequality and poverty in this city. They have spelled it out right there in black and white: poor people do not have enough money, and it is the federal government that decides how much money to give them.

I am very proud of the hundreds of millions of dollars of investment by this government in housing and in community services, and I appreciate that the Chief Minister has gone to some effort to spell those out at length in his amendment. Having said that, I will not let the Chief Minister get away with this one. Paragraph (5)(c) of the amendment refers to “the largest indexation increase to the pension in 12 years, and the largest indexation increase to welfare payments in more than three decades”. Yes, that is wonderful, but that is built into the system. That is expected. We saw the new Prime Minister—

Mr Barr: I said that.

MR DAVIS: The reason I bring it up is that I think we saw a bit of a cheeky attempt from the new Prime Minister to try and take credit for that, as if it were a policy decision of the new federal government and not built into the system. That is why I raise it. I raise it because deflections like this—with the Canberra Liberals saying

poverty is all the Chief Minister's fault, or the government's fault—deflect from the core problem here.

I would have been prepared on this occasion to perhaps give Ms Lee and the opposition the benefit of the doubt if they had come into this chamber and spelled out, like I just have, the driving forces of poverty in the city. The fact that they have not demonstrates the motivations behind this motion.

The Canberra community should know that the Canberra Liberals are motivated to work on this issue or to be seen advocating on this issue for political opportunism. While I am sure there is not a single member of the Canberra Liberals that wants to see Canberrans in poverty, you cannot be taken seriously as a substantive contributor to the debate if you are not prepared to acknowledge, in its entirety, the challenge of wealth inequality and poverty in this city.

I underline, in my remaining seconds, these few points again, in summary. Mr Deputy Speaker, if you want to get people who are in poverty out of poverty, you give them more money, and balloons drop from the sky. It is not rocket science. The natural consequence of a failed economic political ideology advocated for by the centre right and Liberals from across this country is why people are poor and homeless. The unregulated excesses of capitalism have created the greatest divide in wealth and income inequality in this country's history, and the only way that we are going to do something about that is by enthusiastically participating in the federal poverty inquiry and fixing our system structurally.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (4.05): I will not be supporting Ms Lee's motion. I will be supporting the Chief Minister's amendment.

We know, thanks to the community sector's extensive body of research work, why poverty exists in the ACT. We know who is most affected and where those households are most concentrated. I am deeply disappointed that Ms Lee is showing complete disrespect for the work that our community sector has done by calling for another inquiry instead of action to relieve the pressure on people living in poverty and advocating to the commonwealth government to change the drivers of poverty that are outside ACT control.

I note that, in February 2021, we had an almost identical motion from Ms Lee. Blowing things up in the media seems to be the goal of the ACT Liberals, but I have learned that there are things that you cannot solve by jumping into an X-Wing and blowing something up. When I spoke to the almost identical motion in February 2021, I listed some of the existing research by our community sector on poverty in the ACT, and I said:

If you'd like an in-depth analysis of this data, please feel free to pop into my office where I can take you through the past 42 years of housing costs and labour force data, with a gendered lens.

I am sad to say that, since Giulia Jones moved on from this place, not a single MLA from the ACT Liberals has shown an interest in discussing policy with me.

Ms Cheyne: Shocking!

MS DAVIDSON: I know. I did once get one nice WhatsApp text from Mr Parton last month—thank you—but unfortunately there was nothing about policy. Seeing that the opposition are far too busy debating amongst themselves who their next no confidence motion will be about, I thought I might run through some of the research into poverty in the ACT, which I will table, to make it easier for Ms Lee to find.

Housing affordability and poverty are inextricably linked in the ACT, as is shown in the Anglicare rental affordability snapshot. In their recommendations for what should be done in the 2022 snapshot, Anglicare recommends raising the rate of commonwealth welfare payments. As Mr Davis explained, this needs to be more than just a CPI increase.

Anglicare also calls for investment in more affordable rental homes. Minister Vassarotti will speak in more detail about the ACT government's ongoing work in housing and why this is absolutely a commitment in the parliamentary and governing agreement.

As Mr Davis said, in the *2022 ACT Cost of Living Report*, published by ACTCOSS, we learned that the higher JobKeeper payment and the coronavirus supplement meant that our poverty rate dropped from a pre-COVID estimate of 8.6 per cent to 5.2 per cent by October 2020. Returning to the lower payment rates after that date meant that the poverty rate jumped to nine per cent. I quote from my speech during the debate on a similar motion in February 2021:

I implore everyone in this Assembly to call on the Morrison government to revoke its decision to throw almost 20,000 more Canberrans into poverty, and permanently raise the rate. This should be a priority for Ms Lee and her colleagues.

Was it a priority for Ms Lee? Did she talk to her federal counterparts about raising the rate? I do not think so. The reason I think that is the rise in requests for food relief assistance when JobKeeper ended, which the ACT government did its best to meet through the Canberra Relief Network, working with local food pantries alongside the SES, Volunteering ACT, and defence service veteran volunteers from Disaster Relief Australia.

In October 2021 ACTCOSS published a fact sheet on poverty and COVID-19 in the ACT, again calling on the commonwealth government to raise the rate for good.

We also know that there is a gendered dimension to poverty in the ACT, thanks to *Below the surface: the hidden women in the ACT in middle income households at risk of ending up in poverty*, published by the Women's Centre for Health Matters, in partnership with researchers at the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling at the University of Canberra in June 2019. That research tells us that at least 44.7 per cent of all ACT women and girls in middle-income households are most likely only in that middle class due to parent or partner income. If there is a family or relationship breakdown or the primary income earner experiences a loss of income, those women and girls are at risk of living in poverty—drivers of poverty.

This built on the previous report by the Women's Centre for Health Matters in June 2018, *Hidden disadvantage among women in the ACT*, where we found that there

were 2½ times more women than men who were sole parents on a low income. We produced maps showing where those households were most concentrated, which I have enlarged, and I am tabling, so that you can see more clearly what the difference is. Note that dark blue is bad and bright green is good.

This gender-disaggregated data builds on a 2017 report produced by NATSEM for anti-poverty week, which showed the small areas within suburbs that had the highest concentrations of poverty. We know where it is, and we want to take action.

Experience of violence is a key factor in how women with children end up in poverty in the ACT, as we learned from a 2014 report by Domestic Violence Crisis Service, *Staying home after domestic violence*. More than half of families lost their homes, either rented or owned, within 12 months after separation as a result of domestic and family violence. The impact of this was explored in the July 2017 report from the Women's Centre for Health Matters, *Beyond crisis*.

Low paid and insecure work also contributes to poverty and homelessness in the ACT. A 2015 report by the Housing and Homelessness Policy Consortium ACT found that housing stress in the ACT was highest among workers in the retail, accommodation and food services industries, who were incredibly hard hit by the economic impacts of COVID. This contributes to the modelled prediction that 55 per cent of workers facing housing stress are women.

Thank you for your patience, Mr Deputy Speaker; I am nearly done. In November 2019, ACTCOSS published *Shattered myths—20 years of ACT Council of Social Service work on poverty*. There is a lovely photo on page 6 of our very own Minister Rebecca Vassarotti, from her time as a poverty task group project officer in 1999.

I quote former ACT Chief Minister and community affairs minister Gary Humphries, who was nice enough to sponsor my Parliament House security pass back when I was a community sector social researcher working on these issues. He said in 2001:

There are no easy solutions for many community issues like disadvantage and poverty, and while the ACT government has a major role to play in addressing poverty, it cannot tackle the issue on its own. Great outcomes can only be achieved when the government, the community sector and the broader community work together.

We do not need another inquiry. We need action, and that is what this government is trying to do.

I remain the most optimistic member of the ACT Greens, hopeful that Ms Lee and her colleagues will engage constructively on how to put into action the priorities that the community sector has already advocated for, and which we know from existing research will make a real difference to the lives of Canberrans. I support the Chief Minister's amendment to this motion. I present the following papers:

Poverty in the ACT—Data and reports—

ACT Cost of living report 2022—Tracking changes in the cost of living for low-income households in the Australian Capital Territory—ACT Council of Social Service Inc., May 2022.

Below the surface—The hidden women in the ACT in middle income households at risk of ending up in poverty—Emma Davidson, Women’s Centre for Health Matters Inc., dated June 2019.

Beyond crisis: working with Canberra’s professional firms and businesses to make safer choices easier for survivors of domestic violence—Women’s Centre for Health Matters Inc., dated July 2017.

Creating Opportunity or Entrenching Disadvantage? 5 Years on—ACT Labour Market Data Update— ACT Council of Social Service and Women’s Centre for Health Matters Inc., dated October 2019.

Hidden disadvantage among women in the ACT—Emma Davidson, Women’s Centre for Health Matters Inc., dated June 2018.

Hidden disadvantage in the ACT: report for ACT Anti-Poverty Week—National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling and the Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis University of Canberra, dated October 2017.

Housing affordability and the labour market in the ACT—Housing and homelessness policy consortium, undated.

Poverty and Covid-19 in the ACT—Factsheet—ACT Council of Social Service Inc., dated October 2021.

Proportion of adult women and adult men living in a sole parent family in low income households, by the ACT suburbs, 2016—Map.

Rental affordability snapshot 2022—Anglicare NSW South, NSW West and ACT.

Shattered myths—20 years of ACT Council of Social Service work on poverty—ACT Council of Social Service Inc., dated November 2019.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (4.12): I thank Ms Lee for moving this very important motion. I support without reservation the commissioning of an independent inquiry into the prevalence of poverty in Canberra.

As the motion notes, 38,000 Canberrans are currently living in poverty. Almost one-quarter of these are children. But these are not just numbers to me. As a member for Ginninderra, I am acutely aware that a disproportionate number of the territory’s working poor and struggling families live in my electorate. For me, this issue is personal. These are my neighbours and my friends. These are the people who have twice chosen me to be their voice in this place. I honour them today by speaking on their behalf in support of this motion.

Let me give some figures. According to the latest census data, residents in the Ginninderra electorate have the lowest average income in the ACT. This is true across the categories of personal income, family income and household income. The average family in Belconnen earns almost 21 per cent less than the average family in Mr Barr and Mr Rattenbury’s electorate. As everyone understands, there is a huge difference.

Despite working hard, far too many Belconnen residents are struggling to keep a roof over their heads. In 2016 8.9 per cent of households in my electorate were in rental stress, paying more than 30 per cent of household income in rent. Five years later, that figure had ballooned to 25.1 per cent.

Think about that. Six years ago, one in 11 households in my electorate was experiencing rental stress. Now it has nearly tripled to become one in four. This is the highest rate across the ACT and, unless something changes, by the next census half or more of all renters in my electorate could easily be in rental stress. During the same time, the percentage of Belconnen households in mortgage stress has surged by 70 per cent.

Figures such as these give us a high-level snapshot of poverty in the ACT, but we need to know more. We need to understand the rates and drivers of poverty here in the nation's capital. We need to have solid data, not just ideologically informed guesses, regarding the relationship between poverty and economic conditions, including fiscal policy. We need a government that will get serious, really serious, about mechanisms to address and reduce poverty in Canberra.

Robust, Canberra-specific data are necessary to get the mechanisms right. Lack of interest in generating such data is an admission by those opposite that they are not genuinely serious about the 38,000 Canberrans currently living in poverty or the thousands of others who will inevitably join them as cost of living increases continue to hit lower income residents hard.

On behalf of the residents of Ginninderra, I wholeheartedly commend this motion to the Assembly.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (4.16): I thank Ms Lee for bringing this motion to the Assembly, particularly in Anti-Poverty Week. As a previous co-chair of Anti-Poverty Week, as was raised by Ms Lee when she brought an identical motion to the Assembly more than a year ago, this is an issue that I particularly care about.

As previously stated, rather than merely inquiring into the issue, the ACT Greens would instead prefer action on this issue. Rather than spending government money on an inquiry to identify the drivers of poverty, which we are well aware of and which are also being reviewed through a federal parliamentary process, we would use these funds to go to the numerous programs that are designed to support households on low incomes, as outlined in the government amendment. Rather than continuing to talk about these wicked problems, we want to focus on introducing programs and initiatives that aim to reduce inequality and ensure that all members of our community have access to the essential services that are needed to live a dignified life.

There is already a wealth of information on the key issues that are driving poverty in the ACT and in Australia more generally. I do not think anyone could follow the act of Minister Davidson, who has so comprehensively outlined this. We know that these are incredibly difficult times. Rising inflation and the cost of living are disproportionately hurting those with the lowest incomes. We cannot ignore that the current situation of spiralling costs is particularly harming those Canberrans living on welfare, as Mr Davis has outlined.

The rate of JobSeeker payments continues to be significantly under the Henderson poverty line. Thank goodness there have been indexed increases to pensions and welfare payments. But let us be clear: these are a passive and legislated response to some of the extreme increases in costs in recent times, but they do nothing to address

the structural inadequacy of welfare payments in Australia. As a result, people receiving income support payments are experiencing poverty because, as Mr Davis outlined, they are just not being given enough money to survive. They are not being provided with enough money to afford their groceries, fuel and utilities. Unless they are able to reside in income-based social housing, they certainly cannot afford to privately rent.

In response to calls that we cannot afford to raise the rate of JobSeeker, there is an easy answer: ditch the financially irresponsible stage 3 tax cuts. Let us prioritise the use of finite resources to support those on the lowest incomes, not deliver more wealth to those on the highest incomes. This is in the realm of the federal sphere but something that we will continue to advocate on. We know that this makes economic sense as well as moral sense. We know the areas where Canberrans in poverty are particularly hurting. The cost of housing, the cost of food and the cost of utilities are key areas where there are particular pressures. The current cost of living crisis has many drivers and there are limited ways that we can respond locally. However, where we can, we will.

We know that, in the main, housing unaffordability in Canberra is caused by the financialisation of housing Australia wide. Instead of being for the social good, housing has become a speculative investment because of decades of policy choices that have made it a commodity. While we do not have all the levers to improve housing affordability, our actions show that we are working hard to make things better, particularly for those on the lowest incomes. We continue to roll out investments in public housing and we have increased funding to specialised homelessness services, from a \$20 million base of funding in 2018-19 to \$30 million in 2022-23.

As noted here in the chamber today, we have more work to do. We are currently in an ongoing and deep process with our specialist homelessness sector, through both the Rough Sleeper Working Group and the specialist homelessness sector commissioning process. We will be continuing to deeply understand and ensure that we have specific and detailed conversations with the experts who are also delivering services each day. We are optimistic that new initiatives, such as build-to-rent and partnerships with our community housing sector partners, can facilitate a significant uplift in affordable rental and build on some of the current programs we have already introduced.

It is true that we will not solve housing affordability on our own, and it is something that we need to work with the commonwealth government on. While there has been renewed positiveness that there may be a much more cooperative federal environment to look at how we can further reduce housing stress, I do have to be honest that my optimism soured quite significantly with the announcement late yesterday that the commonwealth government will not forgive the ACT historic social housing debt. This means that the ACT government will be providing funds to the commonwealth government to service a debt that is questionable and has probably been paid many times over, rather than investing even more in desperately needed social housing.

Access to healthy food is an area where we have seen significant price pressure in recent times, due to the impact of climate change, extreme weather and supply chains affected by COVID restrictions, to name a few reasons. In this area we need to look at

how we support people who are struggling most. This is something that my ministerial colleague Emma Davidson, in her role to support social recovery, has been working particularly hard on.

In addition, I think we have the opportunity to work with the whole community to improve our access to local healthy and affordable food. We need to look at ways where access is universal and not required to be subsidised for those on the lowest incomes. This is something that I am keen to ensure is a theme of the work that we are progressing around a food and fibre strategy.

The cost of utilities is another key pressure, particularly with the climate extremes that we are facing in Canberra. Again, we are lucky to be a forward-thinking government whose contracts have insulated our community from the price increases felt by many other Australians. The ACT government is providing real relief to low income earners through a substantial concession. But we know that there are structural things we can do to decrease the energy costs faced by households. I was extremely proud to champion the increase of energy efficiency standards for new homes so that there will be less reliance on fossil fuels to heat our homes in winter and cool our homes in summer, saving people money, as well as saving the planet.

We know what is driving poverty and we know that there are things that the ACT government can do to reduce poverty and inequality. Unlike some governments, we are not responding with economic prosperity. I listened to some of the Canberra Liberals' contributions to the budget debate yesterday and today with some alarm, given their focus on the issue of government debt. I think it is time to come clean on what your plans are and if these plans include reducing services and programs to support those on the lowest incomes. We really need to know: what will you be offering to address poverty in this city? With that, I commend the ACT Chief Minister's amendment to the motion.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (4.25): It is interesting that the Chief Minister says that he will not support my motion because it is nothing different, of course, to what the federal parliament is doing. What's interesting is he then, in this book of an amendment, spends more than a full-page spruiking what the ACT government apparently is doing to reduce poverty.

So it is very clear, Mr Deputy Speaker, that this Labor Greens government is always very quick to spruik and spruik but cannot bring itself to take any responsibility for the 38,000 Canberrans living in poverty, including 9,000 children; for the fact that we have the highest median rents in the country; for the fact that 73 per cent of those living in that classification they spent more than 30 per cent of their household income on housing; nor for the fact that tens of thousands of Canberrans are being deprived of the opportunity to own their own home.

Once again, we see many ministers in this government say that they already know, that they already know. And yet, we saw only a couple of hours ago, in question time this morning, Minister Vassarotti saying that she actually does not know all the reasons why ACT has increasing levels of repeated homelessness, whilst at the same time it is decreasing in Australia.

Everything comes down to income support for every member on the Labor and Greens side. Of course it plays a role. I specifically mentioned that it plays a role in my motion. Of course it plays a role. But whilst every single member of the Labor and Greens parties in this place continues to spruik about policy levers that are absolutely not within their control, they absolutely ignore the policy levers that are within their control. They are stubbornly, stubbornly refusing to even consider the policy levers that are within their control because of course, conveniently, it is much easier to say: “Not our responsibility. Not our role. It is all the federal government’s responsibility.”

Mr Barr has said on a number of occasions that he is so happy now that there has been a change of government at the federal level; so now it is going to magically happen, is it not? It is going to magically happen because it was of course the evil federal Liberal-National government that was keeping people in poverty! So it is going to happen, is it not, magically, right now because we have had a change of government at the federal level.

