



Debates

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Legislative Assembly for the ACT

TENTH ASSEMBLY

18 October 2022

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Tuesday, 18 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.

Petitions

The following petition was lodged for presentation:

Stromlo Forest Park—car park—petition 30-22

By Ms Lawder, from 692 residents:

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

Reason for this Petition

The Bike and trail running enthusiasts of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to the Stromlo Forest Park carpark. Firstly, we believe that the proposed carpark design does not currently meet the needs of its users: the car park spacing and the introduction of pay parking will have a negative effect on the user experience for regular patrons and visitors to the complex.

For patrons arriving with bikes on the roof or back of their vehicle, there is not enough space in the parking spots to safely remove their bikes. If children are also present, this space issue only worsens. Currently, the fact that there are no allocated car parks works well for people disembarking from larger vehicles such as utes, vans and motorhomes.

Visitors are also concerned about the possibility of paid parking being introduced at this carpark. Cyclists and runners are out on the trails for hours and the introduction of paid parking would significantly discourage visitors. Recreational outdoor activities such as these positively impact people's lives and we believe the government should be encouraging these healthy outdoor lifestyle behaviours.

Additionally, for the nearby suburbs, there will be an increase in traffic congestion due to people using the facility parking in residential streets and then riding across to the park.

This facility provides local revenue via other means by providing tourism dollars into the community, there is no need to introduce pay parking to such an iconic sporting location in Canberra.

Requested Actions

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

Reconsider the proposed design of the Stromlo Forest Park carpark so that it is more suited for its visitors' needs;

Ensure that no paid parking arrangements will be introduced.

The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petition would be recorded in Hansard and a copy referred to the appropriate minister for response pursuant to standing order 100, the petition was received.

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petition, having more than 500 signatories, was referred to the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality.

Motion to take note of petition

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

That the petition so lodged be noted.

Stromlo Forest Park—car park—petition 30-22

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.02): I would like to say a few words about the petition that was lodged in my name today about the redesign of the Stromlo Forest Park car park, which has come about following some significant community concern about proposed changes.

The petition calls on the government to reconsider the proposed design of the Stromlo Forest Park car park because there is considerable concern about the draft design and whether it is suitable for the visitors' needs. They are also very concerned about the introduction of paid parking, which has not been officially announced at this point, but there is quite a bit of fear in the community about that.

Prior to launching this petition, I was contacted by a number of mountain bike enthusiasts and ultramarathon-running people and their groups, who shared a wide range of concerns: firstly, about the car spaces in the proposed design of the car park, which they feel were too small because they did not allow for larger vehicles such as caravans or those with trailers. When you are taking a family, for example, or a group full of mountain bikes to the Stromlo Forest Park, you will often have the mountain bikes in a carrier on the roof of the car or on the back of the car, and there needs to be sufficient room for you either to stand by the sides of your car and unload your bikes whilst, at the same time, the car next to you might be trying to do the same thing.

Similarly, with the carriers on the back of a car, if you are standing behind your car, unloading bikes, and so is the car immediately behind you, there needs to be enough room in the aisle for cars to safely pass by. So people are concerned about the size there, especially when there are children around or the car park is very busy. And there are times when the car park is extremely busy.

It seems, according to people I have spoken with, that this is a solution desperately looking for a problem. People who use the park frequently believe that it works perfectly well as it is with the dirt car park, and people make the aisles that they need. That way if you have got a long vehicle or a wide vehicle, you can park where best suits you.

With regard to paid parking, if you are a trail runner you might be out on the trail for six hours at a time—if you are an ultramarathon runner—and they are concerned about the introduction of paid parking during that time while they are out on the trail for six hours. We do have a beautiful facility there at Stromlo Forest Park, but we fear that people will find other solutions if paid parking comes in.

There is also a fear people have expressed to me that it may have a negative impact on the business there, the Handlebar. If you are already out for a couple of hours in the park and you are thinking about whether to have a beer or two before you go home, the possibility of paid parking may impact on your decision.

We know the positive health benefits from outdoor activities such as this, trail running and mountain bike riding, and we believe we should be encouraging these healthy lifestyle behaviours. Some people have also expressed to me that they would prefer that the money that is going to be spent on paving the car park would be better spent on the trails themselves in the Stromlo Forest Park—the whole park is a beautiful space, so why do we now need green space in and around the car park as well, when the whole idea of the park is that there is plenty of space?

Another concern expressed to me is that if there were paid parking, it may mean that people going to the park will park in nearby suburbs, and that is going to really annoy nearby residents. If you are going mountain bike riding, if you park further out in a nearby suburb and you have got a kilometre to bike in, that is nothing to you as a mountain biker—it is a good warm up before going out on the trails.

I would like to thank the petitioner who started off this petition, which received nearly 700 signatures. I hope the EGEE committee will consider whether to have an enquiry into it. I look forward to the government working collaboratively with Stromlo Forest Park users to make sure that the car park is best suited to the users. It is not a shopping centre car park; it is for a specific audience with specific needs, and the car park design must be fit for that purpose. Thank you.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.07): I would like to thank Ms Lawder for bringing forward this petition. It is really good to see community voices coming directly into the Assembly. That is what our petitions are for. There has been a lot of conversation in the community about our facilities at Stromlo, about that car park in particular and our general facilities, and I am really looking forward to bringing a motion later in the week that will deal with some of those matters.

I have also been out at Stromlo; I have been out riding there with a lot of different people. I was at a meeting with CORC last week, and we had a really good briefing from the managers—the Stromlo and arboretum managers. It has been really good to get some information out there, because I think with over 4,000 users there, we have got a really broad community, and a lot of them feel like they have not been directly involved and, maybe, they do not know what is going on. It is great to see a call for more consultation, so that is one of the things that I will be bringing on in my motion.

It is really great to see this community petition come forward, and it is really good to see more government work and attention in this area. It is such a great sport; it is so much fun. We have so much potential out there, and we have such great opportunities to make this better and to make sure that the choices we are making are right for the area, right for our environment and right for all the user groups and the people who will be using it in future.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 22

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (10.08): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 22, dated 17 October 2022, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings and a revised copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings for Scrutiny Report 21.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR CAIN: Scrutiny report No 22 contains the committee's comments on 30 pieces of subordinate legislation, proposed amendments to one bill, including an explanatory statement to the amendments, and three government responses. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Work health and safety—Dickson shoring collapse Ministerial statement

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) (10.09): I want to take this opportunity to inform the Assembly and Canberrans of the details behind the construction incident that occurred early last week, to set out the actions taken so far in respect of that incident, and to outline the powers available to Access Canberra when it comes to ensuring compliance with our building and construction laws and regulations.

On the morning of last Tuesday, 11 October 2022, Access Canberra was made aware of an incident of a shoring collapse at a construction site at 330 Northbourne Avenue. The collapse occurred during the early hours of that morning, and no-one was present onsite at the time. The collapse impacted residential properties along Lowrie Street, Dickson, and caused a localised power outage.

Access Canberra building inspectors and the senior engineer attended the site and have worked collaboratively with WorkSafe ACT to ensure safety at the site. Under the power of the Building Act 2004, Access Canberra inspectors issued a stop notice for the site on that Tuesday afternoon. That notice has meant that all further building works, except required rectification work, have not been permitted.

On Friday 14 October, under the power of the Construction Occupations (Licencing) Act 2004, the Construction Occupations Registrar issued an emergency rectification order. This order was issued to Bloc Constructions (ACT), who are required to arrange for the completion of rectification works as set out in the order. The time between the stop notice being issued on 11 October and the emergency rectification order being issued on 14 October was to enable the necessary expert advice to be sought and provided in relation to the rectification methodology.

This order was issued as an emergency order because there was a need to act promptly to protect the safety of any persons at the premises and to protect the safety of occupants in the adjoining land which have been affected by the building works. The order requires the completion of the rectification works by no later than 5 pm on this coming Thursday, 20 October 2022.

Access Canberra is engaging with affected residents in relation to the processes underway. Directly affected residents are receiving engagement in person by a senior Access Canberra representative. This is enabling these residents to stay informed about activity underway and for their questions to be answered. The site is currently safe and stable, and the approach to remediation is being discussed with affected residents. Access Canberra is also undertaking a letterbox drop to nearby residents, providing an update on activity.

Access Canberra building inspectors and the senior engineer will continue to work collaboratively with the builder and WorkSafe ACT throughout the rectification works. As the matter is still under investigation by the registrar, at this stage I am unable to advise whether any additional regulatory action may be taken against the licensee.

This type of deep excavation is associated with medium- to high-rise construction projects, typically comprising one or more levels of basement in addition to a rise of three or more storeys. Such construction involves many specialised subcontractors, supervised by a class A builder.

The Construction Occupations Registrar has directed Access Canberra's senior engineer to undertake a targeted assessment of construction sites across the ACT that are at similar stages of construction, to ensure appropriate monitoring and controls are in place to manage excavation safety. This may also include the consideration of site

conditions, including ongoing rainfall impacts, engineering design and construction methodologies. This work commenced this week, and it includes technical experts conducting inspections across the territory.

This incident in Dickson follows a similar collapse of shoring at the WOVA construction site in Phillip that occurred on 6 August. The rectification methodology for that site was agreed by Access Canberra and WorkSafe. Access Canberra inspectors continue to undertake fortnightly inspections of that site, and I can advise that rectification work is well underway. These regular inspections will continue until the Construction Occupations Registrar is satisfied that there is no risk to the public or the territory.

Following that incident, on 8 August this year, the registrar wrote to all construction licensees about our unusually wet weather and advised them to ensure site safety, including around excavation and shoring. Further correspondence was then sent by the registrar to the 1,026 class A builders with an active licence in the ACT on Thursday 13 October. That recent letter directed the class A builders to review the stability of their works, including temporary earthworks, retaining walls and basement construction. Builders are required to notify the registrar within seven days of any issues that have been identified and steps taken to address them. So far, the results are encouraging, with a number of class A builders providing immediate responses to that letter.

I will now turn more generally to the legislative framework that covers construction and issues of noncompliance. The Construction Occupations Registrar has a range of options for dealing with noncompliance. Where appropriate for the protection of community safety or to prevent ongoing negative impacts, immediate regulatory action may be taken against builders or developers. For complex building and planning complaints, Access Canberra will undertake detailed investigation and analysis to consider regulatory actions that are proportionate to the issues, informed by the necessary technical professional knowledge, and that are legally defensible.

There are a range of regulatory options that are available to the registrar and Access Canberra. To briefly outline these, under the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act, the registrar may: impose conditions on construction licences to ensure public protection or in response to finding a disciplinary breach; suspend or cancel a licence; and register demerit points for disciplinary breaches. At 15 points worth of disciplinary breaches accrued within a three-year period, the registrar may suspend, cancel or take other disciplinary action. The registrar may: make emergency rectification orders or rectification orders that require a licence holder or former licence holder to undertake rectification work; accept a written undertaking given by an entity relating to the entity's contravention or alleged contravention of the law; undertake disciplinary action or apply to ACAT for an occupational discipline order; and prosecute offences under the act.

Separately to those powers, under the Building Act 2004 an authorised officer may: issue stop notices on building works; issue notices to carry out building work where work has not been carried out in accordance with the Building Code, the building or part of the building is not structurally sound, or the building or part of the building is unsafe because of fire hazard or unfit for use because of a danger to health; impose an

immediate monetary sanction for certain types of breaches; and prosecute offences under the act.

The occurrence of issues such as this shoring collapse underscores how important it is that building regulatory activity is adequately resourced. It is for this reason that, since the 2019-2020 financial year, Access Canberra has received significant additional funding to ensure the safety of Canberrans and to improve building quality. This includes budget appropriations of over \$4.5 million injected into building compliance and quality, which includes 29 additional staff to provide new capabilities in structural engineering and building surveying, along with significant enhancement to existing functions, with additional building inspectors and investigators, positions for data and legal support, and officers to support communication and engagement with industry.

This increased resourcing has given Access Canberra the capacity to undertake improved assessment of building licensing and to better address building quality through holding licensed entities accountable. This funding has allowed more inspectors and investigators to be onsite during the construction phase, to establish the rapid regulatory response capability, to enforce regulations when responding to complaints, and to respond to increasing volume in the construction sector. It has grown the capacity of the agency to engage with industry and to use data to inform targeted regulatory actions.

Access Canberra now has in place a range of programs to hold builders to account, such as proactive inspections to improve compliance in the work undertaken by builders and building surveyors, and to protect the community through ensuring that licensees are meeting their legislative obligations.

Access Canberra conducts targeted audit programs when a pattern of behaviour or a significant reduction of building quality and code compliance is identified. Examples of targeted audit programs are those that focus on: a particular licensed entity, a problematic work component, higher risk building types or a geographic location. Indeed, the targeted audit program on works involving deep excavation that will commence in the coming days is another example.

Importantly, and as reflected by the incident in Dickson, this funding has allowed Access Canberra to grow its technical expertise with the employment of technical specialists, including qualified structural engineers and building surveyors to provide for an increased focus on building quality in medium- to high-rise commercial construction. This capacity allows Access Canberra to quickly, independently and with confidence assess defects by analysing the design and undertaking observations to make recommendations in terms of safety and compliance.

Increases in building and construction activities, combined with climatic and environmental challenges, will lead to an increased requirement for regulatory interventions. This means that the innovative regulatory reform work already funded and underway within Access Canberra is timely, and why the continuing investment into community safety and the liveability of our city is a core priority of this government.

Recognising this, I will conclude by advising that before the end of the year, I will be releasing a statement of expectations relating to the registrar's functions. This is a notifiable instrument made in consultation with the registrar and requires the registrar to report in 12 months in response to that statement. I will be updating the Assembly in due course.

I present the following paper:

Shoring Collapse at Dickson on 11 October 2022—Ministerial statement, 18 October 2022.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (10.21): I thank Minister Cheyne for providing the Assembly with an update on the very serious construction site incident in Dickson last week. Canberrans are rightly concerned to see such incidents. As Minister Cheyne has just outlined, the ACT government has a regulatory system in place to respond to incidents such as these, led by the very capable staff in Access Canberra.

I would like to make some brief remarks as the Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction about the policy reform in my portfolio to improve the building quality in the ACT. Over a number of years we have been progressively implementing significant building reform. Minister Cheyne has outlined some of the outcomes of this as well as the increased resources. It has been very positive to work with Minister Cheyne.

In the second phase of work, we have considered recommendations from the Shergold-Weir *Building Confidence* report and the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Economic Development and Tourism Inquiry into Building Quality and are progressing initiatives intended to give even greater assurance and protection for the community and make those working in the building and construction industry accountable for their actions.

As the incoming Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction, I inherited three key reforms awaiting action that I believe are crucial to lifting building quality standards and community confidence. I am working to ensure they are delivered as fast as possible. These reforms are supported as priority projects by a range of stakeholders including unions and professional building peak bodies. I will briefly touch on the three reforms, which are: the registration of professional engineers, developer regulation and a public certification service.

In relation to engineer registration the ACT government is working to finalise legislation for the introduction of a registration scheme for professional engineers. Consultation with the community and the industry on the proposed registration scheme has recently concluded. Legislation for the Engineer Registration Scheme is on track to be introduced to the Assembly in November this year. This will ensure that

only suitably qualified professional engineers can undertake certain engineering activities in the ACT such as structural engineering.

In relation to developer regulation, the ACT government remains committed to introducing greater accountability measures for property developers during this term. Introducing greater accountability measures for property developers is another way the ACT government is taking action to increase the accountability of practitioners in the building industry. This is a complex piece of work and an innovative piece of work with no other jurisdiction moving to introduce this model of reform thus far. However, Queensland is also working to develop a model that addresses similar issues.

The Environment Planning, and Sustainable Development Directorate is preparing a discussion paper which will consider various issues and options for improving the accountabilities of developers and providing consumers with greater information about developers and their developments. I look forward to being able to use this discussion to support discussions around the specific elements of a model of developer regulation which will support a new scheme being developed through 2023.

Finally, in relation to public certification services, the government continues to progress work to establish a public sector certification service in response to the commitments in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement as well as recommendations from the ACT Inquiry into Building Quality. Recently a procurement process began to engage a consultant to undertake a regulatory and economic assessment of the range of options for a government-run building certification service. This work will support government decision making around the specifics of a potential model, with us working to deliver public certification services through this term in the Legislative Assembly.

While we have a strong regulatory system there is a need to ensure that it is further strengthened, particularly to ensure that appropriately qualified building professionals undertake this important work, that there is confidence around the models that support building work, and that we know there is strong accountability in relation to ensuring works are undertaken in a professional manner.

I thank Minister Cheyne, Access Canberra and WorkSafe for their efforts in carrying out the regulatory functions which are the way a strong regulatory system is delivered to ensure community confidence, worker and community safety, and high building quality.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10.26): I thank Minister Cheyne and Minister Vassarotti for their comments this morning on the shoring collapse of the construction site in Dickson.

I am encouraged by their commitment to ensuring a collapse like this does not happen again. As has been noted, if this collapse had occurred during the day with workers on site it could have been a completely different situation. I would like to thank both WorkSafe ACT and Access Canberra inspectors who attended the scene and worked to ensure that safety was the highest priority on the site.

Madam Speaker, I am deeply concerned that this is the second collapse that we have seen recently; the other in August in Woden. WorkSafe ACT will continue to work with Access Canberra and all builders and developers in Canberra to ensure that they guarantee site safety, with extra consideration being given to the risks resulting from the recent extreme weather.

The dangers in Canberra's residential construction industry are widely known. As a result, WorkSafe has focused a large amount of its resources on Operation Safe Prospect, which targets residential construction in both greenfield and brownfield areas across Canberra. This operation has resulted in more than 920 workplace inspections for non-compliance and safety issues. During 2021-22, 199 prohibition notices were issued across the ACT primarily for a failure to manage the risks of falls from heights. There is still a great deal of work to do to ensure that construction sites are safe places to work.

The collapse of the shoring wall at the construction site in Dickson last week is a timely reminder that we must strengthen regulations in the construction sector. Minister Cheyne has outlined the actions she and Access Canberra have taken including more resources and regulation. It is also true of WorkSafe ACT where the ACT government has increased resources and put more inspectors on the job. Both Access Canberra and WorkSafe play a vital role in educating industry participants, responding to incidents, and holding employers to account.

Work to strengthen regulations has also occurred through our unit title reforms. This has provided increased transparency for buyers. Notwithstanding steps being taken across various portfolios we continue to have developers who act as if they are above the law. While we have strong regulations and regulators who can respond when issues occur, we need to do much more to stop dodgy developers and curtail the harm they cause.

So, Madam Speaker, developer and trades licensing is a crucial step in our pathway to ensuring every worker comes home safe at the end of their day. We need developer and trades licencing sooner rather than later to ensure that incidents like this do not occur into the future. I am committed to doing what I can to ensure this important reform is delivered. Thank you.

Question 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.

Debate resumed from 13 October 2022.

Community Services Directorate—Part 1.8

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 1.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (10.31): I rise today to speak about disability and the overall lack of additional provisions within the budget for those who do not qualify for the NDIS, those who need it most and need the support provided by the ACT government. I note there has been a further increase in funding for the ACT's commitment to the NDIS, yet I was perplexed to see that the overall budget for disability had in fact decreased in this year's budget.

In a response to a question on notice about this matter, I was told it was due to reprofiling of funding and the existing provisions of monies from the 2021-22 budget; yet we have more people who need support who do not qualify for the NDIS. So I am left wondering why, when the needs are greater and more urgent, there was an overall reduction in funding for disability services. If in previous years it was possible to budget for this amount, then surely it should be possible not to reduce funding but to keep it at least at the same levels and increase services.

A recent survey for the ACT showed that as many as 26 per cent of people with disabilities living in households are in the lowest two income quartiles, often living in households with less than \$50,000 a year before tax, needing extra government support. This budget does not meet their needs.

I think ACTCOSS summarised it well, describing this budget as “treading water.” Perhaps the most significant forward-looking gaps were around the ACT's disability strategy and disability health strategy. The budget fails to signal any forward looking initiatives for the community. When questioned about this, the government's response was that it was being offset with the health funding envelope with future funding to be decided. This is a disappointing response. The scoping study was completed last year, and it might have been expected that a more indicative and specific funding arrangement could have been put in place, but in this budget and in the forward estimates is a signal to the community of this government's commitment to this and other strategies. Currently there are over 10,000 people who have self-identified as living with a disability in the ACT, though we know that number could potentially be higher.

Finally, I was surprised by the lack of funding in this year's budget for the various charities and organisations that have in the past relied on government funding. Missing from the budget for this year were advocacy agencies such as ACT Disability Aged and Carer Advocacy Services and Advocacy for Inclusion. The forward estimates funding for Roundabout Canberra, who deliver a tremendous service to Canberrans in need, has also disappeared, it seems. I questioned the government on the lack of visibility of the promised money, to be assured that the grant money would be paid as promised, though not listed in the budget. I was glad to get that response

from the minister. These groups are incredibly important in the role they play in our community. I was not as happy about the response to my question on Roundabout funding during the estimates hearings; the minister's response indicated that it would no longer be provided as a standalone provision but has to be absorbed into directorate funding to be paid for as a service. I recommend the government review this decision for future budgets. This is not necessarily the best outcome for any organisation that relies on regular income such as an ongoing government grant to manage its budgets.

I note the committee recommended the government clearly identify in future budgets all funding allocations for community service organisations and individual advocacy groups provided within the disability sector. The government's response is that this is their policy though it has obviously not been followed in this budget. The advocacy community and I look forward to seeing its return as a separate line item in future budgets.

In summary, a disappointing budget for the disability sector—a decrease overall, no forward looking initiatives for the ACT disability strategy or disability health strategy, and a change in funding parameters for one of our key support groups, whilst at the same time no information about the ongoing support for Canberrans for Canberra's advocacy groups. I think ACTCOSS were kind when they said this budget was treading water.

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) (10.36): I rise today to talk about the government's commitments and funding towards domestic and family violence prevention as well as sexual assault and violence services in the ACT government's budget. Of course, Madam Speaker, the ACT considers itself a safe place. However, far too many women and children are being impacted by domestic and family violence in the ACT as well as sexual assaults and sexual violence. That is why the ACT government continues to take these issues very seriously and we continue to provide funding to services to ensure we improve integration and coordination as well as providing support and increased access to these kinds of services as well.

To support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim survivors and to respond to the "*We Don't Shoot our Wounded...*" community report, \$1.8 million has been committed to co-design and implement culturally relevant and appropriate responses to domestic and family violence. The government is also establishing the wraparound service model and investing \$660,000 to ensure that we get the implementation right.

The government has also put another \$5.9 million to provide dedicated response to domestic and family violence instances with high risks of lethality. This will include intensive case management, coordination as well as information sharing. The government has used the government's safer families levy to fund, either partially or in full, \$1.8 million for education, training and capacity-building resources for the sector to support victim survivors, promote sustainability for organisations and ensure best practice support into the future. \$620,000 has gone to expanding the capacity of

Domestic Violence Crisis Service as well as Canberra Rape Crisis Service to meet the demands for emergency hotel accommodation, case management and fund a range of support options.

In response to the *Listen. Take Action to Prevent, Believe and Heal* report, this budget commits the following funding: over \$580,000 to undertake a review of agencies and statutory bodies which will identify where further investment and changes need to be made to address victim survivors needs; \$1 million to develop a long terms strategy for the prevention of sexual violence and to change behaviours, as well as \$1.4 million to implement independent sexual violence advisors to provide expert advocacy system navigation and links to services and supports to victim-survivors. Consistent with recommendation one of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program report the government has committed \$1.4 million over four years to establish structured and ongoing consultation with victim survivors of sexual assault. Lastly, \$4.3 million over four years to establish a multidisciplinary centre to co-locate a broad range of specialist sexual violence response services to provide best practice responses to meet the needs of victim survivors.

Madam Speaker, in my portfolio of Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence the government will continue to prioritise and undertake a range of grant opportunities and specialist programs and work across government to ensure that we promote and achieve our gender equity agenda.

I also want to briefly comment on the launch of the national plan yesterday by the federal government, which our strategies in the ACT feed into, and soon to be developed, an action plan for the first five years to implement that national plan in the country's response to domestic and family violence. This has been the clearest and most measurable approach by the federal government in working with states and territories to develop a plan to address this longstanding issue that nobody has ever been able to resolve and we have a plan to resolve this within a generation. We recognise that is aspirational and there is a long way to go before we get there. However, every state and territory including the federal government have committed themselves to the national plan. Working together, in particular to ensure the voices of people who have lived experience with domestic and family violence have a say and their voices are heard and well embedded within the national plan, and the action plans following.

Madam Speaker, we will continue to work with the community services organisations that provide supports for people who are impacted by violence, whether sexual or domestic and family violence, to ensure they have the funding they need to respond to people in our community impacted. We know in the ACT we have a chance to be really mobile in the way that we respond to this, learning and listening and talking to each other about the different kinds of innovative models and approaches we can include in our response. This is a complex issue. It requires a committed and complex response. That is why you will see our funding in the ACT budget going to a range of different services and organisations, as well as innovation, to ensure we cut across all of the different areas we need to in responding to domestic and family violence and sexual assaults and violence in the ACT.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (10.42): I am pleased to rise again in support of this budget and to speak specifically about our investments which support families and community services, as well as our investments in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The ACT government is committed to the principle of early support—to shifting investment earlier in the life of a person, family or issue to ensure that we are meeting need when it first arises not only when it escalates to a crisis point. Many of the essential services that seek to realise this principle of early support are delivered through the government's partnership with the non-government sector.

Every year thousands of Canberrans seek out the 250 essential services funded by the ACT government and provided by the community sector, across homelessness supports, child and family supports, legal services, statutory care and protection, family safety, mental health, multicultural services and support to manage alcohol and other drug dependency. I am sure that I have missed some in that list.

These programs and organisations contribute to what makes Canberra a great place to live and to ensuring that all Canberrans have the support that they need. Currently, the ACT government invests more than \$200 million, in partnership with more than 140 community sector organisations, to deliver these services for our community. In turn, the community sector employs around 17,000 people to do this crucial work. The social services sector is people-powered, with wages being the most significant costs for the non-government organisations we partner with.

The community sector indexation rate, or CSI, is a formula which determines the indexation percentage for most ACT government community sector contracts and deeds. The formula for CSI has historically been the wage price index, 80 per cent of the formula, plus the consumer price index, the other 20 per cent. These two indices in that balance have been a fairly robust and sensible way of deciding how much indexation should apply over many years.

However, over the last two years in particular we have seen a welcome increase in relevant award wages above the wage price index, and so we have adjusted the community sector indexation accordingly. Earlier this year, the Fair Work Commission annual wage review decision responded to inflation with increases in the minimum award and, relevantly, the wages set out through the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award, or the SCHCADS Award.

In response, the government has adjusted the methodology of calculating the CSI rate. The application of a CSI rate of 4.43 per cent in this budget will see the community sector receive an additional \$28.1 million over four years. This funding increase reflects our commitment to the sector and to ensuring that organisations can pay their incredibly valuable, skilled and qualified workers the wages they deserve without compromising the service delivery. We know there is further work to do with the sector to improve sector sustainability. The *Counting the Costs* report, which we commissioned and which was released earlier this year, contained several recommendations and we are working to deliver a whole-of-government response to the report in early 2023.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations have unique expertise to provide culturally appropriate, culturally safe services and to work with children, young people, adults and families who have often experienced intergenerational trauma and the legacy of colonisation, institutional and individual racism, and past government policies and practices.

The Canberra community is fortunate to have a number of strong and emerging Aboriginal community-controlled organisations across different sectors, each of which demonstrates the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and service delivery. In the child and family support sector, Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation is the most established of these organisations and aims to protect, nurture and support children, young people and their families as they grow. While Gugan is primarily funded for youth services, in reality we know it supports children, young people and their families from birth, through childhood, into adolescence and adulthood.

At the 2020 election ACT Labor have committed to delivering a purpose-built facility with Gugan to better deliver their essential services. Gugan was established in 1992 and its current building has undergone a range of ad hoc refurbishment since the service moved into its Grattan Court site in 2001. After 30 years supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans, a purpose-built facility will ensure that Gugan can continue to meet the needs of the community into the future.

The ACT government and Gugan have worked closely to develop plans for the new facility, to be built on the existing site, that will enable expanded services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in a familiar setting. The new building will include a reception area, staff workspaces, youth work and homework spaces, function and exhibition spaces, art and music facilities and indoor and outdoor play areas. This budget includes more than \$19 million to fully fund the construction of this facility.

This important investment in the community-controlled sector in this budget sits alongside work across government, including, in the health portfolios, the continued development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and other drug residential rehabilitation service, in partnership with Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services, as part of the renewed Watson health precinct; the transition to a residential program at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm; and the establishment and evaluation of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific standalone suicide prevention, postvention and after care service in the ACT, being delivered by my colleague Minister Davidson.

All of this really important work is of course informed by our partnerships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, including through the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028 and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The statutory child protection and out-of-home care system is one of the most challenging and complex areas of service delivery under the ACT government's and

other state and territory governments' responsibilities and another area where growing the Aboriginal community-controlled sector is a priority.

