



Debates

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19 October 2022

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Wednesday, 19 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.

Leave of absence

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

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Gentleman for this sitting due to illness.

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

That leave of absence be granted to Ms Lee and Mr Hanson for this sitting due to illness.

Environment—biosecurity Ministerial statement

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (10.02): I wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting, the Ngunnawal people. I respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and region.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to update the Assembly on the biosecurity threat environment that is currently facing the nation and the ACT, and the response of the ACT government. These threats have received considerable media attention in recent months, and the ACT is playing no small part in a coordinated and national effort.

Biosecurity is defined as the management of risks to the economy, the environment, and the community of pests and diseases entering, emerging, establishing or spreading. These pests and diseases include weeds, pest animals, and the pests and diseases of plants and animals.

Australia's strict biosecurity laws and policies play a critical role in maintaining our global reputation as one of the few countries to remain free from the world's most

invasive pests and diseases. Furthermore, maintaining our biosecurity protects our way of life, our people, environment and the economy. However, biosecurity incidents are continuing to rise in volume and complexity and require stronger efforts by governments, business, industry and the community to prevent, plan for, respond to and recover from these pests and diseases.

In 2020, the CSIRO published a report on the biosecurity outlook for Australia, which identified that between 2012 and 2017 the number of interceptions of biosecurity risk material at the Australian border rose by 50 per cent. In 2022, significant biosecurity threats have been realised. Japanese encephalitis virus and varroa mite, the *Varroa destructor*, have been detected for the first time in Australia. The origin and entry pathway into Australia of Japanese encephalitis virus and varroa mite is not known. The ACT is very pleased to be part of the national response effort to these biosecurity risks and recently deployed staff interstate to assist with varroa mite operational activities.

The ACT is not immune to these risks. Under the Animal Diseases Act 2005, I declared restrictions on the movement of European honey bees, hives and apiary equipment that had been in New South Wales from coming into the ACT, to protect the ACT's bees from varroa mite. In early July, the ACT government coordinated an online briefing to beekeepers in the ACT to inform them of the varroa mite situation and how they could be part of the ACT's response effort.

As part of the 2021-2022 budget, the ACT government invested an additional \$2.9 million towards managing new and emerging invasive plants and animals in the ACT. This additional funding is allowing the ACT to respond faster and more strongly to reports of pest and invasive plant incursions across the ACT. Recently, the ACT government successfully delivered a thermally assisted, aerial shooting of invasive species program that removed 503 pest animals from over 90,000 hectares of national park and reserves in the ACT.

There remains heightened concerns nationally around the likelihood of lumpy skin disease and foot-and-mouth disease entering Australia due to the recent detection and uncontrolled spread of these diseases in Indonesia. Preventative measures for these diseases have already been put into effect at Australian airports with direct connections to Indonesia. This includes the introduction of foot mats to clean potentially contaminated footwear and additional detector dogs to ensure biosecurity risk material is not brought in by international passengers. As Minister, I remain on the front foot with the commonwealth and state and territory agriculture ministers to ensure nationally we remain prepared and ready to respond.

It is a sad and confronting fact that biosecurity incursions devastate industries and cost millions in response, efforts and losses. The multimillion-dollar response to eradicate red imported fire ant incursions from the south east of Queensland has been ongoing since 2001 and is a stark reminder of the importance of our risk mitigation measures at Australia's border, and the potential financial and other impacts of managing these incidents. The ACT will continue to engage at the national level and work with other states on biosecurity risks such as the red imported fire ant.

Some emergency animal disease risks to the ACT include the Hendra virus and diseases exotic to Australia, such as avian influenza, Newcastle disease, African swine fever and African horse sickness. The ACT cannot afford to be complacent about these risks. Biosecurity is a shared responsibility between all jurisdictions, the commonwealth and industry.

This is formally captured in the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity, known as the IGAB. The IGAB establishes Australian governments' commitments to strengthen, participate in and lead the national biosecurity system. It describes the responsibilities of all states and territories to manage biosecurity within their borders. Further bolstering strategic collaboration, the first ever National Biosecurity Strategy was released by the federal Minister for Agriculture, Murray Watt, during his Press Club address in August this year.

The ACT is engaged in a national biosecurity policy development and coordination effort through the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting, the Agriculture Senior Officials Committee and the National Management Group, which bring together all Australian governments and industry partners. These bodies are actively meeting at present in response to the heightened biosecurity threat environment and incursions.

In response to the heightened biosecurity threat environment and the varroa mite incursion in New South Wales, the ACT government is bolstering its biosecurity preparedness and planning. Some of the measures include: refreshing the ACT's biosecurity emergency plan and incident management system to ensure that they meet contemporary expectations for an emergency response; activating the ACT biosecurity committee—comprising representatives from directorates and the Canberra Airport—to provide a coordinated and whole-of-government approach to biosecurity policy and operation in the ACT; and engagement with ACT beekeepers and planned engagement with ACT landholders on the risk of varroa mite, emergency animal diseases and how they can contribute to manage that risk.

Whilst working in cooperation with all jurisdictions, it is important that we work particularly closely with New South Wales to ensure that we work effectively in cross-border biosecurity management. A memorandum of understanding between the ACT and the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries was established in 2016 on cross-border security. With the recent occurrence of varroa mite in New South Wales, this MOU is being reviewed to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and reflective of the current arrangements.

In this spirit of cooperation, I am proud that ACT biosecurity officers have answered the call from New South Wales to assist in field operations for the pollination event at Balranald, in western New South Wales. Despite there being no known varroa mite incursion in this area, the pollination event involves bringing together bee colonies from a range of areas, and the operation will be an added safeguard to ensure that procedures are followed to prevent further potential spread. These deployments will prove invaluable in growing the ACT's knowledge base and experience in responding to and managing a biosecurity outbreak.

The ACT also needs appropriate legislative powers to meet these biosecurity risks. In August this year, the government agreed to the development of the biosecurity bill. This proposed bill will provide an effective modern management tool, be responsive in emergency situations, be responsive to the future growth of the Canberra international airport as a regional import and export hub and be implemented effectively by government and industry.

It is important that the capability of ACT's biosecurity staff is maintained. In June, biosecurity operational staff participated in the nationally recognised Biosecurity Emergency Response Training Australia course. The ACT has a representative on the National Biosecurity Response Team and continues to maintain and establish connections throughout the local region and across the country.

In closing, the ACT government continues to deliver a broad expanse of work, in conjunction with government and industry partners, to protect the ACT from biosecurity risks. I acknowledge and thank the small and dedicated biosecurity team within the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate for leading this work. The current nature of the biosecurity threat environment will require governments, industry, business and the community to do even more. Therefore, we must continue to work together in a vigilant and agile way to address the current and future biosecurity threats head on.

I present the following paper:

Biosecurity—Ministerial statement, 19 October 2022.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

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.

City Renewal Authority—Part 1.14

Debate resumed from 18 October 2022.

MADAM SPEAKER: I remind members that in debating order of the day No 1, executive business, they may also address their remarks to executive business order of the day No 2, and Assembly business order of the day No 1.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (10.14): It has become clear to me from estimates, and through a brief look at the annual reports, that the City Renewal Authority, in my opinion, does not consider the effect on the payers of the City Centre Marketing and Improvements Levy. It does not consider the impact of the CCMIL levy on payers of this levy to the degree that I think is satisfactory.

We saw during estimates that there was a consultation on the Odgers Lane redevelopment. It was very disappointing to hear that after this project was consulted on, there was no request to the payers of the levy and those affected by this development for consultation on the impact of this development—a post-survey consultation was not undertaken, and that was very disappointing to hear. It was basically explained in this manner: “We think we did a good job of consulting with them.” That was the answer. It is a bit like marking your own homework.

I did follow-up and asked some questions, which were taken on notice, about how the levy is regarded by the payers of it, and the work of the CRA. It was disappointing that, in April/May this year, a survey was posted, and this is the answer from the Chief Minister:

In April/May 2022 a survey was posted to 650 payers via ACT Revenue and promoted via the CCMIL Advisory Group ... Only 16 payers responded ...

That is a pretty disappointing level of response, which perhaps does not reflect just on the payers’ interest but on how they are being reached out to by CRA. While this five-minute survey was opened online by 200 people, it clearly cannot be seen as a representative response to the impact of the levy on the payers and how they view the investment of their levy in doing the City Renewal Authority’s work.

The advisory group has agreed to continue to support the authority to get a better understanding of payers of the levy and to continue to advise on priority settings for initiatives. I certainly will be keen to see how they intend to increase the interest of the payers of the levy in the impact of it on the city area.

I notice, as well, that the authority invited payers to three online workshops. One was cancelled due to low numbers, and two were conducted in August with high-level findings shared. I thank the Chief Minister for providing a summary of that.

Just touching back on the development in Odgers Lane, it was disappointing that feedback that leader Elizabeth Lee and I received, when we visited the site last year, was that the consultation was not adequate—despite the report coming back from the authority during estimates saying, “We thought we did a great job.” That is not what we heard on the ground. It is sad to see that the Church Neighbourhood Goods cafe publicly condemned the effects of the works on their business and, unfortunately, had to close.

We also, obviously, have the Braddon streetscape upgrade occurring. Again, the consultation, and how the consultation was viewed by the payers, does not seem to be part of the agenda. I would encourage any government agency that is collecting a special levy from a certain category of taxpayer to really find a way to see that the taxpayers are satisfied with the level of engagement from them, the relevant authority, to whom the tax is being paid. Surely that would make sense; that would be good governance, but that does not seem to be the priority. Again, as I mentioned briefly, the engagement through surveys does not seem to be working, so CRA needs to find other ways to engage with the payers of this special levy and get some genuine feedback on the impact of it upon them.

Another thing that I did explore during estimates was the very high figure that was presented of the 27 full-time equivalent staff in the employ of CRA. During estimates, I posed the question—we have a wage bill of just over \$6 million for 27 staff, which is an incredibly high average for an authority that is meant to improve the city. I did wonder if there were people on staff to do basic and fundamental works, because if you go down to the fountain, at the moment, you will see at the entrance to the Canberra Centre this very attractive piece of infrastructure, and right next to it there are some bollards to say “don’t walk here” because there is paving so seriously damaged it would be unsafe to walk on. In fact, in one spot, there is no paver at all.

I do wonder if a city renewal authority, by definition, should ensure that the paving in the city is of first-class standard. I invite every member here to go for a walk at lunchtime; go and inspect the paving which is under the purview of the City Renewal Authority, for which payers pay a levy. You would think that the least they could do would be first-class walkways and paving, but unfortunately that is not what I have experienced when I have gone there. Again, I would invite other members to go and have a look, and perhaps you can give some feedback to the City Renewal Authority.