Mr Davis says, “Just give them more money!” I do not know about the area of Tuggeranong you live in Mr Davis, but money must grow on trees! Even the Chief Minister has acknowledged that a good job is going to be a very, very, important factor when it comes to relieving people from poverty. This contribution by Mr Davis just goes to show how dangerous it is to have the Greens in government, Mr Deputy Speaker. That just goes to show how dangerous it is.

But let us talk about a job. We talked about, yes, a job is important. But at the same time, of course, as—and I acknowledge the Chief Minister acknowledged this, as I did, that the ACT has the lowest unemployment rate at the moment in the country. So if that is the single factor, then why are we here?

Ms Davidson spent the entire speech saying that she does know. Here is all the data. Here is all the work that is being done. Then the question is this, why has the rate of repeat homelessness increased in the ACT whilst it is going down all across Australia? Why? Why has it? Why has it? Mr Deputy Speaker, I am incredulous that, as a minister in this government, she is calling for action. What do you think your job is? What do you think the job of a minister in this government is? If it is you calling for action, who is actually going to take the action? I am just incredulous that after two years in this place, both Ms Davidson and Ms Vassarotti are sitting here still spruiking, “Hey, let us do something. Let us call for action.” You have the privilege of making decisions when it comes to those most vulnerable Canberrans. So instead of spruiking and saying, “let us call for action,” just do it!

Finally, Mr Davis talks about lived experience, so let us talk about lived experience. When you have kids in primary school that make fun of your house, when you are too embarrassed to invite friends over to your house because of the state it is in, when you cannot attend school excursions, and when you have debt collectors coming around, barging into your home, tagging your possessions, your household items, to see what is of value to sell, when you have that lived experience—I will not be lectured to by a Greens backbencher that this is all politics and political opportunism. That is an absolute slap in the face to the thousands, the tens of thousands of Canberrans that are doing it incredibly tough in this town. That is an absolute disrespect to the tens of thousands of Canberrans, on behalf of whom I bring this motion again.

The reason I bring it again, Mr Deputy Speaker, is that this Labor-Greens government has failed to act. It has failed to act, and it is clear from the debate today that all those opposite want to do is pick political fights with a very important motion that I have brought to this chamber on behalf of the 38,000 Canberrans that are living in poverty, including 9,000 children. Shame on Labor and the Greens for once again putting their political alliance above the people of Canberra.

We will not be supporting Mr Barr's amendment.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that Mr Barr's amendment to Ms Lee's motion be agreed to.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 15		Noes 8
Mr Barr	Ms Orr	Mr Cain
Ms Berry	Dr Paterson	Ms Castley
Mr Braddock	Mr Pettersson	Mr Cocks
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson
Ms Cheyne	Mr Steel	Mrs Kikkert
Ms Clay	Ms Stephen-Smith	Ms Lee
Ms Davidson	Ms Vassarotti	Mr Milligan
Mr Davis		Mr Parton

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Appropriation Bill 2022-2023

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023]

Cognate papers:

Estimates 2022-2023—Select Committee report

Estimates 2022-2023—Select Committee report—government response]

Detail stage

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate—Part 1.7.

Debate resumed.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.36): I move amendment No 2 circulated in my name [*see schedule 2 at page 3128*]. This amendment seeks to end the \$41 million public subsidy promised by the ACT government to the horseracing industry under the 2022 MOU.

The ACT Greens oppose public funding for the horseracing industry. We understand that a sudden cut will affect the workers and the animals, so I propose that we phase out public funds for the horseracing industry by 20 per cent each year over the next five years. The current MOU pledges around \$8 million to the horseracing industry this year. My amendment would return 20 per cent of that the budget, which is \$1.6 million. This would still mean an income of at least \$6 million to the horseracing industry this year.

The Greens oppose this MOU—we have been really clear on that right throughout—but I do want to stop and acknowledge some of the positive aspects in this MOU. The current MOU is a massive improvement on previous MOUs. It has been made public. I thank the minister for this. It is a really good transparency measure. Government grants, contracts and the budget are all public documents, and I am pleased that this 2022 MOU is also public. You can download it from a website.

The 2013 and 2017 MOUs were not public. Few people knew they existed. Even fewer knew the amounts, the terms and what the government were actually getting for this money. The past funding amounts are extremely hard to find. Of the past eight budgets, I found only one that clearly sets out the funds given to the horseracing industry. I think that in other years the budget funding was in consolidated funds and it was not separately identified. We certainly could not find it, and we looked. Those past MOUs were not public, so you could not simply look at the deals themselves. I recently obtained partial access to those past MOUs under FOI. I am hoping to get full access next week, but so far a third party has objected.

As a result of this forensic research—the current FOI, which is public; the partial MOUs that I obtained under FOI; and one budget reference in the past eight years—I have managed to piece together the funding situation. It looks like, since 2013, over \$100 million of taxpayer funds has been spent or pledged to the racing industry. That is \$100 million with almost no public scrutiny. It did not run through the usual grant or procurement processes that most of our funding goes through. It was done with very little public knowledge. Few knew the amounts or the details, and it is impossible to quantify the actual benefit or the outputs that the public got from that money.

Why does it matter? Without transparency and scrutiny, we do not have accountability. We cannot see that our money is being spent in the public interest. That is why we have FOI legislation. FOI promotes the open discussion of public affairs. It enhances government accountability. It contributes to informed debate. It ensures effective oversight of public expenditure. So I am really, really pleased that the government have done the right thing with this MOU. They have simply published it. No-one will need to trawl through multiple budgets, seeking line items that simply are not there. No-one needs to lodge an FOI request, have partial release and have third-party objections. Everyone can see how their public funds will be spent.

How are those funds being spent? Is it in line with how we are spending our public funds and is it in the public interest? I am not really sure whether Canberrans consider horseracing an art, a sport or some other form of entertainment. But, however you badge it, this funding really is not in step with the way we fund those other activities.

Each year the Brumbies get \$1.8 million. The Raiders get \$2.6 million. The Canberra Capitals and Canberra United get \$1.6 million over four years. Community sport and recreation grant recipients get up to \$10,000 each. Amp It Up! recipients get up to \$45,000. The Canberra horseracing industry get more than the Brumbies, Raiders, Capitals and Canberra United combined. They get 177 times as much as the luckiest Amp It Up! recipient. They get 800 times as much as community sports. Why do they get so much more? I cannot tell you. I do not think it is because they are more important. Most Canberrans cannot remember the name of a single local racehorse, but I bet every single person who lives here could name one local sports team or one local artist.

I want to talk briefly about the betting operations tax. Tax is so dull that people shut down when you start talking about it. My comms officers keep trying to stop me talking about tax; they just find it too dull to discuss. I think that is probably why we have had a few myths spring up around this. I think it is important to get the correct information out there.

The ACT government collects a tax on the racing industry. That tax is not collected from ACT horseracing alone; it comes from golf, rugby, motocross and other sports. There seems to be some confusion about how much of this tax is generated from betting on ACT horseracing, so I asked the Treasurer during estimates. The Treasurer confirmed that, each year, the ACT government collects a tiny amount in wagering tax on ACT horseracing. Some people may have been surprised to hear that. I was not.

The Australian gambling statistics confirm it. ACT horseracing generates less than \$250,000 each year in betting operations tax. The ACT government is giving \$8 million of public funds to that industry each year. Now, \$250,000 of tax for an \$8 million grant is a good deal, but, of course, that is not really how our taxes work. You do not get your tax back.

Tax is spent on services that are in the public interest, like health, education, public housing and the climate crisis. But I have repeatedly heard people say that this tax is a reason to give the industry money. I have heard people say that if we stop funding the industry and they stop paying tax we will be worse off financially. It is simply not true, and it is a very flimsy reason to hand over \$8 million each year and \$100 million in total.

I also want to talk about jobs. Jobs here in the ACT are really important. We are doing well on that front, but we always need to support jobs and we always need to support workers and we always need to make sure that everyone has access to meaningful work. I have also heard people say that we need this MOU to support jobs. I am struggling with that argument too. Thoroughbred Park's wage and salary bill was \$1.675 million last year. That is less than a quarter of the public funds they received. It looks like around 30 FTE jobs to me.

If we spent \$8 million elsewhere, or the \$100 million in total that we have spent and pledged so far, we would make many, many more jobs than that. We could spend it in the public service and make jobs directly. We could make jobs in health, housing or the environment. We could spend it in the arts, which is a sector that famously generates more jobs and a greater return on investment than almost every other sector. We would make many, many more indirect jobs that way. Why do we hand it over to a private sector industry and let them spend one quarter on direct jobs, with vague notions that it is making more elsewhere, untracked?

I have previously noted that the amount of taxpayer money we give to the horseracing industry is around the same amount as they give out in prize money. It looks like we are publicly funding prize money for horseracing. We are certainly not paying for jobs and we are not buying jobs that support the public interest.

Of course, there is an economic impact, and indirect jobs, as a result of the horseracing industry. That is true for any industry and for any use of money. Every business buys equipment, buys stock, needs transport and uses advertising. There are indirect jobs from all of those activities, and this industry is no different. It spends money and it has an economic impact in the ACT. What exactly is this economic impact? It is very unclear. I asked the Treasurer in estimates. He could not tell me either. He did say:

... there is clearly a degree of economic activity. There will be various expectations around modelling of what that economic contribution is. Invariably, those who seek to boost the industry's status will overstate that economic contribution and those who seek to end the industry will seek to understate it ...

My view, for what it is worth, is that the industry tends to overstate the economic contribution.

The Treasurer says that the horseracing industry are likely to be overstating their economic contribution, and I tend to agree because I have seen some pretty high numbers reported but I have not seen much evidence to back the numbers up. The government obviously agrees with this, and that is why the current MOU requires an economic impact report in the first and fourth years. Those reports will cover turnover, employees and visitor attendance. I am really looking forward to seeing these reports. I think they will give us a much clearer picture of what it is Canberra bought for its \$100 million investment in this industry.

But no government hands over funds to an industry purely for the economic impact. If we did that, we would be happy to pay people to smash windows, because repair costs and glaziers are good for the economy. We support the economy whilst also promoting the public interest. We put money into services that the public needs, and we do it in a way that also makes jobs.

We Greens are really concerned about the workers in this industry. We know that transition periods can do real harm to people, lifelong harm, particularly when their industry is not managing the transition well. That is why we have moved to phase out the funding over five years. *(Second speaking period taken.)* We do not think it is in

the public interest to fund this industry at all, but, in order to look after the workers and the animals, we are happy to phase it out rather than cut it off. The horseracing industry are now responsible. They must look after their workers and their animals. They cannot seek endless public money and ask the government to do it for them.

The horseracing industry have been on notice for over a decade that public funds will end. They have not become self-sufficient. In 2011 the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission said that the industry should be self-sufficient. The commission said that, if the horseracing industry is given public funds—if—it should be for a limited period of time. The horseracing industry have been given three five-year MOUs—15 years. This is incredibly generous. They have not used this time and this \$100 million to become a self-sufficient industry. They have simply asked for more public funding and for endless public funding. Last year Thoroughbred Park's total revenue was \$12.5 million. They received an ACT government distribution of \$6.6 million. They are half-funded by the ACT government.

Canberrans understand that we publicly fund schools, hospitals, housing and the environment, but why are we publicly funding a racecourse? How is this racecourse a public service? I understand that the industry is in distress. We have all read about workers compensation claims from accidents in training and on the track, we have read about liability insurance and premiums going up, we have read about the difficulty they are finding in making their business model pay, and we have read that they are finding it difficult to attract young people to join the industry, both as workers and as an audience. I understand that.

It looks like a transition period to me, and we are asking them to make a sensible transition. They should not and they will not get public funding forever. If enough people love watching horseracing then enough people will pay for it. If not, why is the ACT government paying for it? It is not the job of government to prop up a business model like this indefinitely.

Budget decisions are about priorities. They are about what is in the public interest and they are also about process. They are about transparency; they are about how we make those decisions. We usually make decisions like this in certain, specific ways. We do grants, we do procurements and we follow ordinary budget cycles. It is very unusual to do a series of five-year deals. It is extremely unusual to do a series of five-year deals that were not made public. At least this one now is public. These sorts of deals should be really well scrutinised and they also need to be really, really clear about the public benefit they are delivering. Public money is for the public benefit. What benefit is this?

We are hearing on a daily and weekly basis about all of the crises that we are dealing with. We know that we have a housing affordability crisis. We know that we have a climate crisis. We have declared these situations. We have a pandemic, and emergency procedures have been operating for a really long time. We have got all of these major problems and we need to spend our public money on these really pressing public interest matters. When did we declare that Canberra was suffering from a horseracing crisis?

It is really up to the other members in here to decide if this funding meets their tests or whether it is in the public interest. I certainly think this MOU and this particular budget line item meet the transparency and scrutiny tests. The previous ones did not. This one does. We at least know what the money is, we know where it is and we know how much it is. This particular decision has at least been made with integrity and openness and there has certainly been public debate.

But what is the public benefit that Canberra is getting for this public funding? I think most people will have seen the Riotact poll recently. Three in four Canberrans do not think this money is in the public interest. They think that the social licence for horseracing has run out and they do not understand why we keep handing over millions of dollars year on year.

This amendment proposes to reduce the funding by 20 per cent. Next year I will propose to reduce the funding by 40 per cent. It is time to phase out this funding deal. It is time to stop public funding for the horseracing industry. I commend the amendment to the Assembly.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (4.51): This is an extraordinary situation and it would be farcical if it were not such a serious breach of the fundamental certainty and stability of our Westminster system! We have an amendment to the budget brought on by a Greens backbencher—a Greens backbencher who, for all intents and purposes, is a government backbencher, given the Labor-Greens coalition we have here in the ACT.

What will be exceedingly interesting is to see how Mr Rattenbury votes on this amendment. But of course we already got a preview on budget night. Mr Rattenbury, the ACT Greens leader, the Attorney-General in the Barr-Rattenbury government and a member of the government's Expenditure Review Committee, indicated on budget night that he would not support Mr Barr's budget in full. This is the budget that Mr Rattenbury helped create around the ERC table, and the Greens party would move to vote against certain items of expenditure.

At the time I outlined in the chamber that the extraordinary announcement by Mr Rattenbury on budget night could lead us to three possible outcomes: the Greens capitulate to their Labor political puppet masters and their principles go out the window; the government accepts the Greens amendment, admitting that the Greens call all the shots in their power-sharing agreement after all; or the Greens vote against the budget and it fails to pass. And now we find ourselves here, with an amendment by the Greens backbench on the table for debate. How will the Labor members vote? How will Mr Rattenbury vote? If the Greens vote down on this amendment but pass the budget, does it not confirm that it was all grandstanding? Where will the Greens actually draw the line?

The Greens amendment is contrary to the parliamentary and governing agreement to which all Labor and Greens MLAs are signatories. The agreement requires Labor and Greens MLAs to "guarantee support for the passage of appropriation bills" and to "agree to work together as a cabinet and a government". Is this what we are

witnessing right now—Labor and the Greens working together as a cabinet and a government to pass the budget? If this is what they call it, I would hate to see the opposite. Guarantee of supply is fundamental to stable government. What we are witnessing today, and since the Treasurer delivered his budget, is anything but. This is a hopelessly dysfunctional government.

I would ask the Chief Minister, through you Mr Assistant Speaker Cain: is Mr Rattenbury continuing in his role on the ERC? The ERC is made up of three members, of which Mr Rattenbury is one, who consider all expenditure, revenue, capital, savings and investment proposals. How can Mr Rattenbury continue in that role and how does Mr Barr trust Mr Rattenbury to continue in that role? The principle of cabinet solidarity, the bedrock of our Westminster system, has been totally undermined by this move from the Greens. How embarrassing for the Chief Minister that he cannot rely on or control the junior party in his uneasy power-sharing agreement.

Only days ago Mr Barr valiantly fought for Mr Rattenbury and told this Assembly what a wonderful minister he is. Even if, as Mr Barr has indicated, he does not care and he is not affected by this move by the Greens, how on earth does he trust the Greens after this, when he knows, and the Greens know, that the opposition will vote for this budget item and both Mr Barr and Mr Rattenbury can rest easy? The mere fact that Mr Barr needs—not gets but needs—the votes from the opposition to pass his budget in full is a complete and utter embarrassment. Make no mistake.

What then for the next budget? What will the Greens hold this government to ransom on next? The true test of the Greens' principles will be whether they pull the same stunt on an item of expenditure where they know that there is no guarantee that the opposition will support it. What this move by the Greens, and indeed the Labor response to this move by the Greens, proves very clearly is that both Labor and the Greens will do whatever it takes to retain their tenuous grip on power. It is Canberrans that pay the price for this.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.57): There are stakeholders, there are key workers in the racing industry, who have communicated with me in the last 10 minutes who watched Ms Clay's speech and who are absolutely gobsmacked. One of them said, "What does she mean?" I will sit down and talk to some people afterwards.

In every other jurisdiction of Australia the Greens are a protest party. In every other part of Australia the Greens are a fringe party that carp on the sidelines about what the adults should be doing. This is the only place in the country where this group of people have been given this much power and this is why it is so dangerous. The Greens have a vision of how all of us should live, of the pastimes that we should enjoy and the way that we should go about our lives, and they wish to stop the rest of us doing the things that give us joy if those things do not align with their values.

Horseracing is actually a part of the fabric of Australia, whether Ms Clay likes it or not. It is a part of who we are as a nation—so much so that when the Albanese government chose 10 everyday Australians to attend the funeral of Her Majesty the Queen, among those chosen was Chris Waller, the trainer of Winx.

The Greens' ideological war on this line of spending completely ignores any of the historical context of the funding. It completely ignores the fact that horseracing was funded largely from an agreed percentage of turnover through ACTTAB, when the betting operator was owned by the ACT government. It completely ignores the fact that when the government sold ACTTAB to Tabcorp there was a steadfast promise on funding. We have mentioned it in here before. Brendan Smyth, at that stage, was the spokesperson for these matters for the Liberals. He asked the government at the time, "Does this mean that, sneakily, you could withdraw the funding?" They said, "No; don't be ridiculous, Brendan. Don't be ridiculous. As if we would cease this funding! This is a part of Canberra."