The A Step Up for Our Kids 2015-2020 strategy oversaw significant investment and reform in the child protection system over around seven years. Despite the successes of this strategy, including stabilisation in the number of children in the statutory system, persistent issues remain, including the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out of home care; gaps in educational and other life outcomes for young people with a care experience; increased child concern reporting, which is now at over 20,000 reports received each year; and fragmentation between the statutory services and our non-government partners who work more in the early intervention and family support space.

We know that we need to do more to improve service quality, compliance with legislative requirements, governance arrangements and, indeed, career satisfaction. To address these ongoing challenges, a renewed strategy, the Next Steps for Our Kids 2022-2030 strategy, was launched in June 2022. It builds on reforms to child protection and out of home care that commenced under A Step Up for Our Kids but also broadens the scope beyond the statutory system.

Next Steps will expand investment in targeted, culturally safe and therapeutic family support services and provide safe, stable living environments for children and young people who require out of home care. The Community Services Directorate is working with government and non-government stakeholders to develop the first four-year action plan, which will guide ongoing implementation of the strategy.

But many reform actions under the next step strategy are already underway. Guided by the Next Steps strategy, the government is in the process of recommissioning services in the out of home care system and family support systems. This budget provides funding of \$32.3 million over four years to support this service system. This includes additional funding for six existing partner agencies to support ongoing and continuity of service provision for children, young people and families. There is funding to support the growth of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and service delivery in the system, with an initial focus on diversionary services. I am very pleased that we were able to work with Yerrabi Yurwang on that.

There is funding to support the transition of a new therapeutic residential care provider. This includes over the next two years \$4.96 million for highly intensive residential care placements, required where no other suitable placement can be identified. Of course, we also provide continued funding for Gugan Gulwan to continue to deliver functional family therapy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, in line with the existing commitment in response to the Our Booris, Our Way report. We have funding for staff to oversee the implementation of the strategy, in partnership with the community sector advocates and people with lived experience. Hearing those voices of children and young people, their families and carers, has been critical to the development of the strategy and will be critical to its implementation.

Both embedded within Next Steps and continuing to sit alongside it as an independent priority is the work to implement the recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way review and to meet the intent of this review in addressing the drivers of Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families becoming engaged with the child protection system, as well as meeting their needs within the system. The budget delivers against a number of key recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way review. This includes the establishment of an independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's commissioner, led by my colleague Minister Cheyne; funding for two lawyer positions at the Aboriginal Legal Service New South Wales/ACT to establish a care and protection legal advocacy service, led by my colleague Minister Rattenbury; and, as I outlined earlier in this speech, important funding to support the development and transition of services to community controlled-organisations in the service system.

This budget continues our government's important long-term agenda to target support early, where we know the lifelong outcomes of our investments are strongest and the lifelong budget impacts are, in fact, the lowest over the long term. We continue to achieve this through partnerships and we will continue to strengthen those partnerships with the non-government sector, the Aboriginal community-controlled sector, carers, families, children and young people, led by evidence and by lived experience. I commend this part of the budget to the Assembly.

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) (10.54): We all want an accessible, inclusive Canberra. COVID-19 exposed inequality and barriers to accessibility and social inclusion across our community. As we continue to strengthen the community, there are a number of budget initiatives that will empower our whole community in this work. As we come out of the worst of COVID-19's public health restrictions and the associated economic impacts, it is important that we have a plan for social recovery for everyone in our community. When our community is challenged, it is often our community sector who best understand the specific needs of those most impacted and are the first to respond to social recovery needs, such as food relief and emergency accommodation, mental wellbeing and social isolation, and rebuilding community connections.

We saw throughout the past few years the sense of belonging and connection and a hand of kindness that was extended by individuals and organisations across our city to support those people having a hard time. We also recognise that the ACT government has a role in providing support and resources for our community sector and our broader community so that those people stepping in to help know that we are doing this together. We know from research into the aftermath of the 2003 ACT bushfires, as well as eight other major disasters around Australia and the world, that social recovery is most effective when it is community led and government supported.

This budget includes funding of \$250,000 this year and \$150,000 in 2023-24 to complete the development of a social recovery framework. This will enable us to co-design the framework with the community so that we can better understand the sector's ability to respond when disaster strikes and identify what the ACT government can do to better support our community.

In addition to this new initiative, we continue the technology upgrade fund this year, next year, and the year after that, to support our community sector in maintaining and

upgrading the IT equipment software and skills that enable them to better support their clients and members, and increasing access to digital technology for those members of our community who are most at risk of digital exclusion. We have known for many years that our NGOs often do not have the capital to pay for the upgrades they need to deliver services and support the community in the increasingly online world, which is why we provided \$487,000 this year, as we did last year, through technology upgrade fund grants, to support our community.

Our unpaid carers for people with disability and the elderly, and kinship carers for children in out-of-home care, took on additional work during COVID-19. Our carers need care too. This week, 16 to 22 October, is Carers Week. This budget includes funding of \$825,000 over four years for the second action plan in the ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028. The carers strategy, led by the Carers Strategy Governance Group and co-chaired by the CEO of Carers ACT, will focus on actions in the second action plan covering recognition, education, information access, ongoing carer engagement and enhanced support services.

It will be a carer-led process, co-designed with the community sector and carers to enable a carers strategy vision, a community that cares for carers and the people they care for. Funding will resource peer-to-peer mentoring and support. Carers will be matched with individuals with lived experience and organisations with expertise in working with young carers, culturally and linguistically diverse carers, older carers and carers for people with disability.

Carers strategy funding will also support policy work in the community that advocates to remove barriers for carers in accessing the necessities of daily living and supports for their own wellbeing. In 2022-23 the carers strategy funding will also produce a carer respite options handbook. The handbook will focus on identifying ways that carers can seek respite in their day-to-day activities, developing resilience that is not dependent on accommodation services.

Caring for carers is also caring for older Canberrans. One in nine Australians provide care to an older person and one in five women aged 65 to 74 years old are carers. Housing affordability has a real impact on mental wellbeing, which is why the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing have included in the older person's mental health and wellbeing strategy that they will explore the experience of older women with homelessness, and the drivers of homelessness in older women. More than 37 per cent of people living in public housing in Australia are over 55 years old. This is why the continued funding for the growth and renewal of public housing stock and the allocation of a further \$57.3 million in this budget to undertake additional housing repairs and maintenance to maintain additional public housing stock is so important.

Work continues, in alignment with the age-friendly city plan, to make our city more accessible and inclusive for Canberrans as they grow older, supporting their health and wellbeing and that sense of connection and belonging that is so important for mental wellbeing. The government is investing \$1.75 million in this budget, with funding into the forward estimates, to continue the age-friendly suburbs capital works program, with upgrades in Reid, Scullin, O'Connor and Chifley, informed by the input of older residents.

Becoming a more dementia-friendly city is also important, with training continuing for Access Canberra staff as an embedded standard practice and Access Canberra shopfronts adopting dementia-friendly design. The ACT's first dementia-friendly film screening will take place on Saturday, 22 October, with support from the ACT government. It will be a wonderful way to celebrate Carers Week.

With the age-friendly city plan and the older person's mental health and wellbeing strategy working together, this government has an ambitious plan ahead to address the social determinants of health and wellbeing for older people in our community. In addition to working on physical infrastructure, such as footpaths, public transport and access to government services, we will be co-designing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elder day program, focusing a lens on older Canberrans in suicide prevention activities and co-designing communication channels for providing information and support to promote mental health and wellbeing in older Canberrans.

We learned during COVID-19 how important accurate and timely information is for those most at risk from the virus, including the elderly, people with chronic health conditions and their carers. While we have announced an end to the provision of free rapid antigen tests for those workers from 30 September, and with requests for RATs having dramatically reduced over the past month, I would like service providers to know that we are still able to provide that support if it is needed. It is important that every older person in our city and every person with disability and every carer knows that we are here for you and we will do whatever we can to ensure that you are able to safely access the in-home care supports that keep you well, maintain your sense of belonging in the community and enable you to live a full life. For people on a low income, with concession cards, RATs continue to be available through our ACT libraries.

I have written to the commonwealth Minister for Health and Aged Care and the commonwealth Minister for Aged Care, asking them to work with the ACT government on the future provision of RATs in the ACT's aged-care sector and offering our support to work with the commonwealth on reforms to the aged-care sector, including the implementation of recommendations to the royal commission into aged care. This is how effective governments work across jurisdictions, by offering collaboration, in a genuine spirit of goodwill, to achieve our collective goal of an accessible and inclusive society for everyone.

On Thursday, 4 August I presented an executive motion on continued COVID-19 supports for vulnerable Canberrans over winter. I was so hoping to have a real conversation in this place about how we encourage people to think about and act on the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on those most at risk in our community. I continue to hear from older Canberrans, our disability community and carers, for whom COVID is not over. It is not just our personal responsibility but, in fact, our collective responsibility to continue to protect those who cannot risk catching this virus. That means looking for COVID-safe ways to stay socially connected, such as catching up for lunch at an outdoor cafe instead of indoors, continuing to wear a mask when visiting friends or family whose health is at risk, and supporting flexible work or study from home or a graduated return to the office for those who need it.

Most importantly, keep up the handwashing and getting boosters, and, if you are someone whose health is most at risk from COVID, talk to your GP about how to access antivirals, should you test positive. With telehealth appointments and home delivery of prescriptions, you can access medicines that will improve your health outcomes without even leaving home. I have hosted and will continue to host webinars and to facilitate conversation in the seniors and disability communities about how government can continue to support people as we move through the public health emergency and into recovery from what we have all experienced these past few years.

This budget also funds a range of accessibility and inclusion improvements in our community for people with disability, including enduring mental health conditions. Some of these include the development of the ACT Disability Health Strategy and first action plan; the expansion of mental health programs for young people and suicide prevention; an expansion of the PACER program, which links police, ambulance and clinicians in early response; funding to improve public school infrastructure and equitable enrolment adjustments, including students with disabilities; funding to make online government services more accessible; a \$50 increase to the utilities concession; and funding to maintain the flexibus transport services.

In addition, we continue to fund services that support people with disability who are not in the NDIS, as well as people who are accessing the NDIS. This includes the Children and Young People Equipment Loan Service, the CAYPELS program; the Child Development Service; the Office of the Senior Practitioner; the disability justice strategy implementation; the Integrated Service Response Program; disability Official Visitors; and both individual and systemic advocacy, which all support people with a disability to have access to mainstream supports and services, for which I particularly want to thank ADACAS and Advocacy for Inclusion, who recently completed their merger with People with Disabilities ACT.

There is much more I would like to say about the resourcing provided to programs supporting seniors, our disability community, veterans, carers, volunteers and young people in our justice system, but unfortunately there are time limits. I commend this part of the budget to the Assembly.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (11.04): There are so many advantages to living here in the ACT, but the ACT should be a model of good governance. Living here should bring access to the best of everything: affordable housing, quality health care, safe neighbourhoods, world-class schools, well-maintained parks and community facilities, roads that are safe to drive and ride on, and so forth. Certainly, if one takes seriously the big promises and spin repeatedly offered by those opposite, we should actually be enjoying all of those things. But we are not, because this is a government that talks big but fails to delivery every single time.

This budget is one more example of that. Characterised by lack of substance, it highlights a government that is content to merely fiddle around the edges. I will share a few illustrations from the recent budget estimates process in relation to my shadow portfolios, beginning with families, youth and community services, and specifically child protection.

Nearly three years ago the Our Booris, Our Way steering committee released its final report into the over-representation of Indigenous young people in child protection. Shortly before estimates hearings, the implementation oversight committee publicly stated that it was “tired and frustrated by the lack of progress and feel disappointed” that only one recommendation out of 28 has been fully implemented.

When I asked Minister Stephen-Smith, in hearings, what is taking so long, she shamelessly insisted that the government has made more progress than the committee understands. She also claimed that the government has struggled to explain all this progress to the committee. Several members of this committee helped to conduct the inquiry and wrote the recommendations, but, apparently, according to the minister, they are incapable of comprehending just how much progress this government is actually making. Never mind that the minister also admitted that some of the changes she believes her government has delivered have not necessarily resulted in a visible and significant change in outcomes. In many ways, that quote from the minister sums up this government and this budget: no visible or significant change in outcomes.

Let me give a more detailed example. Recommendation 4 from Our Booris, Our Way is universal access to the family led decision-making process called family group conferencing, for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families engaging with or entering the child protection system. This may be one of the recommendations that the minister believes has been implemented because it has now been adopted as government policy. There is just one problem: it is not actually happening!

For at least a year I have been asking for data regarding the implementation of this process, to no avail. All I know is that an internal government document last year noted that this policy, instead of providing universal access, has a “low referral rate”. In estimates hearings for this budget, I again asked the minister what percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are actually being referred for family group conferencing, in alignment with the policy. The correct answer, of course, should be 100 per cent. The policy, after all, is meant to be universal. Her response, however, was:

CYPS do not collect data on the number of families who should have been referred to FGC [family group conferencing].

This government is spending money on providing family group conferencing for all Indigenous families but, at the same time, has literally no idea how close it is to achieving that target. Clearly, based on an internal assessment from 2021, the government knows its promise of universal access is, in reality, actually quite low. How low, nobody knows. The absence of a percentage certainly makes it easier to assert that the implementation of this policy has been successful—far easier than if it were known, for example, that only five to 10 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are actually being offered this alternative. Significantly, whilst the tripartisan Select Committee on Estimates recommended that the ACT government begin reporting the correct percentage, the government, in its response, outright rejected this recommendation.

In summary, the ACT government has promised universal access to family group conferencing for Indigenous families who enter the child protection system. The

government knows for certain that it is not providing universal access to these families. At the same time, the government has refused to track the data that would allow it to be measured and improve its performance. As a direct result, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are not accessing family group conferencing. Inevitably, some of their children will enter care and protection when this does not need to happen. The inescapable message to community and others who care deeply about this matter is that the ACT government do not really care at all. It is all just lip-service for them. This is not good governance. It is, however, a hallmark of this Labor-Greens government.

I offer a further example from the recent budget estimates process. Last year community stakeholders reported to me that they had seen a large increase in low income families seeking autism assessments for young people aged 12 and above. The problem is that, unlike the governments in Tasmania, Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory, the ACT government does not provide autism screening once children turn 12. Consequently, in a motion, I asked those opposite to join me in calling on the government to begin offering assessments to low income families with older children, as happens in other jurisdictions. I also wanted to ask the government to improve data collection regarding how many families experience delayed diagnosis of autism, because, as Australian experts have noted, it is difficult to improve early diagnosis unless one knows the extent and cause of late diagnosis.

Greens-sponsored amendments to the motion acknowledged the surge in low income families seeking autism assessments for older children but completely removed my call for these families to have increased access to government assessments. They also struck out my request for improved data collection—maybe because if data does not exist, there is no problem. Such an approach by a government is blind, foolish and heartless. So in estimates hearings I asked Minister Berry how much of this budget's increase in funding will help to achieve the outcome of increased awareness of autism. The answer was none. I likewise asked what innovative ways the government is exploring to increase awareness and early assessment. Answer: nothing it was not already doing. I also asked if the government had started seeking data regarding low income families needing assessments for older children, whether from stakeholders or internally. The answer, as you should be able to guess by now, was also a big no.

Once again, if there is no data on this issue then the problem does not exist, right? How foolish. The evidence is already out there. Stakeholders report that increasing numbers of low income families are seeking assistance to obtain autism assessments for their older children. So we have a situation where Labor and the Greens have unanimously acknowledged a surge in low income families who have missed out on early autism assessments, but this government has not only refused to assist these families; it does not even want to know who they are or how many of them there are. It has no intention of finding out why they were missed because—and let us just be honest here for a moment—this is a government that, despite its outward support for the amended motion last year, has zero intention of exploring innovative ways to improve its service delivery; those are just words after all. ACT Labor and the Greens have perfected the art of speaking words they have no intention whatsoever of acting

upon! Shame on this government for turning its back on needy families, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. In so many areas, the goal appears to be to create an appearance of committing to reform whilst carefully managing expectation so that little real reform needs to happen. *(Second speaking period taken.)*

When it comes to the prevention of domestic and family violence, I witness the same concerns I see across my other shadow portfolios. When the safer families levy was announced by the ACT government in 2016, I and many members of the Canberra community welcomed the much-needed investment in our underfunded frontline domestic and family violence services. The government announced that the levy would directly fund a range of new programs aimed at improving outcomes for victims of domestic violence and their families. Instead, we saw \$2.4 million of the safer families levy spent on training all 21,000 ACT government staff, at the expense of frontline service providers.

With four consecutive annual increases taking the safer families levy from \$30 to \$50 per household, I asked the government, during hearings, exactly how much of the enlarged levy would be allocated to frontline community services, as opposed to frontline government services. The answer I received:

... it is not possible to provide the requested breakdown of the Safer Families Levy component allocated across the identified categories.

My fear is that the ACT government will continue to pull much-needed funding away from frontline services when we are living at a time when there are more vulnerable people in our community than ever before. For years, I have been advocating for more investment in this space. I have continually fought for more investment in women's refuges and in organisations that support at-risk men, but to no avail. At least this Labor-Greens government outright confirmed its lack of concern in a written response to a question I asked during estimates hearing:

The 2022-23 Budget does not provide any new funding under the domestic and family violence portfolio to these frontline services.

Not only is there no new funding for women's refuges and men's organisations but there is no new funding for frontline community services found anywhere in the safer families portfolio—only a reallocation of earlier funding that was provided for the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service. How much longer can this situation be sustained? Canberrans rightly expect that their payment of the annual safer families levy will create increased safety for those directly impacted by domestic violence.

A final example of how this government and this budget both fall short comes from my shadow portfolio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. In July 2020 Ms Julie Tongs, CEO of Winnunga, wrote to the former Attorney-General seeking a detailed, comprehensive and independent inquiry into the justice system and its contact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. This letter led to a government roundtable of Indigenous leaders on 25 March last year.

According to documents released under the Freedom of Information Act, in the lead-up to the roundtable Minister Stephen-Smith encouraged the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs to provide JACS with some guidance regarding this meeting. I quote from that guidance:

- (1) The meeting needs to have modest goals for what will be achieved by government.
- (2) We should not be seen to be pushing towards a particular outcome.

This same document also indicates that the government would strongly support “an Our Booris, Our Way type model for a review”. The ACT government’s preference for this model was so strong, in fact, that the terms of reference for the Our Booris, Our Way review were included with the invitations to the roundtable and a presentation on the review was given near the beginning of the roundtable.

In his opening remarks, Attorney-General Rattenbury also stated:

Clearly one of the potential review models is to mirror the Our Booris, Our Way review process.

Briefing notes for the Attorney-General indicate that Our Booris, Our Way took two years to complete and cost approximately \$2 million. So presumably the government was prepared for a new review to last that long and cost that much as well. We all know that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders at the roundtable rejected the idea of a review and instead unanimously requested a fully independent board of inquiry. At no point have community leaders backed down from this request. Labor and the Greens, however, have repeatedly rejected it.

The goal, remember, was not to be seen to be pushing towards any particular outcome. But when the outcome did not match the modest goals that the government wanted, the answer was, and continues to be no. Many community members, community leaders and stakeholders such as ACTCOSS sincerely hoped that this budget would include funding for the desired board of inquiry. It does not, of course. Amongst the reasons given by those opposite for ignoring this request from Indigenous Canberrans is that it would take too long and cost too much.

As part of estimates hearings, I therefore asked Minister Stephen-Smith what her estimate was for the duration and cost of a board of inquiry. Remember, the government was prepared to strongly support a two-year, \$2 million review. I wanted to know on what basis she and other ministers had chosen to reject the roundtable’s proposal. Her response was:

The cost and duration of a Board of Inquiry would depend on the scope of the Terms of Reference of an Inquiry.

Well, yes, Minister. That is perfect tautology. In other words, the ACT government has rejected a board of inquiry, in part because it could take too long and cost too much, even though it has zero idea how long it might last and how much it might cost. I strongly suspect that the real reason, of course, is that Indigenous leaders did not get the clear message: goals for what this government will achieve need to be modest, and

when the government repeatedly offers a particular review as a model that is the model that must be followed. End of story.

That sums up this worn-out government and this lacklustre budget: appear to be consultative but only agree to community requests that match government priorities; keep the goals modest, with outcomes that are difficult to measure; when outcomes are not reached, blame those who just cannot see what progress the government has really achieved; and for heaven's sake, do not collect data that might further expose this government's mounting failures and repeated fizzles.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.21): I rise today to speak on Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 as it relates to my shadow portfolios of seniors and women. I start by saying that seniors have come to expect very little from this Labor-Greens government, and it is no wonder when you look at this recent budget, because, once again this year, we have seen no new initiatives for older Canberrans—just more of the same.

It is just repeat on repeat. There is no new thinking, despite the government acknowledging, time and time again, how severely our older Canberrans have been impacted by COVID; despite the fact that according to the 2021 census results, the proportion of Canberrans aged 60 to 75 has increased from around eight per cent on the previous census to 12.6 per cent of the total ACT population; and despite the fact that Canberrans live longer than other Australians, which was also highlighted in the recent census results.

So we should be giving back to our seniors, and we should be doing more to ensure that they can age gracefully with their independence and dignity. Many of the main issues that older Canberrans come to me about are very simple ones. It would not take a lot of effort to fix these issues and make their lives that bit easier and better. An obvious one is the lack of communication between Access Canberra and the ACT Transport Authority. A number of times I have been contacted by older Canberrans, upset that they had been told that their licence will be suspended if they do not provide a medical certificate to the ACT Transport Authority, despite them having done so several times already. This is very distressing for some of our older Canberrans. Their licence is a big part of maintaining their independence. Most of us want to do the right thing. When we are asked to provide the information or the documentation, we do. To be told that we have not provided it, is quite distressing.

Other issues include basic maintenance such as having safe and accessible footpaths to walk on. They are simple issues but ones that really impact older Canberrans. Another government service that matters to seniors is public transport. When it is accessible it helps older Canberrans to keep their independence. A lot of constituents have contacted me about their access to off-peak public transport, which limits their independence because they have to pay for the peak period. They would like it to be more in line with some other jurisdictions.

Recently, in a question on notice, I asked the minister about whether frontline staff such as bus drivers had received dementia-friendly training. Unfortunately, she could not provide a straight answer; it was very disappointing. This does not recognise the huge impact this can have on older Canberrans, and carers and family members of

people with dementia. These incidents could possibly be averted if bus drivers were given this training as a matter of priority. Of course, the minister with responsibility for seniors is not responsible for public transport, but does it indicate how siloed this government is that ministers have no influence over other portfolios and what other areas of this government are doing? While we do have an Age-Friendly City Plan, which attempts to resolve some of these issues, quite clearly things are not moving fast enough. We have a long way to go before Canberra becomes an age-friendly city, and I will continue to advocate on behalf of older Canberrans and seniors.

I move, now, to the women's portfolio. Once again, it was disappointing to see that the women's budget statement lacked any gender responsive budget analysis, despite much talk in previous years about its incorporation into the wider budget process. During estimates hearings, I asked the minister about this issue, as did my colleague Ms Clay. It was frustrating that no timeline could be provided as to when gender appropriate budgeting would be incorporated into the ACT budget. I will continue to pursue this, because Canberra women are really interested to see this occur.

In the estimates report, I was pleased to see several recommendations relating to gender responsive budgeting. Recommendation 7 states:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate how to improve the effectiveness of wellbeing indicators and gender responsive budgeting and demonstrate that they are influencing budget decisions.

The government's response noted that the wellbeing dashboard will be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure measures and indicators are useful, with the first report due in 2023. I look forward to reading that report.

Recommendation 9 states:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government record and report against how many times directorate staff seek support and training in using the gender assessment tool and which agencies seek support.

I support this recommendation, because what is the point of having things such as the gender assessment tool if we do not know how many people are using them nor if, indeed, anyone is using them at all? I was disappointed to see that the government response to this recommendation said:

The ACT Government will continue to incorporate a gender perspective in initiative planning and decision-making through implementation of the Wellbeing Framework, including Wellbeing Impact Assessments.

Whilst that does sound lovely, this response completely fails to touch on the premise of the recommendation, and disregards the very logical point it makes. How can you improve a tool, or promote it for use amongst our public service if you are not measuring its efficiency or usage, whatsoever?

I believe we need more clarity about how the ACT government intends to introduce a gender responsive budget for women and what timeframes are in place to ensure the process is on track. Through a question on notice, I asked the minister when the ACT

government will take a whole-of-government approach to collecting gender disaggregated data; and, once again, I got a vague non-committal answer. Call me a cynic, but I will not believe the government is using gender disaggregated data to help inform policy and services until I see some proof of it.

We know that the government has no idea about the differences in how males and females use public transport because they tell me they do not collect gender disaggregated data. This is despite the reality that men and women are quite likely to have different travel habits. For example, we hear that women often have multiple jobs and that they often work part-time hours or have additional caregiving responsibilities, in comparison to men. Unfortunately, that is still the case today. And without collecting this data, we will not be able to provide appropriate services and responses because you do not know what you do not measure. I appreciate the minister's good intentions in this space, but I believe that there is a lot more that can be done by the government to make Canberra a fairer and better place for women to live in.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (11.29): I wish to speak to the community services budget as it relates to carers. As I have said before in this place, unpaid carers are often the family, friends or foster carers of people. They are critical to looking after those in our community who need a bit more support than others. Carers are also some of the most selfless people in our community, who work very hard at supporting those who need care, often without considering their own needs. The work of carers is generally unrecognised, and carers are often the last to ask for help—therefore not receiving the support they need to carry out their caring responsibilities or to look after their own wellbeing.

As members will remember, in the December sitting of 2021 the Assembly passed the Carers Recognition Act 2021, which I introduced as a private members bill in the June sitting of 2021. The bill sets out requirements for carer and carer support agencies capturing various ACT public service directorates and other ACT government-funded entities to adhere to a set of carer relationship principles and to include in their annual reports how they are meeting obligations under the act. The intent of the act is to help improve the considerations of the needs of carers, to help them manage their caring responsibilities and so that their own wellbeing is supported.

There is \$825,000 included in this budget for social inclusion, implementing the ACT's carers strategy over the next four years. I understand that the additional \$25,000 in the 2022-23 budget is to produce a carers' respite handbook. Such a handbook would be a useful resource for organisations, individuals and service providers to better inform them of the needs of carers when it comes to rest and recovery. When we think of respite, we think of time away in a different location from our day-to-day reality; respite, however, is not limited to leaving one geographical place for another. Time away can mean taking time to get a coffee uninterrupted, time to go to a go-girl exercise class uninterrupted, time to binge on a bit of television or meet up with friends for dinner. All these things may seem par for the course for people who do not have caring responsibilities; however, for those who do have caring responsibilities these are often the first things that get dropped in the timeframes that inevitably come from looking after yourself and other people.

For carers to have an easy-to-use resource which outlines several ways that they can take rest and recovery in their day-to-day activities is a simple yet effective way we can support carers. As we know, the rest and recovery that comes from respite is critical to everyone in our community, but even more for more carers who are consistently putting the needs of others before themselves. The money over the four years is designed to implement the carers strategy, and I understand that this includes resources for the implementation of the Carers Recognition Act, which has symmetry with the carers strategy.

I would have liked to see additional dedicated funding for implementation of the Carers Recognition Act in this budget; however, I look forward to seeing the act implemented by the ACT public service directorates and other caring and carer support agencies with guidance from the community services sector, and to see the strategy and the act and everything that has been done to improve the wellbeing of carers implemented in the ACT. We know this is important work and that it will be welcomed by many, many people.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (11.33): I want to speak briefly and then touch on some of the appropriation measures with respect to the multicultural and CALD communities in Canberra. Firstly, I want to express my deep appreciation for those communities' commitments to provide our city and our society with the expression of their cultures—their art, food and dance—and their invitation to others to participate in those events and ceremonies. These communities form a growing part of our population and a make growing contribution to our skilled workforce. We see them express strong altruism and a sense of service to the community—and may they be applauded and encouraged in that.

I also want to acknowledge something that perhaps does not get spoken of very often. To leave your country of birth—your country of origin—and come to somewhere new and different requires a real sense of adventurousness and risk-taking. When people arrive in our community we see, as a general pattern, a real commitment to contribute and to advance their own interest, of course, but with a real spirit of altruism to reach out to others and to provide services and encouragement.

Though it is my delight to be in this role of shadow minister for multicultural affairs, during estimates some things did disappoint me about this government's approach and a lack of support for this community. There was confusion about the funding for the National Multicultural Festival. The minister was unable to really answer my questions about the very small team and the breakdown of the funding profile. I was disappointed, again, about the lack of a feasibility study into the multicultural centre. This growing community in our city deserves growing support and acknowledgement, and I can certainly tell you that the Canberra Liberals are all on board with that agenda.