Touching on the budget of over \$6 million for 27 full-time equivalent staff—and I thank the Chief Minister for responding to the question taken on notice. As a breakdown of those 27.29 full-time equivalent staff, as per the information from the Chief Minister, we have six full-time equivalent executives at an average salary of \$333,000. We have three infrastructure manager specialists, and I think I might be inquiring for a little bit more detail on what those positions actually do. We have three full-time equivalent infrastructure manager specialists on a quarter of a million dollars a year, average. We have just over 3½ full-time equivalent infrastructure officer staff—I wonder if there are some pavers in that or not—at an average wage of \$185,000 each. We have 11.6 senior officers at \$178,000 average income, and, again, I might be interested in the breakdown of their actual duties. Then, without specifying levels, we have three ASO, administrative service officers, at an average wage of \$113,000 per year.

The Chief Minister did advise that the actual expenditure was \$5.8 million, but the 2022-23 budget includes indexation, which takes up the increment to just over \$6 million. It is an extraordinarily high amount for people who appear to be at really high-level functions; and yet payers are not being engaged on the impact of developments and where basic works, like the paving, are rather inadequate and actually quite dangerous—where sections of it are marked off “do not walk here”.

This is right in the front of the entrance to the Canberra Centre near the fountain. Go and look for yourself, please. Take a photo; you should post it—actually, we might do that.

We have got “Canberra potholes” taking off as a very popular Facebook site. Maybe we need a Facebook site called “Canberra paving” or “Canberra footpaths”, as well—something to look into. It is disappointing that we have, as reported in the Chief Minister’s response to me, lots of very high-level officers; and, again, without the detail being provided. I think I will be interested in how that breaks down even a little bit further. (*Extension of time granted.*)

In addition to those concerns, it was disappointing, as was mentioned yesterday during questions without notice, that the City Renewal Authority did not meet its land sales targets. This is a concern. How does the government come up with such targets that it keeps failing? I wonder if there is a lesson there! Perhaps pick realistic targets or actually meet them. If they are targets based on all of the evidence and real data they have—and this is across the board with the government’s indicative land release programs—why is the government consistently failing to meet its own targets? Perhaps you should pick targets you can achieve. That would make sense to me.

Perhaps the most surprising thing to come out of estimates was the question I asked about the progress of the consideration of the city stadium. I must admit, I asked this just with a sense of curiosity, because the Chief Minister has been talking about a city stadium probably for as long as I have been attending to ACT politics, and, frankly, that has not been as long as most people here.

The city stadium—“We’re looking into it. We’ve done studies. We’ve had trips to see what these things look like in other places.” It was actually quite surprising to me, and it was not a trick question—it was: “What is the status of the government’s consideration of the civic stadium?” Then the Chief Minister came up with some rather interesting reasoning as to why it was not going to happen. I must admit, the reasoning that the Chief Minister delivered was probably something anyone could have thought of a decade ago—that is, it would get used only for a small period during the year because it is a stadium. I wonder if anyone ever thought of that before, or did it just occur to the Chief Minister during estimates! That certainly created some news. Again, I would just say from my point of view, it was a totally innocent question—“You have been talking about this for a long time: what is the status?”

And as it has become clear through later statements: it is not going to happen. Even Senator Pocock was startled by that. We are hearing about some other things that might happen, but maybe there will be reasons why they cannot that are pretty obvious now. It is pretty unsatisfactory, when we have a specialist levy and we have a specialist authority to take care of the city—and I would encourage members to go and walk around the city, not just in front of the Canberra Centre entrance near the fountain, and check out the paving and the footpaths. Aren’t these rather obvious things that should be first grade and a service to people who run businesses in the city who pay a special levy? They pay a special levy to do what? To renew the city centre—the City Renewal Authority—but the most basic service is being done badly, so I question the priorities of the CRA.

Chief Minister, I trust that you will take this on as a challenge to look at the basic things that people need to walk around safely as shoppers, and that is going to business. Surely, that should be a pretty clear priority in an area where you have a particular target and a particular levy. Again, what are these highly paid executives and specialists really doing? We will be looking at that question a little bit further, and I will be very interested to see. I know that Mr Snow did mention during the response to my queries about the high salary for 27 staff of over \$6 million, as per the papers, that there were lots of specialists. We have got only three specialists listed in the table provided by the Chief Minister. Sadly, it does not say what they are specialists in. To me, it would have been considerate of the Chief Minister to think to himself, “Oh, okay, we’ve got three specialists—I wonder if it’s worth telling Mr Cain what they actually do.” But I have to ask more questions to find that out.

There is much to be concerned about, but I can assure the payers of this levy that the Canberra Liberals are more than happy to go and visit their sites to talk to them and see what value they think the levy provides to them rather than the self-assessment of the CRA saying, “We did consultation, and we thought it was a really good consultation.” That is a pretty unsatisfactory response and not a genuine way to gather feedback.

Thank you for the extension of time, Madam Speaker. I do ask the members in this place to really consider the City Renewal Authority’s priorities and to really consider where this money is being spent—apart from, obviously, on high wages for very senior people—and whether this levy is being used for the purpose of encouraging businesses and engagement with the city area for shoppers and visitors. We have people come into the parks nearby; is this levy really enhancing their experience? Or do they wonder, like I do, “Is any money being spent here on things that really affect us as we are moving around?”

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (10.32): In regard to City Renewal Authority, I could not let debate on this line of budget spending go without making mention, again, of how business owners and communities in the far flung town centres feel about the CRA. I had a discussion on Tuesday morning, in fact, with one of the SouthFest organisers who remarked that the City Renewal Authority is great—for the city.

It really emphasises the great divide in the thinking of this government between the inner city and the outer town centres. Is this not a common theme, Madam Speaker? If it happens in Braddon or the city, the Chief Minister is all over it, but he really needs the GPS anywhere south of Curtin or west of the ANU. People in the suburbs are just sick of being the poor cousins. This is the very real perception. This is the very real perception from so many Canberrans in the outer lying areas. I do a lot of door knocking and it comes up time and again. Mr Cain has gone through the spending on wages and other aspects of the CRA in quite significant detail. I know that it raises concern for people in the outlying areas.

I need to mention SouthFest in Tuggeranong because this is the sort of thing that the City Renewal Authority would be taking coverage of if it were in the city centre. The SouthFest organisers are running this remarkable program this time around. In part, it was dreamt up as a consequence of COVID in that, at the time of the initial planning,

there was uncertainty around what we could be doing, how we could be doing it, and the person density at which we could be doing anything. So SouthFest has been reimagined to incorporate multiple locations and to try to embrace the entire Tuggeranong district. At least for this year it is going to be known as SouthFest in the suburbs and rolls out November 5 to November 20. It is a credit to all those involved that they have been able to pull together this wide and varied program—it is massive—without the support of a City Renewal Authority framework. SouthFest kicks off in that first week of November. Much of what goes on in that event would be bread and butter for the CRA, if indeed that event was taking place in the city or in Braddon. But because it is not happening in the funky part of town, they are left to, not quite fend for themselves because I know there is some ACT government support, but it is not like having the CRA back it up.

I understand there is the business levy in play and because of the number of businesses in the Civic and Braddon areas the money raised from that levy is sufficient to genuinely fund a number of the measures. But none of that could occur without the work of government through the City Renewal Authority. I wanted to say that I am sick of seeing the outer suburbs neglected. Sick of seeing Tuggeranong neglected. These thoughts are echoed not just by Ms Lawder but by many in the outer suburban communities and certainly by business owners in those outer town centres. So on the one hand I am saying that there are a number of CRA initiatives we genuinely applaud, but on the other I am saying that there needs to be more thought, more effort, more money spent on giving a leg up to those outer suburban areas who often feel like poor cousins to the funky inner city.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.35): I will be brief. I think we have had a good discussion of some issues with the CRA, but I wanted to mention a few of the aspects of the work they are doing at the moment and some of the items funded in the budget. I welcome the upgrades to Woolley Street in Dickson. They have commenced. They are a good example of making our streets more friendly for pedestrians and vulnerable road users. That is a really important part of the work that the CRA does.

We are a little disappointed that the Braddon/Lonsdale Street streetscape works could not start despite the allocation of \$4 million for improvements. We are also concerned about Braddon, in general. It does not have a pedestrian crossing. Lonsdale Street has had this wonderful refresh with all of this bustling nightlife and trade but it is really hostile for vulnerable road users. It is really hostile for anyone who is not in a car. We have seen in a lot of areas, right here in Civic and in other areas, that opening up the area and protecting your vulnerable road users tends to be good for the trades. It tends to be good for the shops. It tends to be really good for the nightlife there. We would love to see some good consultation and a different approach happening on that street at some point in the future.

The CRA has a great public art program and I am pleased to see that. Yanni Pounartzis's work in Garema is really fun and there is just a lot of great art around. I am looking forward to seeing the continuation of all of the public art funded by the CRA. I know people all around the city appreciate the works that the CRA has procured. It is great to see art in our public spaces. That is what we want more of in Canberra.

I look forward to the CRA working with other agencies, including the commonwealth agencies, on areas like Northbourne Avenue. We need to be looking at those spots to identify opportunities to make it more friendly for vulnerable road users, for people outside a car. We all know the lines. We all understand that if everyone is in a car everywhere they go, we will all be stuck in traffic. It just does not work, going forward. We say it a lot but we do not always do it. So I will keep pushing CRA to make sure that the heart of our city continues to be made more friendly for public and active transport.

The CRA also undertake land sales as part of their role, and it is really important we ensure that land sales for residential developments within the CRA include public and social housing as part of the conditions of land release. It is really important we ensure that we keep increasing our supply of public housing and that we do it all around Canberra, not just in some areas and not others. It is important for equity and for access to public and active transport, for access to all of the services, that we spread that across Canberra. So, including central Canberra is a good option. There are a lot of great services there and it will assist people greatly if we can have more affordable housing in places where people can walk or ride or catch the bus to get to where they need to go. The ACT Greens will support this appropriation.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (10.39): I thank members for their contribution in relation to the City Renewal Authority. Once again I think we see coming from Mr Cain a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of the agency and the difference between precinct development and asset management. The City Renewal Authority is not the asset owner in relation to all of the land and public realm within the precinct. So, Mr Cain, I think we have been through this at least six times in every estimates appearance, every time we debate the CRA budget in your time in this place. The Renewal Authority is not the asset owner. City Renewal Authority's purpose is set out in legislation.

The engagement of the staff within the authority is consistent with the Public Sector Management Act. The salaries you read out include the superannuation entitlements of those staff, so the suggestion that people are on those income levels also includes superannuation. That, of course, inflates the per employee cost of every single employee once you add in their superannuation entitlements, which are going to increase their salary and their total remuneration package by at least nine per cent, if not 12 or 15.4, depending on the superannuation arrangements they have.