At a time when this government's coffers are being bolstered enormously by the point of consumption gaming tax—a tax which has just been severely increased by this government—it is ludicrous to suggest that some of that money should not be distributed back to the racing codes. Ms Clay ridiculously asserts that the only money that is going to wages from this appropriation is the amount of money that the race club spends on wages. She knows that that is not true. It has been pointed out to her on a number of occasions.

When I came into this place there was hue and cry from government benchers because, as the shadow minister for racing, I had a five per cent share in a very slow racehorse. There was a suggestion that I would somehow be able to get personal gain from my role as the shadow minister for racing. The ethics adviser agreed with me at the time that this was ludicrous.

What I need to explain is that that the horse in question was Agrionius. We called him Max. He won seven races in a couple of years, which is pretty good going. I believe his total prize money was around \$67,000. So, as owners, did we make a profit? Did we make a profit from that? What do you think? Of course we did not. We finished behind. That money went into paying training fees, riding fees. It paid wages for strappers. It paid for the vet, it paid for the admin staff at the vet's office, it paid for the farrier, it paid for the horse dentist, it paid for the transport company and it paid for fuel. That money ultimately could have been considered a part of this appropriation. It went into supporting the hundreds of jobs that are built around the racing industry.

The vast majority of those involved in the racing industry in this town are minimum wage battlers. They are battlers. They are salt of the earth people who often are working a number of jobs to try to pay the rent and to try to put food on the table. These are the people who would be hurt if indeed this amendment was passed. These are the people who would be hurt. What the Greens are saying to those minimum wage, hardworking battlers is that they do not care about their jobs. Jobs have already been lost because of the virtue signalling that has gone on in this space. The jobs of fair dinkum battlers will continue to be lost, simply because the Greens have a vision of Australia which does not line up with the vision shared by the majority of the nation.

My message from the people in the suburbs of Canberra to the Greens is this: we understand that the Greens are not fans of racing. Okay; we get that. We understand that the Greens are not fans of Summernats, that you are not fans of cooking a steak

on a gas barbecue, you are not fans of wood fires, you are not fans of four-wheel drives and you do not like Ford Mustangs. We understand that the Greens hate the Australian flag. We understand that. We get that. But you know what? We quite like most of those things and we would like you to leave them the hell alone.

The Canberra Liberals stand alongside all those in the racing community and steadfastly support this line of spending. We would suggest that, as I have in a recent motion in this place, like virtually every other jurisdiction in Australia we should also attribute a portion of the point of consumption gaming tax back to the racing codes.

I have to refer to the ridiculous argument that Ms Clay brings up time and again. She insists that all this should be based on just the component of ACT racing. The fact of the matter is that New South Wales makes a fair bit of money on ACT racing. Queensland makes a fair bit of money on ACT racing. The Northern Territory makes a fair bit of money on ACT racing. The only way that you can genuinely assess this is to assess the total turnover on thoroughbred racing. You cannot break it down at a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction level. That would just be ludicrous. Should we be chasing Queensland for our share of the money that they have made on our races? It is ridiculous.

Let it be known that this community is absolutely galvanised. They know that if the Greens have their way there will be no thoroughbred racing. Ultimately, people in the equestrian community know that if the Greens have their way there would be no equestrian sport. There are a lot of things that would change if the Greens had their way. They know that there would certainly be no harness racing. They are not going to take it. We are in no way, shape or form supporting this amendment.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (5.04): I rise to speak in support of the appropriation for Justice and Community Safety and against the amendment which has been moved by Ms Clay, and which Labor does not support.

One of the many undertakings in performing my ministerial duties in the portfolio is horseracing policy. In the ACT the racing industry comprises two clubs, the Canberra Racing Club, located at Thoroughbred Park, and the Canberra Harness Racing Club, located at EPIC.

Historically, the ACT government has provided funding certainty for the industry through a memorandum of understanding. At the 2020 election, ACT Labor promised to negotiate in good faith with the clubs for the establishment of a new memorandum of understanding. This decision was made with careful consideration of how a renewed MOU would help to better regulate and manage the industry going forward.

On 1 July 2022, we delivered on that commitment, when I signed a new MOU with the Canberra Racing Club and the Canberra Harness Racing Club. Under the MOU, the government agreed to provide funding every year to the racing clubs from July 2022 to 30 June 2027.

The funding estimates for the racing clubs from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2027 are as follows: \$7.946 million for the first year; then it increases above that, out to 2027.

Indexation is set at CPI minus 0.5 per cent, in accordance with the government's response to the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission.

The percentage breakup of the funding appropriation was agreed between the racing clubs. It is 85.72 per cent for the Canberra Racing Club and 14.28 per cent for the Canberra Harness Racing Club. As I indicated earlier, this investment ensures that the clubs agree to meet a range of expectations under a performance framework regarding industry management. This includes animal welfare obligations, integrity, ongoing viability, governance, accountability and efficiency of the industry.

Under the MOU the clubs are required to inform the ACT government of an integrity-related complaint being made or a breach occurring within 30 days, once the club is made aware of the complaint or breach. A breach includes any incident that occurs at a racing meeting or event held by the club, or an activity undertaken by the board or an employee of the club at any time where community standards were called into question regarding the integrity of the racing industry. These provisions include corruption, consorting, cheating, horse doping, race fixing and extortion, as well as the use and abuse of drugs and banned substances.

The initial report is also required to be followed by a final report after 90 days, outlining the policies and procedures implemented by the clubs to ensure that a similar integrity-related breach does not occur again. Under the MOU the clubs are also required to provide information to the government on efforts undertaken to increase revenue through existing income streams. They have to disclose if efforts to increase revenue are not apparent, and the clubs must provide a reason, and the actions they will take to advance diversification of their current income pool.

Another important aspect of the agreement is that the clubs are required to develop new external income streams to support sustainability and their longevity. The clubs are also required to participate in the new Joint Racing Industry and Government Committee, the JRIGC. This is not an opportunity for additional funding; it is a mechanism for the clubs and government to achieve a range of different discussions, including those around animal welfare, and consulting key racing industry groups on their issues and issues raised by the government.

To further strengthen the industry locally, the clubs have agreed to participate in the development of an ACT racehorse traceability framework, in consultation with the ACT government, through the JRIGC, by the end of the MOU term. The racing clubs are each also required to fund an independent economic impact report in the first and fourth year of the MOU term to measure the economic impact that the industries have on the territory. These reports will inform whether the level of government funding is appropriate.

In addition to our framework, the racing clubs are required to adhere to the Australian rules of racing and the local rules of racing, which contain provisions about rehoming and retraining retired horses, aimed at ensuring their ongoing welfare. This strengthened framework and ongoing commitments under the MOU ensure that Canberra's local racing industry is being well managed, is being well regulated and is sustainable.

We recognise that the Canberra community has high expectations for safe and well-regulated racing in return for this public investment. That is why we have moved to provide these additional requirements as part of the MOU, which we have published.

The Canberra Liberals clearly do not support this amendment, and there has never really been any question about whether this would be supported in the Assembly. It clearly does not have the support of the Assembly. The hyperbole from the opposition, including from Ms Lee, is a little bit ridiculous. It is clearly not going to be supported in the Assembly. The Labor Party certainly will not be supporting it in the vote today.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 6

Mr Braddock
Ms Clay
Ms Davidson
Mr Davis
Mr Rattenbury
Ms Vassarotti

Noes 18

Mr Barr	Ms Lee
Ms Berry	Mr Milligan
Ms Burch	Ms Orr
Mr Cain	Mr Parton
Ms Castley	Dr Paterson
Ms Cheyne	Mr Pettersson
Mr Cocks	Mr Steel
Mr Hanson	Ms Stephen-Smith
Mrs Kikkert	
Ms Lawder	

Amendment negatived.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (5.14): Now that that matter has been resolved, I will speak briefly about a pathway forward.

I noted in that debate very strongly held views on either side of the debate. I want to take the opportunity now to reiterate what I have already said publicly about a pathway forward for this industry that will mean it will be less reliant on public funding into the future. That is very clearly through the utilisation, and the better utilisation, of its land endowment.

Again, there is no secret that the racing club has been preparing a proposal in relation to renewal of the facility and the potential surrender of some of its land for alternative purposes that would generate revenue for the racing club and potentially provide opportunity for land for housing and other purposes within that precinct. That is the pathway forward. It is the only viable pathway forward to reduce the industry's reliance on public funding, and to ensure that it has a stable revenue stream into the future.

Mr Parton: And the harness racing?

MR BARR: The racing club has been talking with harness racing about these opportunities, and potential co-location. It is not resolved, but it is a potential opportunity.

The government's intent is to work with the relevant stakeholders to see whether an outcome can be achieved. It is not guaranteed, but we will endeavour to do so. It would be our intent to ensure that, out of a potential outcome that provides that funding certainty for the racing industry and reduces its reliance on taxpayer funding, there would be a benefit for the community, and that benefit could be realised through more land for housing.

I believe that there is an opportunity. The government intends to pursue it. I have already made all of these statements publicly, but I absolutely reconfirm that this is our pathway forward from here. Assembly members should not be surprised when different elements of this proposal and this work come before them in the various forms that it would do through future budgets, potential Territory Plan variations, and ways to achieve a dual outcome.

I thank members for their contributions on this particular matter, and acknowledge the passionate views that are held. We will endeavour to find a way through this that will achieve an outcome for everyone.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.17): I want to touch briefly on two disappointments in this allocation. They are certainly issues that arose during estimates.

It is pretty clear that recidivism is a significant focus, policy-wise, of the Attorney-General. We have heard a lot about this over several years, including the 25by2025 policy, in which the Attorney-General committed to reducing recidivism by 25 per cent by 2025, to 31.7 per cent. However, it is most disappointing that, as at 30 June this year, only \$57 million of the \$132 million to be invested by 2025 has been spent. So there will be quite a rush of expenditure going forward, and I look forward to seeing what that will entail and capture.

Funding for reintegration pathways was cut by nearly \$40 million in capital funding in 2021-22, and no further funding has been allocated. Further, the purpose-built reintegration centre at AMC has also received no funding in this budget. That is most disappointing. I do question the government's strength of commitment to this policy of reducing recidivism, and I will be monitoring the progress of their expenditure from here on.

Something else of great concern that had a very personal impact was to do with the quality of court recordings in the Supreme Court, in the court system. As I mentioned during estimates, a victim of domestic violence came into my office and told a story of atrocious behaviour by the accused and guilty party—the perpetrator of domestic violence—in the witness box during sentencing. This perpetrator, looking directly at the camera, and knowing that the victim was watching, in another isolated area, made very threatening gestures with their hands—gestures indicating that harm was meant for someone. I think we can guess who that was harm was meant for.

On seeing this, the victim, and also a friend in the court, on seeing this, went to the DPP and said, "Did you see that behaviour? Surely, that should go to sentencing?" Yes, it should go to sentencing; yet, when the DPP examined the video recording, it was of such a poor quality that it was unusable.

This victim had communicated their concerns to the Attorney-General's office, as well as to me. My response was to have a meeting with her and pass on this story, as I am now. There was no response from the Attorney-General's office. It somehow got lost in the emails.

Again, on the budgetary theme, surely, a recording of atrocious behaviour in a witness box in an ACT court should be of such quality that it will count as evidence in any related litigation or appeal. Surely, that would be the case. But it is not so here.

What I got from the Attorney-General was the statement that the quality, he was advised, was reasonably high. Certainly, it was not in this case. There was no commitment. "We have a camera in the court"; that was the response. It is very disappointing that, even knowing this some time ago now, there has been no commitment to improving the quality of recording in the court system, or even the number of cameras, when something like this, that touches a human life so deeply and disturbingly, is not addressed; given that this may be, sadly, a frequent occurrence, if the quality of recording is bad in one case, I wonder what it is like in others.

Again, I am speaking about two things to which the government seems to have a strong commitment that has not been translated into real action by way of the required spending to implement that action.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (5.23): Tonight I want to speak about the police appropriation in this budget.

I want to start by sending a message of thanks, support and respect to our police. They do a very demanding job. They are asked by the community to do jobs that are usually difficult and all-too-often dangerous. That is why they deserve our acknowledgement and respect. That is why they deserve every ounce of support that we could possibly provide. It is also why we are disappointed by the support offered by this government, not just in terms of financial support but legislative support, policy support and moral support. Many feel, as I do, that the ideology of ministers and the rights of perpetrators are taking precedence over the rights of police and their victims. That is not right. It is not fair. It does not make our community safer.

Now I am not asserting that as an opinion. This is what the facts and the people on the front line are telling us. I will start with the facts. According to the Productivity Commission Report on Government Services, the ACT has the lowest number of police per-capita in Australia, the lowest funding per person for police in Australia, the lowest clearance rates for property crime in Australia and the lowest satisfaction of people who had contact with police in Australia. According to police, there were almost 1,700 hundred cars stolen since July last year, and over 940 breaches of bail by offenders for the first half of the year, placing the territory on target to record the highest number of breaches in history.

That is a woeful record from this government. A record that lies not with the police. It is not their fault. The fault lies solely with the government. The police are trying to do everything they can with the resources they are given. If you do not believe me, listen to what the frontline police, through their association, are saying. Let me quote from the AFPA:

Our members are burnt out. We are concerned about the welfare of our members. The ACT government spends the least amount on police officers in Australia.

Also this:

I would argue that ACT policing have been under-resourced for some time. The frustration coming from the membership at the moment is that ACT Policing is, let us face it, a pretty light on police force by Australian standards, and by worldwide standards.

And this:

The association has been continuously drawing the government's attention to under-resourcing, both for staff and infrastructure, for a number of years.

The question we are asking, Madam Speaker, and the question the police are asking, and the question the public is asking is, when will this government start listening to the officers on the ground?

We can see the results in the work police now have to do, conducting record numbers of operations against repeat offenders. In fact, a new task force, that we have been talking about in the Chamber, has had to be formed to deal with this. It is called TORIC, the Targeting of Recidivists in Canberra. A recent report on TORIC outlined the offenders, and said, "Many are regulars on the ACT court lists, persistent bail breach offenders, and with a list of priors which would fill a police notebook. It is little surprise that breach of bail offences year to date in the ACT are running at an all-time high."

And on bail breaches, another *Canberra Times* report stated:

At the current rate of bail breach arrests and charges by police - running at an average of more than two a day - that previous high mark will be exceeded by almost 30 per cent by the end of the year.

It is probably worth noting amongst those horrific statistics that in this Chamber this week the Attorney-General refused to have an independent review into bail. He thinks the system is obviously working so well. As I said, the current rate of bail breaches and charges by police are running at an average of more than two a day, the previous high mark will be exceeded by almost 30 per cent by the end of the year. In the same article, the Justice and Community Services directorate said it was:

... unable to generate any comparative systemic data, presenting the argument that it could not do so because the system it used was "very data-rich".

Well it is simple. They want the facts; they need to talk to the police.

Then, Madam Speaker, are the attacks on our police that they are being subjected to, often by offenders on bail or repeat offenders after release. This has led to an understandable belief that police do their job, only to have the system let them down. I moved to change the bail laws this term to that effect, and it was disappointing that was not supported. This has led to the Police Association, through the tireless work of Alex Caruana and Troy Roberts, to make the extraordinary call for the Attorney-General to be stood down. As reported by the *Canberra Times* on 16 August:

The police association has delivered its most stinging rebuke yet of ACT Attorney General Shane Rattenbury, calling on him to “stop pursuing political ideologies” ...

The AFPA said the Attorney-General should put the “welfare of the ACT community and ACT Policing members above that of serial criminals”.

“ACT Policing are doing their job in trying conditions, and clearly without the support of the judiciary and the Attorney-General,” he said.

“Policing is risky enough without having recidivist offenders on bail, intensive correction orders, or suspended sentences trying to mow them down while they commit further offences,” ...

As bad as that is, that is before we get to very real and tragic stories of the victims. I will finally remind members of the real cost we are talking about. The real victims of these crimes. I quote Tom McLuckie:

It is four months since my son died in the crash in the photo. Since then, I have researched in detail the justice system approach in regards to its bail processes, sentencing, and use of community-based orders. Of the 69 reported offences since my son’s death, through ACT Policing media we have the following. Many of them involved purposeful and deliberate driving at police or driving up the wrong side of a major thoroughfare. Of the 69 offences reported, we have 17 bail breaches and 13 breaches of good behaviour, parole, or intensive corrections orders. In some case we are dealing with orders being breached up to 10 times. That is 43 per cent of offenders reoffending despite these conditions.

Madam Speaker, we should all take a moment to consider these stories and facts when we talk about police in our society. We should think of the McLuckie family, and so many others. We should think of the voices of so many of our police.

I would like to make the point, in response to yesterday at question time. The Chief Minister intimated that the petitions from Tom McLuckie were calling for US style judiciary appointment, US style police forces, mandatory sentences and so on. That is not true. That is not what the petition has called for. It was disingenuous to make that assertion. Just as it was when the Attorney-General suggested that the community, the police, and the Opposition calling for a review into bail was a suggestion that we thought that no one should ever be released on bail. I think it is important, and we can have our views on these matters, but when you have petitions signed by 7,500 people you accurately reflect what is actually said in those petitions.

It is also pretty disgraceful, and I do not know what Mr Braddock is going to say today. But for him to say, as he has previously, that having more police will result in more crime. He has made that statement in this place before. That has not been received well by the police I think it is fair to say. The thought that we would have more police on the street, that leads to more crime. It might actually lead to more offenders being apprehended. I would agree with that. but it is not itself a cause of crime.

It is also unbelievable that Minister Gentleman refuses to allow more police on our streets. I remind you that this is a government, and you may have been the minister back then, Madam Speaker, I cannot quite recall, in 2013—it might have been you, who cut \$15 million of funding from the ACT Policing budget. They are still paying the price of that.

It is quite extraordinary members that we are the only party in this place that truly respects our police and will give them the support they need. Our city is facing very difficult, complex, and dangerous challenges. We have been through some very tough years. *(Second speaking period taken.)*

It is a difficult dangerous job. We should be doing everything we can to support our police. But it is evident that this government is not.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (5.34): I rise to speak briefly in this debate on a number of issues under the JACS umbrella, and among them, residential tenancy changes. These are the changes that the Real Estate Institute, many private investors, a number of community advocates and of course the Canberra Liberals believe will make rental properties harder to come by and more expensive, and ultimately will lead to some extremely bad outcomes.