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) (11.35): The ACT government continues to take a holistic view of the provision of funding to support the inclusion and participation of Canberra's growing and increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse community. I think I can speak on behalf of all of us in this place when I say

that we were not surprised—in fact, we very much welcomed what was reflected in the ACT census—that this is a community that is increasingly diverse. It speaks volumes about our city and its welcoming nature. I commend all those across our city who work so hard to make that a reality.

Our budget processes and allocations consider determining factors, such as promotion, participation and equality and access. As well, they evaluate the effectiveness of previous initiatives through our wellbeing framework. Through this budget, we are continuing to deliver across a range of initiatives. I am honestly quite surprised that Mr Cain expressed his disappointment in the budget. It seems that he does not realise the full extent of the initiatives available to the multicultural community. That includes delivery of the National Multicultural Festival in its 25th anniversary year; significant investment in our community language schools; support for our refugee and asylum seeker community, including delivering enhancements to the ACT services access card and coordination of the Refugee, Asylum Seekers and Humanitarian Coordination Committee; provision of initiatives such as the work experience and support program; and work towards Canberra achieving the advanced level accreditation as a welcoming city in the Welcoming Cities standard.

One of the ways in which we measure our efforts to support and progress a welcoming and culturally and linguistically inclusive Canberra is through the annual Canberra omnibus survey. Figures provided by CSD from the omnibus survey show that the vast proportion of Canberrans agree that Canberra is a community which accepts people from different cultures. This is an indication of the government's success in contributing to this objective through its role in the provision of human services initiatives, policies and programs which ensure social inclusion, and community connection for all.

What is essential is that we continue to invest in social services and programs which promote and provide opportunities for participation and inclusion for all Canberrans, and that these are designed to reflect the diverse cultures and languages spoken by Canberrans. The ACT government, through CSD, is determined to ensure that we deliver on our commitments to the Canberra community. For example, we are preparing for the return of the annual National Multicultural Festival in February 2023 after a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19 restrictions. There is growing community expectation and anticipation of the event, which will open opportunities to share and promote the cultures of existing, new, and emerging groups. As well, it will provide opportunities for these groups to fundraise and reunite after an extended period of absence as a result of the pandemic. Increased funding for the festival through this budget, will ensure that next February's festival is fitting of its 25th anniversary milestone. I stress that the only person who is confused about the appropriation for the Multicultural Festival is Mr Cain.

Another key commitment we are funding is increased investment in our growing community language school sector. This will see funding committed to the professional development of the many volunteer community language teachers, support for the hire of venues to enable community language schools to operate, and funding for the establishment of new language schools and teaching resources. This budget shows our commitment to a strategic, holistic approach to funding Canberra's culturally and linguistically diverse community, and our commitment to deliver on the

determining factors of promotion, participation, equality and access for all Canberrans. I commend this part of the budget appropriation to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Major Projects Canberra—Part 1.9

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (11.40): I raise two very serious points in this part of the debate. In the budget estimates hearings in August, I asked a serious question of the Director-General of Major Projects Canberra about his obligation to report maladministration and corrupt or fraudulent conduct per part 2, division 2.1, section 9 of the Public Sector Management Act. This question was taken on notice.

Making a report under the Public Sector Management Act would be a meaningful and very serious thing to do—surely not something that you would forget—but my question was immediately taken on notice. There is no doubt that there could only be two reasons for that. The first is that so many reports have been made to the Head of Service that he could not possibly remember how many there had been. If that was the case, there would be some very important follow-up questions to be answered about what was going on at Major Projects Canberra. The second is that there had never been a report under the act—which, quite frankly, is extraordinary—and they did not want to say that during the hearing because that would raise further serious questions. Now, as we know from the answers provided after the hearing, it was the second scenario that happened.

The reason I specifically asked about any reports regarding maladministration, corruption or fraud is that there were clearly some serious and significant irregularities with the Campbell Primary School modernisation project tender process, which MPC was involved in. As we know, this specific procurement has been absolutely slammed by the Auditor-General, who said the procurement “lacked probity” and that “tenderers were not dealt with fairly, impartially and consistently”. Whilst MPC tried to deflect and say that this was an Education Directorate project, the Auditor-General also noted:

Officers within Major Projects Canberra were responsible for issuing the procurement documentation, receiving supplier responses and managing communication with the tenderers. Officers from Major Projects Canberra also chaired the tender evaluation teams.

There was clearly an obligation, a responsibility, and a duty on the part of Major Projects Canberra when it came to this project. And there was clearly an oversight on the reporting obligations under the Public Sector Management Act. This scathing Auditor-General’s report led to a remarkable public statement by the Integrity Commissioner of the ACT that these types of issues are rarely a one-off and that they are more likely to be endemic across the entire ACT government.

The second issue I raise is the concerning results of the staff survey as part of a broader whole-of-ACT PS survey done in 2021, where four per cent of MPC employees said they had witnessed corruption in the workplace. That is about nine or

10 staff members of MPC who say they have witnessed corruption—not that they were worried about corruption or thought about it, but witnessed corruption. I find this result very concerning, as should every member in this place. However, what was even more concerning is that the Director-General confirmed during the estimates hearing that nothing was done in response to that survey result. Surely, a result like that would have been of great concern to those in senior positions at Major Projects Canberra. These issues call into question the management and delivery of major projects in our city—such as the Canberra Hospital Expansion, which is behind schedule by about 10 years and well over budget. These issues all go to the culture of secrecy—a culture which is set from the very top. It is Canberrans who literally pay the price for it.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (11.45): I want to speak briefly about the issue of cladding. The safety of our community is of the utmost importance, and has guided our approach to the handling of potentially combustible cladding on buildings in Canberra. The government’s cladding remediation scheme consists of two elements: a program to rectify combustible cladding on ACT owned government facilities, and the private buildings cladding scheme, to assist in the testing and remediation of potentially combustible cladding on eligible privately owned buildings.

The government has established a \$50 million concession loan to enable eligible owners corporations to undertake works to remediate combustible cladding. Loans will be offered for up to 10 years, with a maximum limit of \$15 million per owners corporation, and the loans are administered by an external provider, Lannock Strata Finance. The loan scheme builds on the support that the government provided to owners corporations to undertake assessments of the risk posed by potentially combustible cladding on their buildings.

In July 2021, the government announced the private buildings cladding scheme, which provides grants to eligible owners corporations of apartment buildings to undertake testing and assessment of their buildings’ cladding. The scheme assisted owners of eligible apartment buildings by providing a rebate of 50 per cent of the cost, up to a maximum of \$20,000 excluding GST, to test cladding on their buildings. The government made available \$1.8 million for this part of the scheme.

I am pleased to note that phase 2 of the scheme opened on 29 August 2022. Phase 2 offers a concessional loan to eligible owners to remove and replace potentially combustible cladding on their buildings. As I have noted, we have committed \$50 million to phase 2 of the scheme. Owners corporations which participated in phase 1 of the scheme will be able to apply for a loan to cover all costs associated with the removal and the replacement of cladding that has been determined to be combustible. Owners corporations can have the cost of remediation of the cladding, and statutory fees such as building approvals and the professional fees of architects, engineers and project managers, included in the loan. I want to emphasise that hardship arrangements will be available to individual unit owner-occupiers who face financial difficulty. Such an owner-occupier may be able to seek hardship relief by applying to the ACT Revenue Office.

In relation to government buildings, the ACT government undertook a detailed investigation in 2020 of its own buildings which contain potentially combustible cladding. The government cladding scheme identified 23 government owned buildings that contained cladding that needed replacing. These sites included schools, health facilities and public housing across the ACT. Of these buildings, 17 have had cladding removed under the cladding scheme by Major Projects Canberra, and two buildings have been remediated by the Education Directorate. The remediation options ranged from full replacement of all cladding to the removal of certain elements of cladding to achieve a lower risk ranking. The recommended level of remediation varies by building and cladding elements, based on risk assessment criteria. Work is well underway at the four remaining sites, and all of these are expected to be completed by the end of the year. Current cost estimates indicate that a total of around \$17 million will be required to complete all the works.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.49): I want to focus most of my remarks in this space on the light rail project, which Labor and the Greens are “getting on with delivering”, but I am not sure that they really are, because the question is: when exactly will the tram be delivered? When will 2A be complete? When will Woden be complete? When will Tuggeranong be delivered? What month? What year? What decade? At the end of the day, the final question comes down to: in what century are any of those projects actually going to be delivered?

There is nothing in this budget that answers any of those questions. When I asked them in the estimates hearings, they could not provide the year in which the tram would arrive in Woden. There is nothing in this budget that says that they are serious about delivering for Canberrans.

Whenever Mr Steel rises to speak on anything, he says, “We’re getting on with delivering.” But I am not sure who he is trying to convince. I do not know if it is actually a self-motivation thing or who he is trying to convince. But I think the proof is in the pudding, and they are not really getting on with it. There is nothing in this budget that says that they are serious about delivering for Canberrans.

Labor and the Greens are delivering headlines; I will give them that. Down in my neck of the woods, The *Our Canberra* newsletter had a headline that said, “Light rail is coming”. One can only assume that means to Tuggeranong, but they did not say when—just as the budget certainly has no clues within it as to when. There was a sod-turn headline to start stage 2A, but it did not say when the tram would arrive in Woden or, indeed, when it is arriving at Commonwealth Park. There is a headline saying car parks have been taken off Canberrans to make way for tram works, but it does not say how long those car parks will remain unavailable. It does not say when the tram will arrive in Woden or in Commonwealth Park. The government know when; it is just that they are not delivering any key information.

How much will this next stage of works cost? The budget does not answer that question. When asked in estimates how much the next stage will cost, the government chose not to provide any cost information, even though work has begun. Even though the silver shovels have already been purchased for Mr Barr and Mr Steel to pose for the sod-turning photo, still the government would not share how much it will cost.

The government are happy to make election promises. They are happy to take money from hardworking Canberrans and promise big with that money. They are happy to start work, to pose for photos, to impose the greatest traffic disruption Canberra has seen in 50 years and, to quote the minister, “to force Canberrans to change their commuting habits,” but, when it all boils down, they do not have enough respect for Canberrans to let them know how much the tram will cost and when it will arrive.

The contempt of this government for the people they should be serving is gobsmacking. Why does this budget and why does this government not provide the information on how much the tram will cost and when it will be delivered? The government are happy to spend the money of hardworking Canberrans but are not happy to be transparent and have no confidence in themselves to determine or share key pieces of information with Canberrans. I think that is what it gets down to. I think it is a lack of confidence. I wonder why they are not confident. Why do the government think themselves to be above what Canberrans deserve? Is it just that they are not delivering on their promises?

In various announcements and suggestions in recent times, the government have promised that the tram 2A would be delivered by 2024. That promise was very, very clearly made. The Chief Minister suggested, I think in 2019, that the tram would be delivered to Woden by 2025. Very, very clearly, none of those predictions are going to be realised, and they are going to fall short by a long, long way. Perhaps the government have no confidence in the billions of dollars they are paying to contractors to deliver the project, because the cost is blowing out.

We cannot trust this government’s election promises. We cannot trust them to deliver on time and within budget. I would reflect, Mr Assistant Speaker, that when you use an Uber—and I am sure you are extremely familiar, Mr Assistant Speaker—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Parton, to the speech.

MR PARTON: Excuse me?

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Parton, to your speech.

MR PARTON: Yes of course, Mr Assistant Speaker. Before you hop into the car, you clearly know how much the ride will cost. The user has been given a good estimate of when it will start and when it will arrive at its destination. When you purchase any item in Australia, it is the law to disclose how much the item will cost and it is the law to include all applicable charges, such as GST, and the amount is disclosed to the customer. When you catch a bus or the tram, there are apps to show the traveller how much it will cost, when the tram will arrive and when it will reach its destination.

When you go to build a house, responsible builders will draw up a contract on how much it will cost and provide a good estimate of when the work will start and end and provide this before work begins. Dodgy builders may be sneaky and they might add on charges after the build has started. They may not tell you when they intend to finish the build. Can you imagine building a house and the builder says to the homeowner, “I can’t tell you how much this is going to cost. I just can’t tell you.”

“Can you give me an estimate?” “No, I can’t even give you that. I can’t tell you.” “And when will it be ready?” “I don’t know. I’ve got no idea. I haven’t got a single clue. I am not going to tell you. Just hand me a wad of money up-front and I’ll blow it and then hand me more money.”

That is exactly how the government is operating with public money. And, again, we get no real insight into this in the budget. The government know how much the light rail will cost but they are not sharing it with Canberrans. They know when they will start the build on the various sections and they know when the first tram is likely to arrive at those two various stages.

This is not a budget that provides confidence that the government knows what it is doing. What it does say is that the government is prepared to rack up even more debt for Canberrans now and into the future, whenever that might be, and demonstrates the contempt that the government has for Canberrans and their money.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (11.56): I am pleased to support the major projects part of the budget debate today. The ACT government is getting on with the job of delivering our infrastructure projects and ensuring that the Canberra of the future, 2030 and beyond, continues to be one of the most liveable cities in the world.

Light rail to Woden is coming, I am very pleased to inform the Assembly. That is obvious, because work has already started right outside the door of the Assembly, particularly on the raising London Circuit project and also the early works associated with utilities removal. With the ongoing funding provided in the budget, we are continuing to work on that major project, which is so important for future transport connections and particularly mass transit connections in our city. It builds on the work that we have done on stage 1 of the project, which has been very successful, came in under budget and has seen higher than expected patronage.

Last week I joined the Chief Minister to start the construction on raising London Circuit, which is a project that is critical for the future of our southern part of the CBD and for the future of the light rail connection. It is part of delivering light rail to Woden. It involves changing the current split-level intersection design, which is an overpass-underpass configuration, into a much more pedestrian and cycle-friendly intersection and raising the road level up to the same level as Commonwealth Avenue so that it provides a platform for the connection and extension of our light rail spine down south—firstly to Commonwealth Park as part of stage 2A and then down to Woden as part of stage 2B. Around 60,000 cubic metres of fill will be used to raise London Circuit by six metres and change the current configuration, which has a six-metre high wall that blocks people from moving to and from the southern part of our CDB. This is going to be a significant project to improve the vibrancy, sustainability and connectivity of our city.

The works include road improvements and provide new pedestrian footpath links, including a new signalised pedestrian crossing on Edinburgh Avenue, and major landscaping routes around the project. Works are already underway on the traffic light installation at the junction of Northbourne Avenue and Vernon Circle—that northern end—and a new bus lane is being installed there to provide a slip lane down into City

West, so that, during the construction period, buses can access the city interchange. When the project is completed, it will connect the City Centre to the lake, unlocking new opportunities for land use, improving active travel connections and creating a high-quality, attractive and functional public space around the new intersection.

The government's commitment to light rail is not only an investment in better public transport in our city but also an important investment in mass transit for a growing city. We found out from the census in 2021, released this year, that we are seeing more people live in our city. It is important that we have those options.

We have seen with the first stage an incredibly successful result. We want to build on those benefits and extend those benefits to other parts of the city. It is a project that is going to create thousands of jobs. It is showcasing our city as a modern and sustainable place to live with good public transport connections, and it has city-shaping benefits. We want to see those benefits extended south of the lake as well.

I will address some of the issues that Mr Parton raised. We are getting on with the project. Work is happening. It is undeniable that work is happening on the project, managed by Major Projects Canberra and funded continually through the budget. We have shown an unparalleled level of transparency in relation to both stage 1 of the project and stage 2. We have released the business case for stage 2A.

We have released the net present value figures to the Auditor-General as part of their review, and we continue to release the signed contracts, including the most recent contract that we have signed for the raising of London Circuit and the most recent contract that we have signed with Canberra Metro for the supply of five new light rail vehicles, retrofitting the existing 14 and extending the depot. That is available on the contracts register. Have a look at it. The dollars are there, and the detail of what is being provided is in there.

We are continuing to go through the procurement process for stage 2A. We are looking forward to that being signed, hopefully, next year. And, again, we will publish the details on the current contract register for the public to see. We are going through the processes of government to get on and deliver that project, and we will continue to plan for stage 2B.

On raising London Circuit, we have said very clearly to the public and the media that this will take around two years to complete, after which stage 2A works will begin. The work on the light rail vehicles and the order there is clear in the contract as well. We are expecting that it will take around four years for the retrofit of the 14 vehicles. So that gives you a sense of timing. We will, of course, confirm the 2A design and construction through the procurement process, which is underway with Canberra Metro.

We have been very clear that we support this. The only thing that is unclear is what the Canberra Liberals position actually is on light rail. We saw them put out a media alert about an event that was supposedly going to happen—apparently, it coincided with the day that the Queen passed away—and then, suddenly, the media event was pulled. We have not heard anything from the Canberra Liberals since about their announcement, which was apparently associated with light rail.

So the question for them is: were they planning on backflipping on their commitment to support light rail, or are they going to announce something else? What is the position of the Canberra Liberals on light rail? Do they want to betray the people of the south side and back away from their support for the project? Or is it just a continuation of the flip-flopping position of the Canberra Liberals that they took to the election, with the then shadow transport spokesperson, Candice Burch, saying that they supported the Belconnen route and then Alistair Coe stomping on that and saying, “No we support Woden”? Are they now backing away from it—with the same old Canberra Liberals, under Elizabeth Lee, not supporting light rail? The only people who are questioning the delivery of light rail are the Canberra Liberals in their flip-flopping position on this project and whether they actually support mass transit in our city.

In this budget, we are continuing to get on with our major projects, including the new CIT campus, with an additional \$31.2 million to continue the delivery and design of the new campus in Woden, and also the associated Woden public transport interchange. Our investments in the new campus will provide enhancements to the project in response to community feedback during consultation. This includes an improved weather protection canopy, linking the CIT campus with the public transport interchange, and improve architectural and urban realm integration, landscaping and shelter design in the new interchange.

This transformational project will deliver an education environment that serves 6,500 CIT students and staff every year, as well as integrated public transport connections and a new foyer to support vulnerable students who are also engaging in studying or training. The project is a major catalyst for regeneration in the Woden Town Centre. The new CIT campus will deliver smart learning settings, state-of-the-art simulated learning environments, commercial kitchens and hands-on training opportunities to help students to achieve their full potential in areas that are currently located at CIT Reid but also others in the future as well. There is extra space there for CIT to evolve over time. Those current areas are business, cyber, IT, creative industries, hospitality and tourism. As well as delivering those state-of-the-art learning and teaching spaces, the new CIT campus will create a whole new activating precinct in Woden. Parts of the campus will be open to the public, and shared spaces will showcase the courses available at CIT.

Just recently we welcomed the beginning of construction on a temporary interchange so that the former interchange can be demolished. I am sure many people will welcome that. Construction will now be able to begin on the new campus following the demolition of the old interchange. I am looking forward to this construction work progressing and delivering this important project for Woden, which has also been supported in the budget.

This budget provides continued funding and investment in major construction projects that transform our city, deliver on our important election commitments and also deliver jobs to our city.

So, as we reach the middle of this parliamentary term, Canberrans can see the work that is underway on major projects like the hospital, like the new CIT campus and bus

interchange and new light rail stop in Woden. And they can see the work happening in raising London Circuit, right outside our door, as we get on with bringing light rail down to Commonwealth Park and eventually down to Woden. I endorse this part of the budget.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: A couple of points, members. Mr Steel, I am sure you will enjoy checking *Hansard* again, but it is Mr Assistant Speaker. And Mr Hanson and Mr Parton, please cease interjections. I will warn you.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (12.07): I just want to speak briefly. There has been a lot of conversation here today, and I do not need to repeat any of that. But I do welcome the increased staffing that we have seen at Major Projects Canberra in this budget. We have gone from 219 staff last year up to 240 this year. Major Projects Canberra have a big task; they have a lot on their plate. And it is really important that we build their capacity and make sure that we can be delivering all of the major projects on time and to a high quality.

We have heard a lot about Canberra's light rail already, and I am pleased to hear that aired in here. Canberrans really do deserve a gold standard public transport system. That is absolutely what we have seen in stage 1. The uptake on stage 1 has been just astonishing. It is doing exactly what it is meant to do.

We need to make sure that we are supporting Major Projects Canberra so that they are delivering the next stages quickly, and we need to make sure they have the capacity to deliver multiple large-scale infrastructure projects all at the same time. They work with a lot of other agencies. There is a lot of coordination work and there is a lot of forward planning work that they need to do, as well as the construction work that they are actually doing. So I am pleased to see that they have got some more resources.

Like Mr Parton, I have heard community concern with the pace that we are delivering light rail. I will not labour on that point. That project is really transformative for Canberra. It is part of our compact city design. It is part of the way we are going to reduce urban sprawl. It is part of the way that we are going to reduce congestion and cut emissions. It does so many things at once. It is good to see that we are commencing construction, and it is really important that we make sure we continue building that entire network in a really good and timely way.

It is great to see Major Projects Canberra delivering a lot of these projects, including commencing light rail stage 2 and the Woden bus interchange. It is also really good to see this investment in our public transport infrastructure. That is so important for Canberra. We have put a lot into our roads, and it is really important that we put this effort into our public transport.

There is a lot going on in Canberra at the moment. There is a lot of competing problems that we have to juggle here. We all know that we are in a climate emergency. We are also the fastest-growing state or territory in the country. So all of that means that we have a huge job to do with our infrastructure. I am pleased to see that we are getting some federal support on some of these projects, and I am pleased to see that a lot of these major projects are going ahead. But we have a big job to do and quite a lot of pressure on how well we do it and how fast we do it.

It is really, really important to make sure we get high-quality contracts and high-quality procurement outcomes right across the public service, but particularly in major projects, as it is so important for trusting government and for good environmental and social outcomes to make sure that we are getting good value for money for the people who live in the ACT. That is just another really important reason for Major Projects Canberra to be well resourced. So I am pleased to see that they have got extra funding. The ACT Greens are happy to support this part of the budget.

I want to talk about some amendments I moved last week. We have not moved amendments to the budget before, since being in our current arrangement, so we took some advice from the Legislative Assembly staff. We have had our debate on whether JACS funding should be reduced to remove some of the funding from the horse racing. I have been advised that I am able to not move the consequent amendments. We have had that debate. We have resolved that debate. Everyone has had their chance to say what they needed to say. It has had a good public airing.

Given that, I do not have any desire to bring the consequential amendments that would be rolling in parts all of this week. The Assembly has informed me that I can inform the Assembly that I will remove those amendments and that I will not be moving the remainder of my amendments this week.

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 12.12 to 2.00 pm.

Questions without notice Suburban Land Agency—sales

MS LEE: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, in the Suburban Land Agency's annual report for 2021-22 it states that 517 single blocks were released to market, a shortfall of 114 against a target of 631 in the indicative land release program. Canberra is experiencing a housing affordability crisis, and the SLA cannot meet its own targets for land release. Why didn't the SLA meet its target for the release of single residential blocks in the 2021-22 financial year?

MS BERRY: I thank the opposition leader for her question. We have been over this question a number of times during estimates hearings in the past. The indicative land release program is a target that is set which the ACT government aims to meet through its delivery agency, the Suburban Land Agency. In the last two years it has been within two per cent of the target, for a range of reasons. I will bring the detail back to the chamber, for members' interest. There can be a range of reasons why development cannot occur across—

Ms Lee: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Berry, resume your seat.

Ms Lee: Madam Speaker, the question was, very specifically: why didn't the SLA meet its target for the release of single residential blocks in the 2021-22 financial year? I understand that the minister is going through various reasons why it could happen, but the question was very specifically about that financial year.

MADAM SPEAKER: If you could go to that point in the minute you have remaining, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, I did say that I would take the detail of that question on notice and did suggest that there were a range of reasons, which I would provide.

Mr Hanson: Obviously there are reasons. We just want to know what they are.

MS BERRY: Yes, and I will tell you.

Mr Hanson: Well, you didn't.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, your colleague has the floor.

Mr Hanson: Sorry, Madam Speaker.

MS LEE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, why has the Suburban Land Agency's target for single blocks been revised to 799 for the 2022-23 financial year, down from 850 for the same period in last year's indicative land release program?

MS BERRY: Again, I will take the detail of that on notice because there will be a range of reasons. For each of those different kinds of reasons, it would best if I brought that back to the Assembly so that there is the proper detail to respond to that question.

MR CAIN: Minister, will the Suburban Land Agency hit its land release target for single blocks this year?

MS BERRY: That is a bit of a hypothetical as well. It will definitely set the target and aim to meet that target. However, things can occur that mean that the target cannot be met. Weather can impact on the target. ACAT hearings and disputes from neighbours can impact on targets as well. So I refer the member to my previous answers.

Suburban Land Agency—sales

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, the target land release for multi-unit dwellings in last year's Indicative Land Release Program for 2021-22 was 4,106 dwellings. However, the SLA's annual report for 2021-22 does not provide a figure on the land released for multi-unit dwellings for the financial year. How much land was released by the Suburban Land Agency in 2021-22 for multi-unit dwellings, and did it hit the target of 4,106?

MS BERRY: I am confident that that detail is available. I just do not have it with me at the moment. I will take the detail of that question on notice.

MS LEE: Minister, why has the Suburban Land Agency's target for multi-unit dwellings been revised up to 3,119 for 2022-23, from 2,330 in last year's Indicative Land Release Program? Where is the government expecting the additional 800 dwellings to come from?

MS BERRY: Again, there is quite a lot of detail in the question that Ms Lee has asked for. I will get that detail and provide it to the Assembly.

MR CAIN: Minister, will the Suburban Land Agency hit its land release target for multi-unit dwellings this year? How did you come up with that target?

MS BERRY: Those targets come through decisions made by the government in the implementation and development of the land release program.

Climate change—gas consumption

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction. Minister, we see a lot of macro-analysis that paints a pretty damning picture of climate change and, in particular, how climate change will impact the health of Australians and Canberrans, in particular. Could you tell me a bit more about what the ACT government understands to be the health effects of natural gas and how the government is helping Canberra families get off gas?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Mr Davis for the question. I think when gas is talked about obviously often the larger focus is on the climate change impacts of burning natural gas, which is very important and why the ACT government has announced a pathway for moving away from the use of fossil fuel gas over time. But the point that Mr Davis picks up around the health impacts is less understood but also very important. Burning gas in our homes does have direct health impacts. This is not something that is widely discussed, but the health impacts of indoor gas use were highlighted in a report last year from the Climate Council called *Kicking the gas habit*. The report found that household gas use is thought to contribute up to 12 per cent of the childhood asthma burden in Australia. Gas cooktops produce contaminants that increase childhood asthma risk—in particular, nitrogen dioxide and fine particulate matter. Other household uses of gas and gas appliances, such as indoor heaters, also pose a risk. Portable indoor heaters produce similar chemicals and exhaust but also release the potentially lethal carbon monoxide.

Ms Berry: That's without exhaust.

MR RATTENBURY: Yes. The risk can be reduced, but not eliminated, through the use of properly functioning flues which release the exhaust outdoors. Minister Berry, ahead of the curve, knew exactly where I was going. It is something that I do not think is widely understood, and certainly one of the benefits of transitioning away from the use of fossil fuel gas in the home, where electric appliances do not produce the same contaminants and therefore do not contribute to the asthma burden in the way gas is identified to.

MR DAVIS: Minister, how is the ACT government supporting Canberra's renters in our transition from natural gas?

MR RATTENBURY: Encouraging gas to electric upgrades in rental properties is more complex than with homeowners, because of what is commonly known as the split incentive, where the cost of course sits with the landlord but the benefit predominantly sits with the tenant, certainly in the short-term. For landlords, it can be a matter of capital improvement, but that is certainly not the way that it is commonly perceived.

Landlords can of course access the ACT's interest-free loans under the Sustainable Household Scheme, where they can receive up to \$15,000 to use on the property that they might own. That can be used to transition from gas to electricity if landlords want to. The government also has other programs that seek to support renters with their energy efficiency. As we discussed in some detail in estimates, there is the move to introduce minimum energy efficiency standards for rental properties. The government is continuing to finalise the preparation of those regulations, and we expect to have details of that ready to share with the community soon.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, since the start of last year, approximately how many households in the ACT has the government assisted to get off gas?

MR RATTENBURY: Mr Braddock, I do not have an exact number for you, but I can say that the ACT government assists many households each year to improve their energy efficiency and to switch from gas to electric appliances. Because the programs assist both with energy efficiency upgrades more broadly, and these may or may not result in a gas disconnection, and with direct gas to electric appliance upgrades, more specifically, we do not have the exact number of households that have been supported to get off gas.

But certainly in the data that comes through on the Sustainable Household Scheme there is a clear number of households that are making those transitions. Also, from the data that Evoenergy has, we are seeing a reduction in gas usage per household, and certainly the number of connections and disconnection is giving us indications. But there is more work to be done in gathering data in that space as we move through developing the gas transition policy over the coming years.

Education—NAPLAN results

MR HANSON: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, the latest annual report from the Education Directorate shows that NAPLAN targets for ACT students were not met between 2019 and 2021 for reading and numeracy across all year levels. Recognising the impact of COVID, what plan is in place to assist students who have fallen behind during these years?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Hanson for his question and note that the last couple of years in education across the country have been impacted by COVID. The way that education has been delivered changed over the last couple of years. In particular, a

NAPLAN test was missed, which has also impacted on the way that NAPLAN is reported, or the impact of not having that reporting included in the data that has been provided in the most recent releases.