The City Renewal Authority is a referral agency for a variety of planning approvals. They have a role in design review in relation to their precinct. They also manage large scale infrastructure projects, and small scale ones, but then they hand the asset back to Transport Canberra and City Services. Yes, there is ageing infrastructure in the CBD. You are correct to point it out and that is one of the reasons why it is a particular priority at this time, because the CBD is the oldest town or group centre in Canberra. There are buildings and assets that are more than 100 years old. The works you complain about are seeking to address some of the ageing infrastructure and the challenges there. Particularly in the historic Sydney and Melbourne buildings and their laneways. Every time it rains, the storm water capacity is not sufficient so those buildings are further damaged. There is special enabling legislation in order to

coordinate a response to restore and respect those heritage buildings because there are multiple owners. Buildings are unit titled. There are more than 60 owners so there needs to be a government agency to coordinate those activities, and also to coordinate the other government agencies that own assets in the precinct. For example, Icon Water in relation to the stormwater infrastructure and Transport Canberra and City Services in relation to the public realm.

The City Renewal Authority has an element of its activities that relates to the use of the levy you referred to multiple times, Mr Cain. That levy collects \$2.35 million, rising to about \$2.5 million in the final out year. Let us be clear: that \$2.5 million is not going to be able to address every single infrastructure challenge within a 100-year-old precinct. It is not intended to, Mr Cain. But there are urgent works and they have been carried out by the authority.

I make the point ultimately, and I appreciate that this city and its planning structure has multiple town centres. But the city is for every Canberran. Not just the people who live here. Although I note that its population is doubling and one of the fastest growing areas of Canberra is this central precinct. That is a deliberate policy strategy. Lots of new residents, lots of demand on ageing infrastructure. The CBD is for everyone. I guess there is a question here about what sort of Canberra do we want? Are we five or six communities 80,000 strong who just happen to live next to each other? Or are we the city of Canberra where we are all part of a community? Our political structure leans much more towards that we just happen to be five towns that are co-located next to each other. But we literally adjoin. Our city itself, at 455,000 people, and our economy, is only so big. So if we do not unify as a city, then we are not in a position to attract the sort of investment and infrastructure that a city approaching half a million people would expect. One of the challenges is that there are certain assets that our city is only big enough to have one of. The question then is, in order to have access to that single piece of infrastructure equitably distributed, it is logical, as is the case in pretty much every city where there is only one of them, for it to be located in the centre of the city. Canberra bucks that trend in some instances in that we have a more distributed network of large scale infrastructure. That is an historic planning decision.

It has an interesting application in the context of stadium infrastructure that Mr Cain referenced in his remarks. It is certainly the case that we have pursued the concept of a new stadium in the CBD. We have looked at all of the possibilities and how you might be able to deliver that project. But it is not feasible. It cannot deliver the project you would expect for the cost on the site that was identified without undertaking a very expensive relocation of a road. We have tried. But it does not work. So I acknowledge it does not work and that was my answer to Mr Cain's question. But throughout the process it was not the only option we were looking at. That has been very clear along the journey of consideration and in looking at alternative sites. So we have always had other options. We have now reached the point where we can categorically say that it will not work on the city site, so we are now focusing our attention on those alternative options.

But, of course, there are other infrastructure projects within the forward infrastructure plan that would work on the site. As part of precinct renewal and of the development of new infrastructure for which there is likely to be only one such facility in the entire

ACT, it makes sense that it is centrally located. A new Canberra theatre co-located with the existing theatre infrastructure is an obvious example. This is why we are pursuing that project. The City Renewal Authority has an important part to play in the delivery of that project alongside the Cultural Facilities Corporation as the eventual asset owner and Major Projects Canberra as the delivery entity for the physical construction of the new asset. The City Renewal Authority has the opportunity to integrate that public spend into the broader precinct and seek to attract other complementary investment to ensure that we have a world class arts and cultural precinct in the city centre. That is the role that the City Renewal Authority will be playing.

It is not the only project though, and Ms Clay and others have touched upon other projects, events and activities that the City Renewal Authority supports. There is a specific task here: the oldest infrastructure in the city, in the territory, some of our city's few great heritage buildings. This is necessary work and I acknowledge Mr Parton's support for it. But to suggest that there is nothing else happening across other town or group centres in the ACT is unfair and untrue. One needs to only look at the range of projects and investment occurring in Woden, Belconnen, Gungahlin and the Tuggeranong Town Centre to get a sense of what is happening in the other parts, the other major town centres in the territory. It is not just at town centre level, it is also at group centre level. I think we have an opportunity, as an aside, through the district level planning and the work that Minister Gentleman is leading, to be able to encourage some more local centre rejuvenation through clever and careful planning policy. All of this comes together, though, with a view that the city is for everyone, and Canberra, as the national capital, should have a CBD that people are proud of. What is the alternative? That we have a hole in the centre of our territory and that there is no investment in the oldest area of Canberra that is one of the fastest growing.

Finally, on Mr Parton's observations, everyone in this place is parochial about their own electorate. I do not think there is any doubt about it and it is what you would expect. My experience is that the least parochial members are actually from Kurrajong. That has been my experience over the time that this electorate has existed. Perhaps it is a historical accident around the fact that this part of Canberra is the oldest and it has always been at the centre and there has always been electorates to the south and electorates to the north and electorates to the west. If the accusation from Mr Parton is that I, like every other member in this place, also play a local member role, if that is the accusation, then yes, I will plead guilty to that. I am as passionate about my electorate as each of you are about your own. That is fair. That is reasonable. My community also has needs. So it is unsurprising that I would be in favour of delivering for my own community, just as you all are for yours.

So I reject the assertion that the City Renewal Authority is somehow a special creature that looks after only the CBD for the residents. It does not. It plays a role for everyone in Canberra. Most people in Canberra at some point in the year, and for fifty or sixty thousand people every single day from all over the ACT, come into the city to work or for entertainment or any other range of activities. The idea that Canberra would not have a good CBD, I think, is poor public policy and poor for the image of the national capital. So that is why I support this appropriation, why it is important that the City Renewal Authority continues its work. It does not mean that other parts of Canberra are excluded. One needs to only look at the flow of investment right

across the rest of the territory to get an understanding of where that investment is coming, where that investment has been delivered. But it also must be reflective of two important points. Firstly, where population growth is occurring and where there is not existing infrastructure so new infrastructure is being built for the first time. It has certainly been the case in Gungahlin and it is increasingly the case in the Molonglo Valley. Then the secondary issue is: what is the physical state of the existing infrastructure? The reality is that the oldest infrastructure in this city is in the CBD.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Legal Aid Commission (ACT)—Part 1.15.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (10.53): I want to thank the Legal Aid Commission, Legal Aid ACT, for their very valuable work. I am always learning something myself as they describe their work and the priorities that are before them. I do applaud in particular their support for victims of family violence and people from the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders community in Canberra.

I note that one of their priorities in this budget was to finalise long-term accommodation. It is on page 22 of the paper. I did write to the Attorney-General earlier this month, on 10 October, and maybe he can give us the answer this morning, about the renewal or the replacement of the lease that Legal Aid had on its premises in the city. It is my understanding that this lease was due to expire at the end of September and there were some issues to do with a commitment to moving away from gas as an energy source for that building. I am not quite sure what happened at the end of September. I do hope they are still there, even though the lease has ended. As I said, I wrote to the Attorney-General on 10 October. Forgive me if he has responded and I have missed that, but he is certainly welcome to speak to that this morning.

What are the plans, the long-term accommodation plans, for Legal Aid? That is one of their self-described priorities: “finalise long-term accommodation”. They have a very important function and are very aptly located in the city. We have the court precinct here. We have the police centre here. We have a central location for travel. So it is a very obvious place to be for such a legal service provider, but doubt remains—the last time I spoke to them anyway, which was a few weeks ago, during estimates—as to the long-term arrangements for accommodation for their own staff. It may not be part of the speech that he was planning to give this morning, but I do invite the Attorney-General to fill us in on the details of Legal Aid’s accommodation plans. My understanding is that it is in his hands and awaiting some sort of outcome.

As I have already mentioned, Legal Aid does valuable support work, particularly for the more vulnerable in our community, those who are not as financially endowed as others, to access their legal services. I do, and will continue to, monitor that Legal Aid expenditure is being spent for these priority targets. I have explored on a couple of occasions with Legal Aid a significant cash holding. I understand that they have reasons to have a bit of a buffer that is actually not being spent, and that is partly related to their accommodation. That is my understanding anyway. I am certainly not trying to misquote them or mischaracterise their response. But in the medium and long term, a legal provider like this ought to have most of its money being spent on its services, rather than sitting there just in case they need it for something.

I think this is tied to the accommodation priority and the accommodation needs of Legal Aid, and I do press the Attorney-General to make that plain and clear as soon as possible. Then—who knows?—there may be some more money released for the actual on the ground work of providing legal aid support to the more vulnerable in our community.

Just touching on their service to family violence, last year I note that 39 per cent of their services were family violence related. Certainly, it is an important area to look at for government, whole-of-government issues. That is being done at the federal level, I noted recently. It is a priority, I think, for all parties in this house to ensure that people in these family relationships are safe in such relationships. It is so tragic to see that that is not always the case.

I do want to thank, again, Legal Aid for the work that they do. I am available, as shadow attorney-general. My door is open to discuss with them issues that they have, ways that they think their work can be enhanced and whether they are properly funded to meet community demand, particularly at the time that we are coming out of, with shutdowns, and hopefully entering our new normal. It has changed the environment in our homes, in our businesses and in our workplaces, and there will be, at all times, really, some who have that need for legal support. I am glad to see that that is available through the Legal Aid Commission. Again, I extend an open invitation to them for briefings, for suggestions on how their work can be improved and how their services can be further enhanced. Thank you.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (10.59): I am pleased to speak to the Legal Aid line, because of course they perform fantastic work, serving some of the most vulnerable people in Canberra. It is difficult work, but it is incredibly valuable in improving outcomes and helping to find productive solutions to some of the worst disadvantage that we see in our city. I note that the staff at Legal Aid are passionate about their jobs. They work incredibly hard and they seek to serve as many people as they can.

I think that there is a challenge there in that, certainly through the pandemic period, we have seen increases in the number of approaches. They have laid out that data. That is why there is additional funding for Legal Aid in this budget. There has been \$2.841 million allocated over four years to provide more resources to Legal Aid's family violence unit, the Older Persons ACT Legal Service and Legal Aid's helpline to strengthen Legal Aid's capacity to support vulnerable members of the community and manage the ongoing increase in demand for these services here in the territory.

The government will also continue to support criminal case conferencing in the ACT Supreme Court. This initiative builds on the 2021-2022 budget initiative, criminal case conferencing in the Supreme Court, which encourages negotiated settlements and improves the overall efficacy of the criminal justice process and better justice support for vulnerable Canberrans. We provided increased support to the Legal Aid Commission to meet the increased demand for the commission's services.

This initiative contributes to the wellbeing domain of government institutions in that formal sense of the wellbeing indicators, but I think the really important measure of its impact lies in people who could not otherwise afford legal support getting that legal support to deal with what are often the most difficult moments in their lives, be that applying for a family violence order or finding themselves involved in the criminal justice system.