There are around 12,000 public and social housing properties in the rental pie here in the ACT and more than 40,000 private rentals. I think that too often this government forgets that the vast majority of rental properties in the ACT—if we consider the whole pie, 80 per cent of them—are provided by private investors.

Without sufficient private investors in the market, the entire market collapses, in that there are just not enough homes for renters. They are forced to either become homeless or move somewhere else. Ultimately there are a bunch of renters who are planning to buy. So some of them may be able to get on that home ownership merry-go-round themselves, but the changes that are being mooted impact so heavily on those at the lower end who will never buy, who will never buy, who will always be renting. Some because they choose that, and some because they do not have the means to buy and never will. They are the ones who are impacted.

When it comes to the causes of rental affordability in the ACT—I wanted to refer to some comments made by Tom Leahy on the Riotact last month. Now I do not know who Tom is, I have no idea. He commented on one of the stories on Riotact late in September. I liked the quote. I do not know if I will contact Tom and let him know I that have read out his quote.

He said, “Why don’t we start talking about the real cause? Rental properties are predominantly supplied by property investors. Governments cannot afford to supply sufficient properties, so they rely on private investment. Private investors have invested in property to gain capital appreciation to build wealth and create financial security for their future. In the current environment, investors are seen as greedy money grabbers. The ACT government has seen them as unlimited cash cows. So over the past 10 years land rates have increased substantially, land tax has been increased significantly, body corporate fees for unit owners have also increased, and tenancy legislation has moved significantly in favour of tenant’s rights. So with all these costs, restrictions on removal of problems tenants, what would a sane investor do?” says Tom.

“They sell up and save themselves a monumental headache. How does that impact the rental market?” says Tom. “Simple, less properties to rent. Less properties means less supply. It doesn’t mean less demand. And with solid demand for less properties, tenants compete to secure a rental. That competition leads to increased rents and that places a burden on those less fortunate, the tenants that cannot afford to buy. What is the solution? Stop making it harder to be a landlord. In fact, we should be making it easier for investors to supply property. The more we increase supply, the more demand is met. The less competition there is for the available properties in regard to the rental market. Then focus on reducing the cost. Once you have increased supply and reduced costs, the demand on individual properties falls and the result at market will lead to rents falling”. That is Tom’s thoughts, in the Riotact.

My view is the residential tenancy changes that come under this portfolio umbrella, or are coming, are being led by this Greens minister, will result in more investors leaving the market. And that will result ultimately in homelessness. The government’s own research, Madam Speaker, indicates that is the case. The government’s own research basically says that this will result in investors leaving the market, before they have even been implemented. So again, I just wanted to raise my concern, because I know there has been a lot of work done under this portfolio umbrella. And there is more work to be done. Certainly the Liberals have great concerns.

I have to again raise the enormous concern that I have at the minister’s insistence we rollout significant changes that he is pursuing in the gaming space. We have already spoken about the Greens attempts to shut down racing in the ACT today. You could be forgiven, Madam Speaker, for believing that the Greens, through this minister, want to shut down the club sector.

When Mr Rattenbury took over this portfolio, I had faith; I genuinely believed he was a man who would consult, who would listen and who, despite his political colours, would be a genuine pragmatist who could work through this complex space and come out the other end with something that was workable. But I do not think that is going to happen. Mr Rattenbury is well aware that his planned legislation is flawed, as evidenced by him dropping the timing of the first tranche of this legislation. The work that the government has done on this legislation is flawed in that the cost estimates for the changes that would be required are a mile out of whack. I think the government knows that. I also suspect the minister is well aware that his pie in the sky idea of who is going to fund all of this is just a complete fairy tale.

In Estimates, we had a bit of toing and froing over the \$5 bet limit that is at the centre of these changes. The minister conceded that he had no idea what percentage of bets in the ACT are above the \$5 level. So, indeed, there could be none. There could be no bets over \$5. What ever happened to evidence-based decisions?

The minister, in answer to some of my questions, shared with us the public survey done in 2019, in which the government asked Canberrans what they thought the maximum bet level should be. So these were just the Canberrans who responded to this survey. Probably quite a number of them had never set foot in a gaming area, but it does not matter, I mean, you have to ask everybody. The 2019 ACT Gambling Survey examined attitudes towards maximum bet limits on electronic gaming machines. For those who believed the bet limit should be changed, the average suggested limit was \$6.92. That is a little bit tough to go with. So we have ended up at \$5, because this group of Canberrans believed that the maximum bet limit should be \$6.92, which is going to go to the nearest sensible number. And that is your evidence.

Do you we know how many people bet above this limit? No, have not got a clue. Have not got a clue. But all those people out there, they said, go with about \$6.92. They said, "All right. Okay. We will roll that out. Let us go with it".

Can you imagine, dare I say it, if we ran a survey asking the people of Canberra what the salary of an MLA should be? Imagine if we did that! And if indeed the consensus was, about \$36,000, is that what we would go with? I am just asking. I am just asking.

I would hope that serious consultation continues in this area between clubs and the minister. I have already noted that this issue is so galvanizing that it has brought the two warring clubs groups together. I would urge those club groups, and individual clubs, to engage with their Labor members in particular, because you know that on this side of the Chamber we know what is going on. You know that we are across what is happening. You know the Greens, by the looks of what is going on, want to close the doors. I mean, I do not know, maybe after you have dealt with horse racing. So get in the ear of your Labor member and see if you can bring the CLAG unstuck. Because these changes are not going to work, as flagged by the minister. There is no way that they will work.

In closing, and I know we have covered this, but I just wanted to say, in closing, I find it bizarre that this week in Canberra we had that purely ideological virtue signalling debate about horse racing. Over the border in New South Wales they are preparing for the Kosciusko this weekend. It is the world's richest race exclusively for country trained horses. So in the cities and country towns up and down the eastern seaboard they are preparing to cheer home the winner of the Kosciusko. In Sydney they are opening up their hotels and restaurants and bars to take advantage of all of the benefits that come from such a massive event. While that is happening in Sydney, Melbourne is rolling out the Spring Racing Carnival. The Cox Plate is on next weekend at Mooney Valley. The majority of the nation will stop on the first Tuesday of November when the gates fly for the two-mile handicap that we know as the Melbourne Cup.

I wanted to note that the rest of Australia is getting on with the job of being Australia and they are laughing at us!

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.43): Talking to the JACS elements of the appropriation, I will address, firstly, corrections. The Greens want to create a safe, healthy and connected community by building communities, not prisons. This vision is to ensure that we keep our community safe by preventing and reducing crime, by focusing attention on reducing recidivism. We believe in a smarter approach to the criminal justice system.

I note with concern the continued challenges at the AMC in preparing detainees for release back into the community. Despite repeated committee inquiries, recommendations and debates in this place, we are yet to see a meaningful increase in the use of the transitional release centre. The continued over-classification of detainee security risk mean that detainees are ineligible to access the TRC or the Transitional Release Program. This directly impacts on their ability to successfully reintegrate into the community.

It should be remembered that there are approximately 400 people detained at the AMC at any point in time, and that the TRC only has a capacity in the range of 15 to 20 beds. We are only addressing a small proportion of detainees who are released each and every year. The reintegration centre was planned to have a capacity of up to 60 beds. It is time that we progressed this initiative to help those leaving the AMC to be in the best possible position to successfully return to the community.

I agree with the estimates view that, given budget commitments to build a reintegration centre were made several budgets ago, and the ongoing delays that it has faced, we need to be clear as to when we can expect the reintegration centre to become a reality.

I also want to reiterate the importance that, here in the ACT, as a human rights jurisdiction, the human rights of detainees are respected. This is dependent on a correctional services culture that puts human rights at the centre of every decision. This needs to percolate through all levels of the staff structure, so that the human rights of detainees are upheld in a vulnerable environment, such as a prison.

Another program that I would like to see advanced is the needle exchange program in the AMC. We know that drug use is happening, and that unsafe needle use can lead to the spread of bloodborne viruses. We know that needle exchange programs keep drug users and those around them safe. A program like this, which keeps both detainees and staff safe, is important and acknowledges the reality of the complex entanglement of drug use and crime. Therefore this program should not be forgotten or left off the agenda.

Moving on to police and emergency services, firstly, on behalf of the ACT Greens, I would like to thank our first responders and everyone who works in the police and emergency services and who contribute to making Canberra a safer community. As everyone else runs from danger, they run towards it. That should be acknowledged and they should be thanked.

Talking about ambulances first, I would note that ambulance fees are an issue that warrants further inquiry going forward. Financial considerations should not apply when a purely medical decision is required—that being whether or not one needs an

ambulance. There are significant parts of our community who do not have to worry about the cost of an ambulance—those lucky enough to have private health insurance or those who meet a range of circumstances where the ambulance fee is waived. But there is a significant proportion of our community for whom the outlay for an ambulance weighs heavily on their minds when deciding whether to call for one, wasting valuable time during which their condition may deteriorate, worsening their medical prognosis, prolonging recovery times, causing more stress when the bill arrives, and eventually costing the health system more in the long run.

We are a human rights jurisdiction in the ACT. There do, however, appear to be challenges in ensuring that the human rights of people who are detained by the ACT police are maintained. I note the announcement in the government response to the estimates committee's recommendation No 83:

The ACT Government has been advised that the AFP Operational Safety Committee will undertake an internal review into the use of spit hoods.

I welcome such a review, and I look forward to seeing its outcome. I do question whether the review will consider detainees' human rights or whether it is compliant with the UN optional protocol to the prevention of torture.

I note recent announcements that the Queensland police, following a similar review, determined that alternative measures were sufficient to keep police officers safe. I note that New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmanian and South Australian police have all decided to do away with spit hoods and that they can keep their police officers safe via other measures.

Even the remainder of the AFP do not use spit hoods; only the ACT Policing division does. I repeat the question: why do the ACT police see the need to use spit hoods when all of these other jurisdictions and police forces do not?

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (5.49): I rise today to comment on the emergency services provisions in the budget—or, should I say, the lack of provisions, because this budget does not promise much, and delivers even less, for the hardworking ACT emergency services personnel.

Our emergency services have been waiting for the employment of new staff and the upgrading and building of new facilities. Unfortunately, they will have to wait for another year. “Expect”, “intend”, and “intention”: these are the words scattered throughout Mr Gentleman's responses to a variety of questions taken on notice during estimates. They reflect the moving feast that is the money that will be, hopefully, one day spent on this portfolio.

Let me begin by quickly reviewing what we know so far about the promised upgrades for the Joint Emergency Services Centre in Gungahlin. The 2021-22 budget promised to deliver the upgrade, beginning last year. However, only a small proportion of the funding was spent, with the large bulk of it, \$6 million, pushed out to next year. In response to a question on notice, the minister stated that only next year could the people of Gungahlin expect to see the ACT SES and ACT RFS relocate out of the current facility to make way for the upgrades.

The Acton fire station, previously promised to be operational during this budget year, is still in the development stage, with funding for construction phased out for another two years. We can no doubt expect the same for the Molonglo emergency services centre, which continues to be in the planning phase. There is, of course, the major promise of funding—sometime in the future, though—announced in this year's budget. But that will no doubt go the way of the Acton station and the Gungahlin JESC—lots of promises, yet still waiting on delivery.

The minister also intends to recruit new firefighters, which is wonderful to hear, to fulfil their promise of an additional 99. In a question taken on notice, the minister mentioned that 70 had graduated, but he did not state how many had been employed.

However, the issue of most concern is how we support our existing emergency services personnel. The budget did not give specific breakdowns of spending on support for mental health, particularly those suffering from PTSD amongst our emergency services workers.

With respect to the programs and initiatives that have been identified that focus on the mental health of emergency services workers, I have two questions: is it enough? And is it effective? Firstly, is the spending enough to address the problem? Volunteer levels have been decreasing since 2018, yet the government has not investigated whether this could be due to PTSD or mental health concerns amongst emergency services personnel. This is just one example of the potential underlying problem in emergency services, yet the government has not committed to investigating the scale of the problem and whether there is enough being spent.

Secondly, is the spending effective? The estimates hearings revealed several ways in which emergency services workers could slip through the cracks. One example is redeployment. A drop in remuneration from leaving shiftwork can force emergency services workers to make a difficult decision between redeploying to support recovery and retaining the income that their families rely on. The government pointed to compensation as a potential solution. The question I would like answered is: how long does it take for emergency services workers to get their claims approved, and what can the ACT government do in the meantime to support them?

All of this points to the need for more clarity on the scale of the issue and greater research into the effectiveness of interventions. We need a targeted, focused approach to spending on mental health for emergency services personnel which critically examines whether the initiatives proposed are truly doing enough.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (5.54): I rise to speak about the state of corrections in the ACT. Over the past year the government have made initial improvements in mental health supports for corrections officers, following my motion in August 2021. In that motion I called for the government to enhance wellbeing and mental health support. They have now engaged a specialist counsellor with a background in corrections to counsel corrections officers. The subsequent announcement this year of \$12 million to improve conditions and the workplace culture of the AMC is welcome, and I look forward to seeing this money spent wisely.

I welcome the long overdue move to finally phase out smoking at the AMC. All jurisdictions, barring WA and the ACT, have already done this years ago. It is about time that the ACT joined them.

Banning smoking, if handled well, will bring several long-term benefits to detainees at the AMC. Obviously, we should see increased health outcomes among detainees. Additionally, if detainees kick the habit while in prison and do not pick it back up again once they leave, they will be more financially free. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the average Australian smoker smokes 10.7 cigarettes a day, or just over half a 20-pack. With a pack of cigarettes being about \$23, the average smoker is paying around \$4,200 a year for smokes. This is money that could otherwise be going towards renting a stable home, buying a car to get to work or learning a skill.

Another benefit is that there will be less capacity for troublemakers to cause damage. I have frequently been told by people experienced in the corrections field that the practice in the ACT to allow detainees to freely carry cigarette lighters is madness. This practice has enabled detainees to set fires virtually at will, and caused millions of dollars in damage just in the past couple of years. These fires destroy AMC property, contributing to overcrowding. They also destroy personal property, causing general discontent in the population.

While I welcome the decision, the phasing out of smoking must be handled carefully. Communication with staff and detainees is paramount. It is also imperative that addiction counselling supports be increased, as well as nicotine replacement therapies, such as patches and lozenges.

Banning smoking at the AMC should ultimately improve rehabilitation outcomes at the prison, but it is just a small part of the puzzle. The overall rehabilitation efforts at the prison are debilitating to detainees in many ways, try as they might to conceal it.

The government's appalling performance in this area is being put under the spotlight. In recent months the media has been full of stories of offenders on bail and parole reoffending and causing great harm to property and people. If the government were doing their job properly, we would be seeing far less of this kind of behaviour. Their commitment to rehabilitation is hollow, and they can no longer keep it hidden behind the prison walls.

A perfect example of this hollow commitment is the decision to delay the reintegration centre without a commitment to a transparent timetable. The reintegration centre was supposed to be a dedicated facility that focused on rehabilitation and getting detainees back into the community with new skills and better behaviour. Shortly after its announcement, the government shelved the project and has not been forthcoming on whether development will commence. Without committing to a timetable, the government can effectively sit on this for decades to come.

The estimates committee recommended that the ACT government publish a time line for the construction of the reintegration centre. The government did not agree to this recommendation and merely noted it, explaining that they are working to optimise the

utilisation of the existing transitional release centre, and that they are also assessing the current and future infrastructure needs of the AMC.

In that case, why did they announce the reintegration centre at all? Did they not think about these issues before committing \$30 million to the project in the first place? The underperformance of the transitional release centre was an issue well before the announcement of the centre, and assessments of future infrastructure needs at the AMC should be constantly ongoing. Their excuses are thin, but if they insist on sticking by them, they should at least support them with a time line for when the public can expect them to be finished with their delaying tactics.

One other example of the government's poor rehabilitation effort is in the supports they give to people working on the front lines with detainees. One of these key frontline workers is the case manager. The case manager personally meets with a detainee and plans out their time within the prison to ensure that the detainee leaves the prison better off than when they went in.

For the case managers to perform effectively, they need support. In previous years they have had access to a forensic psychologist, who could provide advice on complex cases. The program ended, and case managers have had to go without this specialist advice for some time now. In response to a recommendation to expand the forensic psychologist services at the AMC to the case management unit, the government agreed in principle, although the paragraph afterwards did not exactly fill me with confidence that this would happen. I will continue to follow up on this very important issue.

Another area of major concern is education at the AMC. Last year I spoke about the education contract at the AMC. I said that, with the expiration of the previous contract in June 2021, we had a golden opportunity to improve the delivery of education and programs to better help our detainees to reform their lives and succeed outside the prison walls.

The government is squandering this opportunity. As of the estimates hearing, there is no new provider. Apart from some ad-hoc programs and a handful of detainees in higher education, there has been no formal or ongoing education provided at the AMC for over a year.

To anyone, it would be clear where such inaction will lead. Often people offend because they are in hard circumstances. Education and meaningful employment are some of the best ways to better one's circumstances. When you lock someone up for extended periods of time and provide no means for them to improve themselves while they are behind bars, you release that person in circumstances worse than they had before. Which is the most likely outcome: (a) they come out as someone more likely to find meaningful employment; or (b) they reoffend and are back within two years?

One example of this from just this year is a man who, while on parole, went on an overnight burglary spree that involved four premises on one street. The government must step up in this area. Studies have consistently shown that correctional education improves inmates' outcomes after release. There are many studies, but I will refer to

just one. A study conducted on inmates in the US showed that inmates who participated in correctional education programs have 43 per cent lower odds of recidivism than those who did not, and the odds of obtaining employment post-release for inmates involved in education programs versus those who were not was 30 per cent higher.

Given the government's target of reducing recidivism by 25 per cent by 2025, these stats should have them salivating for an education provider. They say they are prioritising resources to obtain one; but, when they have already taken a year to do so, I find their assertion hard to believe. The right to education is enshrined in our Human Rights Act. Everyone has the right to have access to education, to further education and vocational and continuing training. *(Second speaking period taken.)* The Corrections Management Act says that detainees "must have reasonable access to news and education services".