The ACT government continues to focus on equity and equality within our schools to ensure that young people who have not had the chance or need a better hand-up to get a good quality education get that. We know that when we tackle inequality within our schools, we impact on the academic performances of our young people.

We are continuing to work with each of our school communities and the federal government around ways that we support young people, particularly over the last couple of years, to ensure that they get the appropriate gains in literacy and numeracy across the board.

MR HANSON: Minister, how will progress be tracked to ensure that students are not behind by the time they finish their secondary education?

MS BERRY: One of the ways that the ACT government tracks the success of a young person's education in our schools is through our survey of senior secondary students. It identifies the number of students who continue on with education or continue on to work. We have really high participation rates because it is a voluntary survey, but it allows us to track the number of students who have been in our system, participated in the survey and then continue on to further education, have a gap year with an intention to go to university, or have other forms of education or work.

That is unique to the ACT, but it is one way that we can see that our students, particularly when they leave senior secondary school, are continuing on with either their learning or going into the workforce.

MR COCKS: Minister, what extra resources are being provided for teachers and support staff as they take on an extra workload to help to ensure that these students are not left behind?

MS BERRY: I thank the member for his supplementary. This is an important question, particularly after the last couple of years. Our teachers have been working incredibly hard, so making sure that they are supported, as far as their workload is concerned, has been vital. It has been a really good experience to be working with the Australian Education Union on the task force, to understand clearly from the educators themselves what the workload pressures are and how government can help the workforce to overcome those. We have already seen changes in that workload pressure through the A to E reporting, without the comments, and encouraging parents and families who want to understand how their child is going at school to contact their school and attend their teacher-parent interviews.

Mr Cocks: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order, Mr Cocks?

Mr Cocks: Madam Speaker, the question was very specific, around what extra resources are being provided for teachers and support staff. The minister has not spoken to what is being done.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think she is in order because she is referring to general support of activity, curriculum development, and supporting students and teachers. Ms Berry, you have 50-odd seconds left.

MS BERRY: The additional workload pressure reduction for teachers in our public schools has involved implementing the additional pupil-free days, which allows teachers and school leaders to do planning, so that they can spend good, quality time in front of their students when they are attending. Those are just a couple of things. We know we have more to do, and we are keen to hear from our teachers, school staff, school leaders and school principals to understand what else we can do to make sure that our teachers can spend as much quality time in front of students as they possibly can.

ACT Policing—response times

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I refer to the AFP annual report, which shows that ACT Policing did not hit their required target in responding to priority 1 critical incident calls—so called “life or death” situations—or priority 2 calls, which require a response within 20 minutes. Minister, why didn’t ACT Policing meet the priority 1 or priority 2 targets?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. It is an important question, as we look towards resourcing policing through our budgets to ensure we have the amount of support for police to meet those targets. In this case, I will take the detail of the question on notice. I think there are some areas there we need to talk to police about—in reporting and resourcing.

MR HANSON: Minister, what is the risk to community safety in ACT Policing not meeting these targets?

MR GENTLEMAN: Canberra is a very safe city. Canberrans have told the government and responded to our surveys about safety across the city. Police are doing a very good job and keeping our community very safe. There are aspects of community policing which need to be supported, and we will work through that, but, as I said, we know that Canberra is a safe city. Police have my confidence and will continue to keep the city safe.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, how has the lack of funding affected the ability to respond to critical calls in the ACT?

MR GENTLEMAN: We have increased funding every budget for ACT Policing through priority programs and through the taskforce, and there is more funding for policing in this budget as well. I would say to those opposite: when you get the opportunity, please vote for that funding this year, and we look forward to you supporting our police.

Planning—ACT Planning System Review and Reform Project

MS ORR: My question is for the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, can you please provide the Assembly with an update on the planning system review and reform project.

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Orr for her question and her ongoing interest in sensible planning for our growing city. With more people living and working in Canberra than ever before we need a planning system that can facilitate growth without compromising the characteristics of the city that we value. So we are reforming the planning system to deliver better outcomes for communities, the environment and Canberrans. We recognise the current system does not always deliver the best possible outcomes for the community. The new system moves away from rules to a more outcomes focused planning system. This is a big change that will benefit the Canberra community.

There are three key elements to the change; a new planning act, new Territory plan, and district strategies. As members would be aware, last month I tabled the new Planning Bill 2022 in this Assembly. Following the introduction of the bill, the government is now working towards presenting the draft of the new Territory plan and the draft district strategies. Community feedback on these documents is important and will help shape the final versions of both. We have staggered the release of these three elements to allow community members and stakeholders to read through and interact with the material. There is a large amount of content in each of these documents, and all of these documents shape the new planning system for our future. I want to thank EPSDD staff who have put a huge amount of work into preparing these documents for community consideration and for the benefit of our community. I look forward to continuing to update the Assembly on this work as it progresses.

MS ORR: Minister, what are the district strategies and how will they work in the new planning system.

MR GENTLEMAN: The district strategies are a new level of strategic planning document and an important new feature in the new planning system. District strategies will capture and protect the value, character and attributes of each of Canberra's nine main districts. They will be specific and targeted directions for each of the districts. The districts are Tuggeranong, Woden, Weston Creek, Inner South, Inner North, City, Gungahlin, Belconnen and east Canberra.

The district strategies are designed to sit between the high level policy in the ACT planning strategy and the detailed requirements of the new Territory Plan. They balance growth in the districts with the need to preserve character. There are several aspects that are represented across all districts, of course. The district strategies were developed following community feedback and reflect what people said they wanted for the new planning in their area. We know that Canberrans love our bush capital but we also know they are particularly attracted to their districts. I personally think our open spaces and Brindabella views down south are pretty hard to beat Madam Speaker, and I am sure you would agree.

The district strategies will guide the strategic management of growth and change on the district scale in the city. They will map green and blue spaces, good travel connection, housing, employment growth and a revitalisation of our shopping centres. So I am excited for the release of these strategies in the near future and I believe they will show how our new planning system is coming together to provide great outcomes for Canberrans who love their city.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how can the community be involved with the project.

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes it is a great question and I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary question. Community is at the heart of these changes and we have spent years engaging Canberrans, understanding what they love about their city and what they want from their planning system. This has helped shape the bill, the new plan and strategies. In addition, each of these documents has its own consultation process. The existing environment planning forum and the stakeholder working series consisting of industry and community representatives were used to discuss early policy approaches to features and changes proposed in drafting the new planning bill. Our legislation working group consisting of legal and planning practitioners was also convened to discuss the drafting of provisions and policy approaches. Given the complex nature of the draft planning bill, online information sessions were held for the public and stakeholders to help inform considerations for the draft planning bill and in preparation of submissions. It is likely a similar process will occur for the Draft Territory Plan and the strategies in the districts as well.

In the coming weeks and months the community also has their chance to comment on the draft strategies and the Draft Territory Plan, similar to the bill consultations. We will work with interest groups as well as the wider community to hear their opinions. We want to hear a range of thoughts from people who interact with the system in different ways. We are in the process of finalising exactly what the consultation process will look like, but it will be driven by the principles of good community consultation. They are outlined in the Planning Bill. We want everyone to have their say to make sure the new system is the best possible one for our city.

Work health and safety—wall shoring collapses

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction or whichever minister wants to take it. On the matter of multiple building sites having had severe wall collapses in recent months, the Construction Forestry Maritime Mining and Energy Union ACT CEO said that “heavy rain should not cause excavation collapses”. Minister, how is it possible for yet another wall to collapse this year and why are Canberra’s excavation sites not up to a safe standard?

MS CHEYNE: I will take this, as Minister Vassarotti is the policy minister and I am the operational minister with respect to this. I will refer Mr Parton to my extensive ministerial statement earlier this morning. The matter still is under investigation, so it is too early at this stage to detail what may have been the cause here. But can I assure members that Access Canberra and WorkSafe ACT are working closely with the builder, the manager of the earthworks, and are also working closely with residents both those immediately affected and neighbouring residents, regarding the safety of that site.

I refer Mr Parton to my earlier information, this morning, that an emergency rectification order was issued on 14 October. That was issued based on advice from geotechnical and structural engineers, detailing the remediation work to stabilise the affected walls, including measures to address the impact on adjacent residents and their properties. That needs to be completed by 5 pm on 20 October. In addition to that, the registrar and the senior engineer have engaged with many other builders and are beginning to conduct site inspections across the territory.

MR PARTON: Minister, how many of those site inspections have been completed by Access Canberra, subsequent to the collapse, and how many defects or other problems have been identified?

MS CHEYNE: Again, I refer Mr Parton to my ministerial statement this morning, which did outline this. That work has just begun in earnest. Of course, Access Canberra has continued to engage with building sites across the ACT. As I detailed in my ministerial statement this morning—

Mr Parton: A point of order, on relevance.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, Ms Cheyne.

Mr Parton: We appreciate the ministerial statement, but the question was specifically: how many of those site inspections have been completed by Access Canberra? If the minister doesn't have that detail, that is fine. She can take it on notice.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Ms Cheyne.

MS CHEYNE: Madam Speaker, as I said, it has begun, so I do not have that detail at this stage. I will note that Access Canberra worked very hard over last week regarding particularly the safety and the structural issues at the Dickson site, in addition to the broader work that they are undertaking across the territory. Specifically, Mr Parton, Access Canberra have also been engaging, as I did detail this morning in the ministerial statement, with Geocon at the WOVA site. We have noted that there was a shoring collapse at that site as well. That work is also ongoing. I am happy to provide an update to the Assembly. It may not be today, Mr Parton, but certainly by the end of this week I can give a further update as to how many inspections have been done to date. Access Canberra has written to builders. The responses received from builders are also guiding where some of those inspections need to take place.

MR CAIN: Minister, what permanent, on-the-ground action is the ACT government doing right now to ensure that this doesn't happen again?

MS CHEYNE: Again, this was extensively detailed this morning. I am happy to repeat it.

Mr Cain: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order.

Mr Cain: Sorry; I am predicting where this is going. I don't want to hear an answer that says: "I gave this answer earlier." I actually just want to hear the answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Cain, sit down. The minister was five seconds on her feet. Ms Cheyne.

MS CHEYNE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Correspondence was sent out to all class A builders on the afternoon of 13 October, reminding them of their responsibilities and also requesting that they send through relevant information to the registrar addressing specific matters in relation to the design and work methods associated with deep excavations. Responses are due to that by 20 October. This is in addition to the registrar writing to builders on 8 August, following the WOVA collapse on 6 August.

The registrar will use that information provided, as flagged, to assist in targeting the proactive site inspections of class A developments that Access Canberra is currently undertaking. Access Canberra's senior engineer has been directed by the registrar to undertake targeted assessment of construction sites that are at similar stages of construction across the territory to ensure that appropriate monitoring and controls are in place to manage excavation safety. This may also include the consideration of site conditions, including the ongoing rainfall impacts, the engineering design, and the construction methodologies. This correspondence has also been provided to the HIA and the MBA, and both bodies have been contacted by the registrar.

ACT Health—staff welfare

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. I refer to media reports about your wellbeing fund for health workers, that the union has described as a bandaid solution which will not address significant workforce issues. This comes as a question on notice response—No. 90—reveals that health workers have reported 1,065 cases of mental stress in the RiskMan system for 2021-22, which is by far the biggest category for staff incidents. Why has your wellbeing fund failed to win support from the nurses' and midwives' union?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Castley for the question. Of course, yes, we have committed \$8.75 million to a wellbeing initiative. That is being guided by, and co-designed with, staff across the health system. This is one part of a comprehensive response. I think we are all aware that the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, in the context of some announcements that have been made in other jurisdictions, and in the context of our current enterprise bargaining process, is advocating for more support for nurses and midwives.

That is exactly what they should be doing as the industrial advocates for nurses and midwives. But this \$8.75 million fund is an important part of our broader approach to supporting the wellbeing of all of our healthcare frontline workers. It is being co-designed with the work force. In the announcement of that, I stood alongside a couple of very enthusiastic staff from Canberra Health Services who have been directly involved in that co-design process, talking about the ideas that were coming from

teams directly, about what would help to improve their wellbeing—at the individual team level, where half the funding is going to go; and also at the organisation and territory-wide level, which is the other part of the funding.

This funding is also being used to support a recruitment campaign for nurses and midwives across the country. This is exactly what the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation has been advocating for. In meetings with me, we have talked through a range of things that they think we need to be doing. These include work force planning, which we committed additional funds towards in the budget, and significant territory-wide recruitment activities, which are being supported by this fund.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, do you expect the number of mental stress incidents reported by your staff to reduce as a result of your wellbeing fund; and, if so, by how much?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Castley for the supplementary question. Absolutely, the purpose of the wellbeing fund is to support the improvement in wellbeing of nurses and midwives. But this is not the only thing we are doing. Through the budget, we committed \$7.2 million to the next phase of the Towards a Safer Culture strategy for nurses and midwives—co-designed with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, which is a partner in the delivery of that strategy—and to improve and expand occupational violence training, and to make some investments in physical infrastructure for the safety of our nurses and midwives.

So it is combination of all these measures. The Canberra Liberals constantly think you can do one thing and that that will fix the world. These are complex problems that require a combination of solutions, and we are absolutely focused on ensuring that the numbers of workplace stress incidents are reduced. Psychological safety for our work force is absolutely critical.

We know that this has been a very difficult time. We know that we have seen not only an increased work force strain as a result of staff absences due to isolation quarantine with COVID-19, and due to a range of other illnesses across the winter period, but we have also seen—and we have certainly heard anecdotally—that the stress and strain on the community of the last two years has resulted in increased occupational—

Ms Castley: I have a point of order, Madam Speaker. I asked about specific numbers. When you have a solution there should be some return on investment, and I am asking the minister what she expects that return on investment to be.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think the minister responded that there is no simple, direct response in answer to the question. I could have paraphrased you, Minister; I apologise.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you, Madam Speaker; I think you paraphrased that very well. I will just finish by saying that we are not alone in these matters. Across the country and around the world, people have seen this increase in occupational violence.

MR COCKS: Were conversations held with the health staff who reported those 1,065 cases of mental stress, and did any of those workers ask for a wellbeing fund?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Cocks for the supplementary question. Absolutely; the reason that we have established the wellbeing fund in the way that we have, with this co-design process, is specifically a response to the engagement with staff, particularly across Canberra Health Services, but also in the Health Directorate. Both have had very strong evidence based wellbeing strategies in place, but as a result of some very difficult matters that have occurred over the last year or so, there has been engagement directly with staff, inviting them to put forward ideas about what could be done to support their wellbeing.

This is exactly a result of conversations with staff who have experienced significant psychological impacts of their work. We know that it is partly occupational violence, as I was talking about in response to a previous question, and partly in relation to trauma. We know that within our health services there can be very difficult circumstances that our healthcare workers face. They support individuals and families who have very difficult experiences in the system, and the vicarious trauma associated with that, or the direct trauma associated with that, can be really quite damaging. We know that we need to do better in supporting those individuals who experience that trauma, and that is exactly what our health services are focused on doing.

ACT public service—cultural and linguistic diversity

MR CAIN: My question is to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Minister, I have recently read the *State of the Service* annual report produced by CMTEDD for 2021-22. I note—and my reference is page 65—that, every year since 2017, the average salary for CALD ACT public service staff has not met the ACT public service average. In fact, the gap between the average for the ACT public service and the CALD average has significantly widened since 2017. Minister, were you aware of this, and what reasons do you think are behind it?

MS CHEYNE: I think Mr Cain's question is asking for an expression of opinion, which under the standing orders is not appropriate.

Mr Cain: No; it is a question.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not believe he is.

MS CHEYNE: He said, "What reasons do you think?"

Mr Cain: Well, you are the minister responsible.

Ms Lee: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: the question was: are you aware of this issue—it is her ministerial responsibility—and what is the reason? It did not ask for an expression of opinion.

MADAM SPEAKER: You could interpret, and a good lot of questions have been hypothetical or expressions of interest, but they have been allowed to be asked—

particularly the first part of that question was: are you aware of it and do you have any comments about the reason it is so?

MS CHEYNE: Madam Speaker, I do not have comments about it at this stage, because I think it probably requires some deeper interrogation. And I appreciate Mr Cain raising it today.

Mr Cain: So will the minister take it on notice?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Cain, you have asked your question. If you want to ask another, stand on your feet.

MR CAIN: Minister, why have you let this gap widen under your tenure as Minister for Multicultural Affairs?

MS CHEYNE: I think Mr Cain's question shows a gross misunderstanding of how the public service works and, indeed, how ministerial responsibilities work.

Mr Cain: It is on page 65, Minister. You can read it yourself.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Cain, that is enough!

Ms Lee: Attack is the best defence.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please, members. Question time is to ask questions, not to throw comments across the chamber.

MS CHEYNE: All directorates are responsible for inclusivity and diversity and ensuring that we are—

Mr Hanson: So everybody has failed, not just you? Is that your argument?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, please pay attention to what I say.

MS CHEYNE: I think we can recognise that we do need to do more work here and that diversity and ensuring that that is reflected in all levels of the public service is achieved. I am certainly very happy to have a further conversation with my colleagues.

The multiculturalism bill that we introduced last week does reference and goes to the heart of the standards, principles and values that we expect not only as a city but also of our ACT government directorates and agencies and how they are promoting those values and principles, including through participation, whether that be employment or their policies or their programs. That will be reported on in each directorate's annual report every year, and there will be a statement delivered to the Assembly. I encourage members to visit the multiculturalism bill and understand it.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, what message does this send to the multicultural community?

MS CHEYNE: I am not sure that it does send a message to the multicultural community. I have recognised that across the ACT public service, there is work to ensure that we do have diversity reflected at all levels of government. That extends not only to our culturally and linguistically diverse community but also across all levels of diversity.

We will certainly take this message that the opposition is giving today and further interrogate those figures, together with my ministerial colleagues.

Waste—green waste services relocation

MS CLAY: My question is to the minister for city services. Minister, it is important for Belconnen residents and those living in the outer north to have access to a green waste recycling site, but some people were concerned about the proposed site off Stockdill Drive. There was comment that it might be inappropriate due to traffic impacts on Stockdill Drive, bushfire risks, environmental run-off and various other concerns. The original DA was refused on a number of grounds, including some of these concerns. Can you tell us where the new DA is up to?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I was asked a question about this on 21 September by Mr Cain, and I can repeat what I said in the chamber in relation to that, which is that we are continuing to work through the issues that have been raised by the independent ACT planning and land authority in the planning process. We will continue to work through the planning system to deliver a green waste facility for Belconnen. We are working through those issues before resubmitting a development application.

In the preamble to Ms Clay's question, she referred to the particular site that we have chose in west Belconnen, which is block 1582. The ACT government has been undertaking a significant amount of preparation and planning around future sites for waste-type facilities in the north of Canberra. With the growth of the city, there are very few sites that are suitable for these types of facilities in the north of Canberra. This was chosen as the preferred site based on that expert analysis that had been undertaken. In fact two other sites that were also identified as part of that and which were deemed to be not suitable are both located adjacent to this site, east and west of block 1582. So you are seeing that there are not a huge number of sites around the place that are suitable.

In order to provide the services that Canberrans, including those who live in Ginninderry and west Belconnen, expect, we do need to have these types of facilities available for green waste drop-off. That is why we are committed to delivering this facility and working through the planning system to address the issues that have been raised, which include issues around bushfire risk mitigation, traffic management and other impacts. *(Time expired.)*

MS CLAY: Are alternative sites under consideration or is it just the one block that is under consideration?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. The government has determined that this block is the preferred site, based on the planning work that had been done in

relation to a range of other sites around the place. We will continue to work through the planning system. We think that we can address the issues raised by the independent land authority, and those will be addressed through the planning system. There will no doubt be another opportunity, through the notification process, for the community to consider those matters once that has been submitted.

MR DAVIS: Minister, how will the government consult specifically with the Ginninderry community and with those across west Belconnen more broadly?

MR STEEL: Through the planning process, there will be a period of statutory notification where the community will be able to view the planning application and the associated documentation which addresses the issues that have arisen. They will be able to have their say directly to the independent planning authority as they assess the DA and then make a decision.

Suburban infrastructure—projects

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, how is the government delivering on ACT Labor's suburban infrastructure commitments in my electorate of Yerrabi?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Petterson for his question. The government is working hard to deliver on ACT Labor's election commitments in Yerrabi, with a range of projects under design, construction or in the planning stages.

The shops that we are upgrading at Gwydir Square in Kaleen are nearing completion and have a range of upgrades which will rejuvenate this local shopping hub and support local businesses into the future.

We are also working on two significant playground upgrades in Ngunnawal and Kaleen, the latter of which is currently under consultation alongside of a new play space upgrade in Lyons.

We are getting underway with the final design of the new recreation park in Casey, which will provide significant new amenity to the suburb. It is a beautiful park, with a lot of natural and significant beauty, but one that we think can be greatly enhanced for the public benefit through the upgrades we are undertaking there, with construction due to get underway in 2023.

I was very pleased to have also recently announced the concept designs for a new dog park in Franklin—something that I know our local members have been working extensively with the community on for some time. More and more Canberrans are becoming dog owners. I think we have the highest rate in Australia. We are delivering on our commitment to make sure that there are opportunities for exercising those canines in the areas around Yerrabi.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how has the concept design for the Franklin dog park taken community feedback on board?

MR STEEL: Thank you Mr Pettersson for your supplementary question. The government has heard from the community in the early stages of this project, including feedback sent through from local members. We know that some of the biggest requests from the community for the new dog park are for plenty of shade, bins, benches and drinking fountains.

Dog parks are more than just places to bring your dog to throw the frisbee. They are places where the community can come together as well, so facilities for humans are also in the design, including a small picnic shelter, seating and a drinking fountain for the owners of our furry friends. There is a large, irrigated grass play area as well, which will be surrounded by new plantings of deciduous trees that will provide shade and canopy cover.

We also know that the community wants a mix of types of play for their dogs. That is why we have proposed a dog agility area, with formal and nature-play-style elements. We also want to make sure that the community can have their say on the concept design ahead of further detailed design occurring. I encourage residents to give their feedback on the YourSay website about the Franklin and Lanyon dog parks.

DR PATERSON: Minister, what features are being considered for the new play spaces in Kaleen and Lyons?

MR STEEL: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. I am very pleased that we have opened up consultation on two play space upgrades: in Kaleen and in Lyons, in our electorate of Murrumbidgee. We are seeking community feedback on what the needs are for these substantial upgrades.

At Lyons, we are proposing to relocate the existing very small, basic play space at the Lyons oval to be closer to the Lyons shops. We have heard from the community that they want something closer to the shops. Indeed, there was a petition to the Assembly from Mrs Jones in relation to that and with that request.

We are seeking the community's feedback now on what they would like to see as part of that new play space. We are looking at new equipment, and people can provide their feedback on climbing structures, swings, amenity, the street furniture available, the shade trees and diverse play equipment, including such things as nature play, fitness equipment and learn-to-ride tracks.

At Kaleen, we are proposing additions to an existing play space at Wakool Circuit, and we are hoping to diversify the current offering there at that existing play space. That could include things like basketball hoops, balancing equipment and an all-ability play element as well. We are keen to hear the community's feedback, and we will be informed by their feedback ahead of finalising the designs. We are looking forward to those then getting under construction.

Of course, we are getting underway with the other wide range of play space upgrades that we are also undertaking across the ACT, including upgrades at Chisholm, Gordon, Aranda and Ngunnawal.

Molonglo River—sewage

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction. Recently sewage water from the Lower Molonglo wastewater treatment plant spilled into the Molonglo River following heavy rain. Minister, what is the design capacity of the sewage treatment plant and was it working to capacity at the time.

MR RATTENBURY: I will have to take the very specific questions on notice. What I can tell Ms Lawder and colleagues in the chamber, and this is all available on Icon's public website, is that during the recent heavy rain incidents there was a significantly increased flow into the sewerage system and this did lead to the discharge of partially treated and settled effluent into the Molonglo River. The majority of the effluent discharged from the plant continues to be fully treated and disinfected. Stormwater from heavy rain does dilute effluent received at the plant and it does increase the river height and flows. The proportion of partially treated effluent released into the river system represents less than one per cent of the flow of the Murrumbidgee River at the time. That is the broad context.

I can also let members know that various notifications were made to the ACT and New South Wales environment protection authorities, ACT Health and NSW Health, as well as nearby residents, particularly those downstream. This does not impact the ACT's water supply because our water is all drawn from upstream of that point. Clearly, for residents between here and the Burrinjuck Dam there are issues of health, and they were given advice not to draw water from the river during those times. On the specifics of capacity, I will take that on notice and provide Ms Lawder with it in due course.

MS LAWDER: Minister, did Icon treat to maximum capacity before overflowing occurred or was some equipment offline?

MR RATTENBURY: I have not been advised of any equipment being offline Madam Speaker. I will check and also provide that to Ms Lawder on notice.

MR MILLIGAN: What is the volume of extra sewer flow during wet weather and is this due to stormwater ingress?

MR RATTENBURY: I am sure there is a very detailed answer in litres, which I will provide to Mr Milligan on notice.

Motor vehicles—registration

MR COCKS: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, in 2021 the ACT top selling car was the Toyota RAV4. To register and put compulsory third-party insurance on this car in the ACT costs approximately \$250 a year more than in either New South Wales or Victoria. Minister, why is this cost higher in the ACT, a city-state, than in other jurisdictions?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. The recent reforms that we have put in place, as a government, in relation to the motor accident injuries insurance

scheme have seen premiums come down, which is part of the cost of owning a motor vehicle here in the ACT. That was, of course, in addition to earlier reforms to introduce competition into the then CTP market. So we have seen premiums come down over time.

The opposition did not necessarily support those reforms, which were part of the work we were doing to improve the cost of living for those who own a motor vehicle in the ACT. Under the Liberals there would have been higher premiums. Under our reforms, we have been bringing premiums down.

Ms Lee: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Steel, please. A point of order.

Ms Lee: Mr Cocks's question was very, very straightforward. It specifically said: why is this cost higher in the ACT than in other jurisdictions? Mr Steel is continuing to debate an issue that was before the Assembly last term.

MADAM SPEAKER: I believe it is in order. The question was around cost, but I am asking Mr Steel if he can go to the specifics. I think the question is still in order.

MR STEEL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have finished answering the question.

Ms Lee: You mean not answering the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Lee, please. Your colleague is on the floor. Mr Cocks.

MR COCKS: Minister, what incentives are in place, given the comparatively higher cost, for people moving to Canberra to transfer their registration over to the ACT?

MR STEEL: Regulatory measures, including recent changes that we have made to ensure that people register within three months of moving here. If they do not, their car not only will not be registered here but will be uninsured.

MR PARTON: Minister, how many people have been fined in the last 12 months for not transferring their registration to the ACT within the required three-month period?

MR STEEL: I will take that question on notice. That is a matter that sits with Access Canberra. While I am responsible for the policy in relation to this, I will come back with some further information if I can.

Gungahlin—community facilities

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, my question is to the Minister for Planning. Minister, the Gungahlin community centre is a project of great interest to me. I have had correspondence with constituents who are concerned about a proposed location being on the outer edge of the town centre—almost 800 metres' walk from the centre. Can you please tell me how the government is proposing to ensure that the community centre will be easily accessible.

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Braddock for the question. Of course, the government has been very supportive of the Gungahlin community centre. Funding began back in the 2021-22 budget, in allocating \$300,000 to complete a project feasibility and develop a business case for future funding. There was a further \$150,000 in 2021-22 and a further \$150,000 in the current budget—2022-23. Foundations for the Gungahlin community facilities project have been established through a district-wide community and recreational facilities assessment, which was released through YourSay in April 2022.

The engagement with the community centre began in July, and has involved more than 30 group and one-on-one meetings, including the Gungahlin Community Council, and the recently created Gungahlin Community Panel. The common themes engaged through all of the discussions and sessions were positive and supportive of the project's direction. Discussions followed on determining the best possible location to meet community needs and aspirations, and the building design requirements of different organisations and possible management arrangements to achieve equitable community access.

There is another round of engagement occurring now; it is due to begin very shortly. That will aim to finalise the options for the government's consideration. That will include the preferred development site, the community facility concept design, and a preliminary construction cost estimate.

MR BRADDOCK: How will the community centre be integrated with other land uses in Gungahlin centre?

MR GENTLEMAN: It is an important question—that we are sure that the Gungahlin community has the right facilities for its needs, and that it fits in with the other parts of the Gungahlin town centre. A lot of that information has come back through the Gungahlin Community Council and the consultations that are occurring just now.

MS CLAY: Minister, how will the new planning system ensure that we have enough community space all around Canberra?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Clay for the question. I spoke earlier about our district strategies that will come forward very shortly for communities to engage with the government on the future planning system. The community will be able to have its say on those strategies, which, of course, will include community facilities and other things that the future community of Canberra will need in the planning system.

Domestic and family violence—federal government initiatives

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children?

MS BERRY: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. As members will now know, the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children was officially launched in Melbourne yesterday, after it was endorsed by all state and territory ministers.