I want to join Mr Cain in expressing our gratitude for the fantastic work done by Legal Aid ACT. On the issue of Legal Aid's accommodation, I can assure the Assembly that Legal Aid are staying exactly where they are. Their lease was due for renewal. There has been a process where, whilst the formal policy of government is to rent only in buildings that are all electric, we did seek to test this with the renewal of Legal Aid's lease. We worked with the building owner so that they would seek to, at the end of the life of the gas systems in their building, consider moving to an all-electric system through the upgrade process. As we know, their heating and cooling system will reach the end of life point. We understand that that will be during the term of the next lease for Legal Aid and we have sought to, as part of our overall government commitment, ensure that that is the case.

I can also let the Assembly know that the government provided quite a bit of support to Legal Aid to help that negotiation process, providing staff from EPSDD who have quite a bit of knowledge on how these systems work. I do not expect Legal Aid to have a detailed understanding of how heating and cooling systems work; that is not their job. They have got a really clear job. But EPSDD does have that expertise, so we brought in support from EPSDD and also Property Group to work through these details. Mr Cain sent his letter eight or nine days ago, so that is why I have not responded to him yet. My understanding, and certainly the last conversation I had with Legal Aid about this matter, which was some weeks ago now, was that the i's were being dotted, the t's were being crossed and the lease was sorted. I am quite confident that that is the case.

I saw the CEO of Legal Aid in the last three or four days at a community event. He did not raise any concerns with me, and I reckon he would have if there had been any concerns. So I will formally write back to Mr Cain but, to the best of my knowledge, the lease has been sorted. Certainly, the intent is that Legal Aid would stay in the city, because Mr Cain is right: the location is very suitable for them. There is no reason why we would want to move them. That has certainly been the approach that has been taken. We also need to ensure value for money and various other considerations, and that has been the discussion that has been had. I can come back and correct the chamber, but I am very happy to confirm that Legal Aid will be staying in their current premises.

Having made those remarks and hopefully answered that question, I commend this appropriation to the Assembly for all the reasons that have been talked about—the excellent work that Legal Aid does and the additional funding that has been provided to them to expand their capability and to meet the growing demand that we see.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (11.05): Legal Aid is an essential service for many Canberra families, including those who find themselves entangled in the child protection and/or youth justice systems. Six years ago Legal Aid ACT's submission to the Glanfield inquiry called for an external merits review mechanism for child protection decisions because it was not adequately resourced to assist families with legal challenges to these decisions.

Concerns about adequate access to legal representation and advocacy remain. The Our Booris, Our Way Steering Committee noted in their final report that this access is "extremely limited". This may be especially true for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. The New South Wales government provides funding to the Aboriginal Legal Service to provide assistance with child protection matters. In contrast, the ACT government's funding model for the Aboriginal Legal Service does not provide any resourcing for child protection matters. The Our Booris, Our Way report calls this an anomaly in ALS service provision and further notes that this refusal by Labor and the Greens to fund the Aboriginal Legal Service to assist with child protection matters "leaves organisations such as Legal Aid and the Women's Legal Service, both of which are under-resourced for their demand".

Access to legal representation in child protection matters is very important. One public submission to the Our Booris, Our Way review states that the territory's child protection system is:

... impenetrable for many of our clients who are highly vulnerable, have low levels of literacy and a deep mistrust of child protection agencies due to past and current practices. The system is not conducive to participation and the voices of children and parents being heard, especially in the context of vulnerable parents.

The same submission made a clear recommendation: every family should receive legal advice as soon as they begin to engage with child protection services. This means, of course, that organisations such as Legal Aid would need to be adequately funded to provide ongoing advocacy and legal representation to assist families to navigate the jurisdiction and prevent matters from escalating.

Let me make an important point here: getting the funding right actually results in cost savings over time. The worse that matters are allowed to get, the more expensive they become to fix. I quote again:

Investment in early intervention circumvents costly, time-consuming and traumatic escalation of child protection matters through the legal system and separation of families.

It should come as no surprise, then, that recommendation 8(b) from the Our Booris, Our Way final report is as follows:

The Steering Committee recommends that funding be made available, as a matter of urgency, to professional legal and advocacy services that are culturally appropriate to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are able to access formal legal services.

The Labor-Greens government has formally stated that it is supportive of this recommendation but the steering committee has not been impressed:

The Steering Committee is frustrated by the lack of responsiveness for these specific legal representation and advocacy services, despite stated ministerial level support.

The steering committee likewise have stated that they lack confidence that the Justice and Community Services Directorate understands the specific needs of the community for this recommendation. Earlier this week I pointed out that the Our Booris, Our Way Implementation Oversight Committee, which replaced the steering committee, recently publicly expressed their frustration that, three years after the final report, only one of 28 recommendations has been fully implemented. That includes recommendation 8(b).

I stand today to once again call on Labor and the Greens to provide Legal Aid ACT, and other such organisations, with the resourcing they need to be able to assist Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders and other vulnerable Canberra families with the legal representation and advocacy that they need to navigate this territory's unnecessarily impenetrable child protection system and its youth justice system.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (11.11): I rise to advise Mrs Kikkert that this budget does in fact explicitly include funding for the Aboriginal Legal Service to establish a service to support families engaged with child and youth protection services. Obviously, if she cares enough about this matter, she is going to stay and hear a response specifically to her comments on this budget.

Not only does this budget specifically include exactly what she was just calling for, but I can also advise the chamber, in Mrs Kikkert's absence, that last month we had a final roundtable with stakeholders in relation to the establishment of an external merits review process for child and youth protection. It is something that I have acknowledged a number of times has taken longer than we had hoped. But we are ensuring, through this process, that we develop a best practice model for external merits review in child and youth protection. It is a complex space. What we have heard from other jurisdictions is that their model of simply using their equivalent of ACAT, their tribunal processes, is not ideal. We want to ensure that we establish an integrated internal review process and external merits review process.

It was a very productive roundtable on 16 September, with a range of stakeholders, including Legal Aid ACT, the Aboriginal Legal Service and the Human Rights Commission. It was co-convened by the Human Rights Commission, with the Children and Young People Commissioner and Public Advocate. There were members of the Restorative Community Network and a number of other stakeholders in that meeting to talk through the work that has been undertaken by a consortium of consultants, including Curijo, who are working to develop an ACT-specific model.

In relation to the legal system and child and youth protection services more broadly, Mrs Kikkert, you would expect, would also be aware that we have funded, through

previous budgets, some work to completely modernise the Children and Young People Act. That is in recognition of the fact that there is a lot of work to do to ensure that we build a more restorative child and youth protection system. We have been engaging with the community in that work, including, as one of the first pieces, a consultation process currently underway and almost concluded, led by SNAICC, about embedding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle more appropriately into the Children and Young People Act.

We have also previously funded a therapeutic court for child and youth protection services to try to find new ways to ensure that the legal processes around child and youth protection services are more restorative. We have also previously funded a duty legal person from Legal Aid to be present in the Childrens Court for child and youth protection matters to ensure that families can get the advice and support that they need, in recognition of the fact that these things often come to court quite quickly after emergency action is taken.

In relation to the Our Booris, Our Way review recommendations, we have previously talked about the fact that we just recently introduced legislation and funded the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people commissioner as well. So there is a lot of work underway in both the legal representation and advocacy space. We know that there will be more work to do. I think it would have been appropriate for Mrs Kikkert to acknowledge some of the things that were in the budget, rather than pretending that they were not there.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (11.15): That was one of the more unusual elements of a budget debate, when Mrs Kikkert stood up and said that this funding is not there and the minister stood up to explain to her and she just left the chamber. She did not even pay attention. It was an unusual approach to the budget debate, but there you go.

I just want to take this opportunity to say that, in the time since I previously spoke, I have been able to confirm, for Mr Cain's benefit, that the Legal Aid lease has now been signed and executed. Legal Aid are definitely staying where they are, which was my earlier understanding, but I now have confirmation of that.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

ACT Executive—Part 1.16.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Cultural Facilities Corporation—Part 1.17.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (11.16): Under this government, we have seen scandal after scandal after scandal: the Campbell Primary School modernisation project; the CIT contracts; the ChooseCBR failure; the allegations of drug parties, inappropriate relationships and cover-ups at the Alexander Maconochie Centre; the Auditor-General's report on West Basin; and, to add to this conga line of corruption

scandals, the appointment of former Labor minister Gordon Ramsay as CEO of the Cultural Facilities Corporation.

This is another example of a Labor-Greens government minister trying to avoid blame for irregularities in their portfolio, hiding behind process and the government board that they appoint. Will any of the ministers in this government stand up and do the right thing—take responsibility for their portfolios, demonstrate integrity and call out their jobs for mates culture?

The Cultural Facilities Corporation example has an extra dimension to it. Not only did the former Labor minister get the CEO role—an individual whose only prior experience in the arts was his ministerial position and whose only substantive prior management experience was running the Uniting Church in Kippax. While that is a worthy role, I do not think it necessarily recommends itself to managing a multimillion-dollar arts organisation. After a supposedly competitive national process, are we really supposed to accept that, with 24 other applicants, Mr Ramsay was the best person for the job?

It is important to look at the time line. Mr Ramsay lost his seat at the October 2020 election. He was immediately awarded a contract position in the Chief Minister's office, for his alleged skills as a legal professional. In May 2021 the longstanding and well-respected CEO of the Cultural Facilities Corporation, Harriet Elvin, gave notice that she would be leaving her post. She undertook to stay on until a suitable replacement could be found. We heard in estimates that what seemed like it should have been a thorough recruitment process was undertaken in the second half of 2021. Apparently, it was a national recruitment effort. Then, in November 2021, somehow a former Labor minister, Gordon Ramsay, commenced in the role as the new CEO of the Cultural Facilities Corporation. In May Ms Elvin gave notice. In November Ms Elvin left her post. In May Mr Ramsay was appointed CEO of the gambling alliance. In November Mr Ramsay commenced his role as the new CEO of the Cultural Facilities Corporation.

As a long-term public servant, I am a staunch believer in the merit principle. The most capable and suitable person should be appointed to any job, no matter what level, irrespective of their political connections. Mr Ramsay was so obviously ill-qualified to head up this significant and important government-funded arts organisation in the ACT. His astoundingly limited prior experience as “CEO” for a very convenient period of time certainly raises eyebrows. Even if we do give Mr Ramsay's appointment the benefit of the doubt, which we did initially, when it was first announced, the events that occurred in the first half of this year, 2022, should leave us in no doubt as to the dodginess of this entire saga. Almost immediately after he commenced in his role as CEO of the Cultural Facilities Corporation, Mr Ramsay created a brand-new position: chief of staff. That is a role that is paid over \$150,000 and was never necessary before. The government seems to think that this was also fair and competitive.