As of now, the government's compliance with these two acts is questionable, and is in breach of detainees' human rights. Frankly, it would not be the first time this year that the government was found to have breached the human rights of detainees at the AMC.

With all of these shortcomings, it is imperative that we have well-resourced oversight bodies. Currently, we do not have that. The primary dedicated oversight body for our corrections systems is the Office of the Inspector of Correctional Services. This office is staffed with hardworking experts in the corrections field. The office was created with the primary purpose of overseeing AMC and ensuring that it is compliant with legislation, policy and human rights.

It was expected at the time of the office's creation that, in addition to providing daily oversight and producing an all-of-centre healthy prison review, they would likely have to produce another report, perhaps once a year, in response to a critical incident. Since the office's creation, instead of producing just one critical incident report a year, they are producing three or four times as many.

They have also been put in charge of overseeing the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, and form part of the national preventive mechanism for the ACT. This increase in duties has not been accompanied by a proportional increase in funding by the ACT, despite the office putting in a budget bid for the past three years, asking for just one more full-time employee—just one.

The estimates committee heard evidence that suggested current funding levels are limiting the inspector's capacity for oversight. This is extremely concerning to me, and it should be concerning to anyone who believes in freedom and human rights. It seems to me that this government do not care about these things. If they did, they would not have ignored the inspector's request for additional resources for three years.

To make up the shortfall in their manpower, the office has been funding additional positions within their operational funding. Given the host of failures that this government is responsible for in the corrections space, it is critical to fund the body designed to keep the government accountable for their failures.

This government may not care about transparency and upholding human rights, but I do. I will continue to fight for increased resourcing for the Office of the Inspector of Correctional Services. I thank them for the extremely important services that they provide in such a difficult area. It is not easy to hold this government to account, and it is even harder to do so when this government gives you more responsibility with one hand and throttles your funding with the other.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our hardworking ACT Corrective Services staff. Their efforts are often unappreciated, overlooked and misunderstood. I want them to know that I appreciate them, and that their welfare is high on my list of priorities. It takes people of great integrity and empathy, and with a thick skin, to enter a career in this field, and they all deserve fitting reward and recognition for their efforts.

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) (6.08): In my capacity as Minister for Human Rights, I am pleased to speak in support of this budget, which continues to fulfil our responsibility to protect and promote our fundamental human rights in the ACT. There are three key initiatives I will speak briefly to.

Firstly, the budget provides over \$3 million over four years to establish the independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner, in line with the recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way report and a co-design process that has been undertaken with the community. As members know, in the last sitting I introduced legislation for the establishment of the commissioner, and I am pleased that through this budget we are making the investments needed to ensure that the commissioner can get to work and undertake the role that has been called for by the community.

This budget also provides \$1.773 million over four years in additional resourcing for Victim Support ACT to take on the administration of the three victims registers: the adult register, the youth justice register and the affected persons register. These three victims registers have previously been delivered by three different agencies: Corrective Services, CSD and ACAT. The relocation of the three victims registers to within Victim Support, with resourcing for new positions to administer them, facilitates a centralised and more victim-focused approach.

Victim Support ACT will act as a central point to better facilitate the provision of information and support to victims of crime. The relocation will further facilitate victim access to broader wraparound Victim Support services, including case coordination, safety planning, counselling and financial assistance, as well as specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse services.

This budget also provides over \$270,000 in additional funding to the ACT Human Rights Commission over two years, addressing an increasing number of complaints received by the commission. This supports Canberrans to use the Human Rights Commission's complaint process to seek remedy. This initiative builds on recent government efforts to strengthen the capacity of the Human Rights Commission,

including additional resourcing to support the Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner provided in the 2021-22 budget.

Human rights are of course essential for everyone in the ACT, regardless of gender, religious belief, nationality, race or any other point of difference. This budget invests in the promotion and protection of our human rights. Madam Speaker, could I just do a quick shout-out to all of those involved in upholding and promoting our human rights. This is an obligation that is held right across the ACT government, but I make particular mention of the Human Rights Commission, the leadership there and all the extraordinary support that is provided and facilitated by every single person within the commission.

It is something very special. We are lucky to have that level of expertise and that care in supporting people to undertake conciliation processes, helping them to navigate our systems and of course upholding human rights, making representations to government but also navigating processes that often come at the most difficult time in a person's life, whether it is through discrimination or victim support or through seeking that support from our Children and Young People's Commissioner or as the public advocate. I give a very big thankyou to all of those people at the Human Rights Commission who work incredibly hard and incredibly long hours to ensure that we continue to be a leader in the field of human rights in the ACT.

I also give a special shout-out, Madam Speaker, to the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and particularly those who support me in my capacity as Minister for Human Rights. We have had a very big agenda in the past two years, not least in the considerable budget initiatives and legislative reforms that we have been progressing. They have done an outstanding job, and I could not be more proud to be working with them as we continue to lead the way here in the ACT.

With your indulgence, Madam Speaker, it was remiss of me not to thank all of the colleagues in the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate when I spoke on that earlier today. I think you heard, through my lengthy speech at the time, just how much we have been progressing in that space to support business, to support the community—all of those front-facing roles through Access Canberra—and indeed the incredible amount of very positive change that we have achieved through artsACT. Probably no-one is listening; nevertheless I do want to put that on the record. Thanks, Madam Speaker. It was remiss of me not to have done so in the earlier part of the budget today. That was no reflection on how supported I feel and the amazing achievements over the past year that indeed are reflected in this year's budget. Thank you.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (6.14): There are some very important investments in this budget in the area of justice and community safety, which we are currently discussing in this particular line, built on key commitments which aim to make our justice system even more accessible and equitable. It also builds on our commitment to making our community safer. There are a range of initiatives which I would like to highlight, then I will also touch on some matters that have been raised during the debate and answer some questions that have been raised by colleagues in the chamber.

I think it is really important that we reflect on the items that are funded in the budget—new initiatives. Of course, there are a whole range of ongoing programs, but budgets do tend to be about the new things and that is simply where I intend to focus my comments tonight. The budget includes nearly \$11.5 million over four years to deliver a range of programs and initiatives focused on addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ACT criminal justice system. The program combines new initiatives that are expected to make a real and immediate impact and the continuation of established programs that have been demonstrating positive results.

I make two observations before I go on. The first is that we do know that the rate of over-representation in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as it is around the country, is too high in the ACT. It is a matter of national shame and we need to be focused on addressing this. The ACT government has set very ambitious commitments, but it is right that we have those ambitious commitments because having anything else is really not acceptable. This budget seeks to make those investments.

The other point I would make is that I am very pleased to see that there are programs being continually funded here where there have been pilots that have proven to be successful. We are determined to make sure that we keep investing in them. There is some, at times, frustration when pilot programs get up and get going and then, even if they go well, they do not necessarily go on to the next phase. I have been very clear in these areas that where a program works we should keep investing in it. If something is not working then we either need to change it or we need to accept that it is not working, stop funding it and think about what we can replace it with. I think that this approach is a good one.

The initiatives funded in this budget include the screening of detainees for cognitive disability; the expansion of the Galambany Circle Court; the re-establishment of the Community Friends program, as I was asked about earlier today in question time; continuing the On Country program; and a one-on-one intensive case management program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees, to reduce recidivism. Flexibility is also provided in the program for new initiatives to be introduced in the future, based on consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Islander community. It goes to the point that I was making that if we do find that there are gaps then we need to be willing to try new things.

I am a firm believer that we should not be frightened of trying new things, because this is such a long-term and problematic area and we cannot keep doing it like we have been doing it. There will be things that are working. We definitely should keep doing those, but we need to have a degree of boldness in being willing to try new things. This particular initiative aligns with the government's commitment to justice reinvestment, keeping people out of the criminal justice system and reducing the incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to match non-Indigenous incarceration rates and reduce recidivism in the ACT by 25 per cent by 2025.

This budget also contributes just over \$3 million over three years to assist the ACT's community legal assistance sector to respond to a recommendation of the Our Booris, Our Way report by establishing a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care and protection legal advocacy service. This builds on the 2021-22 government initiative of community sector partnerships, community legal assistance sector support, which provided funding to ensure that these organisations are able to maintain service delivery levels.

This budget also includes nearly \$700,000 over four years to continue to support the SafeHome Program, which improves security for households in the ACT that are victims of or vulnerable to home burglary. This initiative contributes to wellbeing and safety and I think is a very practical program. For people who have been victims and therefore have a sense of fear or have a loss of sense of security, this is a very practical program that helps them physically modify their homes to improve security.

It is one of those things that really make a difference to people who cannot afford to make those modifications themselves. Perhaps they have not been able to do them in the past. Through either having been a victim or for a range of factors they are considered vulnerable, and to get that really direct and tangible support can help them feel more safe and secure and therefore improve their quality of life.

The budget also invests in the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, or ACAT as it is commonly known, to undertake the first phase of a new client interface system that will enable ACAT to provide better and more timely assistance to customers in financial hardship and under threat of disconnection of their utility service. That is just over \$600,000. This is, again, a really important area of work that supports some of the most vulnerable Canberrans. ACAT does have a very important function in this space of working with people who are at threat of disconnection. It works with the utility and the client to make sure that they do not face that disconnection and have a payment plan in place or various other options that can be delivered. This is really about empowering people and working with them to make sure they continue to get those essential services delivered at their residence.

The budget provides \$331,000 to continue support for the resourcing of the legislation, policy and programs division of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, enabling them to drive the government's law reform agenda. This initiative continues the funding provided in the 2021-22 budget to strengthen policy development and make sure that we have the staff. There are many demands, both from the government and also arising through this place, to look at a range of policy questions. JACS are a very busy agency. They answer to a number of ministers and they have a lot of different responsibilities. This line item is particularly about increasing their capability to get that work done and to make sure that the government is able to respond to the many issues that arise in the JACS policy space.

There is also money set aside for both JACS and Access Canberra—in total \$1.465 million—to undertake further discovery and design work to support the introduction of \$5 bet limits and \$100 load-up limits on electronic gaming machines in the ACT, building on the government's ongoing work to reduce harm from gaming while supporting sustainable clubs.

I note Mr Parton's comments on that. There is obviously a whole debate to be had about how this progresses. What I can assure Mr Parton, and the community more broadly, is that the government does have an ongoing relationship and a lot of discussion with, and will be continuing consultation with, the club sector and harm reduction advocates about how we progress this reform. We have been very open about it. We put out a discussion paper early in the process, and I have been very clear about this. It was a discussion that said, "The government went out and got independent advice. We have been advised that this is the best pathway forward."

Before we completely design it, we want to get feedback." That is genuine consultation. We did not spend six months honing a final proposal. We said, "This is the advice we have received. We want to test it with you."

We have had a broad spectrum of feedback, as you might anticipate. The government is now in the process of establishing a technical working group which will have nominees from both the clubs and the Gaming Technologies Association, who represent the manufacturers of machines, so that we can actually get down to the technological minutiae of this reform. That is ultimately what it is going to be about. There is a lot of technical detail—the software capability of machines, wiring networks in clubs, gaming protocols and all these sorts of questions which require really detailed discussion. That is what the government is now engaging on with the sector to further refine the proposition and determine the next steps.

I can assure this house and Mr Parton, who I know has a particular interest in this, that that consultation is continuing. The government continue to listen to a range of stakeholders in this space as we seek to move forward on minimising harm in the ACT whilst making sure that our clubs continue to be viable and important social hubs in our community.

Turning to other questions that have been raised in the debate tonight, I want to provide information to members where they have raised issues. Mr Cain flagged the issue of the quality of recordings in the court, from the letters he and I received from a constituent. He did make the response that the constituent had received no response from the Attorney-General's office. I can assure the house that that is not the case. I do not have the date in front of me, but I have responded in writing to that constituent with a detailed answer which sought to address the questions that that constituent raised. I am happy to provide more details to Mr Cain about that if he wants to get back to me.

Unfortunately, the shadow attorney-general was not able to stay for the full discussion of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate tonight, but, if he is listening or he reads the *Hansard* later, I am happy to have a discussion with him about that matter.

I will briefly reflect on the comments that Mr Hanson made about ACT Policing and this government's support—or, in his view, otherwise—for ACT Policing. Mr Gentleman is absent today. I will not speak on his behalf per se, but what I will say, as a member of this government and as the Attorney-General, is that the ACT government has enormous respect for our police service. It is unclear to me whether Mr Hanson was born a polariser or whether he has practised it. He certainly relishes it.

I want to make the point that it is possible to respect the role of police and it is possible to value the role of police but have different views on particular matters. For Mr Hanson it is: “You’re all in or you’re all out.” That is simply not the case. The ACT government works pretty closely with ACT Policing. As attorney, I have considerable dealings with ACT Policing in the particular roles I have. Obviously, Minister Gentleman has the lead responsibility. I hope that, in the event that Mr Hanson ever became a minister in an ACT government, he would apply a little more critical thinking than he conveys in this chamber on some of these issues.

It is possible to support our police force, to support those on the front line. They do have a challenging job. I chat to various of them. When I see them in public, I make a habit of chatting to the officers that I see. I often have quiet conversations with them about a range of matters, and they share their views with me freely, which I appreciate. There are things that they have concerns about and there are things that the government is doing that they are very supportive of. I think that there is a degree of sophistication there which is not reflected in the remarks that were made in the chamber this evening.

I am mindful of the hour. I will conclude my remarks there. As Minister Cheyne just did—and I think it is a good reminder—I take this opportunity to thank the staff of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate that I work with, because they work incredibly hard and they are really thoughtful in the advice that they provide to the ACT government on what are often really complex legal issues.

I often joke that if you put five lawyers in a room you will get six different opinions, and JACS works in that space. That is challenging work, but they do it with tremendous grace and tremendous enthusiasm. From those who do the complex policy work to those who work in our finance team, putting the budget bits together that get to be in this appropriation bill, I value all of their work. We do not often get to say it to them, so I will follow Minister Cheyne’s lead and take this opportunity to put a plug in. Hopefully, none of them are still at work at 6.30 at night. With that, I am very pleased to commend this part of the budget to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Community Services Directorate—Part 1.8.

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

Adjournment

Motion (by **Ms Cheyne**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Work health and safety—emergency responders

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (6.29): I wish to start a conversation today about the price our emergency responders pay with their psychological health. As we run from danger, they move towards it on our behalf. Every day, they deal with community

members who are experiencing their worst day. They make sure that our community is safe and cared for and clean up the mess when things go badly.

Today I want to share the story of a first responder and his emotional journey, to start prompting community discussion on how we can help those who serve our communities faithfully and at a great personal price. In Richard's own words:

Over the last 20 years or so I have worked tirelessly, to my detriment, helping the people of Canberra and NSW. I started in volunteer emergency service work before doing so professionally. I was a police officer here in the Territory before choosing to fulfill a lifelong ambition of being an ambulance officer. I started at the very bottom and worked my way up to the highest standard of clinical care offered. I have been awarded four medals, 1 citation, countless commendations and certificates of appreciation.

I suffer from mental health issues. I have been diagnosed with PTSD, depression, severe anxiety, and apparently a borderline personality disorder (whatever that is). I will not go into the causations of my PTSD. I do not intend to vicariously traumatise others. In 2015 I took an overdose of my prescription medication.

This was after significant events in my ambulance career that filled my glass up and it overflowed. I sought help and spent weeks in a private hospital whilst the ACT Ambulance response was to pay someone overtime to go around the stations and cancel my access to the safes in case I came by to steal drugs to do it again. I crawled my way back up and started again, but physical injury at work in 2016 and a very long recovery then led to a significant relapse of the PTSD.

PTSD changed me as a person. I truly hate who I am now. I was once a very good intensive care paramedic. Very few have ever disputed that. Now I am no one. I have spent years now in other public service jobs. Some not successful, some very successful.

PTSD cost me my career. PTSD cost me any hope of being any kind of successful person. Now PTSD will be costing me my house and every ounce of self-respect I ever had. I can't even talk to my old colleagues from the police, or ambulance. I am too embarrassed about where I now am.

I am now back in a sad place. My GP this morning said "I just don't know what to do." My only response: "Me neither." Please, I urge you, start talking about these issues. After all, no one has been talking or listening to me.

So to Richard: I promise to do what you quite reasonably asked of me as a representative of the Canberra community, who ask responsible questions about this topic and seek meaningful answers. I will also continue to tell your story and those of other first responders who have suffered the mental cost of the work that we as a government have asked them to do. To this end, I will continue with more speeches in the Assembly on this important topic.

Children and young people—work experience personal account

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (6.33): As the youngest member of this Assembly, one of the parts of this job I am most proud of is being able to provide work experience

opportunities for young people in my office, particularly young people from my electorate. The speech I am about to give you is from Isobel, a 16-year-old year 10 student from Wanniasa High, who my team has had the privilege of having worked in our office this week. She may have even contributed to our work on Dr Paterson's motion on cardiovascular health. These are Isobel's words about COVID-19 and the relationship with her education. She says:

COVID-19 hit Australia in March 2020, only a few weeks into the first term of school. At first, students weren't worried. We had been through a major flu outbreak a few years earlier and we were more worried about getting our assignments done and going home at 3 pm. But, as the virus began to spread, we became more aware of what it could mean for us and our education.

When the announcement was made that students all over the ACT would be going into lockdown and it was unknown when we would return to school, I was in my year 8 history class learning about medieval Europe and, ironically, the bubonic plague outbreak. I remember my teacher stopping the lesson to talk about the news and what it would mean for us. Students in my class were asking questions: "When will we come back, Ms?" "When will all of our work be online?", "What if we do not have access to the internet at home?" And our teacher had no definitive answers for us.

The school had assumed the lockdown would be coming, but, without the help from our government, they had not had the time to create a plan of action. Our government created a lot of confusion around how the lockdown would work by releasing information in snippets and not having a real plan. This meant our teachers could not reassure students and give them the support they needed when it felt like the world was starting to come undone.

On Monday, the week after that history lesson, we were all at home learning how to use Google calls, half the class sleeping in, and everyone, surprisingly, missed being at school. Throughout the lockdown, a lot of students around Australia struggled with wellbeing issues due to the unpredictable future, families being affected financially, a lack of support for their education, and taking on extra responsibilities while working from home by doing household chores and looking after family members.