Yesterday I took the time to meet with community service organisations, providers and government and non-government stakeholders here in the ACT to celebrate the launch of the national plan but also to thank them for their contributions and the time that they have taken out of their work to contribute to the plan.

The national plan sets an ambitious goal to end violence against women and children within a generation. Currently, as we know, one woman dies every 10 days as a result of domestic and family violence. As a community, we need to ensure that perpetrators of domestic and family violence are held to account. I am pleased that we are continuing with the local advocacy, and this has been reflected in the national plan.

The national plan runs from 2022 to 2023 and will be informed by two five-year action plans that will be developed and open for consultation in coming months.

DR PATERSON: Minister, what does the new plan mean for people in Canberra experiencing domestic and family violence?

MS BERRY: The new national plan is an opportunity to continue the conversation in our community about how we best support victim-survivors and what actions we can take to stop domestic and family violence before it happens.

In Canberra, we are fortunate to have a mature and well-developed community sector that plays a key role in supporting our initiatives in the community. The ACT government will continue to advocate for longer-term funding agreements with the federal government to provide funding certainty for our community members and work with our commonwealth counterparts to increase the share of funding to the ACT.

MS ORR: Minister, how does this new plan build on initiatives led by the ACT government?

MS BERRY: Working towards ending domestic and family violence cannot be done by any state or territory on their own. The federal government developing a national plan will mean that we will be a strategic approach where we will work closely together and build on the initiatives that we have each implemented within our own budgets to ensure that our own communities have domestic and family violence addressed in a way that is appropriate for them.

In the ACT's budget, there is \$1.4 million over four years in response to the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program report; \$4.3 million over four years to establish a multidisciplinary centre to collocate a broad range of specialist sexual violence response services; \$5.9 million to provide a dedicated response to domestic and family violence incidents, with a high rate of lethality; \$1.8 million to codesign and implement culturally relevant and appropriate responses to DFV in response to the *We don't shoot our wounded* report; and \$660,000 to re-establish a wraparound service model and ensure we get the implementation right.

Over \$580,000 has been committed to review agencies and statutory bodies, to identify any changes or further investment for community service organisations; \$1 million to develop a long-term strategy for the prevention of sexual violence and to

change behaviours; \$1.4 million for independent sexual violence advisers to support victim-survivors as they navigate the system, access services and receive supports; and funded either in part or in fully by the Safer Families levy, \$1.8 million in education, training and capacity building resources for the sector to support victim-survivors and promote sustainability; and \$620,000 to expand the capacity of the Canberra Domestic Violence Crisis Service as well as the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre in meeting the demand for emergency hotel accommodation, case management and support options. *(Time expired.)*

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

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Bills referred to Committees, pursuant to resolution of the Assembly of 2 December 2020, as amended—Correspondence—Bill—Inquiry—Sexual Assault Reform Legislation Amendment Bill 2022—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, dated 12 October 2022.

Integrity Commission Act, pursuant to section 213—Special Report—Suburban Land Agency Land Sales, dated 17 October 2022.

Mr Gentleman presented the following papers:

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Animal Welfare Act 1992—Animal Welfare (Advisory Committee Member) Appointment 2022 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-228 (LR, 10 October 2022).

Health Act 1993—Health (Interest Charge) Determination 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-225 (LR, 29 September 2022).

Public Health Act 1997—Public Health (COVID-19 Management) Declaration 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-224 (LR, 29 September 2022).

Public Sector Management Act 1994—Public Sector Management Amendment Standards 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-227 (LR, 6 October 2022).

Remuneration Tribunal Act 1995—Remuneration Tribunal (Fees and Allowances of Members) Determination 2022—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-226 (LR, 4 October 2022).

Road Transport (General) Act 1999—

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation (Deciding Applications for Registration - Taxi) Declaration 2022 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-230 (LR, 11 October 2022).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation (Manuka Oval) Declaration 2022 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2022-229 (LR, 11 October 2022).

Planning—Age-Friendly City Plan

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (3.03): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the International Day of Older Persons is celebrated on 1 October each year, as designated by the United Nations General Assembly on 14 December 1990 (resolution 45/106);
- (b) Ageism Awareness Day, which is centred around the International Day of Older Persons, took place on 7 October 2022;
- (c) the number of Canberrans aged over 55 years is increasing as a proportion of the population, based on the 2021 Census results; and
- (d) ageism is increasingly an issue for society as life expectancy continues to rise, particularly in the ACT, where we have the highest male and female life expectancy in Australia;

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) accelerate the replacement and repair of footpaths, including but not limited to, work on the age-friendly suburbs strategy;
- (b) accelerate work on making Canberra a dementia-friendly city; and
- (c) start collecting usage data via MyWay cards of senior citizens to better understand their travel needs and habits;

(3) write to the Australian Government in support of a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons; and

(4) provide a copy of this correspondence and any response received to the Assembly by 1 March 2023.

I rise today to speak to this motion listed in my name on the notice paper, which calls on the ACT government to accelerate the footpath maintenance component of the Age-Friendly City Plan and the initiatives to support Canberra becoming a dementia-friendly city. It also calls on the ACT government to write to the federal government in support of a UN convention on the rights of older persons.

This motion follows the passing of two significant dates recently in relation to my shadow portfolio of seniors. On 1 October each year, the International Day of Older Persons is observed around the world. This year's theme centred around the resilience of older persons in a changing world—a theme that is very pertinent, given the past few years, when we have faced, amongst other challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been particularly difficult for older people. Also, Ageism Awareness Day was on 7 October, a day that brings attention to the existence and impacts of ageism in Australia and how we can all play a part in combating it.

As a jurisdiction, the population of Canberra is ageing at a faster rate than the national average. In just the past five years, the proportion of Canberrans aged 70 and over has increased. There is clearly an increasing demand for more services accommodating the requirements of our ageing population. Despite this, the ACT Labor-Greens

government continues to leave older Canberrans behind and fails to prioritise them in a meaningful way.

I know that one of the main issues raised with me by older Canberrans is the state of footpaths in the ACT. For many older people, being able to go for a walk in their neighbourhood provides them with the positive benefits of being outside and exercising. They also have the opportunity to converse with their neighbours and passers-by. It is a simple thing, but it is also part of continuing to hold onto that feeling of independence. That is why it is so disheartening to see the number of reports about broken footpaths. Once again, it is a failure of the Labor-Greens government to deliver basic municipal services, and this negatively impacts Canberrans.

Older people cannot go for a walk, or they stop going for a walk, if they are afraid that they might fall because of a damaged footpath. We have seen this in suburbs in my electorate in Tuggeranong. For example, near one of our retirement villages and aged-care providers, there is a damaged footpath where a woman fell and broke her collarbone. That made many of the other residents fearful of walking in the area, because they knew that this accident had occurred. Unfortunately, that part of the footpath was never properly repaired. A close-by section was repaired but not the area where this lady fell and hurt herself. So it is limiting our older Canberrans in their day-to-day life.

Another key government area that greatly impacts seniors is public transport. The Age-Friendly City Plan outlines several measures to improve this area, including the study of public transport patronage data specific to ACT Seniors Card holders. This data should be compiled and used to make improvements to the public transport network to ensure that it is accessible for older Canberrans.

Public transport is another area of government that allows older people to keep their independence and ensure that they do not have to rely on loved ones to get around if they do not wish to, or they really do not have to. Older Canberrans were already significantly affected when some of the bus stops were closed as part of the network 19 changes, and when the bus routes changed.

When I asked the minister recently about dementia-friendly training for bus drivers, I was disappointed to receive quite a vague response. I have been asking the minister about this specific issue since I first advocated for a dementia-friendly design and initiatives to be included in the Age-Friendly City Plan.

Finally, my motion today calls on the ACT government to write to the Australian government in support of a UN convention on the rights of older persons. Older people's advocacy organisations have long been calling for the establishment of a UN convention on the rights of older persons. An international convention such as this would affirm globally that older people are entitled to the same human rights and fundamental freedoms as everyone else. Human rights do not have a use-by date. Human rights do not end when you reach a certain age.

This would help to raise awareness of issues such as ageism and reduce the neglect of older people in societies throughout the world. It would change the perceptions that

societies have of older people, so that they are not seen as a burden on society but as the active contributors that they are and want to be. Older people often say to me that they feel invisible and unheard. This is often despite hugely successful careers in their chosen professions. Once they reach a certain age, they feel that no-one wants to listen to their opinion anymore.

I am hopeful that the Labor-Greens government will support my motion today about making Canberra more inclusive and accessible to all in the community. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

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) (3.10): I move:

Omit all words after paragraph (1)(d), substitute:

- “(e) older people continue to be disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 compared to the general population, in terms of both health risks as well as social wellbeing and connectedness; and
- (f) the ACT Government is committed to supporting older Canberrans through the Age-Friendly City Plan, Re-envisioning Older Persons Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT Strategy and the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) continue to implement the Age-Friendly City Plan and Re-envisioning Older Persons Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT Strategy;
- (b) continue consultation and the implementation of the Age Friendly Suburbs Program, which includes remediation and repair of, and new, footpaths;
- (c) continue to progress work to make Canberra a more dementia-friendly city;
- (d) consider the results of the ACT Household Travel Survey with a focus on older Canberrans, to better understand their travel needs and habits;
- (e) continue to work with the older community, the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, stakeholder groups and across government, to identify the broader needs of, and supports required for, older Canberrans;
- (f) write to the Australian Government in support of a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons; and
- (g) provide a copy of this correspondence and any response received to the Assembly by 1 March 2023.”.

I will speak to both Ms Lawder’s motion and my amendment. I welcome Ms Lawder’s interest in making Canberra an accessible, inclusive community for everyone—a place that celebrates growing older and provides support for older Canberrans to thrive.

I am very happy to support Ms Lawder’s call for the ACT government to write to the Australian government in support of a UN convention on the rights of older persons. Recognition of the human rights of our older community members is an important

aspect of how we create a community where older people are celebrated. But I want us to do more than that. I want us to be a place where older people have access to the services they need and have opportunities to engage fully in community life, and where older people thrive.

That is why we published the Re-envisioning Older Persons Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT Strategy just a few months ago. This strategy enables the ACT government to look at the social determinants of mental health and wellbeing for older people, and work across directorates with our community sector and with older people themselves on actions to improve wellbeing. Areas of work include housing; community connection; suicide prevention; and increasing the mental health understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, and LGBTIQ+ older Canberrans.

Taken together, the work within the Age-Friendly City Plan and the older persons mental health and wellbeing strategy addresses almost every aspect of life for older Canberrans.

Within the Age-Friendly Suburbs Program, funding was delivered in the 2021-22 budget for upgrades in Reid, Chifley, Scullin and O'Connor. The community can now provide feedback on the plans for each suburb via YourSay, and at community pop-ups over the next fortnight at Chifley shops from 12 pm to 2 pm on Thursday, 20 October; at Scullin shops from 12 pm to 2 pm on Friday, 21 October; at Geerilong Gardens playground in Reid from 11.30 am to 1 pm on Saturday, 29 October; and at O'Connor shops on Sargood Street from 1.30 pm to 3 pm on Saturday, 29 October.

The ACT government is also delivering 88 new or improved bus stops this year to improve the accessibility of local bus stops, and transitioning the entire bus fleet to be low-floor and accessible. A report by Women's Health Matters on bus stop improvements in 2019 showed quite clearly how bus stops could be improved to feel safer for women travelling after dark, and these improvements will also make bus stops safer for older people. I encourage the community to provide feedback on where they would like to see changes or improvements in the Canberra public transport network via the Transport Canberra online feedback form or by calling 13 17 10.

As a self-confessed data nerd, I very much welcome Ms Lawder's interest in having more information for our transport network planners to better understand the needs of older Canberrans. But MyWay data alone will not give us the full picture. The ACT and Queanbeyan household travel survey is the best place to find out about the travel needs of older Canberrans, encompassing public transport, active travel and cars. The most recent data we have is from the 2017 survey, but there is data being collected right now for the 2022 ACT and Queanbeyan household travel survey, with the public release of data due in 2023.

When it comes to public transport use, we know from the 2017 survey that people on lower incomes are more likely to trip-chain, and I expect this also applies to older Canberrans. Trip-chaining is when stops are made on a journey, such as taking a family member to the doctor, going on to another suburb to pick up a prescription from the chemist, and then, say, picking up a grandchild that you are looking after, after school, before returning home.

There is also a gendered travel component, particularly for carers. We know from the 2017 survey that picking up or dropping someone off comprises 10.6 per cent of men's travel, but 14.5 per cent of women's. We would not have found all of this in the MyWay data. We know that there are more women than men who are carers, and that one in five Australian women aged 65 to 74 years old is a carer. I am very much looking forward to the updated age and gender disaggregated data in the 2022 ACT and Queanbeyan household travel survey, and seeing it used to better plan for mixed modes of travel and for women, older people and carers.

We keep our older Canberrans informed about transport and many other important services through websites; targeted information shared through our community sector partners, including COTA ACT and ADACAS; and through newsletters delivered to letterboxes, such as *Our Canberra*. I would also particularly like to thank COTA ACT for their work on the Silver is Gold Festival and the Seniors Expo, sharing information with our community about services and ways to stay connected. This year we had two expos—one on 26 May, and a second veterans and seniors expo on Wednesday, 28 September, not long before the International Day of Older Persons on 7 October.

Becoming a more dementia-friendly city is important, with training continuing for Access Canberra staff, and Access Canberra shopfronts adopting dementia-friendly design. The ACT's first dementia-friendly film screening will take place on Saturday, 22 October, with support from the ACT government. I am very pleased to say that it is one of the best films Australia has ever produced, *The Sapphires*, and it will be a wonderful way to celebrate Carers Week. Canberra Museum and Gallery is also upgrading their access ramp to the Open Collections gallery to support people with dementia, who may have difficulty with depth perception, as well as a series of hands-on workshops for people with dementia to enjoy CMAG's arts program.

Being able to tell our stories through the arts is how we make meaning of this rapidly changing world that we live in, and that is particularly important in recognition of the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 has had on older people in our community. Providing \$80,000 per year through the Seniors Grants Program supports community-led recovery and enables reconnection after long periods in isolation in the past two years. Applications for the 2022-23 Seniors Grants Program are open right now, until 24 October.

As I said earlier today, I will continue to advocate for—and this government will continue to support—the protection of those who are most at risk from this virus, through communication about our collective responsibility to care for those around us, access to supports for disability and in-home aged-care workers and advice for service providers on how to provide COVID-safe care, and ensuring access to antiviral medicines for those who need them and ongoing access to vaccination boosters for all of us.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing for their very much appreciated advice on issues impacting older Canberrans, and their systemic advocacy, which was evident in the work plan that they released earlier this year. The lived experience of older Canberrans is at the heart of

decision-making on issues affecting them, through their engagement with both the Age-Friendly City Plan and the older persons mental health and wellbeing strategy.

To Prue Power, Cathy Hope, Louise Bannister, Joanna Cochrane, Christine Leopardi, Jenny Mobbs, Philip Pigginn, Wendy Prowse, Charles Sage, Juliette Spurrett, Jane Timbrell, and Thi Nha Tran, I say thank you for the work that you do, and I look forward to many more conversations about how we can support older Canberrans, end ageism and celebrate growing older.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.18): I am pleased to speak today to Ms Lawder's motion and Minister Davidson's amendment. Older Canberrans are an important part of our community, and I welcome the remarks by Minister Davidson about the work underway across government to support a better Canberra for our seniors. I also welcome the continued work that Minister Steel has been undertaking through the Age-Friendly Suburbs Program.

Ms Lawder pointed out that the number of Canberrans over the age of 55 is growing. Some 60,000 Canberrans are over the age of 65, as per the 2021 census. As a community and as a government, we must continue thinking about the ways we work with older Canberrans to get around our city and be able to access the services that they need each day.

I welcome the inclusion of Chifley in the Age-Friendly Suburbs Program—a suburb that is in my electorate of Murrumbidgee—alongside Reid, Scullin and O'Connor. Funding has been allocated for improvements to footpaths, bus stops, intersections, curve ramps and median strips, to make these suburbs better for older Canberrans. Local residents often tell me about the difficulties they face in our older suburbs where there are missing links or repairs needed. I encourage my constituents to give me feedback and let the government know their priorities as part of the program.

This year's theme of the International Day of Older Persons was resilience of older persons in a changing world. This is an important theme which reflects the difficulties that older people have faced in recent years and will face into the future.

Through COVID and growing digitisation, there are some challenges emerging for older people that had not existed before. As the community becomes more reliant on technology to get things done, we must not forget about older people in our community who are facing a larger than ordinary shift in the way they live their life.

Part of this challenge is making our services better and more accessible for residents, and bringing every Canberran, no matter their age, along on the journey with us. I note the work that Minister Cheyne has been doing with Access Canberra to make the service centres welcoming and inclusive places for those who live with dementia. This is important work that reflects the work we must all do to make sure everyone in our community can feel safe and included.

I am pleased that we continue to work across government to improve the day-to-day lives of our older Canberrans, and I welcome the views of older Canberrans as we work towards achieving a better Canberra for everyone.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (3.20): I certainly want to thank my colleague Ms Lawder for bringing this motion before the Assembly. My own electorate of Ginninderra is home to many seniors, and this needs to be a city for them as well. I spend a lot of my time as a local member responding to complaints by these elderly residents about the state of services and accessibility.

I especially like Ms Lawder's call on the government to accelerate the replacement and repair of footpaths. Recently, and over the past few months, I have had several calls to go and visit some of the damaged footpaths in Ginninderra and, in particular, as they have affected senior community members. I walked to and from the Kippax group centre with an elderly woman who needs to use a walking frame and finds it very difficult to navigate the cracked cement and raised edges along this stretch. In fact, last year she took a very serious fall while trying to navigate one section of this footpath.

I travelled to Higgins shops and was very concerned about the cracked pathways in front of Higgins shops, and I have seen on a few occasions the impassable pavements in the park behind O'Dea Place, in Holt. Around the Kangara Waters retirement home, there are cracked footpaths in areas where senior citizens would love to go for walks, and to be able to walk in safety. Sadly, being able to walk in safety is not the case in every part of my electorate.

For a government who encourage an active lifestyle, particularly for our senior citizens, this service delivery is very lacking, and it is very negligent of them. Our damaged footpaths are, to our senior citizens, what our potholed roads are to our drivers today. We are again seeing reflected in this government's commitment to basic services a failure across the board.

I thank Ms Lawder for bringing this motion before us, and I certainly commend it to this Assembly.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (3.23): I want to start by thanking Ms Lawder for moving this motion today. I want to make a few brief comments in relation to the government's approach, particularly to making sure that our city's streets are accessible for all Canberrans, including older Canberrans.

We know, through the ongoing program of work with the Age-Friendly Suburbs Program, that when we make streets accessible for older Canberrans through that universal design, it is good for people of all ages to move about. This is a big focus of the ACT government's active travel plan, on which we have been consulting with the community.

We know that walking is the easiest and most accessible form of active travel for many Canberrans. It is a form of travel that we are examining at the moment through the household travel survey, to get a better understanding not only of people's needs but also of how they are using other modes of travel around the city.

We are hoping to promote more sustainable forms of travel amongst all age groups. That is why the active travel plan has set out a range of different actions for

community input, including a focus on a better connected and maintained path network. That includes how we use the \$4.3 million that the ACT government has allocated, delivering on our election commitments to better maintain our paths, as well as the \$2 million we have committed to extend the Age-Friendly Suburbs Program to four suburbs. We are consulting with those suburbs at the moment about what they would like to see, not only in terms of the maintenance of paths, but in terms of improved ramps that are safe for people who are using our active travel network, and any other improvements that will make it safe to walk around our streets in those suburbs that typically have an older cohort of residents compared to the rest of Canberra.

As part of the actions that we are proposing to take under the active travel plan, which we have been consulting on, we want to continue to deliver on our Age-Friendly Suburbs Program to address footpath quality, gaps and missing links. We want to make sure that we are progressively upgrading footpaths. That is being informed by the work that has been undertaken through footpath audits that have been funded throughout the city from the program that we implemented during COVID-19, the Jobs for Canberrans program. As Minister Davidson mentioned, we are upgrading our bus stops to make sure that they are all accessible by the end of this year, in order to meet accessibility standards.

We are continuing to build on priority community path links identified by the community, and we are looking to prioritise the investment criteria to have a particular focus on walking around areas that are of interest to the community, such as schools—many grandparents take their grandchildren to school—the shops, which are frequented by many people in our community, including, particularly on weekdays, the older community in Canberra, and public transport stops as connections on our footpath network.

We are also proposing to invest in making walking more comfortable by responding to community requests for seating and shade. We know that older Canberrans often require seating, and that is part of what we are proposing in the active travel plan. Importantly, we are incorporating universal design principles in design guidance and infrastructure standards to ensure equity of access to public spaces. There is a significant amount of work going on.

There is one further measure that I particularly wanted to highlight. Again, it is another commitment that we made at the election, in addition to expanding the Age-Friendly Suburbs Program and the investment in path maintenance, none of which the Liberals committed to at the election. The other commitment that we made and that we are delivering on was around undertaking a feasibility study of an on-demand transport system that would potentially replace the flexible transport system.

That work is underway at the moment, and we are looking forward to considering the outcomes of that feasibility study to understand how we can improve the bus service that picks people up, particularly older people and those with mobility issues or a disability, from their front door so that they can get to the local shops, a rapid bus link,

their GP or another place of interest in their community, and make sure that they retain those connections to the community.

There is a range of different measures underway in terms of public transport and in terms of community path accessibility. We are looking forward to finalising very soon both the active travel plan and the feasibility work on on-demand transit. I commend Minister Davidson's amendment to Ms Lawder's motion.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (3.28): I thank Ms Lawder for bringing this important motion before the Assembly. I wish to speak in support of Ms Lawder's motion and highlight an organisation that has both taken it upon themselves to recognise the International Day of Older Persons and would greatly benefit from the accelerated replacement and repair of footpaths.

To recognise the International Day of Older Persons, the organisers of the Umbagog parkrun dedicated the first event of the month to older persons. They went to great efforts to emphasise that people of all ages were welcome and that, although the event is called a "parkrun", anyone attending was welcome to "parkwalk" and set their own pace. This sort of inclusivity should be applauded, and I thank the volunteers who take the time out of their weekends to facilitate it.

I have been touched by the stories I have heard of older persons who have found great meaning and social value from attending this parkrun. Attendance at the parkwalk on 1 October was over 130 people—one of their highest attendances since they started in July this year. I imagine their efforts to promote the parkwalk to older persons had something to do with the spike in attendance that week.

Unfortunately, this group has to deal with the mud and broken areas of footpath that are all through the park. They and all other users of the park, such as Waterwatch, the Ginninderra Catchment Group, Friends of Umbagog and surrounding residents would greatly benefit from Ms Lawder's suggestion in her motion to accelerate the replacement and repair of footpaths.

Another group that I would like to give a shout-out to is the Belconnen Community Men's Shed. I have previously spoken about this group and praised the part that they play in providing social connections and meaningful activities to men of all ages, and particularly to older persons and retirees who may otherwise lack a social outlet.

I echo Ms Lawder's call for the Assembly to write to the federal government in support of a UN convention on the rights of older persons. Such a convention could only serve to strengthen the rights, protections and freedoms of older people, to whom we owe so much of our current rights, protections and freedoms. I commend Ms Lawder's motion to the Assembly.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (3.31): I would like to thank all members for their contributions today. There were many useful points in everyone's contribution to the debate.

Back in 2019 I spoke about footpaths with respect to the Age-Friendly City Plan. In 2019 I said that, at the current rate, it will be 2073 before all current suburbs are funded for footpath replacements. Of course, by that time, the ones that were first done will be in a dire state. That is why my motion originally called on the government to speed up the Age-Friendly City Program, because it is not going fast enough to keep our footpaths in good repair for anyone in our community, let alone our older Canberrans, who may have mobility issues.

I found this last year, when I was on crutches for a while. The state of our footpaths made it really difficult to get around in some places. Good footpaths, of course, help not just our older Canberrans but every walker—everyone who walks their dog around the block—if you are lucky enough to have a footpath, that is—people with mobility aids; people with disability; mothers, fathers or carers with prams and strollers. It is not only our older Canberrans who will benefit, but they are the purpose of my motion today.

I appreciate that Mr Steel, I think, said that MyWay data alone will not give us the full picture of the usage. I am not sure exactly why that is the case, although I will be pleased to see the results of the household travel survey. We should already have a lot of this information from MyWay cards, and that is why I am moving an amendment to Ms Davidson's proposed amendment. I move the following amendment circulated in my name to Ms Davidson's proposed amendment:

Omit paragraph (2)(d), substitute:

“(d) start collecting senior citizen's usage data via MyWay cards as stipulated in the Age-Friendly City Plan to better understand travel habits and needs.”.

My amendment seeks to replace Ms Davidson's paragraph (2)(d) with the amendment circulated in my name, which refers to the fact that, according to the Age-Friendly City Plan, we should be collecting this usage data on MyWay cards. It is already stipulated in the Age-Friendly City Plan, so why are we not using it? We should be able to get the information from the MyWay card saying, for example, “Mrs Smith used her card on Thursday to go to Belconnen,” because you tap on and tap off with the card. I do not understand why we are not already doing it. It is part of the MyWay system, I would have thought, and it is certainly stipulated in the Age-Friendly City Plan, so why are we not doing it now?

I am also pleased to have brought to the attention of the Assembly and the minister the need for better dementia-friendly design and awareness here in the ACT. I am pleased to see that the ramp at CMAG, an issue that I have raised, has been fixed, and that there has been some training delivered to frontline staff, including at Access Canberra.

I would like to thank Mr Steel for his very considered and useful contribution today. He and I do not always see eye to eye, so it is nice to have a civil conversation about this important topic. I am also very pleased to see tripartisan support for writing to the federal government about a UN convention on the rights of older persons. As I said earlier, the rights of older persons should not have a use-by date, and we must respect our older Canberrans, who have contributed so much to our city and continue to contribute so much.

I would like to thank them and the organisations who represent and work with them every day. There are many fantastic organisations in Canberra, such as Council on the Ageing ACT and Communities@Work. There is a huge list that work with older people, and I would like to thank them for their work. I commend my amendment to Ms Davidson's proposed amendment to the Assembly, as this is work that should already be done, as stipulated in the Age-Friendly City Program.

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) (3.36): I will speak for a few moments to Ms Lawder's amendment to my proposed amendment to her motion. I am very genuinely keen to see greater use of data in planning our transport network. The unfortunate thing is that MyWay data alone will not give us all of the information that is needed.

There are a few reasons for that. One of the reasons is that, while MyWay cards tell us where people tap on and tap off and when they have travelled, if the card is not registered—and a large number of the cards being used in Canberra are not registered—we do not have any information about their gender, their age or anything else about the user. It is important for us to have information about gender, age and a number of other factors in planning a good transport network that works well for everyone. That is why the ACT and Queanbeyan household travel survey data gives us a much more complete picture. It tells us the person's age group, their gender, what their reason for travelling is, and whether they have to take someone else with them on their journey. That gives us a much more complete picture.

The other difficulty about MyWay data being our main data source for planning our transport network is that it really only tells us about people's public transport use. It does not tell us about the people who are not using public transport, and it does not tell us about people who might be making use of our active travel pathway network, car sharing or many other ways of getting from point A to point B.

In 2020 I did a survey of people who were using active travel pathways throughout Canberra, to try to get a better understanding of where we might want to improve cycle paths and shared walking paths. We found through that work that there are a lot of people in Canberra who are using those pathways that we might not otherwise have heard about. There were a lot of people using electric wheelchairs on shared paths to get around their neighbourhood. Lots of people were riding bikes and taking people with them. They did not want to ride their bike on the road; they wanted a separated pathway.

These are all things that we do not find out from MyWay data because that is primarily about bus and light rail travel. That ACT and Queanbeyan household travel survey will be our best source of understanding people's travel needs, and I look forward to seeing the data and to discussing it more with Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (3.39): I seek leave to make a very brief closing statement. I have already spoken, but I seek leave to speak again briefly.

Leave granted.

MS LAWDER: I agree; I am looking forward to the results of the household transport survey, but I feel a bit like the little girl on the Mexican food ad: “Why can’t we have both?” We are supposed to have the MyWay data. According to the Age-Friendly City Program, we are supposed to already be collecting the data. Why can we not have both, to give us a better and more comprehensive picture of the travel habits of our older Canberrans?

Question put:

That **Ms Lawder’s** amendment to **Ms Davidson’s** proposed amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 16

Mr Cain
Ms Castley
Mr Cocks
Mr Hanson
Mrs Kikkert
Ms Lawder
Ms Lee
Mr Milligan
Mr Parton

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Mr Braddock
Ms Burch
Ms Cheyne
Ms Clay
Ms Davidson
Mr Davis
Mr Gentleman

Ms Orr
Dr Paterson
Mr Pettersson
Mr Rattenbury
Mr Steel
Ms Stephen-Smith
Ms Vassarotti

Question resolved in the negative.