Let us have a look at the time line and the facts. First, this is a newly created role—created personally by Mr Ramsay. Second, this role was initially advertised as a temporary role in January 2022. I am sure public servants will understand the significance of this timing—a time many would avoid if they wanted to find the best

candidate, because few Canberrans are scouring the public service *Gazette* for jobs. Third, this role was advertised for just one week. Fourth, the internal Cultural Facilities Corporation paperwork related to advertising of the role says:

The aim of advertising is to make as many people as possible aware of a vacancy and persuade suitable potential applicants to apply ...

—that is, to attract from the widest range and largest number of suitably qualified candidates. It continues:

... advertising in the ACT Gazette alone is unlikely to attract a competitive field of qualified applicants for a position. Please consider placing advertisements in a variety of media.

Despite that, the only box that was ticked for advertising in this case was the ACT *Gazette*.

It would be funny if it were not such an egregious and serious misuse and blatant manipulation of ACT public service processes to, once again, find a job for a mate. And, lo and behold, despite ticking the minimum number of boxes for the recruitment process, the person hired for the role was Mr Ramsay's former political chief of staff—the person who backed him during his time as a minister in this place. The person who was hired for the role is someone who has continuously worked for Mr Ramsay, including during his time at the Kippax Uniting Church. On the information that I have seen, it seems absolutely clear what has happened here: a deliberate gaming of the recruitment process so that the CEO could hire his preferred candidate, in a \$150,000 per year role, to help him run the organisation because he is not qualified to do it himself.

During the estimates hearing the relevant minister and the CEO himself were unable to explain the urgency to fill the role and the apparent reluctance to advertise widely for a reasonable period of time or at a more sensible time of year in order to attract a competitive field of suitably qualified candidates. The CEO clearly ignored the advice of his own organisation to rush through this recruitment process, and now we are left asking why. This is a blatant misuse of public processes and funds and is a result of the toxic culture of more than 20 years of this Labor-Greens government, which too often looks the other way when there are egregious breaches of public confidence and faith.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.25): I rise to speak on the Appropriation Bill 2022-2023, as it relates to the Cultural Facilities Corporation. The Cultural Facilities Corporation is the central arts organisation in the ACT and manages the Canberra Theatre Centre, the Canberra Museum and Gallery, and ACT historic places. We have spoken in this place in a range of other debates about some work that has gone on at CMAG, the Canberra Museum and Gallery, to make it more dementia-friendly, including changing some of the ramps. I would also like to give a special shout-out, in the ACT historic places area, to Lanyon, in my electorate of Brindabella, which I visit on a regular basis. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the staff at these facilities for all of their hard work and everything that they do for our arts community here in the ACT. That is especially true following on from and continuing with the COVID-safe arrangements.

We have already heard from my colleague Mr Cocks that during the estimates hearings there was a series of questions regarding the appointment of former Labor minister Gordon Ramsay as the new CEO of the Cultural Facilities Corporation. Prior to being a minister in the Labor-Greens government, Mr Ramsay served as a minister in a church. He is also a lawyer. Obviously, there is nothing wrong with these occupations. However, it does make me question whether he is the best person to run a leading arts organisation. When the new CEO was the minister for arts, the arts portfolio was a very small component of his other portfolio responsibilities—perhaps the biggest being Attorney-General, which took up a lot of his time.

Similarly, as has already been spoken about again by Mr Cocks, the fact that Mr Ramsay's previous chief of staff, from his time at the Assembly, was appointed to the newly created role of chief of staff at the Cultural Facilities Corporation, following his appointment as the CEO at CFC, raised alarm bells. Canberrans deserve to have faith that applicants for high-level government jobs are being selected on merit and nothing else.

A report in July from the Grattan Institute, looking into political appointments, showed that this Labor-Greens government had made the highest number of government board executive and other position appointments with political affiliations, all of which were Labor, in comparison to other Australian jurisdictions. At this point, this included the years of the federal coalition government, where there were Liberal and Labor appointments. But this Labor-Greens government has the highest number of Labor-affiliated appointments of any government in Australia. It is jobs for mates.

It is no wonder that the appointment of an ex-minister into a high-level government position raised concerns in the community. While we gave the appointment the benefit of the doubt at the time and did not raise any concerns—in fact, we wished Mr Ramsay all the very best in the position—concerns were raised by members of the arts community, who sent us information and a range of documents. Obviously, as the opposition, it was our responsibility, our duty, to represent their concerns and ask these questions during estimates hearings. That is exactly what we did, for the benefit of transparency and accountability.

Nevertheless, the Cultural Facilities Corporation is a staple of our arts industry here in the ACT. I hope that, despite the questions that have been raised about the appointments, it prospers under the new leadership and continues to deliver a wide range of outstanding events and activities and contributes to the cultural fabric of Canberra. There are many, many fantastic things happening across the CFC, not just wonderful events at the Canberra Theatre but also exhibitions and events at CMAG and events at ACT historic places. This is a sign of a mature city, this involvement in the arts and cultural sphere. It is important. It contributes tourism dollars, to our economic benefit. So it is great to see that there are a wonderful range of activities, experiences and events happening at our Cultural Facilities Corporation centres.

We would just like to see the murkiness around some of these appointments cleared and ensure that it is clear and transparent. The questions, I think, to some degree remain. However, that does not take away from the work of the CFC on an ongoing basis. We look forward to more of that and their continuing work to deliver COVID-safe activities and events.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.31): I just want to say a few words about the Cultural Facilities Corporation. I will not comment on appointments; I will leave that to others. That is being well aired elsewhere. The Cultural Facilities Corporation is such an interesting part of our arts scene. It pulls together the visual arts and performing arts. It pulls together our history and our culture. It is a really dynamic environment that is looking after such a range of facilities—CMAG, the theatre and historic Lanyon and Mugga-Mugga. It is such a fascinating way for us to celebrate our culture and celebrate our artists.

The corporation has had an amazing ride over the past few years, as has every single facility in the arts and tourism over the past few years. I know they have been through a lot of stages, and they have done really well. They have adapted so well. They went through this amazing period where they had to work out what to do with their pictures when Canberra was blanketed in smoke. They had to work out what to do with Lanyon Homestead and their remote tourism facilities when we had fires threatening. They had to work out how to stage their shows and how to deal with their programs when COVID keeps disrupting everything. The staff have done an amazing job. I also really appreciate the fact that this is a facility that is making a lot of work for artists.

Next time you are at the theatre when you are getting a drink at the bar, it will be odds-on that the person you see is an artist who is working the bar in order to supplement their income—because that is what we have to do. So I want to pause and be grateful for the CFC. It does a great job. I am glad that we are funding and supporting it. I am glad we are investing in our arts, culture, and history—that is really important—and I am glad we are investing in people and programs, as well as the buildings. That is good to see, and I just want to say: well done to the CFC!

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) (11.33): I will briefly reflect on a few of the comments delivered by the opposition. Notwithstanding that Mr Cocks has just delivered a speech clearly drafted for, or by, Ms Lee, and given that he claims to be—in his words—“a staunch believer in the public service”, you would expect that Mr Cocks would school himself and respect the public service appointment process of Mr Ramsay. It was nationally advertised, with an esteemed panel led by the Head of Service, and merit based.

As a staunch believer in the public service, Mr Cocks might like to reflect on the broad aspersions that he has cast. I would ask Ms Lawder to reflect on that as well. Mr Cocks’s use of words like “allegedly” and “apparently”, particularly in describing Mr Ramsay’s previous career and experience, might be what we have come to expect of Ms Lee, but, regardless, under parliamentary privilege it was offensive and repugnant, and absolutely beneath what you would expect of members in this place.

As I said earlier in the budget debate, we have an ambition for Canberra to be recognised as Australia’s arts capital. Setting this ambition has borne the updated policy and detailed actions, together with significant investment in both the immediate and the long term for artists and creatives and for the infrastructure that supports them in their craft, culture and performance. The Cultural Facilities Corporation is

responsible for a large number of the initiatives and projects in the Arts, Culture and Creative Policy action plan over the next four years. It is not surprising, then, that the ongoing and expanded funding to the Cultural Facilities Corporation and its future in this budget is an integral element of the development of arts and culture in Canberra.

Among those actions include leading collaborative work across both national and local arts organisations for programming, promotion and planning. It includes establishing a new gallery in the Canberra Museum and Gallery, focusing on digital art and experience, as a further development for new audiences. It includes the programming and exhibiting of works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, such as the recent Dean Cross exhibition and the work by Canberra playwright Dylan Van Den Berg *Whitefella Yella Tree*. It includes the new ACT Historic Places arts prize, supporting new art works and encouraging community engagement at the iconic Lanyon Homestead, Mugga-Mugga Cottage and Calthorpes House.

In this year's budget the ACT government is funding the design of what will be the most significant expansion and evolution of arts and cultural infrastructure in the ACT's history. The design of the new Canberra Theatre will lead the way for fit-for-purpose, audience-focused theatre facilities, which will mean that our city can both host world class, large scale productions and develop creative opportunities for our own performing arts scene. We are investing \$28.4 million in this work in this year's budget. This major investment is core to realising our ambition to be the nation's arts capital. The new facility is intended to see the existing theatre repurposed, with a flexible flat floor, and a new theatre constructed to accommodate approximately 2,000 people, while retaining the Playhouse Theatre, which was built in 1998. The new facility will also include additional and more flexible spaces for live music, experimental and local performances.

Canberra's population today makes our city an attractive market for touring shows and artists. However, the capacity and technical constraints of the Canberra Theatre means that the economics of theatrical production and some of the larger touring shows have been limited by the current facilities and capacity of the Canberra Theatre Centre. This planned redevelopment will go far in addressing these two key issues.

While this preparation, design and consultation is occurring, the Canberra Theatre will need to remain a place of high-quality experience for our audiences. That is why we are investing nearly \$2.4 million over the next two years for the enhancement of audience experience, including upgrades to the Courtyard Studio, which will be a particularly important venue during the evolution of the Canberra Theatre over coming years. We are also focused on improving the experiences of the public in Civic Square, with increased capability for public gatherings, performances, and activation of this important, central space. Members may have noticed work on Knowles Place in recent times.

In this budget we are also investing in the artistic and cultural heritage of our city, with \$915,000 over four years for Lanyon Homestead. These upgrades will result in the former Nolan Gallery being converted into administration space for staff and volunteers; in turn, meaning that members of the public will have expanded and improved access to areas of the property currently required for staff. Work will also be undertaken to conserve or, as necessary, remove and replace trees nearing the end

of their life span, helping to enhance the visitor experience and preserve the heritage values of the Lanyon landscape.

The government's ongoing investment in the CFC has placed it in a strong position to grow its audience and visitor numbers this coming year. Indeed, our targets this year for the CFC are approximately 40 per cent higher than the targets set for 2021-22. This budget provides significant investment in new projects and restorations, enabling the CFC to continue its outstanding work as a cultural leader and managing our cultural facilities. But, as has been flagged by our previous contributions to this debate, while "facilities" is in the name of the Cultural Facilities Corporation, the CFC is nothing without its people. I thank the many donors, sponsors and supporters—chief among them in this past year are Meredith Hinchliffe and Duncan Reeder. All of them are detailed at length in the past year's annual report.