My school, Wanniasa, took our mental health extremely seriously and was lucky enough to have the resources to help our community. We had year group meetings online to discuss our feelings and just talk with our friends and teachers. Our year coordinators made weekly calls to check in with students, and our student services office helped with any needs, including groceries, so families could help with their children's education without the risk of starving.

Unfortunately, many schools could not offer this level of support and many students' educations were compromised by stress and mental health issues. Mental health was not the only factor contributing to the decrease in attendance over online learning. Things such as the lack of structure, the distractions found at home, the uniformity of all the work being online, and the lack of motivation from teachers all played a part as well.

After two months of scraping through, it was announced that students would go back to school over a three-week period. Everyone thought that, once we were

back at school, everything would be relatively normal again. Yes, we would have to wear masks and, yes, social distancing became a thing, but we would be back at school in our regular classes again. But this was not the case. As students and teachers returned, the spread of COVID continued and created a lot of disruption in classes. We had a lot of combined classes and a lot of substitute teachers. Many of Australia's older students from year 10 to year 12 felt that their educations were incomplete and would give them a disadvantage throughout their adult lives. This fear pressured them into working harder in their classes, causing burnout and the risk of failing their exams.

The biggest problem Australia faced after the lockdown was 'school refusal'—the term used to describe students' separation anxiety when they were forced to return to school. A large group of Australian students had adjusted to learning from home and preferred the comfort of a familiar environment away from their classmates. Their learning was further disrupted when families did not know how to help their kids and thought sending them to school would help them get over their anxieties, in turn making the experience harder for everyone involved.

I had one friend go through school refusal as she had mental health issues prior to the lockdown and, after the second lockdown in 2021, she dropped out and started home schooling. Although some students found it difficult to come back to school, most were very excited to return as they missed the social interactions that school provided. The teachers at Wanniasa were consistently reminding my year group that the social distance and separation from each other made us grow closer as a cohort.

The COVID-19 pandemic was an unpredictable event, but students in the ACT felt neglected by our government when they could not provide us a reassuring plan to get through the pandemic. Our educations were disrupted and now disadvantaged to the people who graduated before COVID hit. Not only did we leave our academic futures in the hands of this government but we continue to trust you with representing us and we wish for you to be more responsible in making decisions that impact the education of future students.

Having Isobel in my office has convinced me that expanding the right to vote to 16- and 17-year-olds is a good idea.

Former Senator the Hon Kim Carr—tribute

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (6.38): I rise to recognise former senator the Hon. Kim Carr and his contribution to Australia during more than a quarter of a century in the Senate. I do so in a week when I had the privilege of attending a ceremony at the Australian Academy of Science's Shine Dome, where Kim was awarded the Academy Medal, only the second politician to receive this honour in its 32-year history, with the other being Bob Hawke. The medal is awarded to:

... a person outside the fellowship who has, by sustained efforts in the public domain, significantly advanced the cause of science and technology in Australia or who has made a substantial contribution to the academy by means other than research.

In announcing that it was bestowing this honour, the academy described Kim as “one of the Australian parliament’s fiercest science and research advocates”. I would go further and say he has been, hands down, the fiercest advocate for science and research in modern Australian politics.

Academy President, Professor Chennupati Jagadish said Kim “committed a great deal of his political life in government and in opposition to advocating for and defending public good research, science and technology and education.” The Academy’s Secretary for Science Policy, Professor Ian Chubb, someone who knows Kim very well, described Kim as a champion of research, innovation, jobs and industry and a champion of a fairer and better Australia.

As Professor Chubb did, I am going to draw on Kim’s own words from 2008, but they could be words from the 1990s or 2001 or anytime in between, because one thing everyone reflects on is Kim’s consistency. But 2008 was a critical year in Kim’s career: his first full year as Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research after the election of the Rudd government in 2007—a deliberate ministerial title and a busy time that I feel privileged to have been part of.

Let us start with the March 2008 speech, titled “Science serving society”. When I say ‘science’ I mean knowledge in all its forms. If I heard it once I heard it 100 times—and I will come back to this. One of the things in his speech was the importance of scientists speaking out and having the freedom to do so. The cultural change in our national politics that Kim was advocating, a radical departure from the approach of the Howard government when academic freedom was suppressed, reflected his own approach to policymaking:

We relish debate and welcome the contest of ideas. We count on our scientists and researchers to improve our decision-making by sharing their expertise. Creativity and dissent are critical to the innovation process.

Kim is consistent in his values and his belief in the importance of science research, innovation and manufacturing in building a better future. Some have, I think, seen this as dogmatic at times. Kim has maintained his focus even when his ideas and priorities have not been fashionable.

But Kim is also endlessly curious, endlessly enthusiastic and endlessly optimistic that politicians working with knowledge holders across all spheres can actually make a difference. After almost 30 years in the rough and tumble of federal politics he still believes it is a worthwhile vocation.

Kim’s perspective is local and international and everything in between, from the interests of Victoria’s meatworkers and automotive manufacturing workers to the scientists engaging with colleagues around the globe and exploring mysteries of the universe with a massive radio telescope.

Later in 2008, Kim gave another speech at the Press Club, this was titled ‘The art of innovation’. It began:

My aim in innovation is not to flood the country with shiny gadgets, but to change the culture.

Of course we will need new technologies to answer the challenges and grasp the opportunities that lie before us.

But we will also need new institutions, new forms of community—new ways of understanding ourselves and our world.

In all of this, the humanities, arts and social sciences are critical.

They will give us the ideas, the language and the self-awareness we need to make change happen.

These disciplines have to be on the same footing as the physical and life sciences.

This is more than a matter of courtesy.

It is a matter of necessity.

These are difficult times.

We have climate change to deal with.

We have globalisation to deal with.

We have an ageing population and water scarcity and social disadvantage to deal with.

And now we have a worldwide economic slowdown to deal with as well.

(Extension of time granted.)

Kim said:

There is no doubt in my mind that we can steer our way through these difficulties and emerge stronger on the other side.

In accepting his medal on Tuesday, Kim stuck to the theme that he has consistently championed for almost three decades in public life, recognising there is more to do and saying:

Science has a critical role in restoring public trust in finding solutions to the big problems this country faces.

Many of which we faced in 2008. As Professor Chubb said:

We'll miss Kim's three-piece suits, his mobile eyebrows and his forward lean which always preceded a tough question in Senate estimates.

Although I am not convinced that many public servants will miss the latter, but his legacy will last, and the country is better for it. I am proud to have been part of his journey and I wish him all the very best in the next stage.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.45 pm until Tuesday, 18 October 2022 at 10.00 am.

Schedules of amendments

Schedule 1

Integrity Commission Amendment Bill 2022

Amendments moved by the Speaker

1

Clause 6

Proposed new section 85A

Page 3, line 6—

omit

created for or by, or received by

substitute

created for and received by, or created by

2

Clause 6

Proposed new section 85A

Page 3, line 12—

omit

created for or by, or received by

substitute

created for and received by, or created by

Schedule 2

Appropriation Bill 2022-2023

Amendments moved by Ms Clay

1

Clause 6 heading

Page 2, line 15—

omit the heading, substitute

6 Appropriations of \$7 181 239 000

2

Schedule 1, part 1.7

Page 5—

omit part 1.7, substitute

Part 1.7 Justice and Community Safety Directorate	417 438 000	43 169 000	226 352 000	686 959 000
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3**Schedule 1****Page 7—***omit*

<i>Total appropriated to territory entities</i>	4 288 610 000	1 682 049 000	893 153 000	6 863 812 000
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substitute

<i>Total appropriated to territory entities</i>	4 288 610 000	1 682 049 000	891 564 000	6 862 223 000
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4**Schedule 1****Page 7—***omit*

<i>Total appropriations</i>	4 288 610 000	1 932 049 000	893 153 000	7 182 828 000
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substitute

<i>Total appropriations</i>	4 288 610 000	1 932 049 000	891 564 000	7 181 239 000
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Answers to questions

Waste—green waste facility (Question No 892)

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Planning and Land Management, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) In relation to Development Application 202240118, is the Government considering rezoning the area to allow for the building of recycling facilities.
- (2) Did the Government contract or request Planit Strategic to submit the development application; if so, how much was Planit Strategic paid to do so.
- (3) How strongly will the proposal from residents, to bring forward the duplication of Drake Brockman Drive to help address the traffic burden generated by a green waste facility on Stockdill Drive, be considered.
- (4) How will the issues raised by all ACT Government entities who did not support the proposal be resolved.
- (5) How will the concerns of residents detailed in submissions to the development application be resolved.
- (6) Why was the development application lodged as a temporary development given it was clear the development would impact the road network and that the application included permanently constructed elements.
- (7) Will the Government continue to extend the same month-to-month lease arrangement they currently have with Canberra Sand and Gravel until a new location is identified, the development application is approved, and the site is ready for operations.

Ms Berry: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- 1) The Government is considering options for the use of Block 1582 which encompasses the site described in Development Application. This may include options for alternate uses of the site to support the development of West Belconnen.
- 2) Yes. \$19,641 (ex GST).
- 3) The additional traffic generated by the proposed green waste facility will be factored into the traffic modelling that will inform the timeline of the future upgrade of Drake Brockman Drive.
- 4 & 5) All issues raised through the development application will be considered as part of the reconsideration process.
- 6) The site is not zoned for a recycling facility and the temporary zoning provides flexibility as Government considers options for waste management and resource recovery in West Belconnen. The permanent structures have been designed to support a range of uses permissible under the current zoning.

- 7) Yes, until such time it impacts the Ginninderry Joint Venture land development project or can be relocated to the proposed site on Block 1582.
-

**Planning—Demonstration Housing Project
(Question No 893)**

Ms Clay asked the Minister for Planning and Land Management, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) In relation to demonstration housing, have any projects without a site rejected an offer of a site; if so, (a) why did they do so and (b) will the Government offer a more suitable site to the proponent.
- (2) How is the Government keeping in touch with the project proponents and when did they last provide a substantive update to proponents, in particular those without sites.

Mr Gentleman: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) No. Suitable Territory-owned land has been identified for each of the four proponents that are engaged with the Demonstration Housing 'without a site' stream.
 - (2) The Demonstration Housing Team within the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate is in regular contact with proponents through appropriate mediums including written correspondence, via phone, and in person or virtual meetings.
-

**Domestic and family violence—case reviews
(Question No 896)**

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) How many cases were reviewed as part of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council's Review of Domestic and Family Violence Deaths.
- (2) How many of the reviewed cases involved children as victims of domestic and family violence deaths.
- (3) Can the Minister provide further details for each of the case reviews that showed differences in risk assessment for future violence or lethality as a consequence of information sharing by relevant service providers.

Ms Berry: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- 1) The report titled The Review of Domestic and Family Violence Deaths in the ACT undertaken by the ACT Domestic Violence Prevention Council in 2016 is publicly available on the ACT Government website. That report shows that 11 cases were reviewed.
- 2) The report shows that no cases were reviewed where children died as victims of the violence.

- 3) The report does not include the details of individual case reviews, however the issue of information sharing is covered in Recommendations 9, 10 and 11 and the issue of risk assessment is addressed in Recommendation 4. The issue of potential increased risk of lethality as a consequence of poor information sharing is covered in detail on pages 28 to 30 of the report.

Casino Canberra—ownership (Question No 897)

Dr Paterson asked the Minister for Gaming, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) Given that in recent hearings of the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023, the question was asked who the new casino operator was and what the process had been regarding this acquisition, the Chief Executive Officer of the ACT Gaming and Racing Commission (GRC) responding “With this particular sale, it is not the casino per se that is for sale; it is a share transfer in one of the upstream companies. It is not that the casino has been sold; it is that the company that owns the company that owns the casino is having a share transfer”, can the Minister outline what this share transfer is, from what company to what “upstream company”.
- (2) Can the Minister clarify if the casino has been sold.
- (3) Can the Minister name the company, that owns the company, that owns the casino.
- (4) What information was provided to the Minister by the GRC to approve the sale of the casino lease from Aquis to Iris Capital.
- (5) What information was provided to the Minister that the sale of the lease to Iris Capital was in the public interest.
- (6) Will Iris Capital be both the casino lessee and the casino license holder.
- (7) What recommendations were made to the Minister by the GRC about the eligibility of Iris Capital as the corporation nominated as the proposed casino licensee.
- (8) Is there any foreign participation or partners identified in probity checks of Iris Capital.

Ms Cheyne: The answer to the member’s question is as follows:

- (1) Casino Canberra Limited is the holder of the casino licence and wholly owned by Aquis Entertainment Limited. Aquis Canberra Holdings Pty Ltd is the object of the proposed share transfer and owns 87% of the issued shares in Aquis Entertainment Limited. The Licence will not transfer as a result of this process.
- (2) The Casino has not been sold.
- (3) As indicated above, Aquis Canberra Holdings Pty Ltd holds approximately 87% of the issued shares in Aquis Entertainment Limited, which in turn owns Casino Canberra Limited.
- (4) As there is no sale or transfer of the casino lease or the casino licence, there is no Ministerial approval or Ministerial decision.

- (5) See response to question 4.
- (6) See response to question 4.
- (7) See response to question 4.
- (8) As the probity assessment has not yet concluded, it would be inappropriate to comment on the specifics of the information obtained.

Yerrabi Pond—amenities (Question No 898)

Ms Castley asked the Minister for Transport and City Services, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) How many complaints has (a) the Minister's office and (b) Transport Canberra and City Services (including Fix My Street) received about (i) covers on barbeques, (ii) drainage at the rotunda, (iii) lights at the rotunda, (iv) more crushed granite for caravans and (v) more power points, at Yerrabi Pond.
- (2) Does the Government plan to improve at Yerrabi Pond (a) the covers on barbeques, (b) drainage at the rotunda, (c) lights at the rotunda, (d) more crushed granite for caravans, (e) more power points; if not, why not; if so, when will these improvements be complete.

Mr Steel: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

(1)

- (a) The number of complaints received by the Minister's Office between the 30/10/2020 to current are as follows:

(i)	BBQ covers	0
(ii)	Drainage	1
(iii)	Lights	5
(iv)	Power points	0
(v)	Gravel	0

- (b) The number of complaints received by Transport Canberra and City Services (including Fix My Street) between the 30/10/2020 to current are as follows:

(i)	BBQ covers	0
(ii)	Drainage	0
(iii)	Lights	0
(iv)	Power points	0
(v)	Gravel	0

(2)

- (a) There are no plans to put covers on the barbeques at Yerrabi Pond or at any location across Canberra.
- (b) The drainage at the rotunda is functioning as designed, with water running as overland flow into the nearby stormwater outlet.
- (c) There are no plans currently to provide additional lighting at the rotunda.
- (d) There are no plans currently to provide additional crushed granite pads for caravans.
- (e) There are two 3-phase power outlets and two normal power points at the rotunda as well as a power pillar at the rear of the toilet block, all of which are available for booking.

Inspector of Correctional Services—resourcing (Question No 899)

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Corrections, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

In relation to funding for the Inspector of Corrections and further to the answer to question on notice No 327 of the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023 in which the Minister stated that the ACT Government continues to work closely with the Office of the ACT Inspector for Correctional Services (OICS) to ensure it is adequately resourced to provide their oversight responsibilities. Given the OICS seems to disagree with as evidenced by statements made in multiple hearings, such as how their oversight over the ACT youth justice facilities is limited. Did the Minister claim that they ensure the OICS is adequately resourced; if so, does the Minister disagree with OICS's belief that they are under resourced.

Mr Gentleman: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

Please refer to the response provided for Recommendation 79 of the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-23 *Inquiry into the Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023* final report.

Yerrabi Pond—upgrades (Question No 900)

Ms Castley asked the Minister for Transport and City Services, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) Can the Minister advise what action has been completed for the parking scoping study for the Yerrabi Pond and foreshore.
- (2) Has there been a draft or study complete; if so, can the Minister provide a copy of this document.
- (3) How much has been spent on the study.

- (4) If the study has not been complete, when will it be.
- (5) Was the study internal or external.
- (6) If the study was external, which company won the tender.
- (7) Will Yerrabi Pond receive an upgrade to the foreshore before 2024; if so, when; if not, why not.
- (8) Has the Minister or Transport Canberra and City Services received correspondence about parking at (a) Yerrabi Pond and (b) Yerrabi Pond foreshore; if so, how many and was the sentiment positive, neutral, negative.

Mr Steel: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) A feasibility study and assessment of the parking at Yerrabi Pond is being undertaken and additional parking is being considered and investigated at the Commercial Precinct adjacent to Phyllis Ashton Circuit. Additionally, parking restrictions and additional line marking is also being considered to improve the efficiency of parking around this vicinity.
- (2) The study and associated designs are in their final stages.
- (3) The total contract price for the study is \$90,620.55 (inc GST). This pricing is inclusive of feasibility and design work on parking provision for the commercial precinct, and lighting for areas of the Yerrabi Pond path and the Gungahlin skate park.
- (4) October 2022.
- (5) The study is being completed externally – a specialist engineering design consultant was engaged.
- (6) The successful provider is RD Gossip Pty Ltd.
- (7) All upgrade works are subject to future budget considerations.
- (8) During the period of the feasibility and design phase, two questions from the community were received in relation to the feasibility and design work on parking. One related to whether parking provided along the foreshore area (on Phyllis Ashton Circuit) would negatively impact the natural landscape setting along the pond foreshore; and one was not supportive of adding parking to the Nellie Hamilton Avenue median strip.

Since 2019, as the Minister, I have received seven letters or enquiries specifically about parking at Yerrabi Pond. These queries have raised issues with insufficient availability of parking or allocation of time for parking at Yerrabi Pond.

Transport—bus shelters (Question No 901)

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Transport and City Services, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) When and why was it decided to stop using the Cummings designed bus shelters as the standard bus shelter for Canberra.
- (2) Is the design work for the shelters being completed by Transport Canberra and City Services, or are the designs being completed by an outside organisation.
- (3) If the design work is being completed by an outside organisation, what is the name of that organisation.
- (4) Which organisations are currently supplying bus shelters to Canberra.
- (5) What are the models of bus shelter these organisations providing.
- (6) How many of each model has been purchased by the Government.
- (7) Why are there are gaps between the roof and the sidewalls of bus shelter 4005.
- (8) What is the name of this model.
- (9) Why is there about a 1.5 metre gap between the edge of the roof and the kerb, resulting in bus users getting wet as they step out from under the roof of the bus shelter to board the bus.
- (10) Does the Government have any data on how effective the Cummings designed bus shelters were at keeping rain off the bus shelter seats compared to the newer bus shelters; if so, where can that data be located; if not, has the Government studied the difference between the two.
- (11) Is there a document that details which bus stops will be receiving bus shelters and when; if so, can the Minister please provide a copy.