Ms Davidson’s amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Building—embedded utilities networks

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (3.45): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) as a result of the introduction of embedded networks in developments such as apartment blocks, retirement villages, social housing, and caravan parks, embedded network users may face higher utility prices compared to those with unlimited retail choice;
- (b) embedded network users have limited consumer rights and protections; and
- (c) embedded network providers operate in a loosely regulated environment that may require strengthened oversight;

(2) further notes the:

- (a) NSW Parliament’s ongoing inquiry into embedded networks; and

- (b) Victorian Government's announcement in July 2022 to ban new embedded networks;
- (3) acknowledges the:
 - (a) ACT Government's achievement of 100 percent renewable electricity in the ACT; and
 - (b) success of the ACT Government's energy policies in keeping the ACT's regulated retail electricity prices below the national average despite an unstable national and global energy market;
- (4) calls on the ACT Government to conduct a review of embedded networks in the ACT, with regard as to whether the following reforms are appropriate:
 - (a) a ban on new embedded networks (exempting buildings that use renewable energy microgrids to deliver low-cost renewable energy to apartment blocks);
 - (b) further regulation of embedded network providers; and
 - (c) further consumer protections for embedded network users to equalise consumer protections for on-market users; and
- (5) requests that the ACT Government report back to the Assembly on this matter by 30 June 2023.

I rise today to call on the ACT government to conduct a review of embedded networks. For the benefit of members and those observing that might not be immediately across the detail of embedded networks, let me provide a brief explanation. Embedded networks are private utility networks that serve multiple premises in a building or self-contained site. They are mostly used to supply electricity to consumers in developments such as apartment blocks, retirement villages, social housing and caravan parks. Other utilities, such as wi-fi or hot water, can also be provided through an embedded network system. Instead of each individual consumer having a contract with a retailer, the building has one contract and the utility is then onsold by the building to the tenants.

Embedded networks first emerged in the ACT following the passage of the Utilities Legislation Amendment Act 2017. This legislation aimed to give individual tenants access to discounted utility rates that were usually only available to big users, by utilising embedded networks. In theory, levelling the playing field between big users and everyday Canberrans sounds like a great idea. Who would not want to jump at the opportunity to access cheaper electricity, wi-fi or hot water?

For those in our community who are slugged with bills, maybe moving into an apartment complex with an embedded network would sound like a reliable solution to reduce costs. The amendment act had these good intentions at its heart, but unfortunately some members of the community are having experiences that do not align with the stated purpose of the legislation. Members of the community have reached out to me and shared that, for them, embedded networks have not resulted in discounted utility prices. Instead, they have locked them into a contract which generates bills that are more expensive than other market offerings and without the consumer protections that exist in the wider market. This problem is of course worse for renters, who do not have direct access to the decision-making of their strata organisation, unlike owner-occupiers, who have more freedom to advocate for change.

It is clear to me that there is a reason that embedded networks are appearing across the ACT and that some consumers are having this negative experience. It is this. I quote, in relation to embedded networks, from one of the largest providers of embedded network operators in the ACT: “huge cost savings for the developer, as the provider supplies, installs and manages the meters”. For all the talk about providing discounted utilities to consumers, it can be forgotten from this conversation that there is a financial incentive for property developers to choose an embedded network. I suspect that any benefits or costs to individual consumers are secondary to this overriding profit-seeking of property developers.

We now live in a time when the cost of living and inflation are rising well above wage growth. Canberrans, like the rest of Australia, are doing it tough. As legislators, we have a responsibility to look at all the ways that we can bring down utility bills. We know that embedded networks may be limiting the consumer choice of Canberrans and increasing financial pressures, so I believe it is our responsibility to take action.

To be clear, I know that this is not the case for all users of embedded networks. Some people out there will be locked into a contract which is of better value than on-market offerings. The issue here, for me, is about accessing the cheapest utilities. Consumers should always be able to access the cheapest market offering on their utilities. If they are not free to choose a better deal or advocate legitimately for it, then something is going wrong and the system needs improvement.

I am also concerned about the lack of consumer protections afforded to users of embedded networks. In an ideal world, it would not matter whether you lived in an embedded network; you would have the same protections as those who do not. But the reality is different. The Utilities Legislation Amendment Act simply introduced embedded networks; it did not do anything to appropriately regulate them.

What recourse would be available to Canberrans if their embedded network suddenly went offline for a few days? They would literally be left cold or in the dark. The protections we all rely upon with our utilities do not exist for embedded network users. What support would be available to a person using a life support machine in an embedded network? Should they just hope that their embedded network operator cares? What about hardship provisions for people going through tough times? Major utility providers have numerous schemes in place to help keep the power on when money is tight. These protections are not ensured for consumers on embedded networks.

It is clear to me that the lack of regulation for embedded networks can have real implications for people’s lives, even if the stated purpose of embedded networks still sounds good. I also want us to consider how futureproofed the embedded network system is. With the adoption of new technologies like electric vehicles, embedded networks need to be as flexible as possible.

There are a range of issues that arise when you combine an embedded network, a body corporate and the need to retrofit or change the provision of a utility. I freely admit that this is a wicked problem. There are clearly benefits to a collective decision,

and not everyone may benefit from every collective decision. But we have regulations on utility providers for a reason. Embedded networks are taking on the role of a utility provider, so it is only right that consumers have the appropriate level of protection. I am hopeful that a review will provide us with some clarity on this issue, and quickly.

This is a topical issue, not just here in the ACT but in Victoria and New South Wales. Members may have seen the Victorian government's July 2022 announcement to ban new embedded networks, as well as the New South Wales parliament's ongoing inquiry into embedded networks. Down in Victoria, since 2018 the state government has taken steps to ban embedded networks, viewing the system of utility service provision as ineffective, unfair and inequitable.

To address this, the Victorian state government set up the embedded networks review panel to investigate and advise the government on how best to implement the ban. This expert panel recommended banning embedded electricity networks in new apartment buildings to ensure that all residents have access to the same competitive retail offers and consumer protections. It recommended a number of other government interventions to ensure that the electricity network market was working in the best interests of consumers. In welcome news, the Victorian government plans to legislate these reforms throughout 2023 and 2024. Premier Daniel Andrews said:

Embedded networks take away choice and rip off Victorians.

The feedback I have received from the community makes me suspect that embedded networks are operating in a similar manner here in the ACT.

In New South Wales there is currently a parliamentary inquiry being undertaken into embedded networks. Although this inquiry is still ongoing, we can deduce that, like Victoria, New South Wales also recognises that, at the most basic level, there may be problems with the way embedded networks operate.

If both Victoria and New South Wales believe that further review into embedded networks is required, then I take it as a sign that the ACT government should review embedded networks. That is why today I am calling for the ACT government to review embedded networks; to examine the appropriateness of a ban; what further regulation of embedded network providers is required; and if further consumer protections for embedded network users are required. In closing, I would like to thank members in advance for their contributions. I am sure we are all on the side of the Canberra consumer.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (3.55): Any effort to improve competition in energy markets and bring the cost of living down for Canberrans is welcome. The Canberra Liberals are not opposed to embedded networks in principle, as they can deliver a number of benefits and innovative opportunities for consumers. However, there is potential for embedded networks to have the opposite effect, which necessitates effective and clear regulation.

The current New South Wales parliamentary inquiry into embedded networks has received a number of detailed submissions from consumers, regulators, retailers,

network operators and generators. Many of them have observed that the regulatory regime for embedded networks in New South Wales is no longer fit for purpose.

However, the Australian Energy Regulator, the AER, noted in its submission to the New South Wales inquiry that there can be benefits for consumers in embedded networks. It gave an example of a retirement village that achieved energy cost savings by converting to an embedded network. It also mentioned cost savings for commercial consumers in shopping centres through the use of solar panels in an embedded network.

The AER has demonstrated that it is very mindful of the need to strike the right regulatory balance. The AER released retail guideline version 6 in July this year, which included improvements to protections for consumers in embedded networks and further clarification of the obligation of embedded network operators. Some of these include a requirement for an embedded network operator to have a hardship policy, provide consumers with an AER fact sheet and make it clear that consumers must be fully informed before an embedded network is established.

The AER also requires embedded network providers to become a member of a state or territory's energy ombudsman, as part of the AER application process. Here in the ACT, of course, the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, ACAT, acts as the ACT's energy ombudsman and provides dispute resolution between energy providers and consumers.

There are also some complexities around the national energy retail law and the application of the ACT retail electricity code. The ACT code does not apply to embedded network providers in the ACT that have an AER exemption. Given these complexities, along with the importance of striking a fair and reasonable regulatory balance, the operation of embedded networks will need to be examined very closely. Any inquiry must present a detailed picture of how embedded networks operate in the ACT and carefully weigh their costs and benefits.

Of course, improving the competitive operation of our energy network will be crucial, going forward, as more Canberrans shift to zero emissions vehicles and are forced to transition to all-electric goods and place more demand on the grid. Private embedded networks may play a crucial role in meeting demand.

Whilst I have no objection to Mr Pettersson's motion, subject to the comments that I have just outlined, to be honest, Mr Assistant Speaker, I am genuinely surprised that the Labor-Greens government has not already looked more closely at this issue, particularly before making grand announcements about banning internal combustion engine cars and gas. The fact is that it should not take a government backbencher to bring forward bread-and-butter governance matters like this one. The government should be getting on with the job of ensuring markets operate efficiently in Canberra, which has the potential to benefit many Canberrans, especially as cost of living pressures continue to hit them hard.

Finally, I understand that Mr Pettersson, in his opening speech, talked about how we should all be exercising the levers at our disposal to ensure that we address the cost of living. That is in stark contrast, of course, to what he has done by voting against

looking at a poverty task force and in relation to what his government, the Labor-Greens government, is doing by not helping at all those tens of thousands of Canberrans who are facing a housing crisis. I find his comments quite incredible in that regard. I look forward to seeing the results of the inquiry, however.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (3.59): I am pleased to join in this discussion of what is a very topical and very interesting issue. I welcome Mr Pettersson bringing this matter forward for discussion in the Assembly today.

Recently, I have also received correspondence from a number of constituents in the territory who live in or have purchased apartments that are part of an embedded electricity network. After having received notice of increases to their electricity costs commencing from the beginning of this financial year, they have found that it is extremely difficult to separate themselves from their embedded network in order to access more competitive electricity pricing through alternative electricity retailers.

The expectation of embedded networks is that they would enable innovative solutions and better access to solar power for apartment residents. While there have been some positive outcomes from the introduction of this mechanism, it has become evident that the changes have also had some consequences that warrant further consideration.

The ACT's framework for embedded networks relies largely on national legislation, with considerable work having been done on this issue at the federal level at around the time that the ACT changes were made. As we learn from the on-the-ground experience of energy consumers here in the territory, we can see that the changes have not necessarily unfolded as expected, and further changes may be needed to get the best outcomes for customers.

It appears that there is currently no obligation for an alternative retailer to take on a customer within an established embedded electricity network. This includes ActewAGL Retail, which means the regulated standing offer for electricity pricing will not necessarily apply to an embedded electricity network and is not available to embedded network customers. It also seems that a customer's avenues to redress this issue are limited by the contractual arrangements under which embedded electricity networks are established.

In many cases contractual arrangements are established initially between the electricity retailer and the developer during the construction of an apartment building. These contracts are then extended to the owners corporation, or body corporate, but not to the individual unit title holder. As such, a unit title holder has difficulty seeking redress through consumer protection advocates for a contract to which they are not a party.

In some cases customers may not even be aware that they are part of an embedded electricity network until they seek to change their electricity retailer. Contracts can be initially established over long periods, locking in customers, but not allowing them the flexibility to access cheaper electricity prices that may be available to customers with direct electricity connections.

It is vital, therefore, that customers in embedded networks are afforded comparable consumer protections to those customers with direct connections to the electricity network. This is especially important at times like these when energy prices are particularly volatile.

Through this review process, we will need to determine what consumer protections exist for embedded electricity network customers, what needs to be amended or strengthened, and how contracts between embedded network operators, owners corporations and consumers of electricity can be better managed.

In his motion, Mr Pettersson notes the investigations into embedded electricity networks being carried out in other jurisdictions. New South Wales have only recently commenced their inquiry, in the first part of this year. While they have accepted submissions and held several hearings, they are yet to release a report or recommendations.

In response to similar concerns, in July this year the Victorian government announced a ban on embedded electricity networks in new residential apartment buildings and a set of reforms for existing networks, commencing in January 2023. This includes transitioning embedded networks into Victoria's electricity licensing framework, which will ensure that consumers in both new and existing residential embedded networks will have the same retail market access, legal protections and regulatory oversight as other Victorian consumers.

The expert panel established by the Victorian government to conduct the review into embedded networks handed down its draft report in June 2021. Their time line for implementing the recommendations of the review extends out over several more years, which I think indicates that there is still quite a bit of work to be done. It does highlight the complexity of the issue and the analysis required to determine the most appropriate way forward.

I can let the Assembly know that, having received this feedback from constituents myself, I have directed the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate to commence investigations into embedded electricity networks in the ACT. They have been working on that for a little while. This has included consultation with several other ACT government directorates who have an interest in achieving an equitable outcome for ACT electricity consumers and with electricity retailers operating here in the territory. That has been an initial stage of investigations, and the scope of work has not yet been formalised, because it has been in an investigation phase.

I think that works quite well with the motion that Mr Pettersson has brought forward today, because the issues he has identified are certainly reflected in the preliminary work that has been done by the directorate, so I am very happy to support this motion today. I am happy to reassure Ms Lee, who expressed some consternation, that the government has in fact already been looking at these matters. Mr Pettersson's public discourse makes it useful for the Assembly to understand the work that is both going on and will need to be done in the future.

The complexities involved in investigating the issues surrounding embedded electricity networks mean that a resolution may take a little bit of time. It may need to come in stages. I think that the reporting date Mr Pettersson has suggested is quite appropriate. It may be that we are able to provide some information sooner, but it will depend on how much we are able to leverage off what other jurisdictions have done, and also to consider whether this work might need to be done in stages.

I welcome this matter coming before the Assembly today. There are some important issues to be examined in this space. As has been discussed in the debate, there are opportunities in embedded networks. Certainly, the original intent identified the potential for both cost savings and innovations. As is always the case when these things start to be used by some, it invites reflection on whether the laws are working as intended and whether reform is needed.

This is a timely and appropriate opportunity to consider that, and talk about whether we need further consumer protections or whether we need to pursue the Victorian pathway. These are matters on which I will be pleased to report back to the Assembly in the course of next year.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (4.06), in reply: I want to thank all members of the Assembly who contributed to today's debate. I would like to thank the many Canberrans that have reached out to me and raised this issue. I particularly want to thank those that have shared not just their time but their electricity bills.

Embedded networks are clearly a complex issue. In theory, they level the playing field between big users and the little guy. They should offer discounted utility prices, but they do not always do so. Sadly, the positive experience that we envisaged when first introducing embedded networks has not been the reality for all Canberrans on an embedded network.

For me, moving forward, there are a few key guiding principles. I want Canberrans to have low utility bills. I want Canberrans to have choice when deciding on their utility provider. I want all Canberrans to have appropriate consumer protections. And I want appropriate regulations. I am optimistic, as is Minister Rattenbury, that a review and follow-up action will put Canberra on the right path.

In closing, I would like to thank all members who have contributed to this debate. I look forward to the review process and the findings that it produces.

Question 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.

Superannuation Provision Account—Part 1.10.

Debate resumed.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate—Part 1.11.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.09): Regarding the planning review, the introduction of the planning bill and the responses from EPSDD in estimates have only confirmed my—and, I believe, the community’s—worst fears that this planning review is a tick-box consultation exercise. It is of concern that the planning review is being led by the Chief Planner and, under the proposed bill, this has resulted in increased codified powers for that role. That is of concern as well. During estimates, the minister said, in response to some of these concerns, that he “cannot think of any decision by the Chief Planner that the Canberra community would disagree with”. This demonstrates outrageous arrogance, blindness, or both.

The Canberra Liberals have been consulting, and will continue to consult, with the community to achieve the right balance for a new planning system for Canberra. This is despite the government making it as difficult as possible for Canberrans to assess their work by releasing the Planning Bill but not the district strategies and Territory Plan at the same time.

It was also of concern to hear that the Western Edge investigation may take 17 years to be completed, despite the ACT drawing even closer to exhausting its greenfield land supply. As the government are still only in the early stages of these investigations, more and more Canberrans will be forced into urban infill as the only viable alternative in the midst of a housing crisis. What happens to housing choice?

This government do not care for housing choices, as shown by their disregard of the Winton report and its rejection of a similar survey to be undertaken—something that the Canberra Liberals leader, Elizabeth Lee, has called for. They seem to be determined to tell Canberrans exactly where and how they should live. It is disappointing on many fronts, Mr Deputy Speaker.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.11): As the Greens spokesperson for planning and parks and conservation, I am really happy to talk about this section of the budget. I am also speaking from a deep interest in our climate policy.

First of all, we are quite interested in the progress on the western edge. We are excited that our first strategic objective in this budget is to deliver a compact and efficient city. I think everybody here understands that that is the kind of development we need to see in Canberra. It is what organisations like the IPCC are telling us that we need. We all understand that investigations like those that are happening on the western edge are a key part of this.

We are following very closely what happens as a result of those Western Edge investigations. Ecologists rightly say that environmental impacts are often assessed after decisions are made about yield for development. But we are watching closely with a view to seeing that our important threatened habitat and our listed species are properly considered, and that we do not develop in those critical areas.

We are also following quite carefully the policy commitment and the public debate going on about '70-30' at the moment. The ACT government's priority is to continue to deliver sustainable planning for new development by requiring at least 70 per cent of new housing development to be within Canberra's existing urban footprint. Of course, the Greens policy goes further than that. Our policy is for 80 per cent of our development to be within our existing footprint. We are looking ahead to a future in which we have no more urban sprawl.

I will pause there for a moment and talk about what sustainable development means. People often trip themselves up on fairly simple words. "Sustainable" means that you can keep doing it over and over again. It would mean that, with respect to the choices we make, our children could make those choices, and their grandchildren, and their grandchildren after that.

It is important, when we are talking about sustainable development, that we are talking about coming up with a model of development for Canberra that we can continue to do, that allows us to live within our existing city limits, our existing footprint, that allows us to live within the planetary systems that we have, and that allows us to live within our natural resources and our natural systems.

The other benefit, of course, of this kind of planning is that it has a lot of other environmental and social benefits. Reducing our sprawl cuts congestion. It means that we are not all stuck in cars in traffic jams all of the time. It reduces travel time and cost. It is actually just a better way to build a city and to live.

We are very interested to see how the ACT government will keep its commitment of 70 per cent infill development. There is a lot of pressure on this. We hear it regularly in here, and we hear it out in the community, too.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommended, in its recent inquiry on the Auditor-General's report, that the ACT government release more land. We assume that means releasing 30 per cent of land. We also assume it means making sure that we are releasing our infill land in a timely manner. Releasing that infill land is important. That is what will help us to work out how to develop sustainably, which Canberra has not quite cracked yet.

We are very pleased to see that there is more funding for the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate in the Planning Review and Reform Project. That is a unique opportunity for the community to help shape the way Canberra will be developed for decades to come. It is a key project. It is important that we do it right, and it is important that our consultation and our resourcing on that project are right.

We were quite pleased with the last few information sessions on the planning review consultation. We heard quite a lot of negative feedback earlier in the piece, and the directorate adjusted the way they were consulting. Later sessions were recorded. They were subject-specific, so people could see what topic was going to be discussed. They could prepare themselves. They could go to the right session. There was plenty of time for questions and answers. They were not just a top-down information briefing. They were not just reading out a pre-prepared presentation. There was actually genuine interaction. There was a follow-up session posted at the end that was purely for outstanding questions and answers.

All of that showed a much better type and quality of consultation, at the end of the Planning Bill review. We are hoping that we see something similar with the district strategies and the Territory Plan. There needs to be genuine, quality consultation. It needs to be two-way. The government needs to listen to what people have to say and answer questions, and not have the top-down model of consultation that we sometimes see.

We are pleased to see additional resources for the planning and land authority in the budget, given the upcoming changes to the way development proposals will be assessed. They need resources to do that. Those resources in the budget are set aside to make improvements to the planning website as well, and to make development applications publicly available for longer. That is all great progress.

I also want to give a shout-out to the work of previous Greens MLAs who have been working in this field for a long time. Caroline Le Couteur did a lot of work leading up to this planning review. She worked quite hard on the planning and urban renewal committee in the Ninth Assembly. She did quite a lot of work on the inquiry into DA processes in the ACT. I am pleased to see that some of those recommendations have now led to some increased funding. We are quite pleased to see that the government will continue to follow through on the recommendations from that previous work.

I would also like to reiterate a few things that are important to the ACT Greens in the major Planning Review and Reform Project. We made a few points last year, and I will reiterate them.

With our new planning system, we need to see climate change and emissions reduction targets factored in to planning decisions. We need to see that the many strands to climate resilience and reducing our climate emissions are all factored in. We need to make sure that the built environment is factored in. We know that it is a major source of scope 3 emissions. We have a really good report from the commissioner which sets that out. We also know that we have scope 1 and scope 2 emissions from higher transport and the higher needs that come with urban sprawl. So we have quite a lot of push factors coming from climate change. We also know that we have an increasingly extreme climate that we need to adapt to. Our planning system is in a really good position to adjust to all of that.

We need a planning system that develops development that works for people. It needs to be driven by the needs and strategic priorities of Canberrans. It needs to be done for the future of Canberra and for the current needs of Canberra, not led by the priorities of developers.

We need to make sure that our new planning system creates settings, within its control, to support more affordable housing for Canberrans. This is really important. We need a planning system that respectfully and genuinely listens to communities and provides communities with useful and accessible information about planning proposals, and that includes genuine attempts to incorporate the concerns of the community.

We would like to see better protection of trees and green spaces for current and future generations. We have recently seen quite a lot of law reform that delivers on that, so that is really good. It is important that all of that package of law reform, and all of that package of review, protects our biodiversity and habitat. We need to make sure that our future development is not harming threatened species.

We need decisions that are based on environmental impact statements to be independently assessed. We need to understand and track the cumulative effect of development on threatened species and wildlife corridors. We need to consider our environment as a whole, not block by block.

This land always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land. We need a new planning system that recognises that and requires respectful engagement with traditional custodians. We need to see integrity in the system. We want to make sure that there is sufficient independence and expertise for assessment and review. Finally, we want to ensure that reviews of planning decisions are assessed quickly by properly resourced review bodies.

Those are a number of comments that the Greens made a year ago, when the review commenced, and we wanted to reiterate those because the review is ongoing.

I am also pleased to see quite a lot of other work progressing in this budget. We have seen Greens Minister Rattenbury's development of a new office for water. We have had a number of Healthy Waterways announcements recently, including some in Ginninderra, which are really great to see. Greens Minister Vassarotti recently announced funding to further protect environment biodiversity, including grants to local community groups that will conserve and protect the environment.

We have seen quite a lot of announcements that will help to establish more trees and plants in our urban areas and that will support the Canberra Nature Map platform. I am looking forward to seeing that work progress and making sure that we are progressing that good work on urban habitat connectivity and mapping.

We have also seen quite a lot of recent announcements. We see in this budget quite a lot of the work that is linking community wellbeing with our access to nature and our appreciation for nature, including things like nature prescriptions. It is pleasing to see that work coming along.

The ACT Greens are happy to support this budget. It is good to see progress on quite a lot of major projects.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.21): I just wanted to make some comments in the sustainable building space. The Canberra Liberals are of the belief that some good

work has been done in the sustainable building space. One of our big concerns is that, from our perspective, we see sometimes what appears to be a lack of coordination between directorates, because the outcomes in sustainable building come, in the first instance, from policy change, but, just as importantly, they come in the enforcement side of this space, which falls under the Access Canberra umbrella.

We have heard from Ms Cheyne today about the increases in spending in that space, and obviously we are supportive of those. We welcome all the spending in this space under the sustainable building minister and we look forward to working constructively with her, with the directorate and also with the industry to bring about some better outcomes, because it is important. Arriving at those better outcomes is a highly complex balancing act, particularly at this time when there is so much pressure on housing affordability.

We understand that the minister, as a member of the Greens party, views much policy development through a prism of dealing with the climate emergency. The Canberra Liberals acknowledge that there is some work to be done in that space, but I would urge, sensibly and constructively, that the changes made in this space pay similar heed to housing unaffordability. The perfect-world changes that Ms Vassarotti may wish to impose on building regulations would increase the cost of housing to an astronomical level. But, despite the potential differences in ideology, I remain cautiously confident that this minister can consider those impacts and find a sensible line which enables us to build more environmentally sustainable buildings while not impacting too heavily on housing affordability.

I must mention the incident at the Dickson building site on Northbourne Avenue, which of course we have discussed at length in various forms today, with the ministerial statement and responses from other ministers and also in question time. I think it goes to the heart of the public perception problem that we have, regarding building quality in the ACT. It is difficult for the public to understand how we, as a jurisdiction, could possibly have two serious incidents of this nature in such a short number of months. Sure, we have had a lot of rain, but to suggest that somehow it is not really possible to safely build large structures when we have lots of rain is ludicrous.

We certainly note the detailed ministerial statement from Minister Cheyne earlier today. We understand that this incident is being thoroughly examined and investigated at a number of levels by Access Canberra and that it is impossible to arrive at conclusions until such time as that investigation has been completed. I do note that the measures outlined by Ms Cheyne to communicate with industry about the high rainfall this winter and spring and the possible effect that it may have on various construction sites in Canberra, and we are certainly buoyed, as is the minister, by the early response from the construction industry.

These incidents again highlight how EPSDD and Access Canberra must absolutely work hand in glove in this space, and, if anything, that the most important aspect of building quality is actually in the compliance area. We all look forward to this process as it rolls out, and certainly we all, in this chamber, hope that it is the last incident of this nature that we see here in Canberra.

I also note Ms Vassarotti's statement this morning regarding the registration of engineers, which the Canberra Liberals wholeheartedly support. We look forward to seeing the relevant legislation, which I gather is next month. The Canberra Liberals have long believed that trades licensing is extremely important, and we are supportive of this push.

We also genuinely look forward to seeing the draft legislation, when it becomes available, regarding developer licensing and regulation. We certainly note that this legislation or this potential change is innovative and it is bold. We could well become the first jurisdiction to go down this path. I think it is more important than ever that consultation on these changes is extremely wideranging and that feedback from all sectors is genuinely taken on board.

We understand what the government is trying to achieve with this legislation, but we also understand that it is a hell of a lot easier to get this wrong than it is to get it right. If we get this legislation wrong, it could have vast, unintended consequences which could lead to extremely poor outcomes for Canberrans. That is notwithstanding the fact that there have been some poor outcomes, and that is obviously why we are going down this path. I am just saying that the Canberra Liberals look forward to working with the minister and government as we move forward in that space.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.27): I rise today to speak briefly on the Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 as it relates to my portfolios of environment, heritage and water. I would like to start, firstly, with environment. We are all blessed to live in Canberra, in the bush capital. We have a community that genuinely cares about our natural environment and that wants to see it preserved, protected and improved.

Since taking on this portfolio, however, I have been a bit disappointed with the business-as-usual approach by the minister in this area. Despite some lovely talk from the minister, her actions have not really demonstrated any willingness to stand up to her Labor colleagues on environmental and animal welfare concerns. For example, she was elected on a platform that promised to make Bluetts Block a nature reserve. As yet, she has failed to deliver on this promise and ignored the advocacy of her government backbenchers. Bluetts Block is still not protected and I am starting to wonder whether it will be made a nature reserve during this parliamentary term. If it is, it apparently will not be because of the great advocacy of the Greens minister.

Just last week, we saw the Greens heroically vote against funding for the horseracing industry. On the other hand, we have not seen the minister stand up to protect joeys clubbed to death or wild dogs experiencing cruel, painful deaths from 1080 bait. They are happy to vote against horseracing but not to protect other animals from terrible deaths. Nobody can show us a double standard quite like our friends in the Greens.

On the heritage front, the budget reveals that, once again, the government has failed to meet its target of 90 per cent for development application advice issued within 15 working days of referral by the ACT planning and land authority. The 2020-21 budget, where they also failed to meet the target, included a footnote that stated that in the past seven years advice issued by the ACT Heritage Council had increased by 122 per cent. A hundred and twenty-two per cent? It almost sounds like the ACT Heritage Council may have been under-resourced for those past few years, although,

whenever I raised it, I was told that that was not the case. But there is no need to fret, because the minister has now suspended the work of the ACT Heritage Council and commissioned a snap review into the council.

During estimates hearings I asked the minister about the review and whether she intended to release it publicly. I was shocked, because the minister's answer, when I asked whether the review would be released publicly, was—I might be paraphrasing slightly—"It depends on what is in it." How is that for transparency and accountability? Obviously, if something is going to be critical of the government, they do not want to release it. So it was a "depends on what is in it" response. I hope the minister is intending to release the report in full very soon.