I thank the board, including the incoming and outgoing members, and especially acknowledge the contribution of Justice Richard Refshauge as outgoing chair, and Harriet Elvin as CEO, who retired last year. I thank the advisory committees, who work very hard to support the work across such important facilities. But, most importantly, I take the opportunity to thank all of the staff across the historic places, CMAG and the Canberra Theatre—full time, part time, casual and the many volunteers—and all those who support hospitality and enhance the experience at these venues: our cafe, catering and bar staff across CMAG, Lanyon and Canberra Theatre; the small but very effective teams that maintain the beautiful grounds and have replaced roofs at the historic places; the front-of-house, box office and patron staff at CMAG and the theatre, who ensure a seamless audience and presenter experience; and those who organise and run fascinating tours and volunteer their time at our historic places.

I thank the curators and programmers of exhibitions and shows, who ensure that there is something interesting and entertaining for all ages and interests; those who run the education, discovery, research, community and learning programs; the marketing and sales support, and all those who manage venue hire. Lanyon is becoming a very popular wedding destination.

I am grateful for the extensive technical expertise, which allows for first-class exhibitions and performances; the conservation management that ensures our collections, facilities and locations are maintained to a high standard; the corporate staff who keep everything running; and the leadership and directors who have been navigating such a difficult and exhausting few years through the pandemic and associated restrictions. The range of staff and roles and responsibilities is obviously extensive and that underlines the unique role that the CFC plays in, and offers to, our city. I thank them all for their expertise, efforts and invaluable contribution now and in the exciting few years ahead.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Icon Water Limited—Part 1.18.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.42): I look forward to speaking briefly about Icon Water, which we spoke about during the estimates hearings. During estimates, we had,

amongst other matters, a series of questions relating to a recent unpleasant taste and odour or discolouration of tap water experienced by Canberra residents. It was revealed at that time that Icon Water had received more than 400 complaints about this issue. At the hearings, officials explained that the change in the water was a result of a naturally occurring event due to the compound MIB being stirred up within the sediment of the Bendora catchment, and they stressed that there is no health risk from drinking the water.

But it did provide an opportunity for Icon Water to examine how they respond to these sorts of situations. For example, at that time, if you called Icon Water on the phone, you were met with a recorded message, which may have resulted in people who had called to make a complaint ending the call entirely. It was surprising that a government response—an Icon Water response—to issues of poor-tasting drinking water might recommend that we add lemon or mint to the water, rather than address the cause of it. We do not want to stop people from making a complaint—we wanted them to stay on the phone—and I fear that the recorded message, as it was, may have meant that some people did not stay on the phone to make a complaint.

Using a prerecorded message like that should not be an avenue to prevent consumers from registering a complaint, because Icon Water is required to provide the information to the ICRC about annual complaint numbers. So, while they had about 400 complaints at the time of the estimates hearing, it is quite possible that there were a large number of callers who did not stay on the phone to make the complaint that they had rung up for, because they were deterred by the prerecorded message. I feel there should be better mechanisms in place to make complaints in examples like this, so that we have a more accurate picture of how big the issue is.

Furthermore, as I mentioned already, some of the responses to people who have raised concerns about the quality of tap water were very interesting. I mentioned that some official responses suggested that people add lemon or mint to the water or store it in the fridge for a while to change the taste. I found this quite disconcerting. Canberra water was known for many, many years as being the best water in Australia, and I am eager to learn what Icon Water's plans are to prevent this type of thing happening again—to prevent the increased concentration of MIB in the future and to ensure that Canberra gets back to the top in being known as having the best possible drinking water in Australia.

Given that it is a natural occurrence, surely it can happen again, and I hope that we have learned some lessons from the recent occurrence. I look forward to hearing what preventative measures might be introduced and what destratification equipment might be installed to deal with that stratification in the water reservoirs in the future. I note that in the estimates report some of these issues were touched on. For example, recommendation 34 states:

The Committee recommends that ICON Water examine reasons for the MIB contamination and how to supply long term high quality drinking water.

I was pleased to see that this recommendation was agreed to, and that Icon Water has entered into discussions with the ANU on conducting MIB research. Similarly, recommendation 35 states:

The Committee recommends that ICON Water should provide as part of the recorded message on known issues a pathway option to leave customer feedback.

I note that this recommendation was agreed to in principle, and that Icon Water explained that its telephone system does not currently have the functionality to provide a pathway option for a customer to leave feedback but that it has an upgrade scheduled in the coming years which might provide this opportunity.

As I said, this may mean that people do not end the phone call but stay on the call or have a pathway to make a complaint, which then must be passed onto the ICRC. It is all intended to work in that way. Having made those comments about the discolouration of our water recently, I would like to thank Icon Water for all of their hard work in providing Canberra with safe drinking water. I look forward to talking with them more at the annual report hearings, which will be coming up sooner than we all might like, and to hear what else they have been doing to ensure that Canberra has the best possible drinking water.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (11.48): The budget outlook notes, on page 276, that Icon Water Limited is currently self-funding a range of capital works projects across the territory. One of these, the Belconnen trunk sewer upgrade project, is being completed in my electorate of Ginninderra, though it has been delayed by both COVID and rain. Part of this project is the construction of four new odour control units—two in Latham, one in Florey and one in Evatt. The Evatt unit is visible from Ginninderra Drive, near the dam wall for Lake Ginninderra. The Florey unit can be seen from Kingsford Smith Drive, and the two units in Latham can also be seen from Ginninderra Drive and Southern Cross Drive respectively.

Prior to the commencement of construction, Icon Water prepared a fact sheet for residents regarding these new odour control units. The fact sheet includes the question, “Do they smell?” followed by a strong assurance: “They are designed to treat odours, so they do not smell.” Unfortunately, this assurance may not always be accurate. Three odour control units exist on the edge of west Macgregor, two within 160 metres of the nearest homes and one only 90 metres away. On more than one occasion I have been told by residents who live near these two odour control units that they smell like rotten eggs, especially when days are very hot and the winds blow from the west.

A rotten egg smell strongly suggests the escape of hydrogen sulphide. In fact, the Icon Water fact sheet notes that hydrogen sulphide is a common source of odour from sewage systems. I have previously raised residents’ concerns about the construction of these four new odour control units, and I stand to raise those concerns again today because, like the units on the edge of west Macgregor, these four odour control units will be located near residential areas in Evatt, Latham and Florey. I realise that the computer modelling in the air quality impact assessment, which forms part of the Belconnen trunk sewer project’s environmental impact statement, predicts that emissions from hydrogen sulphide from these units will be within acceptable limits. Modelling specifically forecasted that this noxious gas will be detectable by nearby residents, on average, for fewer than two minutes each day. Of course, if the ability to smell hydrogen sulphide primarily happens on hot summer days and does not happen at all the rest of the year, a daily average may mask what the impact will be during the warmer months.

As one example, in a letter to me dated 30 June 2020, the Chief Minister assured me that the odour control units in west Macgregor were “currently operating within desired parameters” and that Icon Water had no verified data of an odour problem. In contrast, a few months earlier, one west Macgregor mum assured me that the smell from the odour control unit near her house was so bad on some days that she could not convince her children to play outdoors. I speak up today on behalf of residents in Latham, Florey and Evatt, who may be exposed to bad smells from these new odour control units, as has happened in west Macgregor.

Residents in west Macgregor continue to feel that the ACT government has not taken their complaints about bad smells seriously. As a local member, I will be monitoring any impacts that the future operation of the four new odour control units may have on nearby residents, and I will expect the government to be responsive to any concerns that they may have.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Office of the Work Health and Safety Commissioner—Part 1.19.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (11.53): I wish to speak briefly to workplace safety at this point, because workplace safety deserves to be taken seriously. One of my very early memories as a child was sitting in the living room of a family friend whose life had been tragically taken on a worksite. Seeing the pain that a family goes through when they lose a loved one unexpectedly, through no fault of their own, through a workplace safety incident, is no joke. The ripples that it has through a community are astounding. And it is not something that you forget in a hurry.

That is why Canberra deserves to have a workplace safety system that not only puts the stated intent of workers’ safety at its heart but delivers on that. No worker deserves to be injured at work. No family deserves to be deprived of a loved one through no fault of their own. Workers and their families deserve a system that works—and works with businesses to ensure that everyone comes home safe.

Sadly, there are questions at the moment as to how well our system in Canberra is working. Just recently we have seen—and the minister has spoken to it—another significant workplace concern around a construction site and landslips. It is not the first one recently, which means it cannot have taken the government by surprise. There were warnings that this could happen, but, from the discussion that I heard this week, the biggest thing the government has done is write letters. The government wrote letters to developers.

The fact that those letters may not have had their intended impact may speak to the culture of workplace safety that I am hearing about from business owners and workers. They tell me that the culture in the ACT’s workplace safety organisation is adversarial and unproductive. It puts waving a big stick ahead of preventing problems. If a workplace safety system is going to work well in the ACT, it needs to work in partnership with businesses, not persistently leave them living in fear. If a workplace safety system here in the ACT is going to work, we have to have good training and we have to have effective measures that bring everyone along.

One of the discussions we had in estimates was around the range of stakeholders that are involved in workplace safety during any WorkSafe investigation. We heard that the only external stakeholder that gets to come along is the union. The unions are vital stakeholders in this area—workplace safety can and must be one of their chief concerns—but it speaks to the distrust of the system that businesses now have, that they feel that that is setting the process up to fail.

When they get a letter, do they assume that it is well intentioned? I am afraid they do not. When a WorkSafe inspector comes by, they tell me that it feels like a raid, not a constructive dialogue. They feel that they are always pitched as the bad guy. If we are going to have a system that makes sure people are coming home—a system that makes sure people are not being injured in the workplace—it needs to be productive and it needs to be based on mutual objectives. I cannot think of any employer who wants to see their workers injured—I cannot think of any—but they perpetually feel that they are set up as the bad guy and that they carry all of the risk. That is not good enough.

We need to get to a system where WorkSafe ACT and the government are speaking with businesses and understanding what the issues are that they face. There was a great example of this just recently in the Work Health and Safety Amendment Regulation 2022 (No 1). This regulation, introduced in July 2022, obviously had issues, given the requirement which WorkSafe ACT felt had to be introduced to apply a three-month exemption period for the part of the regulation regarding silica dust. During the three-month exemption, the building industry was left completely in the dark as to what it might be required to do and when it might come into effect. Even as recently as this weekend, they were still telling me that they did not know what would happen when the exemption was due to end, on Monday, 17 October.