Mr Steel: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) Unfortunately, records are not available that pinpoint this change. The original shelter designs were drafted in the 1970's for the National Capital Development Commission. Since this time, standards and shelter designs have evolved to provide more open, passive and accessible spaces.
- (2) Shelter designs are required as part of tender submissions to the territory.
- (3) See response to Question 4.
- (4) A range of suppliers have supplied shelters in recent years. These includes oohMedia (formerly Adshel), CAM NZ (New Zealand) and Stoddart Manufacturing (Australian manufacturer).
- (5) Modern glass shelters to TCCS's specification incorporating Disability Access requirements. Supplier details include:
 - oohMedia - Evo MK3, Evo Custom Made (Wellington style/major stop shelters).
 - CAM NZ - Standard shelters and major shelters.
 - Stoddart manufacturing - Rationalised Classic and Roads ACT (Wellington style/major shelters).

(6) Shelter Types are:

- CAM NZ - 30 standard shelters, 6 x major stop shelters.
- 26 x standard Rationalised Classic shelters.
- 24 x Evo custom made major shelters (Wellington Style).

(7) The gap between roof and sidewall is a standard design feature.

(8) Model Name: Wellington Style (major stop shelter).

(9) This gap is provided to allow for the buses to pull in and out without hitting the shelter.

(10) The ACT Government has not collected specific data comparing the relative effectiveness of these shelters in preventing rain from falling on seats, nor has the ACT Government studied the difference between the two.

(11) There is no consolidated list for future shelter sites however, Transport Canberra review feedback to determine priority sites ahead of new shelter programs being delivered. Currently, Transport Canberra are investigating priority bus stops in new suburbs.

Health—paediatric services review (Question No 902)

Ms Castley asked the Minister for Health, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) Who conducted the external review of paediatric services in late 2021.
- (2) What was the cost and process to select the reviewer.
- (3) When was the review done.
- (4) What was the terms of reference.
- (5) How was the review conducted?
- (6) When did the Minister receive the review.
- (7) What are the review's recommendations.
- (8) Did the reviewer speak to families who have used paediatric services; if so, can the Minister provide relevant details.
- (9) Did reviewer examine gaps in our paediatric services; if so, can the Minister provide relevant details.
- (10) Can the Minister provide a copy of the review.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- 1) Resolve Health Advisory.
- 2) \$87,230.00. A single select procurement process was undertaken consistent with the ACT Government Procurement Policy.
- 3) 2021.
- 4) A Statement of Requirements was produced for the purpose of this review.
- 5) Resolve Health Advisory conducted an eight-week in-depth review of plans, data, best practice and consultation with a broad range of stakeholders.
- 6) The review concluded in June 2021. The Minister was provided with a preliminary working document in August 2021.
- 7) The review identifies priority issues and includes changes to models of care, clarity of governance arrangements and the development of services to meet identified gaps.
- 8) No, the discovery phase included a review of internal and external documents, including The Health Care Consumers Association's Report, Consumer and Family Experience and Expectations of Accessing Interstate Specialist Care, along with Canberra Health Services' complaints data, used to identify key issues from consumers' perspectives.
- 9) The review provided recommendations covering Paediatric Medicine, Paediatric Surgery, Community Child Health and Allied Health in Paediatrics.
- 10) As the review contains information about individual clinicians and is intended as an internal working document a copy of this in full cannot be provided. An appropriately de-identified copy of the review report will be tabled in the Assembly in the sitting week commencing 18 October 2022.

**Remand centres—Symonston
(Question No 903)**

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Corrections, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

What is the current usage status of the former Symonston Remand Centre.

Mr Gentleman: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

The Symonston Correctional Centre (SCC) is no longer fit for use as a correctional facility. While the SCC is still declared as an ACT Correctional Centre, it would require extensive works to bring the current infrastructure to an acceptable security and safety standard as a full-time correctional facility and it remains closed for this purpose. The SCC is used on occasions by ACTCS and other JACS agencies for training purposes.

**Health—radiation therapy
(Question No 906)**

Ms Castley asked the Minister for Health, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) In relation to part (6) of question on notice No 20 from the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023 process, how many of the 117 palliative care patients were previously on more than one dose of radiation therapy.
- (2) Was there a change in radiation therapy for the remaining 71 patients; if so, were these patients receiving more than one dose; if not, why did their therapy not change.
- (3) Are the 117 patients still receiving a single dose with the addition of a linear accelerator machine; if so, how many have changed their dose and have they increased.
- (4) Has there been any complaints from patients who have had their dose changed; if so, how many.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) Radiation Therapy is typically prescribed as a course of treatment. A cancer patient may receive one or more separate courses of curative and/or palliative intent radiation therapy. The dose prescribed for each course can be delivered in one or more 'fractions' of radiation therapy. The decision to prescribe one or more fractions of radiotherapy for each course of treatment is a clinical decision based on the indication for each course of treatment and any other relevant patient factors. A previous course of radiation therapy for the 117 palliative patients referred to may not relate to the same indication and some patients did not receive a prior course of treatment. The prescription of single fraction palliative radiation therapy is used widely and recommended with proven efficacy, particularly in the treatment of bone metastases.
- (2) The decision to treat with multi or single fraction radiation therapy was made between the treating specialist and patient from the outset. The treatment prescriptions were not changed or modified. A patient may have been offered multi-fraction palliative radiation therapy when the treating specialist was of the opinion this offered greater benefit.
- (3) The 117 patients have completed their course of single fraction radiation therapy. No patients have changed their dose. The use of single fraction palliative radiation therapy is still prescribed in situations where it is considered clinically appropriate to do so.
- (4) The radiation dose has not been changed for any patient.

**Sport—Holt District Playing Fields
(Question No 909)**

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Sport and Recreation, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) Further to the Minister's answer to the question on notice No 133 of the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023, in which the Minister stated that the reactivation of sportsgrounds and ancillary sportsgrounds assets at Holt District playing fields is confirmed to be delivered during the 2022-2023 financial year, can the Minister advise if this will be done in partnership with the successful tenderer for the implementation of the Kippax Masterplan Development; if so, will there be a cost sharing plan between the Government and the tenderer; if so, what percentage of the cost will each party be required to pay; if not, who will pay for the reactivation of these assets.
- (2) Given Higgins oval was only recently upgraded with lighting, why were they not installed with 100 lux lighting at the time of the upgrade.

Ms Berry: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) The re-activation of the Holt District playing fields is being delivered as a standalone project by Transport Canberra and City Services. The budget of \$3.344 million for the re-activation of the Holt District playing fields is provided for in the 22-23 ACT Budget.
- (2) Budget constraints at the time of delivery of the Higgins sportsgrounds re-activation project allowed for a 50 lux LED system to be initially installed. The project team in the system design did however recognise future system potential by incorporating adequate provisions for power supply and engineering upgrades to accommodate the upgrade to 100 lux in the future.

Roads—maintenance (Question No 910)

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Transport and City Services, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) Which organisations are currently contracted by the Government to repair potholes.
- (2) What is the value of each organisation's contract.
- (3) What key performance indicators are associated with each contract, for instance, do the contractors have a quota of how many potholes they must repair per month.
- (4) Given that while Icon Water was working on the Belconnen Trunk Sewer Upgrade, their heavy vehicles damaged roads causing potholes along Companion Crescent and Homann Place and noting that they have since repaired those potholes, who was responsible for repairing those potholes.
- (5) Was this pothole repaired with cold or hot mix asphalt.
- (6) How long did it take to repair those potholes.
- (7) What was the cost of repairing those potholes.
- (8) How many potholes in the Ginninderra electorate are currently slated for repair.

Mr Steel: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) Most pothole repairs are conducted by Roads ACT staff in house, including cold mix pothole repairs and heavy asphalt repairs. Roads ACT has also contracted Capital Asphalt to assist the Government to rectify potholes using asphalt (hot mix).
- (2) Capital Asphalt's contract value is \$155,952 including GST.
- (3) The nature of this contractual arrangement is to provide plant and labour resources working under Roads ACT direction and supervision. Consequently, contractual output indicators are not appropriate. Work is packaged and provided to the contractors with specific scope and requirements including expectations of performance.
- (4) Icon Water.
- (5) Hot mix asphalt.
- (6) Repairs were undertaken by Icon Water.
- (7) See response to Question 6.
- (8) As of 29 September 2022, there are currently 138 work orders logged for repair in the Ginninderra electorate.

**Alexander Maconochie Centre—sport and recreational programs
(Question No 911)**

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Corrections, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) In relation to the contract to provide sport recreational programs and activities for the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) (tender 31000.110), what organisation was awarded this tender.
- (2) When does the contract expire.
- (3) Has the Government begun discussions as to whether they will extend, renegotiate or terminate the contract at the date of expiry.
- (4) How much has been paid out to the contractor so far and what is the total that will be paid out by the end of the contract.
- (5) What routine programs or activities does the contractor provide at the AMC.
- (6) Which of these programs are facilitated daily.

Mr Gentleman: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) Corporate Health Management (CHM).
- (2) CHM's contract will expire on 8 September 2023.

- (3) Yes, ACTCS is evaluating the value derived from an external organisation providing these services. This evaluation will inform the Statement of Requirements should ACTCS renew, renegotiate, or award a new contract after CHM's contract expires on 8 September 2023.
 - (4) CHM's total contract value is \$780,000 (including GST). As of September 2022, \$486,502.21 (including GST) has been paid, with an anticipated amount of \$293,497.79 (including GST) to be paid by the contract's expiry date of 8 September 2023.
 - (5) CHM provides a range of individual and group programs addressing physical and mental health. This includes group sports activities, 1:1 fitness/wellness sessions and/or assessments, small group fitness programs and healthy eating workshops.
 - (6) These programs/activities are conducted over the period of a week due to the separation of cohorts in the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) and detainee participation numbers/interest in the programs.
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**Government—lease variation charges
(Question No 912)**

Mr Cain asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) How much money did the Government spend on resolving Lease Variation Charge disputes in the (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20, (c) 2020-21 and (d) 2021-22 financial years.
- (2) How many variations were processed in the (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20, (c) 2020-21 and (d) 2021-22 financial years.
- (3) How many Lease Variation Charges were disputed in the (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20, (c) 2020-21 and (d) 2021-22 financial years.
- (4) How many staff were assigned to the valuation assessment process in the (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20, (c) 2020-21 and (d) 2021-22 financial years, broken down by (i) full-time equivalent/part time/full time/casual/ contractor and (ii) ACT Public Service band.
- (5) What were the details of the variations for the 2021-22 financial year (in spreadsheet, raw data or summary format).
- (6) Does the Government model the potential number of variations in the next five financial years; if so, can the Minister provide this modelling.

Mr Barr: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) Appropriations provided to Directorates cover the costs of administering taxes, including managing disputes. Money spent on resolving lease variation disputes is not separately tracked.

- (2) The following table outlines the number of chargeable lease variations (under division 9.6.3 of the Planning and Development Act 2007) processed for each specified financial year.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Chargeable lease variations processed (approved)	177	165	152	167

- (3) The following table outlines the number of chargeable lease variations (under division 9.6.3 of the Planning and Development Act 2007) for which a review or appeal was commenced for each specified financial year.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Reconsideration	1	7	2	4
ACAT	3	5	6	5
Supreme Court	-	-	-	1

* Note, figures do not distinguish matters that are related and/or duplicated between review fora.

- (4) The following table outlines the number of staff assigned to the valuation assessment process in the ACT Revenue Office by position. All positions are full time employees.

Title	Level	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Executive Branch Manager (Principal Valuer)	SES 1.1	1	1	1	1
Director (Senior Valuer)	SOG B	2	2	2	2
Assistant Director (Valuer)	SOG C	3	3	3	3
Administration Officer	ASO 5	1	1	1	1
Business Administration	ASO 3	1	1	1	1
		8	8	8	8

- (5) Details of variations that give rise to lease variation charges are covered by taxation secrecy provisions under division 9.4 of the Taxation Administration Act 1999 and cannot be disclosed.

Summary of Lease variations approved during the 2021-2022 financial year.

- 102 Variations by instrument approved;
- 61 Variations by grant of a new lease approved;
- 4 Variations to units plans approved.

- (6) The Government does not model the potential number of variations in the next five financial years.

Crace—parking bans (Question No 913)

Ms Castley asked the Minister for Transport and City Services, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) What correspondence with Suez and ACT No Waste led to the decision to introduce parking bans in Crace.

- (2) When did Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) decide to introduce parking bans to Crace.
- (3) What options were considered before parking bans.
- (4) What consultation was done with (a) residents, (b) ACT No Waste and (c) Suez before sending the letter box drop; if no consultation was done, why not.
- (5) Were other options that TCCS were considering for Crace proposed to (a) residents, (b) ACT No Waste and (c) Suez.
- (6) What was the total cost of creating and distributing the information to residents in Crace regarding the parking bans.
- (7) How many complaints did (a) the Minister's office and (b) TCCS receive regarding these parking bans.
- (8) Why does Suez or ACT No Waste not use the rear access utility roads for waste collection in Crace.

Mr Steel: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) SUEZ and ACT NoWaste exchanged email correspondence in March and April 2022 regarding continued blocked access issues to service waste bins in Crace.
 - (2) TCCS considered implementing parking restrictions in May 2022.
 - (3) Following the discussions between the ACT Government and SUEZ, parking restrictions have not been introduced. SUEZ has agreed to continue emptying the blocked bins by either re-attending later or manually moving the bins to enable emptying.
 - (4) a. In January 2022, SUEZ communicated the issue of blocked access with Crace residents by placing a sticker on blocked bins identifying the issue and by undertaking initial and follow up letter box drops to the area.

b. Meetings between ACT NoWaste, Roads ACT and TCCS Communications were held prior to advising residents.

c. The issue was first raised by SUEZ with ACT NoWaste in March 2022 where SUEZ identified that there was continued issues servicing bins in Crace.
 - (5) Refer to the response to Question 3.
 - (6) cost of communications for TCCS was \$699.
 - (7) a. 2.

b. 7.
 - (8) Not all streets in Crace have rear access utility roads and these rear utility roads are too narrow to be used by SUEZ's waste collection vehicles.
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**ACT Health—employee exit interviews
(Question No 914)**

Ms Castley asked the Minister for Health, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) In relation to question on notice No 23 from the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023 process, can the Minister provide an answer to part (4)(a).
- (2) Further to part (4)(b) of question on notice No 23, were exit interviews or feedback provided and/or offered by the give former employees; if so, what was the feedback and were changes made.
- (3) Did ACT Health seek feedback from the five staff before they left.
- (4) Were any internal investigations made into their complaints; if so, (a) who conducted the review, (b) what was the cost and (c) was there a report and recommendations; if so, what were they and have they been implemented.
- (5) Did ACT Health consider using an external consultant to investigate the five staff leaving; if so, (a) who conducted the review, (b) what was the cost and (c) was there a report and recommendations; if so, what were they and have they been implemented.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) Canberra Health Services is unable to provide an answer to part (4)(a) of Question on Notice number 23 from the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023, due to the administrative and resourcing requirements to manually manipulate and cross-check the relevant data sources.
- (2) Exit interviews for ACT Health Directorate (ACTHD) staff are optional, and employees can choose not to disclose their names while completing the exit survey. As such, it is not possible to ascertain if all five of the employees have completed exit surveys or provided any feedback. In one case, there has been a meeting with the staff member and feedback received which is being addressed. The details of the action cannot be released due to privacy and confidentiality reasons.
- (3) See response to question 2 above.
- (4) a. The following processes were internally undertaken by relevant managers in consultation with HR:
 - Preliminary Assessment for two matters
 - Informal resolution through meetings in three matters

The above processes were undertaken internally and not separately costed.

There are reports and actions as a result of the above processes and ACTHD has undertaken an internal review as part of our continual improvement processes. Details of the reports cannot be disclosed for privacy and confidentiality reasons.

- (5) No external consultant was engaged to investigate the five staff leaving.

**Planning—Demonstration Housing Project
(Question No 915)**

Ms Clay asked the Minister for Planning and Land Management, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) Have all necessary planning changes, to implement the demonstration housing projects, been completed by the Government; if not, what changes are still outstanding.
- (2) Have any projects not been offered sites yet; if so, why have they not been offered sites.
- (3) When will the Government complete the process of offering sites.
- (4) Is it possible that some proponents will not be offered sites.
- (5) For each project, can the Minister (a) identify the project, including information such as the suburb the site is in, or the project proponent, (b) if the project has been offered a site, including the process the proponents will have to go through to secure the site.
- (6) Further to part (5), can the Minister clarify, for each project, whether (a) proponents will be required to submit a Stage 2 Request for Tender (RFT), (b) they have progressed to a restricted class tender or direct sale process and (c) proponents have become the leaseholder of the site offered to them.
- (7) For projects that have not been offered a site, why haven't they been offered a site.
- (8) When is it expected that the proponents will be offered a site.
- (9) Will they be required to submit a Stage 2 RFT and will the stage 2 RFT be restricted to a specific proponent.
- (10) Will they be offered a direct sale process.