Clearly, if we are at the point where the minister feels that she needs to suspend the work of the Heritage Council and undertake this review, then things are in a dire state. I acknowledge that this minister has taken on the portfolio only since the last election. But that is two years. It is now two years since the election. It also makes us wonder about what on earth was going on before that time. I look forward to the minister outlining her plan to improve the ACT Heritage Council and explaining how they will finally be properly resourced to issue development application advice within the 15 working days time frame.

Very briefly, I would like to talk about the water portfolio. This budget saw funds allocated to establishing an office for water in the next two financial years. I am very, very interested in this initiative. I will be watching it very closely. Of course, there is no point having a dedicated office for water unless it is appropriately and properly funded and resourced. It must have clear and realistic water quality targets, consistent systems for monitoring and an evidence-based decision-making and annual reporting framework. I very much hope that that is what we are going to see.

I look forward to seeing what progress is made over the next 12 months and to ensuring that Canberrans are getting the most for their money, for their rates that they pay to this government, in the portfolios of environment, heritage and water.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (4.32): I rise to support the Appropriation Bill, which includes a range of new measures that the government is pursuing to conserve, connect and restore nature to our city, protect our environment and heritage, and substantially lift the quality and the sustainability of the design and construction of new buildings. These measures will help us meet the objectives that the government has committed in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement.

I will first touch on environment. Before focusing on our local patch, I would like to turn to the bigger picture. The world is facing an increased twin crisis. Climate change and nature loss threaten irreversible changes to the global environment, changes that will profoundly impact on the wellbeing of millions of people around the world. So while much talk in the Assembly focuses, and importantly so, on the climate change crisis, these twin crises are fundamentally linked and should be tackled together. Nature-based solutions, such as conserving, restoring, and connecting ecosystems are key to the success.

In touching on this I will briefly just respond to some of the comments of Ms Lawder in relation to some of the work that we are doing in terms of managing our whole ecosystem. I would implore the Canberra Liberals, if they are serious about being protectors of the environment, to take a whole-of-ecological approach, a whole biodiversity approach, when we look at managing our environment. The way that we manage invasive pests and species has the support of organisations such as the Invasive Species Council and the RSPCA, as things that we are doing reluctantly as a way to manage our whole biodiversity.

When we look at some of the things that we cover in the budget, I am particularly proud of our Connecting nature, Connecting People initiative. This is a \$3 million initiative over two years which will strengthen and enhance the ACT's urban biodiversity. It will deliver benefits for both people and our patches of planet. This project will achieve improved ecological connectivity, which is critical for nature to survive and thrive in a changing world and urban cooling in the ACT.

This initiative addresses five key challenges facing the way that we build and design our cities. These include biodiversity loss, climate change, closing the gap, the right to a healthy environment, and urban consolidation. That, my colleagues, is pretty good bang for buck.

The innovative planned work includes: the integration of urban habitat connectivity mapping into the new planning system spatially and, through the development of policy and guidelines, this will inform government developers and community decision-making to deliver ecologically sustainable development and aid the delivery of commonwealth threatened species habitat recovery; the production of biodiversity-sensitive urban design guidelines to help shape residential and commercial built form development as a core component of moving towards best practice, sustainable development and strengthened delivery of the living infrastructure program; effective coordination across government to ensure the delivery of multiple key strategies and reforms to ensure that Canberra can adapt to climate change; expanding and improving the Canberra nature map platform to boost the ability of citizen science to provide accurate data to build biodiversity and landscape knowledge, which the ACT could not afford to otherwise collect, and further populate the urban habitat and connectivity mapping; the restoration and protection of priority urban sites that will deliver urban cooling, habitat protection and community amenity; and the co-design and incorporation of Ngunnawal knowledge into site restoration, community infrastructure and engagement and the developed mapping policies and guidelines.

While I would not usually delve into the detail this deeply, I do want to make two points here. First, to turn things around, we need to embed biodiversity considerations like we are doing with climate change into everything we do to help shape Canberra's future. Second, while you can count on me to be continuing the fight for adequate investment to improve the state of biodiversity in the ACT in future budgets, we can do a lot with a little if we address problems in an integrated way and work together.

In relation to environment protection, I have been delighted to see progress around commitments to include the right to a healthy environment into the Human Rights Act.

The protection of the environment and our community's wellbeing remains a key priority for this government. As we move in this direction, funding will be provided over two years to strengthen the ACT's Environment Protection Authority through additional resources. To complement the work that Minister Cheyne is doing in this space, this budget will also fund a review of the environment protection framework and additional resources to support compliance and enforcement.

In the area of heritage, the 2022-23 budget continues to conserve and celebrate the ACT's places and objects of historic First Nation and natural heritage significance. This ongoing work focuses on the areas of recognition and the involvement of the traditional custodians in the management of First Nations heritage, supporting the Heritage Council in its functions to recognise, conserve and celebrate the places and objects of historic First Nations and natural heritage and supporting the community to conserve heritage in their care.

As has just been discussed in this chamber, we are doing work to better support the Heritage Council in their ongoing work, and we have already put additional resources into this area. I will update the Assembly as we work through this work.

The ACT government has awarded 20 ACT Heritage Grants in the 2022-23 financial year that preserve and celebrate the unique stories of the ACT's heritage and history. The 2022-23 grant program focused on the heritage of the ACT's diverse communities and recognised the increasingly important role of the digital heritage experience. Finally, the Heritage Festival, now in its 39th year, is an iconic and popular event that we continue to support. In 2022, more than 177 diverse events took place across Canberra and the region and the number of First Nations events was tripled. We are extremely proud to continue to support this fantastic community event which celebrates the importance of heritage to Canberra and the region.

I will finally just note some work in the area of sustainable building and construction. As we discussed this morning, through our building reform project and in looking at some of the recommendations of previous reviews, we are progressing the initiatives that are intended to give greater choice and protection for the community and making sure that those working in the building and construction industry are accountable for their actions. As I noted, these include reforms such as the registration of professional engineers, developer regulation and a public certification service. I was going to provide some more detail, but we did that this morning, so I am going to move on.

However, I would like to talk quickly about the Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme that was established in 2014 to address the serious risk presented to the Canberra community by loose-fill asbestos in homes. The scheme was administered by the Asbestos Response Taskforce from October 2014 until the task force's closure on 30 June 2022. The task force, over its eight years of operation, made significant progress to realise the ACT government's goal of eradicating loose-fill asbestos insulation from the homes of Canberrans. At the closure of the task force on June 30, 1,006 of the 1,029 properties affected by loose-fill asbestos insulation had been remediated. I would like to take this opportunity to underscore the importance of this complex work and commend the many ACT public servants who worked in the task force over its eight years.

A small number of residential properties remain affected by loose-fill asbestos insulation in Canberra, and it is possible that additional properties may be identified in the future. Because of this, in this budget the ACT government provided \$9.5 million to establish a loose-fill asbestos insulation coordination team. The activities of the coordination team include the administration of the ongoing voluntary buyback program; providing support for the remaining homeowners; progressing the demolition of the remaining ACT government-owned properties; managing the sale of any remediated blocks to the public; and continuing to provide information and support to homeowners should any additional properties be found with loose-fill asbestos insulation.

Finally, the coordination team is finalising the progress of key projects identified in the Mr Fluffy Legacy Project, including the Mr Fluffy Legacy Place of Reflection for which the government has provided \$165,000 within the 2022-23 budget. This funding will be used to construct a forest shelter at The Arboretum as a place of reflection. This will be a place for the community to acknowledge the very significant impact by Mr Fluffy loose-fill asbestos insulation on so many people in the ACT.

Finally, I did want to assure you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that, as the Minister for Homelessness, I am also aware of the crisis around housing affordability. It is something that I think about deeply when we make the decisions that we do, particularly through our work around the National Construction Code 2022. This has been really important work in recent months to improve the sustainability and accessibility of residential dwellings. Doing this work in partnership with other jurisdictions means that cost will be minimised.

The 2022 National Construction Code was made available on 1 October 2022. States and territories will bring the majority of the new code into full effect from 1 May 2023, with a further transition period on 1 October 2023 for more stringent energy efficiency standards and accessibility standards. From October next year, all new homes built in the ACT will be required to have seven-star energy efficiency, have energy efficient major appliances and meet minimum accessibility standards. This is an important first step to ensure that all new homes will be designed for people and our planet and will, in the long term, provide significant cost-of-living relief.

In preparing an updated ACT appendix to the Building Code to give effect to the NCC 2022 in the ACT, local industry is being consulted on any specific aspects of the ACT market that may require consideration, such as substantial alterations, as well as transition arrangements for projects with existing building approvals.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (4.46): The ACT government is committed to creating a more compact, efficient and inclusive city. To realise broader community benefits as our neighbourhoods undergo change, we have funded improvements for public spaces and community facilities, in line with the Kippax Group Centre Master Plan and the Watson section 76 place plan and development concept.

Land planned for the release at the Kippax group centre will provide for a mixed used development to the east of the centre, bringing additional jobs, services, housing and economic activity to the area. Funding in the 2022-23 financial year will deliver the construction of playing fields and associated infrastructure on the corner of Moye's Crescent and Starke Street in Holt to replace those currently on the development site, and the detailed design of the skate facility and community hub, including consultation with the community. This work is underpinned by the community consultation undertaken from 2014 through to 2019.

The place plan for section 76 in Watson identified the location and need for a local community park. The ongoing development of the design is based on what we heard from the community in 2021 and ongoing consultation with the Ngunnawal community, including for artwork design and the potential delivery of artwork by Ngunnawal artists. Construction of the park is anticipated to commence in early 2023 and be completed in the middle of that year.

Through the 2022-23 budget, the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate is continuing to work on the ACT Planning System Review and Reform Project. The Planning Bill 2022 was introduced into the Assembly in September this year. From the bill flows new draft district strategies and the new draft Territory Plan, with draft district policies and draft technical specifications.

Also forming important elements of our planning reform work are the updated city plan and design guides on urban and public realm design. We will continue to work with and listen to the community so that the voices of those in the community who are often not heard are included, and so that we capture views to inform how we plan and deliver a city that meets their needs.

The implementation of key elements of the reform package will enable the community, government agencies, planners, designers and developers, and a range of stakeholders, to engage more effectively with the new planning system—supporting them to engage with the development of a healthy, built environment and with innovation, so that the ACT remains an attractive investment destination.

While planning and land release continues, the government is looking to where Canberra can grow into the future. The 2018 ACT planning strategy identifies the western edge of Canberra—that is, land to the west of the Molonglo Valley, including land generally bordered by the Murrumbidgee. The existing urban areas of Belconnen, Molonglo Valley, Weston Creek and Kambah are areas being considered for future conservation, development and continuing rural uses.

We are in the early phases of the project, which will continue for many years, if not a decade or more. At this stage, we do not know whether land use change or development will be feasible in parts of this area, or where it will be. That is why the work is being undertaken. Preliminary investigations have told us where we need to focus, the information gaps and further studies that are needed.

Studies are being undertaken this financial year and are already underway to determine the suitability of the western edge, including ecological habitat surveys and

the assessment of Aboriginal cultural values. Key matters for the western edge include: bushfire risk, climate change, the protection of the Murrumbidgee River, water quality, environmental connectivity, environment and aquatic habitats, species and heritage. These will continue to be addressed as the project progresses over the coming years.

At a different scale, budget-funding technical studies on establishing an entertainment precinct in the city centre are underway. It is expected that the findings from these studies will provide recommendations on the principles and requirements that will need to be incorporated into the new Territory Plan, an upgraded city plan and relevant regulations as well. The entertainment precinct will work to support live music and nightlife, as per the intentions of the parliamentary and governing agreement and the Entertainment Action Plan, and provide certainty for nightlife operators and nearby residents.

At a suitable time, we will engage with the community on the studies undertaken, what we have found and what more needs to be assessed and investigated. In the mean time and in the interests of transparency, most of the preliminary investigation reports are available on the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate website.

I would like to also report on this government's commitment to securing environmental offset values along the Eastern Broadacre employment corridor. The Eastern Broadacre employment corridor is a critical industrial and commercial development opportunity for the territory that will significantly impact matters of national environmental significance. These matters include the golden sun moth, the striped legless lizard, box gum woodland and natural temperate grassland. The impact of this development has triggered the Eastern Broadacre strategic assessment under the commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. The strategic assessment includes legally binding commitments to protect threatened species and ecosystems in the Jerrabomberra and Majura valleys.

The government is investing \$1.911 million to undertake conservation management and threat abatement actions to meet these commitments. Over a two-year period, this investment will allow the government to employ staff that are essential to the delivery of weed and pest animal control, biomass management, infrastructure repair and unexploded ordnance removal. These actions will facilitate the unimpeded release of developable land within the Eastern Broadacre employment corridor.

The 2022-23 budget further identifies the government's commitment to providing the Canberra community with opportunities to connect with nature—specifically, enhancing the visitor experiences in the Canberra Nature Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. It sets aside \$1.074 million over the next two years to directly improve visitor experience and enable people to get outside, exercise and relax. Nature provides the setting for Canberra's identity as the bush capital, and the tracks and trails have proven to be a great respite to Canberrans throughout COVID. Our iconic tracks and trails will receive \$0.426 million to address high priority safety improvements. There will be quality access, which is essential for people to connect with nature for the health and wellbeing benefits that it provides.

The ACT government is investing an additional \$2.27 million over four years to complete the necessary initiative works for enhancing bushfire protection in the Canberra community. The government will provide this additional funding to the ACT Parks and Conservation Service to develop this initiative based on the areas of interest and the highest bushfire risk, and to assist with the modelling required to update bushfire management plans. The works determined by the initiative will bring the identified areas in these zones to the required bushfire standards.

There is still a lot to do in the planning and environment space. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues into the future to grow and protect our bush capital.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (4.54): I am pleased to speak briefly in support of this part of the budget because there are a number of important initiatives here which have been, in some part, canvassed today, but some warrant some further explanation.

I am very pleased to talk about the Vulnerable Household Energy Support Scheme because the ACT government is committed to a just transition as part of our ambitious climate change agenda. To progress this, we have allocated \$50 million to support low income households and public and social housing to make sure that all ACT households have the opportunity to make their homes climate ready and improve building efficiency as we transition to net zero emissions.

The Vulnerable Household Energy Support Scheme budget funding is being delivered to the community under the program name of the Home Energy Support Program. The Home Energy Support Program, which was launched earlier this year, includes among its commitments support to those in our community who are least able to transition to an energy efficient home and therefore are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

As part of the 2022-23 budget, the Home Energy Support Program enables \$560,000 in upgrades to community housing properties to improve thermal comfort and energy efficiency; an extension of the pilot program, offering rebates for the installation of insulation to rental providers participating in the community land tax exemption scheme; more than 1,100 rebates to low income home owners to assist with upgrades to more energy efficient appliances; and funding to continue the tailored support for existing advisory services for renters. Additional support to improve thermal efficiency for those suffering chronic health conditions will also be provided.

In-home energy assessments and education wrap up this package to the private sector, ensuring that the suite of services will improve comfort and reduce costs. There will also be funding to contribute to a pilot program to deliver energy efficiency upgrades, including ceiling insulation and gas appliance replacement, to around 100 public housing properties.

I have spoken often in this place about the ACT's transport emissions because they now account for more than 60 per cent of our greenhouse gas emissions, and an

estimated 70 per cent of those emissions are from private vehicles, so it remains a very significant challenge for this city if we are to cut our greenhouse gas emissions in this space. Reducing the number of high-emitting vehicles on our roads is an important step towards reaching our emissions reduction targets.

The ACT is recognised as leading Australia in a zero emissions vehicle policy and incentive. In July this year we released the ACT's Zero Emissions Vehicle Strategy, which sets out a range of actions that will make owning a zero emissions vehicle more affordable and accessible for more Canberrans in the years to come. The strategy will support people to purchase zero emissions vehicles by accessing zero interest loans, as well as continuing to expand our ambitious public charging infrastructure plan and new subsidies for multi-unit charging infrastructure. This includes the extension of the stamp duty concession and continuation of registration waivers, which allow drivers to save on new and used zero emissions vehicles. The fact that used vehicles are in there is a really important part. I spoke earlier about the just transition. It is about making sure that second-hand vehicles are also available to people who are keen to make the transition but perhaps are not in the market for a brand-new vehicle.

Under the recent strategy, new or used battery, electric and hybrid fuel cell vehicles registered in the ACT will also receive two years of free registration until 30 June 2024. To help reduce the up-front cost of purchasing a zero emissions vehicle, the ACT also offers full stamp duty exemption to new zero emissions vehicles. This means that no stamp duty is payable on zero emissions vehicles sold in the territory, saving around \$2,100 for new vehicles when compared with an equivalent fuel vehicle with an average emissions performance. From 1 August 2022 this concession was expanded to include second-hand vehicles, resulting in savings of around \$1,600 for used vehicles. This will help to drive the ACT towards our ambitious sales targets of 80 to 90 per cent by 2030 for new vehicles, in line with our intention to phase out new light internal combustion vehicles from 2035.

The ACT government is also continuing to transition our own fleet of vehicles. We now have more than 209 zero emissions vehicles in the ACT government fleet, and this is growing, along with the charging infrastructure to support them. We are continuing to make strong progress in implementing other recent government commitments to support zero emissions vehicle uptake.

That includes the establishment of the government's fleet advisory service, which helps businesses, companies and organisations with a fleet, to share the knowledge that the ACT government has developed in transitioning our own fleet. We freely share that knowledge with others to help them get over some of the hurdles with working out how to do it, to make it easier for them. It is a really practical initiative and I think it is a great example of using the knowledge that the government has gleaned in doing our own work to transition the ACT government to being a zero emissions organisation, to help others get to the same place.

In that vein, the ACT is preparing to electrify our city and transition away from the use of fossil fuel gas by 2045. The government will lead by example by achieving the transition to zero emissions by 2040, ahead of our community target for zero emissions in 2045. As part of this transition, government will electrify its own fossil fuel gas systems in facilities such as schools, medical centres and office buildings.

As part of this year's budget, the government is developing a whole-of-government program to replace existing fossil fuel gas systems at end of life with electric equivalents. A whole-of-government approach will help to reduce procurement costs. Upgrades for multiple systems can be grouped together, achieving economies of scale. While this program is under development, funding has been reallocated from the Zero Emissions Government Fund to enable directorates and agencies to replace failed gas assets with electric appliances, if they reach that point ahead of this whole-of-government program that we are developing.

As I have talked about before, fossil fuel gas use currently accounts for around 20 per cent of the ACT's greenhouse gas emissions. That is why the government is committed to phasing out fossil fuel gas to help achieve our target of net zero emissions by 2045. In the ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025, the government committed to developing a plan for achieving zero emissions from gas use by 2045, including setting time lines with appropriate transition periods for phasing out new and existing gas connections. The parliamentary and governing agreement reaffirmed and extended these commitments to legislate to prevent new gas network connections in greenfield estates and urban infill sites.

The government is developing an integrated energy plan to set the foundations for a steady and manageable transition away from fossil fuel gas. This will establish our pathway to zero emissions from fossil fuel gas by 2045 at the latest. A carefully considered plan, with input from the community, will ensure that we make it a fair transition for everyone and that we support our low income and vulnerable households and businesses to make this change.

As members would have noted, the government released our position paper, *Powering Canberra: Our Pathway to Electrification*, on 4 August. We will release a consultation regulatory impact statement in the coming months on options for a regulation to prevent new gas connections for some new developments. This will help avoid new developments from being locked into using gas in the future. While gas will continue to play an important role in the ACT energy mix for the time being, it is important that consumers are not locking themselves into high gas prices by purchasing new gas appliances today that could well last for more than 15 years.

An analysis published by the ACT government in 2020 identified that efficient household appliances, powered by renewable electricity, were the most cost-effective choice for most Canberra households. The community are encouraged to replace end-of-life gas appliances with electric alternatives. That ACT government analysis was reinforced last week with the new report released by the Climate Council, which showed potential savings of \$1,900 a year for a household in Canberra. So this work that is being done is being now affirmed by others and it shows that the early decisions being taken by the ACT government are to the benefit of our community. They are not only delivering for the environment; they are delivering for people's household bills, they are delivering cost of living savings and they are delivering for people's bottom lines, as well as that important goal of tackling climate change.

The government will continue to invest in technical, economic and consumer insights research and analysis to inform the development of our gas transition pathway so that

we can continue to provide the best possible advice to the community through what is a large and complex project. The ACT community should be proud that we are leading the nation on climate action. As we have seen across Australia, people want and expect government at all levels to take proactive action. Whilst it can be complex and detailed, I think the best thing that we can do for our community is to take the decisions early, manage the transitions thoughtfully and make sure that we do it in a way that best informs the community as we go.

Let me finally touch briefly on the office for water. I was pleased to hear Ms Lawder speak about it. I think it is a terrific initiative in the budget. It is something that, of course, was in the parliamentary agreement. This budget commits \$1.58 million of additional funds over the next two years to resource the dedicated office for water to coordinate and lead water policy development and holistic water management.

The Commissioner for the Sustainability and the Environment's recent investigation into the state of the lakes and waterways in the ACT demonstrates the importance of lakes and waterways for community wellbeing and the significant challenges in managing these within an urbanised landscape. The commissioner's report identifies areas for improvement and affirms the need for ongoing investment to ensure that our lakes and waterways continue to enrich our community.

A centralised approach to addressing water-related issues is required to respond to emerging challenges such as urban development pressures and climate change. I believe that the office for water is a crucial evolution in the adaptive management of Canberra's environment. The office will strengthen water management arrangements, enhance the protection of our catchments and enable Canberra to become a more water secure city. The new initiatives to be developed by the office will improve public access to water information, build the ACT's resilience to cope with the projected impacts from climate change and support a growing population, and advance the water interests of our traditional custodians.

With those few remarks today, I am very pleased to speak in support of this component of this year's budget. I think it delivers a range of important developments in improving environmental protection in the ACT and doing our part in the global challenge of tackling climate change.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Housing ACT—Part 1.12.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (5.07): Housing and homelessness is no easy task. It is a very complex area. As shadow minister, I actually consider it to be an extraordinary privilege and an extraordinary duty. I know that both the ministers here will know exactly what I am talking about and where this is coming from. It is an extraordinary privilege to be dealing with constituents, some of whom have problems that are associated with where they live, every day, 24/7, and, in some cases, to be able to bring about some positive outcomes.

At the end of the day, when those constituents get to me, they have got to me because they have not had results from any other avenue. There is a constant flow of

communication to my office—far more than any other portfolio that I oversee. If we look at the correspondence and the communication that comes from the community to my office from my four portfolios, 90 per cent of it would come from this one.

I would like to acknowledge the directorate, including the Executive Group Manager of Housing ACT, all of the housing managers and staff in Housing ACT and also the contractors, who must, on a daily basis, deal with many, many challenges. I know that they all also understand the privilege involved in that, because we are dealing with people's lives and we are dealing with the place that they spend most of their time. I want to extend my thanks to the community groups who support tenants and help those most in need. We all know and can see that there are some problems in social housing in the capital. I show appreciation for those who work in this space.

This problematic area should not stop us from the purpose, which is:

Housing ACT provides social housing that is appropriate, affordable and meets the needs and circumstances of low-income and disadvantaged people.

That, essentially, has to be the target of what we are doing. Is this achieved? The answer in far too many cases is no. In far too many cases it is not achieved. This is evident in the growing wait list and waiting times. It is even more evident from the significantly increasing transfer list, which, as of 12 October, was 1,065 current tenants wishing to transfer, waiting for priority on average 568 days—over one year for priority. This raises many questions about why so many people are requesting transfers.

I hear many stories coming through my office that relate to domestic violence, antisocial behaviour from neighbouring tenants, overcrowding in properties, unsuitable facilities, illegal activity in complexes, and the list goes on. It is not a pretty list. It is really not. I get back to the fact that most of the portfolio spaces that we deal with are in regard to things that affect people for some part of their day or for some part of their week or for some part of their month. But in this portfolio space we are talking often about things that impact heavily on people 24/7. If the housing purpose statement is to provide housing that is appropriate, affordable and meets the needs, why do so many need to move?

Housing ACT surveys tenants about whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with the service, but no questions are asked as to why they might be dissatisfied. With the figure of satisfied tenants declining year on year, it would be very important to know why they are dissatisfied. It is great that the government is taking on that recommendation that was made at the hearings, and I very much look forward to reading the results, even though data is collected only every two years. I think the results will be pretty interesting.

We know that dwellings are inspected less than once per year. This is evident from the growing number of uninhabitable properties and properties that can no longer be maintained. So much of that problem gets down to years' worth of lack of maintenance. In response to this line of questioning at the hearings, we were told that there is more than just inspections that occurs when working with tenants. That is great, but I guess we go back to the question of: why is it that public housing tenants

are not held to the same standard as private tenants, looking after their property and having it inspected twice a year to ensure no issues and that the property is in good condition?

We understand that there are a lot of tenants with complicated situations, but if they were living in a private rental, they would be subjected to a higher level of inspection. Is the current standard that public housing tenants are held to really setting them up for success? That is my question. Or is it setting them up for failure and for constant dependence on this government. We do not want public housing tenants to fail. We do not want them to fail. We want to see more success stories. Yet we hear so many who tell us that, because they cannot get maintenance done or their house is falling apart, they feel like they are failing. The government must be held to account and they must do better in this space because it is so important to the lives of so many people.

When it was recommended that the government place end or conclusion dates on letters regarding maintenance and other such matters, it was said—and this is from the hearings—that the ACT government believes that it provides time frames and deadlines if applicable. In the recent energy efficiency program, when Housing ACT tenants were sent letters advising them of the program, many chose to take up this opportunity. I use this as an example of where end dates should have been applicable. What was not included in the letter was that the program had a limited amount available and would conclude on 30 June this year. It meant that many tenants missed out because they were not aware of the cap. They were not aware of the conclusion date.

Further, over 300 tenants were sent letters saying that they would be relocating as part of the growth and renewal program, which ends in 2024. But there were no dates or time lines. There were no dates or time lines given to tenants. I am not going to rehash that to a great extent here, but I think we know that that caused enormous stress to so many people who believed that they would be, as they put it, evicted in weeks or months. We know that that was not the case. But there was uncertainty. We believe that time lines and dates around expectations would have been beneficial on those letters.

The two examples I have touched on would have been extremely applicable, but no time frames or deadlines were provided. It is just another example of the Labor-Greens government saying that they are doing one thing and in fact the opposite is happening. Issues like these continue to cause concern or questions in the community when the government cannot provide completion dates allowing for the evaluation of programs.

How many times do the Canberra Liberals need to ask at what date—and I know there will be a rolling of the eyes—will Minister Vassarotti's election promise of a home for all be delivered or when will the ACT government complete the 1,000 additional homes they keep promising? I have got to address some comments that were made about this by Mr Davis last week, suggesting that the Canberra Liberals were wrong to bring up Ms Vassarotti's promise of a home for all because, Mr Davis says, should we not all be aspiring to that? He said that we were wrong—the Liberals—because we should all be aspiring to provide a home for everyone.

At the end of the day, I guess he is right. We should all be aspiring to that, but the difference is that we did not go to an election promising to provide a home for everyone. That is the difference. If you go to the electorate, in the lead-up to the election, and you very clearly promise to provide a home for all, I think there is an expectation from that electorate that you are intending to deliver that outcome and you are likely to achieve it in your first term in government. I do not see it as an aspirational: “Well, we will work towards this, and we might get to it in 2090.” That is not how the electorate sees it.

The problem for Ms Vassarotti is that I am not sure that she actually expected to get elected to this place. But she did. So well done to her. Additionally, I am not sure that she thought it was likely she would end up as the housing and homelessness minister. But she is. She is. My point is that if you promise a home for all and you are the minister, you cannot just say that it is an aspirational goal. You cannot just say that it is a dream that we have and we will work to it—we will get to it at some point.

You have drawn a line in the sand. Given how definitive the promise was, if by the end of the term you have not provided a home for everyone who wants one, then you have failed. You have not delivered. And you have definitely failed if homelessness has increased. So that is why we bring it up. (*Second speaking period taken.*) It gets down to not just this minister but this government and their inability to provide a time line for anything. Where is Mr Steel?

Every time we ask, all we hear is reasons why it has not yet occurred and this quote: “It is not a linear process. There will be fluctuations.” And fluctuations indeed there are. All we see is a small but steady decline in the number of dwellings available and a steady increase in homelessness and wait list times and applicants. So why the government cannot provide deadlines is pretty obvious, really. They do not want to be seen as a failure when it comes to indicating when this is going to happen. If they provided deadlines, they would consistently fail on these milestones and the evaluations would reflect that. We understand that there are many factors that determine whether this is a rolling deadline, but the people of Canberra want to know if this ACT government is succeeding. Hiding behind all the reasons why things have not been completed is getting old.

I appreciate all the efforts of the department to improve the system, but it appears to be getting worse. There are some major communication issues between the department and, dare I say it—I do not want to cause any fights here, or maybe I do; I don’t know—there seems to be, on occasion, from our perspective, a communication issue between both ministers. I am just putting it out there. If the ministers truly believe that Housing ACT is improving, then why do I keep having to send communication on behalf of constituents who have, most of the time, major problems with the system? I know that there has been a positive increase in the Housing ACT budget, including maintenance, community-funded supports and homelessness services. That is fantastic, isn’t it? That is great.

However, we know that these services could be better. The constant growth of the maintenance budget is wonderful because so much needs to be done to ensure that a suitable standard of living is available for every property. However, it raises concerns as to why there is not sufficient maintenance being done with the funding provided

year on year. Is it because of the lack of maintenance over the past 20 years that this Labor-Greens government has been in power? Or is it because the standard of maintenance being completed is subpar? I am not saying that that is the case; I am just asking the question.

There appears to be a lack of empathy between Housing and tenants. It sounds harsh when I say that, because I know that there are some hardworking people and some passionate people in Housing. But from where we sit, there appears to be, on occasion, a lack of empathy between Housing and tenants. It was evident when tenants who were told to relocate felt an absolute lack of understanding and compassion from Housing and the government—a complete disconnect with the tenants and no real chance for discussion.

One tenant was able to be granted a panel discussion to seek exemption from the program. When they turned up, they expected to be able to meet each of the panellists face to face and share the story. And we know the story. The situation was very different. They turned up and were placed in a room next door to the panel and given a computer; the panel was on Zoom. I would hope that those who were involved in that process would, given their time again, perhaps undertake it in a different way. They were not given the chance to share their story and were simply told, “We have reviewed your documents and case.” In that instance, I cannot recall what the final outcome was. I would hope that those who were involved in that process would do it differently. For the aged, for the vulnerable and for those who are in stress, this causes more distress.

I could speak for hours, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I don't think you can, Mr Parton.

MR PARTON: I could seek to suspend standing orders if it was the wish. But I do not think it is, so I won't. The failures are evident in this housing system. All I am trying to do is raise awareness for tenants, who seem to get nowhere, tenants who contact me for help and plead for assistance. I have got to keep pointing out where things have not worked. I have to keep pointing out where things have gone wrong with this housing area.

I wait in anticipation for more of these failures to be addressed and fixed. With the budget presented for 2022-23, I would suggest that the ministers truly take the time to look internally and ask some deep questions to understand where the issues are coming from. Canberra deserves more transparency, and I hope that the constant nagging in this space achieves something and that we do get some better outcomes. That is all I have got to say, Madam Speaker.

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) (5.23): I welcome the opportunity to speak about the ACT government's budget commitments to improve housing for the people in the ACT who need it most.

I will come to some of the comments that Mr Parton made later on, but I thank him for opening the door just a crack, and I will put my foot through and respond to some of the comments that he made.

I want to talk a bit about some of the housing initiatives that the budget has committed to, particularly around funding for growth and renewal, increased maintenance of our public housing stock, and providing more opportunities for more affordable housing in partnership with the build to rent and community housing sector. This will be an opportunity to have some really good projects and provide affordable rentals in the ACT and, indeed, across the country, because of the work that the federal Labor government has committed to, in working with state and territory governments, to make it easier for community housing organisations to get funding through the federal government's loan facility, NHFIC, and maybe working with local governments to build even more housing across the country.

In the ACT we have committed a further \$30 million investment to support the Growth and Renewing Public Housing program. This public housing growth and renewing program builds on the first public housing growth and renewal program, in which 1,288 properties that were no longer suitable were demolished and replaced with 1,288 modern, more suitable dwellings, which are more affordable to heat and cool and better suited to the needs of our tenants.

Under this program, we are demolishing or selling a further 1,000 homes. We will be replacing those homes with 1,000 modern, more sustainable, suitable homes that are affordable to heat and cool for the tenants, and for the people who will be living in them. We have already got halfway, with 140 new public housing dwellings, towards our target of 400, under the parliamentary and governing agreement. We will continue that work.

Mr Parton, your comments acknowledging the work of Housing ACT will be well received, because they have worked incredibly hard. They did not slow down at all during COVID. They continued to build homes and support tenants over that incredibly difficult period of time. A lot of it was done remotely. With what they have been able to achieve, despite the challenges that we have had with weather, COVID, supplies, and contractors being able to build, they are still ploughing forward to meet the targets that we have identified in the parliamentary and governing agreement. But they are providing more than targets; they are providing homes for people that need them.

The budget includes a further \$57.3 million to undertake additional public housing repairs and maintenance in order to maintain high-quality public housing. This means more bathrooms, more kitchens, new carpeting, painting and roof repairs, as well as replacements. Taken together with the previous budget's maintenance spend, approximately \$140 million will be spent on public housing maintenance over two years. This is a significant boost to public housing maintenance work, as well as supporting the local industry here in the ACT.

The government is delivering more affordable housing options for more Canberrans through our affordable housing initiatives. This year's budget has allocated funding to explore additional policy options to further improve housing affordability for low- to

medium-income Canberrans. This includes examination of the Affordable Home Purchase Scheme, delivery of future and ongoing actions under the ACT Housing Strategy and with the aim of delivering 600 affordable rentals under the parliamentary and governing agreement.

Working closely with the Chief Minister, the ACT government is working to grow the build-to-rent sector and drive affordable housing outcomes, while also increasing the amount of rental housing stock in the territory more broadly. I will continue to work across government, and with the broader housing sector, to implement the ACT Housing Strategy, examine a range of programs that are available and work with industry to develop projects and ideas that best support the government's Housing Strategy.

I am excited that, under the new federal Labor government, a number of commitments have been made and will begin to be delivered before the end of this year, and early into next year, across the country to ensure that more and more people get into housing that suits their needs. This is not an issue that the ACT is immune from. I would have to say that in the ACT we are punching well above our weight as far as our commitments to public housing are concerned. We continue to have the highest per capita housing per head in the country, second to the Northern Territory. I am enormously proud of that, and I want to see that continue.

I want to respond to a couple of comments that Mr Parton made, with regard to housing in the ACT, and whether or not we are doing the work and providing housing for people who need it. We are, but things have got worse. That is true; that is a fact. There is no hiding from that, and nobody is hiding from that. That is why I have a lot of hope that the federal Labor government will be able to deliver on their commitments and that it will make a difference here in the ACT for people who need housing.

In acknowledging the federal Labor government and their work in this space, the fact is that they have set up a national housing supply and affordability council. With respect to providing even a council of people meeting together, we did not have that kind of commitment from the former government. Having a council of ministers that will also consider planning and supply issues, and affordability issues on top of that, and delivering on—

Mr Parton interjecting—

MS BERRY: It is no good; I cannot hear what you are saying. I know you are saying something and it is probably not very nice, but I cannot hear you through the—

MADAM SPEAKER: I would not pay attention to it, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Go ahead. I will leave it with you, Madam Speaker, to pull him up, because I cannot hear through the perspex what they are saying. I will keep talking.

I am very hopeful about working with the new federal government in that space, as a member of the council and as the minister responsible for housing in the ACT, on some of the commitments that they have made so far, and providing opportunities

to community housing providers, governments and local governments to deliver more social and public housing in the ACT and across the country. This will have a significant impact here in the ACT.

It is about more than housing alone. Ms Vassarotti will talk about some of the work around the Housing First model, and how those kinds of supports that you wrap around people to keep them in housing give them a fair chance at a decent life, through education, health supports, mental health supports and any other community support services that they might need.

That kind of model, which we have seen in the Gungahlin and Dickson Common Ground, as well as other housing across the ACT and in the homelessness space, has been a real game changer for people who would probably still be on the street today if they had not been able to access programs like Axial Housing, which we put together during the COVID lockdown period.

It is almost about one person at a time in this regard, when we hear those stories. I think that was what you were talking about, Mr Parton, regarding hearing individual stories from people on the challenges that they face. We take our jobs seriously in this place and we want to address them.

I think we have the best chance that we have had in well over a decade, with this new federal Labor government, to make some changes and to have conversations about ways they can support us here in the ACT to continue the important work that we are doing to support people who are experiencing homelessness. They are also working to address those issues across the country. What has been needed in this space is a united, collective and collaborative approach, and I am pleased that we will now get an opportunity to work in that way.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (5.32): I am pleased to speak in support of this part of the budget. In commencing my comments, I want to reflect that the work that is undertaken by Housing ACT to support the more than 20,000 Canberrans who are public housing tenants, as well as our community partners in areas such as the specialist homelessness sector, is complex and challenging. They are rarely thanked for this work, but they have been today. Thank you for doing so, Mr Parton. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank them for their work.

Housing ACT continues to work to improve systems and processes to support tenants through their business transformation projects. A new website is progressively being rolled out, and work is occurring to support easier engagement by tenants and potential tenants. I look forward to these projects being progressively rolled out over the next 12 months and beyond.

With respect to the work that sits with Minister Berry, which she has just touched on, in relation to repairs and maintenance, I would like to express my strong support for the significant investment that has been made in the budget in this area, which comes after significant investment last year.

In addition, the continued investment in the growing and renewal program, which aims to renew and replace our social housing stock, is essential, as we see increasing demand for social housing. The reality is that much of our public housing stock is ageing.

The ACT government is committed to working in partnership with the community sector to ensure that all Canberrans receive the support they need. The 2022-23 budget provides support to a wide range of community organisations to ensure that the community sector can continue to provide essential services and programs so that Canberrans can get the support they need. This budget also recognises that there has been an increase in the complex needs of people, particularly those accessing homelessness services in the ACT.

The parliamentary and governing agreement for the Tenth Legislative Assembly details the provision of an additional \$18 million to expand the capacity of the ACT specialist homelessness sector over the next four years. In each budget since I was elected, the ACT government has been delivering increased funding to support the specialist homelessness sector to undertake this important work. Through this time we have been working closely with the sector to identify needs, increase the number of services and increase the level of base funding for services working in this area.

This has been some of the most significant investment in the sector in a decade. This budget builds on these investments that we have been providing as we move through the pandemic, as well as continuing the significant new services that were developed through the COVID-19 pandemic.

This includes investing approximately \$1.879 million in additional funding to expand the capacity of specialist homelessness services, including continued support for those programs that commenced operation during the pandemic. These programs cover crisis accommodation, transitional housing, support for rough sleepers and clients with high and complex needs, and specialist mental health support.

As Minister Berry outlined, they are evidence based and support approaches, such as Housing First. From meeting with the organisations providing some of these new services, as well as working with others in the sector, I know that they are very well supported additions to the service system.

The successful implementation of these initiatives demonstrates what can be achieved through strong collaboration between government and the sector in applying strategic partnership principles to design and deliver targeted, client-focused and flexible support that can meet emerging needs.

A well-performing sector requires investment and support to ensure that services are able to work in an integrated manner. This budget provides \$1.55 million in enhancements to the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform, known as SHIP, and continues to work with the specialist homelessness sector to develop a shared practice framework and tools.

These enhancements will support improved homelessness accommodation vacancy management and ensure greater data collection capacity, including for subsectors like

rough sleepers, domestic and family violence, and food services, to enable a better focus on the wellbeing outcomes and ensure that responsive services are delivered to Canberrans in need. These initiatives contribute to the wellbeing domains of housing and home, and significantly contribute to safety, social connection, health, identifying and belonging, and living standards.

This is in addition to the total of \$1.646 million that was committed from the ACT's \$50 million COVID response fund to support specialist homelessness services, as part of the government's commitment to addressing homelessness in the ACT.

There is more work to be done. The government is also progressing with a strategic partnership process, working with the homelessness sector and other key stakeholders to plan for the future of homelessness service provision in the ACT.

I can assure those opposite that we are working to provide adequate and secure funding for frontline services working in this key area. We look forward to continued collaboration and engagement with the sector, as we work together to ensure that Canberrans get the support they need. Collectively, we are working to design a homelessness service system that provides support that is accessible, responsive and addresses the core reasons that have led people to homelessness. We are working together towards having a future where homelessness truly is rare, brief and non-recurring.

I want to quickly respond to some of Mr Parton's comments. I want to be clear that the ACT Greens went the last election, and they will go to the next election, with an unashamedly ambitious agenda around homelessness and housing affordability. As we did at the last election, in future elections we will outline clear election initiatives. If we have the privilege to be a governing partner, we will be clear in our plans regarding what we seek to achieve through the parliamentary term in areas, including housing, in any parliamentary and governing agreement.

We do not resile from our ambitious agenda, and we will work across the parliament to achieve it. This budget progresses our agenda significantly, and future budgets will as well.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Canberra Institute of Technology—Part 1.13.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (5.40): I want to talk about my shadow portfolio responsibility for skills and address a number of concerns that have been raised with me over the lack of new provisions in the ACT budget for the VET sector. There are lots of big promises here; but, when you investigate, they seem to be empty promises. Page 67 of the budget outlook promises \$240 million in new funding for education and skills. On page 70 there is an announcement of \$126.3 million for apprenticeships, but when you dig a bit deeper into the budget, you see that there is a little game of smoke and mirrors.

Yes, there is another \$31 million for the CIT campus; I will say more about that shortly. There is \$4.2 million for a website refresh, whilst the \$126 million promised

for apprenticeships amounts only to \$2.1 million for Skilled Capital and \$15 million for User Choice, plus a further \$460,000 revised from last year. It is difficult to see where the other new funding is that will help our economy to grow and recover from the COVID lockdowns.

What is concerning about this new spend is that it includes yet another increase in the overall budget for the Woden CIT campus, with another \$31 million appropriated for this project. It is an important building, but the total project cost is now \$325 million, up from the initial \$240 million projected in the 2020-21 budget. I wonder how much more this project will cost before it is actually completed.

It would be good if the government provided greater transparency in all aspects of this project—projected costs over time, as well as completion dates, and report those on the project website and in their annual reports.

What was also demonstrated in the budget again is a lack of support by this government for the independent sector. The Labor-Greens government in the Tenth Assembly has made it clear that it will not support independent RTOs. This is very clear in the budget. It is not providing adequate funding or any support or promotion, or even acknowledging that they do a good job.

In the last annual report hearings, the minister was asked why so little funding went to the independent training sector. According to the recent *Report on government services*, almost 80 per cent of students in the VET sector attended private or independent RTOs, yet this sector received less than 20 per cent of funding.

When this number was queried, the minister stated that they supported the CIT as the premier government institution and were confident about the quality of training that they provided. He was then asked whether he was saying that he was not confident in the quality of the courses and training delivered by the independent training sector. The minister failed to express his confidence; instead he repeated that he was confident in the CIT and the training they provided, and that was why the government provided at least 75 per cent of funding to them.

In fact this funding is more like 90 per cent. The 2021 *Report on government services* showed that only 10.5 per cent was going to the independents, yet 75 per cent of students who enrol in VET training courses do so in the independent sector.

When questioned about this, the government mentioned the Skilled Capital and User Choice funding. Let us be clear about this. Only 49 per cent of User Choice goes to the private sector—about \$7.5 million—whilst 85 per cent of Skilled Capital goes to the private sector, or \$2.1 million. Out of this whole budget, only \$9.6 million goes to support the study of students who choose to study in the private sector. That is less than \$10 million out of a supposed \$240 million budget. This means that these students are forced to pay their own way for their studies, without government support. There is significant inequality in the system.

This inequality is also demonstrated in the \$4.2 million refresh of the government's Study Canberra website, which so far includes a couple of sentences at the end of the entire page spruiking the CIT, whilst the front-page map only gives the CIT as a place

to study. Why can't this government do more to be inclusive, consider what other states and territories have done and promote all training providers, especially as independent sector providers take up the greater burden of training here in the ACT? It should be, after all, about supporting students and their choices.

In short, it is another disappointing budget area that promises much; but, when you dig down, it delivers very little, especially where it counts—in supporting students in their studies and supporting businesses in getting the best graduates for jobs, as they climb their way out of the pandemic and into a new normal.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (5.46): The CIT contracts saga continues, as we all await the outcome of the Integrity Commission's investigation. What the Integrity Commissioner initially thought would be a four to six-week investigation very quickly grew to become an examination of six separate contracts, several contract variations and over one million documents. In the meantime the stood-down CEO is still being paid over \$300,000 in taxpayers' dollars for the foreseeable future.

The responsible minister, determined to hide behind process and the board, has refused to accept responsibility for the mismanagement that led to nearly \$9 million of public funds going to contracts that are so unintelligible that, to this day, no-one has been able to tell me what they are actually for!

The minister failed to act when he asked the board chair about them in February 2021 and received a response that clearly raised more questions than it answered. Even the Chief Minister defended the contracts during the time that he held the skills portfolio in 2019. In fact the Chief Minister defended those contracts during his short tenure as the skills minister. Let none of us be deluded that he is clear of any of this dodginess.

Astonishingly, since then, the responsible minister has backed in Labor appointee Kate Lundy as chair of the board, even though she was deputy chair for a large portion of these irregular contracts—deputy chair of the board that oversaw millions and millions of taxpayers' dollars going to one contractor, under contracts that are so opaque and so full of ill-jargon that no-one has been able to explain exactly what they are for!

We now see a blanket refusal from CIT to release documents under freedom of information, citing the Integrity Commissioner's investigation, even on seemingly unrelated matters such as a completely separate series of contracts with CIT from 2016 to 2018 to KPMG, whilst the chair of the board was a KPMG partner! There is a clear conflict of interest on the table, which the public have no further scrutiny over because of the blanket refusal to provide any documents under FOI.

As we saw from the performance by the responsible minister and the new board chair, the deflecting and the shirking from answering questions—legitimate questions that are clearly within the public interest—confirm this rotten Labor-Greens government's butt-covering and protecting each other, and that is always above the interests of the public.

The pathetic responses and the non-answers from the minister and the new board chair are a disgrace with respect to the privilege of their public roles and their responsibilities to the Canberra community. Honestly, Madam Speaker, if someone put these series of events forward as a script for an episode of *Utopia* or *Yes Minister*, people would reject it as fanciful. But this is the very real and very sad reality happening right here in the ACT under the helm of more than 20 years of a Labor-Greens government.

The real shame of it is that the teachers and students at CIT are the ones who are the real losers in this situation. The teachers, who are so passionate about seeing their students thrive, and the students, who are there to learn critical, job-ready skills, are missing out on the cutting-edge training, materials and support they need, at a time when we are facing a chronic skill shortage and employers are pleading for more skilled staff.

The minister has completely failed in his stewardship of the skills portfolio, and I have no faith that he will be able to turn it around. His actions since we uncovered this whole scandal have demonstrated not only his inability to fix it but also his refusal to fix it. His greatest show of poor judgement has been to allow the deputy chair to step up to the chair's role, despite her utter failure to do anything about these contracts as deputy chair.

The teachers and students at CIT deserve so much better, our city deserves so much better, and the minister must step up and take responsibility. If he does not, he will have confirmed to the community that he does not have what it takes to be a minister with responsibility for such an important portfolio.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

City Renewal Authority—Part 1.14.

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

Adjournment

Motion (by **Ms Cheyne**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Housing—energy efficiency

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (5.51): We speak a lot about things that we need to do to future-proof our city in light of climate change. Those in this chamber know that I have been working with building ministers across the country to improve energy efficiency standards of residential homes across Australia. Raising the standard is important. What is also important is highlighting the ways that people are

demonstrating how we can make our homes more energy efficient and climate wise. A particular challenge for us in moving forward is how we renovate our homes in ways that are climate wise, reflective of carbon impact and scope 3 emissions and the circular economy.

Given the need to profile good practice, I rise today to share my experience of visiting a wonderful example of a Canberra house retrofitted to have modern design and good energy efficiency. The house I visited in Watson was one of the existing brick veneer dwellings built in the suburb in the 1960s. The original home was quite small by today's huge standards and had an internal layout that did not really match up with the way in which we use our houses today. The owners told me that they would be spending upwards of \$4,000 a year on energy bills and were still uncomfortable and cold. Their house had a gas central heating system that failed one day and, I suspect, spurred on this project.

The owners resourcefully decided to retain their existing house, change the floor plan by moving the internal walls and put on a modest extension for a bit more space. While they were at it, though, they radically upgraded the energy efficiency of the house to 7.7 stars. They also went all electric, disconnecting from the gas network and switching to heat pump hot water, reverse cycle air conditioning and an induction cooktop. They installed a rooftop solar system and a battery, with the assistance of a loan from the Sustainable Household Scheme. The owners reported to me that their annual electricity bill is now \$750, which also includes running their EV, with no more fossil fuels.

A couple of things really impressed me about this project. First, a house built nearly 60 years ago was saved from demolition and many of the original materials in the house were able to be reused. Rather than just throwing away something old, this family managed to keep the original house and turn it into something that works for them today, and they saved considerable amounts of embodied carbon in doing so. Certain parts of the house look modern but, if you look, you can also see the original Watson house there too.

Secondly, while the move to seven stars, agreed to by building ministers earlier this year, took over a decade and was something that was opposed for being too hard, a quite old Canberra house was turned into a 7.7-star home by using good design and people willing to try something different. This kind of thinking should really be applauded. We have many houses in Canberra like this one that will need to be upgraded over the coming decades.

I would really like to thank the owners for hosting me for a tour of their home. It was a house that was functional and a home that was loved. I cannot wait to see more families taking up the challenge of building and renovating their homes in this way in the future.

Kenny the dog

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.55): My best friend, Kenny, a little spotted Dalmatian, went to sleep forever a month ago. His heart murmur had reached a point

where he was very uncomfortable, and we knew, and I like to think he also thought, that it was time to say goodbye and end his pain.

Kenny joined our family 15 years ago, and 15 years is a pretty good trot. It is longer than some of my marriages have lasted! At the time, we also had a lovely Rhodesian ridgeback called Bundy as well, and Kenny adored Bundy and would always like to be touching him and would sleep half on top of him. We got Kenny from a local breeder, and he was the proverbial runt of the litter. He was a bit small for a Dalmatian, but what he lacked in size he made up for in personality. He loved kids and kids loved him. Every child seems to have seen *101 Dalmatians* and wants to pat a spotty dog—not to mention the fame of Bottomley Potts, all covered in spots, from the Hairy Maclary series.

Kenny was not always good with other dogs. He especially disliked other dogs off-leash running up to him, and he did not react well. Truth be told, I did not really blame him for it as it always annoyed me too when people allowed their dog to rush up to us. This was usually okay, except for an unfortunate incident during the 2020 election campaign, when Kenny and another small dog who had run up to him had an altercation. No dogs were hurt, but I was mortified because Kenny was wearing a “Vote 1 Nicole Lawder” coat the time. Other than that, Kenny did a lot of letterboxing.

I have never had a more entertaining, character-filled dog in my life. He was always so excited to see me when I got home—much more so than my husband and children! He had so many antics that caused us stress and joy. He liked to become very sick on long weekends and public holidays—of course, the most expensive time. He developed bladder stones that had to be surgically removed on a couple of occasions. Apparently, this is a genetic trait in Dalmatians. He then had to go on a special diet and medication for the rest of his life to try to stop the development of more of these urate stones, to the tune of about \$200 a month.

He later developed dementia and his behaviour changed. He was often lost and confused, but he still had good days where he was still the same old Kenny. He went on human dementia tablets to slow the progression of the disease, and at about this time he decided he should sleep on our bed. I have never before in my life had a dog sleep on my bed, but nothing I did could stop him. In his final days, I had to lift him on and off the bed.

He shed hair like you cannot believe and, if you wore black, you felt like a post-modern Collingwood supporter because you had so much white hair on you! He loved walking around Lake Tuggeranong, stopping at Mimi’s for a coffee, and also down to Common Grounds in Gowrie, and he was very well known in the neighbourhood.

Dogs are pack animals and my husband and I were his pack. He was very talkative. In fact, to be honest, he whined a lot. I do not even think he knew that he was doing it. Sometimes it was very annoying, but at other times it sounded like he was talking. He thought he was a person.

I would like to thank our vet clinic at Fadden for their care of Kenny and their care of Peter and me when the end came. The day before, we decided to go for a walk and, for the first time ever, decided to leave Kenny at home because he just did not seem happy. After a really rough night, we rang the vet, and I held Kenny and talked to him through to the end. Dogs love us unconditionally and Kenny was such a loyal, fun and faithful friend.

We miss you, Kenny, and we will always remember you.

Gambling Harm Awareness Week

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (6.00): This week is Gambling Harm Awareness Week in the ACT. This morning, I attended the Gambling Harm Awareness Week breakfast at the Vikings club. It was good to hear of the Vikings' new initiative to further train employees and launch an in-venue program aimed at reducing stigma associated with seeking support for gambling harm. I was very grateful to hear Markus Fischer tell his powerful story of lived experience of gambling harm.

I see a major part of my role in the Assembly as amplifying in the chamber people's voices in our community. One such story that I would like to tell today is that of Harry, whose mother has written to me in distress at the impacts of online sports gambling and the impacts it has had on her son and her family. She wrote:

Our son, Harry, started online gambling six years ago, at the age of 19. We had no idea that he was gambling. It was hidden by what we considered typical behaviour of a young person being attached to their phone. The truth came out after an ultimatum from his girlfriend that he needed to tell us. He was scared, embarrassed and frightened to tell us, and we are his parents. We, as his parents, felt gutted, angry, devastated and frightened for his future and that of his relationship.

We also felt embarrassed that Harry had lied to us so many times over the years, saying that tools had been stolen when, in fact, he had sold them to get more money to gamble, and we had of course paid for new ones. He would also tell us that his boss had not paid him that week, so we would give him money, which of course went on gambling. Being in the building industry, we believed that at times not being paid immediately was commonplace.

As time went on, we felt ridiculously gullible and the trust that we had in our son was shattered, and who could we turn to? We felt embarrassed at how easily our son manipulated us. Our relationship is strained due to this lack of trust, and we feel helpless. He is, in turn, embarrassed and distraught that his relationships with those who he loves so dearly have been compromised.

We arranged for Harry to go to a private rehabilitation centre in Sydney last December, but it was not tailored to gamblers and, sadly, despite having high hopes that there would be strategies that he could put in place, Harry came home with more ways to con us. The saddest part of Harry being in rehab for all of us was the sense of relief we felt by his absence from the home. We did not have to put up with the lies or the mood swings, and we could all breathe out for three weeks.

Since coming out of rehab, he has stolen money twice, and this is to pay for a bank loan he used for gambling and was not able to repay. Harry has excluded himself from the TAB and clubs, but that then compromises social activities with his mates who want to go and have a meal and a drink, and Harry cannot join them.

That is the end of Harry's story that I will tell today. I believe Harry has a bright future and I hope he will walk away from this experience over the last few years empowered that his story may help people and that people hearing this speech today will realise they are not unique in their experience and they are not alone. I would like to thank Harry and his family for trusting me to tell their story today.

Harry and his family's story is one of the reasons that I have started the Bets Off. Game On. petition, calling for an end to gambling sports ads on TV. The petition will form part of a submission to the federal parliament's Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, through their inquiry into online gambling. I see this inquiry as a significant opportunity to tell the federal government how fed up the community is with the gambling advertising on our TV and how it has infiltrated our sports.

I would like to thank my ACT Labor colleagues for their support for the campaign. I would also like to thank those organisations, such as ACTCOSS, Alliance for Gambling Reform, the Salvation Army, Anglicare, the Australian Federal Police Association, the ACT Domestic Violence Crisis Service and Royals Rugby Union Football Club, which have publicly supported the campaign. The petition will be open for just over three more weeks. Please get on board and reclaim our sports from those international online wagering companies.

Women's rights in Iran

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (6.05): As shadow minister for multicultural affairs, I believe that, in order to understand and represent the unique challenges certain groups in our community face, it is important to play an active role in local events, no matter what the occasion. Hence, I felt compelled to attend and stand in solidarity with the ACT Iranian Persian community on Parliament House lawns on the afternoon of 27 September.

The ACT Iranian community of Canberra and parts of the Persian Australian Community Association coordinated a protest on that afternoon. This initiative was supported by Amnesty International ACT/SNSW, with supporters travelling from Melbourne and Sydney to add their voice. The aim of this rally, which should not surprise any member here, was to bring into the foreground women's rights in Iran.

Of course, a trigger for this protest and for many others was the tragic death of the Kurdish Iranian woman Mahsa Amini, whose passing was deeply upsetting. Ms Amini died in custody after being arrested by Iran's "morality police" for alleged breaches of the mandatory hijab legislation.

This incident has sparked protests across Iran and cities around the world and is daily in our news, with men and women advocating, at great risk, support of women's rights. We can see widespread support globally regarding this issue, and Amnesty

International is collecting evidence on the security force's use of weapons and power and breach of human rights.

The next day, I was very, very fortunate to meet Mrs Nigar Barjestehmanesh, one of the coordinators of this event and President of the Persian Australian Community Association of the ACT. Nigar and I had a really good chat, and I certainly extended my support to her and to her community and look forward to engaging with them going forward. I would certainly encourage any MLA to do the same.

In closing, Canberra is an immensely diverse and welcoming multicultural community, with groups interacting voluntarily and positively with one another, and we are so fortunate not to have any dissention or anything resembling violence between the different groups in our city. I give credit to them for the manner in which they conduct themselves and open themselves to the broader community. As shadow minister for multicultural affairs, I want to stand with the Persian Iranian community at this moment and offer my support to them during this very challenging time.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.08 pm.