Mr Gentleman: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) Three territory plan variations which relate to the Demonstration Housing Project have commenced. They include V372 (Section 76, Watson), V375 (Manor House, Griffith), and V376 (Stellulata, Ainslie). Proposed planning changes associated with the remaining four Demonstration Housing 'with a site' proposals will be included within the draft new Territory Plan when it placed on community consultation later this year.
- (2) (3) (4) Suitable Territory-owned land has been identified for each of the proponents that are engaged with the Demonstration Housing 'without a site' stream.
- (5) There are six proponents progressing through the Demonstration Housing 'with a site' stream as outlined below:

Project	Housing Type	Location
Stellulata (Individual)	Small scale co-housing	Ainslie
Manor House (Individual)	Manor House typology	Griffith
ECHO (Community Housing Provider)	Affordable housing	Lyneham
Verdant Developments (Individual)	Flexible living /multi-generational homes	Weston
In Loco – O'Connor (Architect, Builder, Landowner)	Age in place 'missing middle' townhouses	Forrest
In Loco – Forrest (Architect, Builder, Landowner)	Age in place 'missing middle' townhouses	O'Connor

There are four proponents progressing through the Demonstration Housing 'without a site' stream as outlined below:

Housing Typology	Location
Urban Village	Kingston
Build to rent	Belconnen
Co-housing	Watson
Environmentally sustainable dwellings with some affordable dwellings	Lyneham

(6)

- a) All 'without a site' proponents will/have been issued a Stage 2 RFT or RFP.
- b) Three restricted class tenders and one RFP leading to a direct sale process has been issued. One restricted class tender is yet to be issued.
- c) No proponents have signed Crown Leases.

(7) (8) (9) (10) See above.

Municipal services—Gwydir Square shops (Question No 917)

Ms Castley asked the Minister for Transport and City Services, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) Can the Minister provide an update about the Gwydir shops upgrade, including (a) what work has been completed, (b) what work is still to complete, (c) when the project will be finished and (d) the total cost compared to how much money was allocated (budgeted for).
- (2) Can the Minister detail any ongoing consultation with local traders and residents and feedback received from them about the upgrade works.

Mr Steel: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

(1) An update on Gwydir Square Kaleen upgrade works are as follows:

- a) The main area of the shops is open with the upgrades completed including:
- Adjustments to parking arrangements to bring the car park in line with current standards improving safety and usability of accessible parking spaces.
 - New parking spaces within both car parks (operational once asphaltting is complete).
 - New pavement with levels realigned where appropriate to bring in line with standards and improve water drainage away from shops.
 - New kerb ramps and paths to improve accessibility.
 - Landscaping including new trees, improved tree pits for growing conditions, shrubs, edging treatments and mulching.
 - Furniture and amenity elements including bike parking, seating, and tables.
 - Toilet installed (operational once services connections are complete).
 - New shade sail to the playground.
 - New shade structure to the seating area outside playground (to be open for use once signage is complete).
- b) The remaining works are focused around two small areas of the Centre, the playground area and the rear carpark. Works to complete include asphaltting, services connections/ installation, signage installation and soft landscaping.
- c) Construction is expected to be complete by the end of 2022.
- d) The 2021-22 ACT Budget allocated \$7.5m (ex GST) to deliver the construction of upgrades at Kaleen Gwydir Square, Campbell and Duffy Shops. This is for all project costs including internal costs, contingency and construction delivery.

Final project costs will not be known until completion; however, the Gwydir Square upgrade is currently within the allocated budget, including the following external contracts plus variations that are accounted for within the allocated project contingency:

- I. Construction contract \$1,787,500.00 (incl GST) (original contract value)
- II. Superintendent contract \$ 49,500.00 (incl GST) (original contract value)

(2) Consultation with local traders is ongoing and focuses on project updates which are undertaken by the contractor on a regular basis. To date the feedback provided has been favourable with both traders and local residents.

At the commencement of work a trader was concerned about the noise from the pavement works. The contractor undertook to manage these works with minimal disruption as possible.

Feedback has been received about access between disability parking and the shops, and safety of temporary kerb ramps. Territory representatives have liaised with the contractor on this feedback. As a result the contractor has undertaken site checks and adjusted temporary access provision as required to ensure access and safety of users.

**Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—Domestic Violence Agencies
(Information Sharing) Amendment Bill 2022
(Question No 918)**

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) In relation to the YourSay consultation for the Domestic Violence Agencies (Information Sharing) Amendment Bill 2022, how will the ACT Government ensure that the views, experiences, and expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is front and centre, given the historical punitive treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by government and institutions.
- (2) Which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and organisations will the ACT Government engage with as part of consultation for the bill.
- (3) How will the ACT Government work closely with persons with disability as part of consultation for the bill.
- (4) Which relevant groups and organisations, referred to in part (3), will the ACT Government engage with as part of consultation for the bill.
- (5) How will the ACT Government ensure that the views and experiences of children will be taken into account as part of consultation for the bill.
- (6) Which relevant groups and organisations, referred to in part (5), will the ACT Government engage with as part of consultation for the bill.

Ms Berry: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

1. Consultation on the Domestic Violence Agencies (Information Sharing) Amendment Bill 2022 (the Bill) has commenced with the Domestic Violence Prevention Council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group (the Reference Group) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (the Elected Body).

The ACT Government is in the process of organising consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members informed by the advice of the Reference Group and Elected Body to ensure cultural safety.

2. See response to question 1.
3. The ACT Government has commenced consultation with representatives from organisations who work closely with people with disability via the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS).
4. See response to question 3.
5. The ACT Government will ensure the views and experiences of children are taken into account when consulting on the Bill by consulting with the ACT Children and Young People Expert Reference Group and the Human Rights Commission, including the ACT Children and Young People Commissioner.
6. See response to question 5.

**ACT Health—Digital Health Records system
(Question No 919)**

Ms Castley asked the Minister for Health, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) How many staff (a) full-time equivalent and (b) headcount, are working on Digital Health Records (DHR) and what is their classification.
- (2) What are the teams within the DHR program and how many staff are in each team.
- (3) When will the project complete testing and how many staff are testing the system.
- (4) Is testing of the system outsourced; if so, what is the cost of this.
- (5) When will the project be complete.
- (6) Will DHR be implemented in all areas of ACT healthcare on this date; if not, what areas will have DHR and what areas will not.
- (7) Can the Minister Provide an estimated implementation date for each division that will be using DHR in ACT.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

1. As of September 2022 salary reports, there are 187.34 FTE staff, with a headcount of 195, within the ACT Health Directorate (ACTHD) DHR Program team. Classifications ranged from Admin Service Officer 3 (AS03) to Executive Group Manager.

Canberra Health Services has a DHR Readiness Team that incorporates 24.21 FTE staff with a headcount of 24 with resources ranging from ASO3 to SOGB levels.

Calvary Public Hospital Bruce has a DHR Readiness Team of 4.8 FTE with a headcount of 5 ranging from SOGC to SOGA.

2. The ACTHD DHR Program teams are:
 - a. Overall Program – 4
 - b. Implementation – 157
 - c. Technical – 24
 - d. Data and Business Intelligence – 10
3. The core testing phase is complete. All DHR implementation application analyst staff and technical staff have been involved in testing and health service subject matter experts have been involved in elements of testing.
4. Testing has not been outsourced.
5. The DHR System will Go-Live across all ACT public health services on Saturday 12 November 2022. The DHR implementation program will be complete by 24 March 2023. Like other information technology systems, the DHR will then require maintenance and updating, including in response to user feedback, and a team will be employed to undertake this ongoing work.

6. The DHR will be implemented in all areas of Canberra Health Services, Calvary Public Hospital Bruce, Clare Holland House and the Tresillian QEII Family Centre.

7. 12 November 2022.

**Waste—materials recovery facility
(Question No 920)**

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Transport and City Services, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) Was the \$21 million funding from the Recycling Modernisation Fund announced in 2020 spent on the existing Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) in Hume (referenced in the Riotact article titled \$21 million tech boost at Hume to mean cleaner, better recycling for region, dated 15 July 2020); if so, how much of it was spent and what upgrades were implemented at the facility; if not, (a) what happened to that funding and (b) has that funding been put toward the new MRF announced in August 2022 (referenced in the Riotact article titled Canberra to get new recycling and composting facilities in bid to reduce emissions, dated 11 August 2022).
- (2) Will the existing MRF be closed after the completion the new MRF; if not, will each MRF recycle different materials, and will both continue to be used.
- (3) Why was it decided to build a new MRF when the existing MRF was due to receive an extra \$21 million in upgrades.

Mr Steel: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) The Recycling Modernisation Fund of \$21 million has been allocated towards the construction of a new modern Materials Recovery Facility (MRF).
- (2) The new MRF will be constructed on the adjacent block to the existing facility. Processing of co-mingled and Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) recycling will transfer from the current MRF to the new facility when it is operational. While the functional capability is being finalised, it will include new value-adding processes to improve the marketability of glass and plastics. The Territory will assess the options for the old facility after the design of the new MRF is finalised.
- (3) This was explained in the announcement on 8 August 2022. More information available here:
https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_releases/chris-steelmla-media-releases/2022/powering-a-circular-economy-for-the-act-and-surrounds

**Waste—food organics and garden organics facility
(Question No 922)**

Mrs Kikkert asked the Minister for Transport and City Services, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) Once the Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) facility is completed, will the Government operate the facility themselves or will the operation of the facility be contracted out to a private organisation.
- (2) How will the operator of the facility keep the soil sold from the facility affordable, especially given that the soil that will be sold is only made possible by the public giving their organic waste for free.
- (3) Will the ACT Government be contributing any funds to the construction of the FOGO facility in addition to the \$13 million contribution from the Commonwealth; if so, how much will the ACT Government be contributing.
- (4) How much longer will the trial of FOGO in Belconnen last.

Mr Steel: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) The Territory's intention is to procure the infrastructure and services through a single design, construct, operate and maintain (DCOM) contract.
- (2) It's important to note that the material recovered through the FOGO processing comes from food and organic waste that would otherwise have been sent to landfill. The beneficial reuse of the compost generated will be a key element to the operation of the facility. The commercial and marketing model for the final organic product will be addressed through the procurement process.
- (3) Yes, the ACT Government will contribute to the development of the FOGO facility. The Territory's investment in this project is subject to the contractual delivery model and completion of the procurement process.
- (4) The FOGO pilot is currently funded to October 2023.

Waste—bulky waste collection (Question No 923)

Ms Castley asked the Minister for Transport and City Services, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) How many bulky waste collection requests have been (a) made and (b) completed, each month since July 2021 to present.
- (2) Is the bulky waste collection completed by government or a private company.
- (3) If the bulky waste collection is completed by (a) a private company or (b) government could the Minister specify, (i) what the cost of the contract/service is, (ii) the duration of the contract/service and (iii) the term of the contract/service, eg, is the company paid to complete a certain amount of collections per week/month/year, or if other, can the Minister specify.
- (4) Are residents able to receive priority for a collection under certain conditions; if so, what are those conditions; if not, why not.

Mr Steel: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) The tables below show the monthly bulky waste collection requests made and completed since July 2021. Figures indicated as cancelled requests in the tables include bookings which were either cancelled by the resident or were deemed to be futile collections by the contractor due to non-presentation.

Month & Year	Requests made	Requests Completed	Requests Cancelled
July 2021	1,876	1,796	80
August 2021	988	941	47
September 2021	970	944	26
October 2021	864	815	49
November 2021	636	598	38
December 2021	616	587	29
January 2022	973	928	45
February 2022	769	719	50
March 2022	752	715	37
April 2022	762	720	42
May 2022	808	764	44
June 2022	677	641	36
July 2022	742	702	40
August 2022	880	859	21
September 2022	913	885	28
Total	13,226	12,614	612

- (2) The Bulky Waste service is provided under contract with the Territory by Suez Recycling & Recovery Pty Ltd (SUEZ).
- (3)
- The total value of the contract is \$9,066,000.00 as published on the contracts register.
 - The term of the service agreement is three years, commencing on 5 June 2020, with two extension options of one year each.
 - The contractor is paid for the number of completed collection services. The contractor is also required to achieve a number of key performance indicators aligned to the objectives of the service.
- (4) Residents are not able to request a priority booking. This is because the service is designed to be a scheduled service. There are commercial bulky waste operators that are able to assist residents that may require priority service.

Government—costs and revenue (Question No 924)

Ms Clay asked the Treasurer, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) How much did the 2012 ACT Taxation Review Paper cost.

- (2) Is the Government considering a new review following fiscal impact of COVID-19.
- (3) How many entities paid payroll tax to the ACT in (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21 and 2021-22.
- (4) What were the (a) compliance and debt recovery costs and (b) administration and collection costs, in terms of cents per dollar of revenue, in 2021-22 of ACT's (i) land tax, (ii) general rates, (iii) payroll tax and (iv) foreign ownership land tax surcharge.
- (5) What was the total value of revenue foregone on general rates and the Fire and Emergency Services levy due to concessions in (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21 and (c) 2021-22.
- (6) How many deferrals of general rate payments were there in (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21 and (c) 2021-22.
- (7) What was the total value of revenue foregone on general rates and the Fire and Emergency Services levy due to payment deferrals in (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21 and (c) 2021-22.
- (8) In 2021-22, what as the total mean and median nominal land tax payable for all dwellings with AUVs, within the thresholds of (a) \$300k-\$600k, (b) \$600k-\$1 million, (c) \$1 million-\$1.8 million, (d) \$1.8 million-\$2.5million and (e) \$2.5 million plus.
- (9) In 2021-22, how many dwellings that paid land tax in the ACT had an AUV of (a) \$300k-\$600k, (b) \$600k-\$1 million, (c) \$1 million-\$1.8 million, (d) \$1.8 million-\$2.5 million and (e) \$2.5 million plus.
- (10) How does Treasury decide what is a "good" tax and are there criteria.

Mr Barr: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) The 2012 ACT Taxation Review Paper cost \$677,538, including consultancy work, panel honorarium, expert advice, printing and administration.
- (2) The Government undertakes reviews of tax reform for each stage of tax reform. The outcomes of the reviews were published in the 2016-17 Budget and the 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update. I anticipate there will be a review towards the end of Stage 3 of tax reform (2021-22 to 2025-26).
- (3) The number of entities that paid payroll tax to the ACT in:
 - (a) 2019-20 – 3,699
 - (b) 2020-21 – 3,847
 - (c) 2021-22 –3,961.
- (4) This question is unable to be answered. The operational costs of the ACT Revenue Office for the administration and enforcement of taxes are not recorded by the categories asked in the question.
- (5) There are a number of concessions available to eligible ratepayers every year. The total revenue foregone on general rates and the Fire and Emergency Services levy

concessions is published annually in the ACT Tax Expenditure Statement. Total revenue foregone on general rates and the Fire and Emergency Services levy due to concessions is:

- (a) 2019-20 –\$38.657 million.
 - (b) 2020-21 – \$52.158 million.
 - (c) 2021-22 – these figures are not yet available as the 2021-22 Tax Expenditure Statement has not been released.
- (6) There were:
- (a) 407 deferrals of general rate payments in 2019-20.
 - (b) 461 deferrals of general rate payments in 2020-21.
 - (c) 502 deferrals of general rate payments in 2021-22.
- (7) Revenue deferred is not foregone as it is payable at an agreed time in the future. Revenue deferred in respect of general rates is:
- (a) 2019-20 – \$3.69 million.
 - (b) 2020-21 – \$3.85 million.
 - (c) 2021-22 – \$4.84 million.
- (8) In 2021-22, the mean and median land tax assessed for all ACT dwellings (houses and units) by AUV follows:

AUV (\$)	Mean land tax (\$)	Median land tax (\$)
(a) \$300k-600k	\$4,148	\$4,026
(b) \$600k-1m	\$7,205	\$7,466
(c) \$1m-1.8m	\$11,610	\$12,066
(d) \$1.8-2.5m	\$22,850	\$22,107
(e) \$2.5m+	\$35,572	\$36,440

- (9) In 2021-22, the number of dwellings (houses and units) assessed for land tax in the ACT by AUV follows:

AUV (\$) thresholds	Number of dwellings
(a) \$300k-600k	12,502
(b) \$600k-1m	2,485
(c) \$1m-1.8m	412
(d) \$1.8-2.5m	22
(e) \$2.5m+	25

- (10) Treasury takes into account a variety of factors when assessing the merits of alternative taxes including whether a tax is equitable (applies equally to taxpayers in similar circumstances and reflects the capacity to pay of taxpayers in different circumstances), efficient (minimises distortions to economic activity) and simple (predictable and easy to comply with).

**Municipal services—playgrounds
(Question No 925)**

Mr Davis asked the Minister for Transport and City Services, upon notice, on 23 September 2022:

- (1) Given that a number of constituents are concerned that existing Tuggeranong playgrounds, notably playgrounds in Wanniassa, do not meet community need in quantity and quality, what capacity does the ACT Government have to consider more upgrades to playgrounds around Tuggeranong.
- (2) What is the process by Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) for deciding which playgrounds to prioritise for upgrades or maintenance.
- (3) Would TCCS consider increasing the number of playgrounds in Wanniassa, and improving the quality of the equipment and space.
- (4) Would TCCS consider planning and constructing more large scale adventure and destination playgrounds in Tuggeranong, other than in Kambah and Gordon, like those in Taylor, Moncrieff and Throsby.

Mr Steel: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) The ACT Play Space Strategy was released in May 2022 and sets the direction for the future of play spaces in the ACT. It guides the forward planning, delivery and management of play spaces ensuring an equitable, inclusive, diverse, safe and engaging mix of play opportunities across Canberra.
 - (2) Play spaces are prioritised for upgrade utilising recommendations from annual audits along with current demographic, spatial and social information. This process ensures that safety standards are maintained, and public investments are suitably targeted. A preventative inspection and maintenance program is also undertaken at Canberra's playgrounds to mitigate risk from equipment failure and assess soft-fall levels against safety standards.
 - (3) A program of minor improvements is underway in Tuggeranong including at Steinfeld Court, Wanniassa. In 2021, Sangster Place and Whiteman Street Wanniassa received minor improvements. In 2020, both Wheeler Crescent and Bassau Close in Wanniassa received minor improvements. There are currently no plans to build additional play spaces in Wanniassa.
 - (4) The Government has planned six significant playground upgrades across the ACT over the next three years, two of which are in Tuggeranong. As part of this program Gordon (Point Hut Pond) and Chisholm (Alston Street) will receive significant upgrades in consultation with the community. Significant upgrades to the playground at Tuggeranong Town Park are also included in Lake Tuggeranong foreshore project.
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Question without notice taken on notice

Health—paediatric services

Ms Stephen-Smith (*in reply to a question by Mr Cocks on Wednesday, 21 September 2022*):

In 2018, two external reviews were conducted into paediatric services, including:

- Review of cases of late stillbirths and neonatal deaths that occurred at Centenary Hospital for Women and Children.
- Review of Paediatric Endocrinology and Diabetes Service.