The industry has been given a further two-week transition period, but many of the businesses I have spoken to are still confused as to how they will adhere to the new regulations. Silicon dust is a really important issue. It has major health impacts, and we have to have practical measures that work. The fact that introducing water is seen as the only solution here actually introduces a whole set of new risks that have not been adequately considered. Water does not work very well with electricity, for example. The industry will also require training and support to implement the new regulation. It is not good enough that the only organisation that this government wants to allow to produce training is, strangely enough, owned by the CFMEU.

Industry, businesses and workers have serious questions around how workplace safety works here in the ACT. It is not a system that is designed to get the best outcomes yet. It can be, but we have to get all sides working together to make sure people are coming home safely.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

ACT Gambling and Racing Commission—Part 1.20.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (12.01): I want to start by saying that in the ACT we should be extremely proud of the way that we regulate gambling, and that so much of this gets down to compliance and to the Gambling and Racing Commission. It also

gets down to the compliance officers and all of those on the ground who work hard to make all of this come together.

The ACT, because of our historic gaming model, has always led the way in the prevention of gambling harm. Because of the fact that the vast majority of our gaming machines are owned and operated by community clubs, we have always risen above the pack with regard to protecting those who are potentially sucked into the whirlpool of gambling harm. We also have a very strong regulatory framework in this space, and it is up to the Gambling and Racing Commission to enforce the rules to make absolutely certain that our gaming operators are doing the right thing.

The money that is spent in this line is very clearly money that is well spent. It has become a heavily contested space in this place in the last six years or so, and often the war of words around ideology does not assist in creating the best outcomes for everyone. At the policy level, we are going down the path of some major changes, albeit that that process appears to have hit a number of hurdles and what was originally forecast to occur in this area may not be rolled out exactly in the way that it was first mooted.

The government has often not listened well enough to the clubs with regard to their very sound advice on protecting patrons from gaming harm. However, there are occasions when the clubs are listened to. I was pleased to be an attendee at the Gambling Harm Awareness Week breakfast at the Erindale Vikings club on Tuesday morning, along with my government colleagues Mr Rattenbury and Dr Paterson. I am really excited by what Vikings announced on Tuesday morning with regard to the latest gambling harm prevention measures that are being rolled out at the Vikings group at their four venues—in Wanniasa, Chisholm, Lanyon and the Tuggeranong town centre.

What they have announced is the Ask for Andy program. “Andy” is the generic name that has been given to the gambling contact officers in the Vikings venues. If, while you are in one of those venues, you feel as though you are in trouble—you feel overwhelmed by feelings of gambling harm and associated addiction issues, or that you are being dragged in by the force of the whirlpool—you do not have to approach someone and explain all of that. All you have to do is say to one of the staff members, “I would like to see Andy. Is Andy available?” That is it. That is all you have to do.

Andy is caring, approachable, mature, supportive and someone you can lean on to provide support without judgement. Andy is the generic name given to the on-duty gambling contact officers—the specially trained staff who are in the club to support and provide assistance to patrons who may be negatively impacted by gambling. Each of the Vikings clubs has at least one GCO on duty at all times, and the Andys undertake training to ensure that they are equipped with the knowledge that they need to assist and support patrons. They have over 40 Andys across the Vikings group, who are well equipped to handle and identify gambling harm. Andy is not their real name, but when you ask for Andy you will be taken to a private space for a cup of tea and to have a safe chat. Andy will offer you the opportunity to discuss how you are being impacted by gambling and can connect you with support services straightaway, or you can do that in the future. Andy can also talk about self-exclusion programs and all of that stuff, which is part of our framework here.

So, applause to the Vikings group, and may the government acknowledge that the people who often know best what happens on the floor are in the clubs themselves, so please use them more.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Public Trustee and Guardian—Part 1.21.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (12.06): I have a question that I will continue to ask until I get a satisfactory answer. I have not received that answer thus far. Why was the Public Trustee and Guardian not asked to administer the Chief Minister's Charitable Fund? As the Chief Minister would be aware, the Public Trustee and Guardian manages GreaterGood, Canberra's public charitable foundation. It is a very sophisticated operation. It provides people with the facility to create their own tax-effective charitable funds. It requires some expertise in both tax and trusts, obviously with a focus on charitable purposes. According to the GreaterGood website, it can assist individuals and funds to produce perpetual income for a charitable cause. It is not a charity itself, but it links "good people with good causes". That is very worthy. It assists individuals and organisations to establish their own charitable funds in a low cost, tax-effective manner under the umbrella of GreaterGood.

What we have instead is the Chief Minister establishing his own charitable fund, to provide additional help to the most vulnerable members of our community. As I said, given the complexity of GreaterGood's scope of responsibilities, surely the Chief Minister's worthy goal could have fitted under that umbrella—a charitable foundation already established under statute.

I have not had a good answer to the question: why set up an additional charitable function in the territory? It has been outsourced. It has been taken out of the hands of an organisation, the Public Trustee and Guardian, which has a public good role in legislation. The Public Trustee and Guardian was established for the good of the public, across a whole spectrum of activities. Why wouldn't it be tasked with expanding its role? I have not yet received a satisfactory answer to that question. It requires an extra source of funding and ongoing funding for something that has operated for quite a while.

I leave the question open for an explanation: why doesn't the Public Trustee and Guardian embrace the Chief Minister's Charitable Fund operations? It would be appropriate. It is my opinion that it would also be desired, and I do not think the Chief Minister has provided a satisfactory answer to that.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission—Part 1.22.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Total appropriated to territory entities.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Treasurer's Advance—Part 1.23.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Capital works reserve—Part 1.24.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Total appropriations.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 10, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Title.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (12.12): This is the last speaking opportunity before the bill is put to a vote, so I want to take the opportunity to thank members for their contribution to the budget debate and to thank the Select Committee on Estimates for their report into the Appropriation Bill.

As members are aware, putting the budget together each year is no small task. I acknowledge the significant effort from officials in Treasury, the directorates and indeed across the entire ACT public service. I would like to specifically acknowledge and thank Under Treasurer Stuart Hocking, departing Deputy Under Treasurer Sue Vroombout, and Stephen Miners, our other Deputy Under Treasurer, as well as their respective teams.

This is the third of five budgets in this parliamentary turn. I want to acknowledge the work of the team within my office, particularly led by Faheem Khan and Brittany Atkins, who manage the budget process within my office. But I thank all of the staff across the executive who contribute to assisting their ministers through this budget process.

I thank my ministerial colleagues for their engagement throughout the budget process and the many, many ERC meetings. As I mentioned earlier in the debate, the process requires thousands of difficult decisions that balance competing priorities. These are challenging decisions and every budget requires them to be made, but I believe we get the balance right in our decision-making process.

The last two years have not been easy as we have managed the impacts of the pandemic, but the territory economy has outperformed expectations. It has been resilient and flexible and is expected to continue growing over the coming years. This budget balances the need to continue to improve our fiscal position, which it certainly does, with the need to invest in the services that a rapidly growing city needs.

I commend the title and the budget to the Assembly.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (12.14): I would like to make a few closing comments as well. In closing the debate on the budget for this financial year, we have some observations from the Canberra Liberals. As usual, this is a budget big on promises and spin. But all Canberrans will get out of it is an underfunded health system, a neglected education system, potholes bigger than craters on our roads, long grass and a dangerous driving crime wave because our police have been let down by this Labor-Greens government.

Past performance is usually a good indication of future performance, so we know that the Labor-Greens government will fail to deliver, just as they have for the past two decades. This is because we see a tired Labor Party beholden to their junior coalition partner, the Greens, who are busy trying to have their cake and eat it too—happy to be in a power-sharing arrangement when it suits them, then go to great lengths to pretend to be independent and different when they need to take up one of their fringe issues. The result is incredibly bad governance, and Canberrans are paying the price for that.

On debt and deficit, thanks to this Treasurer's financial mismanagement, the territory is currently in the worst ever financial position since self-government. Higher and higher taxes will have to be paid by future generations of Canberrans to cover debt repayments. In fact, by 2025-26 Canberrans will be paying half a billion dollars each year to service that debt.

This year it is only just a cool \$335 million, which is more than the expenditure on the justice portfolio. It is more than the government spent on transport, on environment and climate change, on economic development or on housing. Imagine what a difference we could be making in all of these areas, along with health and education, if we did not have this \$335 million in interest repayments escalating to half a billion dollars in three years time. Let me repeat that: half a billion dollars a year on interest repayments alone in 2025-26. Whilst the Chief Minister would like to blame COVID or Mr Fluffy or the global financial crisis for his financial troubles, the truth is that he is just not very good at managing Canberrans' money—because that is whose money it was.

The Chief Minister, in the health area, started taking money out of our health system long before COVID, which is why COVID has been such a challenge for our hardworking doctors, nurses and medical staff. In fact, Labor and the Greens have consistently been responsible for the worst emergency department and elective surgery waiting times in Australia, year after year. The state of our health system is thus the result of deliberate long-term neglect and under-resourcing by this Labor-Greens government.

It is the same story in education. The minister blames an Australia-wide teacher shortage, but the reality is that the teacher shortage is now exacerbating the problems this Labor-Greens government created by underfunding our education system for the past decade. It means that here in the ACT our academic standards are now going backwards. Violence and bullying have become such an issue that WorkSafe ACT had to close a Canberra school to whole year groups earlier this year, and our school infrastructure has been so badly neglected that it has become dangerous.

On city services and basic maintenance, we can add to this neglect the absolute failure of the Labor-Greens government to deliver these most basic city services. At the moment, for example, we have a pothole epidemic on our roads. Even though we have had record rainfall from La Nina, the budget is in such bad shape that the Labor-Greens government cannot afford to address our urban services issues properly—grass not being mowed, cracked footpaths not fixed and attempts to move to a fortnightly garbage collection to save money. Meanwhile, our rates go up alarmingly each and every year, beyond inflation.

I turn to housing, public housing and vulnerable Canberrans. The cost of living in Canberra is untenable for so many, and this shameful Labor-Greens government has left vulnerable Canberrans behind. In so many ways, we are a privileged city with a local government that does nothing about the 38,000 Canberrans who are living in poverty, including nearly 9,000 children. There is complete disregard for Canberrans living in public housing, with a waiting list of over 3,000 to access public housing, and fewer public housing dwellings now than there were a decade ago. That is the reality under this Labor-Greens government. They also routinely fail to deliver on their own targets for new dwellings each year, despite a chronic housing affordability crisis in Canberra. They talk the big talk but they do not walk the walk. The Labor-Greens government's incompetence and neglect of Canberrans is staggering, and this budget is just another reminder of that.

Title agreed to.

Question put:

That this bill be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 14		Noes 7
Mr Barr	Dr Paterson	Mr Cain
Mr Braddock	Mr Pettersson	Ms Castley
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Cocks
Ms Cheyne	Mr Steel	Mrs Kikkert
Ms Clay	Ms Stephen-Smith	Ms Lawder
Ms Davidson	Ms Vassarotti	Mr Milligan
Mr Davis		Mr Parton
Ms Orr		

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 12.25 to 2.00 pm.

Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (2.00): Minister Gentleman is absent from question time today due to illness. As was the case in his last absence, Minister Steel will assist on planning, police, emergency services and corrections questions, and I will assist on industrial relations and workplace safety questions.

Questions without notice

Fadden—Healthy Waterways project

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction. Earlier this month at the Tuggeranong Community Council there was a presentation from the directorate about the Healthy Waterways stage 2 projects, with 13 new structures proposed to be built, based on theory and computer model default parameters, rather than on actual recent data. Hence, they may not achieve the outcomes expected and required. One of the projects mentioned was the construction of four mini rain gardens in Fadden, in the green space and walkway behind Dash Crescent, McPhail Place, Bow Place and Ogden Close, leading down towards Fadden Primary School oval. Minister, why are you building more water quality assets when, to use your own words, you don't yet have evaluation reports of the stage 1 projects?

MR RATTENBURY: As Ms Lawder well knows, a significant amount of research has been done for the ACT government by the University of Canberra, particularly on the Tuggeranong catchment and how to improve water quality in Lake Tuggeranong. I know that both Mr Davis, in particular, and Ms Lawder are very passionate advocates for that, because of the difficulties that we have had with Lake Tuggeranong. As I have explained here before, that research has shown that we need to intervene higher up the catchment, so to speak. Rather than simply building large assets and filtration points, intervening closer to the source is really effective. So these projects are part of that research, that understanding and that attempt to improve water quality in Tuggeranong.

MS LAWDER: Minister, how many houses were letterboxed in the area about the Fadden rain gardens proposal?

MR RATTENBURY: I am afraid I do not know that off the top of my head, but I will take it on notice and provide Ms Lawder with the details as quickly as I can.

MR PARTON: Minister, what community education components are included in stage 2 of Healthy Waterways?

MR RATTENBURY: There are a number. Stage 1 is very much about physical assets. Stage 2, based on research that has been done for the government by the University of Canberra, has clearly pointed to issues of community action being an important part of improving water quality. What has been identified, for example, is that we now know that eucalyptus leaves lying in gutters, as well as deciduous leaves, can become a significant source of nutrients in the system. With the rain, as the nutrients leach out they flow into the system. That is where things like the Leaf

Collective have become an interesting community trial, where people become involved in picking up leaves and the like. In this round of funding—I do not have the exact figures to hand—a significant component of the budget is actually about the community education approach and not simply physical assets, because clearly we need to take a multi-pronged approach to dealing with nutrients flooding into waterways. I am happy to provide the figures on notice.

Belconnen—Healthy Waterways project

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction. Minister, at last night's Belconnen Community Council there was a lot of discussion about a proposed Healthy Waterways project near Emu Creek in Belconnen. There was huge enthusiasm for Healthy Waterways, but there were some concerns about this particular proposal. The main concerns were that the DA was lodged before consultation began—it has now been removed—that the project looked more like an engineered water filter than a beautiful habitat-rich wetland, and that people were not sure if there was time for their views to be genuinely considered. Can you tell me how you will proceed with this project?

MR RATTENBURY: I will start with the issue of the development application. It was submitted prior to the consultation commencing. That was an error of process, and I apologise to the community for that. It was certainly not the intent to look as if it was a *fait accompli*. Once I became aware of this issue the EPSDD was advised to withdraw the development application and proceed with community consultation.

That community consultation is now underway. Any future DA will not be submitted until that process of consultation is finished and a consideration of the feedback has been taken into account. Regarding the DA, that is where it now stands. We apologise to the community today, because obviously a step like that can breed some distrust or perhaps some cynicism about the sincerity, but I want to ensure the community that we are keen to hear their views on this project.

In terms of the design of the project, this is a different type of project. When I launched it, we talked about a sub-surface wetland. The idea in this case is that, with respect to the roots of the various plants, the water flows under the ground and gets filtered in that way before it hits Lake Ginninderra, ideally in a much cleaner state as a result of the sub-surface filtration. I am very interested to hear this feedback if people feel that it is not what they had in mind. That is obviously the point of the consultation.

What we will do now is assess that community feedback and consider it in light of people—perhaps having heard the presentation last night at Belconnen Community Council, for example—having a better understanding of why the project has been designed in the way it has, and think, “Actually, that’s fine,” or whether they still have views that it is not what they had in mind. That is the work that will continue from here as part of the consultation process.

MS CLAY: If enough locals have strong views, do you think the project might include more nature elements, better amenity and maybe a pond?

MR RATTENBURY: I do not have a view on that yet, simply in the sense that it is in the middle of the consultation. I have heard the feedback from last night's meeting, and obviously we are still waiting now for the other perspectives to come in. Obviously, the point of having a consultation is to solicit the community views to see whether people have particular preferences in the design process. This particular project, for example, uses about half of the oval at Emu Bank. Certainly at the earlier consultations—the more informal discussions with the community—people were clear that they did not want to see the whole oval used. They still wanted space to walk their dogs, and the like. So it was designed to seek to accommodate those views. There are some other views coming through now. We will clearly need to take those into account, but, again, I can assure the community that there is scope to take those matters into account. We will look at it as all the feedback comes in and assess the final design of the project in light of the feedback.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, does the community like the Healthy Waterways projects established in other parts of Canberra?

MR RATTENBURY: Certainly, I think the Healthy Waterways assets are becoming incredibly popular in the sense that people enjoy walking around them and through them. They enjoy the wildlife that they attract, although I do recall—members who have been here for a while might remember this—the Lyneham wetland. When it was first being built there was some degree of community opposition. People were concerned that it would perhaps draw snakes and/or rats to the area. Some of the members in this place echoed those views, but having seen that project now fully built I know that the community has really embraced it.

We see them featuring in real estate advertisements for various properties that are located near to them. So I think that, generally, the community is very appreciative of them. People appreciate the wildlife. They appreciate the human amenity. They appreciate the park benches that often go with them because they can go and sit and relax. So, overall, I think they have been very well received, but there are questions that come up about the different types of designs coming through. As the research evolves the designs are changing and I think it is really important that we continue to tell the community why they are being done in the community and why that are being done this way, and take on board any concerns that people have.

Municipal services—Monash shopping centre upgrades

MS LAWDER: My question is to Minister for City Services. Minister, we have spoken in this place on a number of occasions about shopping centre upgrades. The supermarket at Monash shops closed some time ago and the site has been largely vacant. Nevertheless, your government was progressing with “upgrades” at Monash shops to attempt to attract a new tenant. A development application has now been lodged for a childcare centre on the site. Minister, is the government still going ahead with upgrades at the Monash shops at ratepayers' expense?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. As we undertake improvements to shopping centres and other public spaces around Canberra, we consult with the community on what they would like to see as part of those upgrades. Often we get

feedback that is quite different, depending on the circumstances, the experience of those communities of those spaces and what they would like to see built in those spaces, and it could be a range of different things. So we will continue to consult with the community as we go through the shopping centre upgrades program to find out what is appropriate in that location in Monash.

Ms Lawder: Point of order, Madam Speaker. The question was quite clearly: is the upgrade still going ahead? It was not about consulting with the community. Is the upgrade going ahead—yes or no?

MADAM SPEAKER: Without directing the minister how to answer the question, but if you can come to that point, Minister.

MR STEEL: We will consult with the community on what they would like to see in that location before we go ahead. It could be quite different, depending on what the changed circumstances are at that shopping centre.

We have put forward a range of shopping centre upgrades. That was based on work that had been done by TCCS and informed by condition audits of shopping centres and where their current infrastructure is at at the moment. We will look at what we can do to improve that infrastructure, and that could mean that it is quite different to what is currently there and may take into account the changed use at that shopping centre to provide early childhood services as opposed to retail services over the next period. We will have that conversation with the community before we determine and make a decision on what upgrades will be happening there.

We have made a commitment to upgrade a range of different shopping centres and other public spaces through public realm improvements. The opposition did not make that commitment at the election. We are getting on with the job of delivering the promises that we made. You never promised anything and you cannot deliver

MS LAWDER: Minister, why is it not up to the proponent to make the changes that may happen at Monash shops, rather than at ratepayers' expense, given the development application lodged?

MR STEEL: At a number of different shopping centres, when we have undertaken upgrades and we have consulted with the community, we try to get the greatest benefit to the community by making sure that private investment also complements the public investment being made often at the same time. Sometimes one follows the other.

We will work out what the particular circumstances are at that shopping centre. If there is a live application that is coming ahead of the upgrades at Monash, we will obviously consider what urban realm upgrades there are. But there will be a clear demarcation about what is public land, which is the responsibility of the ACT government to improve, and what is private land. We will work with local business but also the broader community about what they would like to see at that shop.

Richardson shops is another example down Ms Lawder's way. We have undertaken upgrades there in terms of play space improvements. That benefits the whole community. It does not matter what is in the shopping centre. We hope that that will

spur private investment in the shops in the future, but that space for play is going to be used by the whole community the whole year round.

So there are things that we can do to improve these spaces for the whole community, and we hope that will also benefit businesses. Early childhood services are often considered to be businesses. They are also places of education and learning. We will see what we can do to complement those activities. That might mean activities that actually support young children. That is something that we are absolutely committed to through playground upgrades. As part of the shopping centre upgrades that we are undertaking, we often do make upgrades to play spaces, for example, or put in new play spaces. Duffy shops is a great example of that, with construction underway at the moment.

MR PARTON: Minister, can you provide an update on upgrades at Lanyon and Calwell, including expected completion times and what is to be included in those upgrades?

MR STEEL: We have set out a range of different shopping centres that we plan to upgrade in this term of government. That will give the opposition a sense of the timing. We will be consulting with the community on those upgrades.

At Lanyon shopping centre, in particular, there has been a significant amount of work started already, with funding commitments made in relation to upgrades to the lights that are going into the Lanyon Marketplace from Tharwa Drive. That will provide some improvement to the shopping centre. We are keen to hear from the community about other improvements we can make.

There is a particular constraint in relation to what is public land and what is the private leasehold of the shopping centre at Lanyon. So we will need to make sure that we concentrate on those areas that are public land, and we will make improvements to that, and we hope that the shopping centre themselves will make improvements to their private lease.

Housing—energy efficiency

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction. I think all members in this place would appreciate that climate change does not just represent an increasing number of acute disasters but prolonged changes in daily temperatures and weather conditions, with heatwaves set to double. With that in mind, what are the benefits of the ACT leading the nation in the quest for a minimum energy-efficiency standard of seven stars?

MS VASSAROTTI: Thank you, Mr Davis, for the question. This is a change that, actually, we have been championing in the ACT for some time, so it was really exciting that, a few months ago, we actually came together as building ministers across the country and agreed to seven stars for our residential buildings. That means that we will actually be part of a national process where that standard will be set.

There are two key things that will be changed through the decisions that were made by building ministers. One is to raise the minimum level of thermal performance for

new homes. That is, really, where we look at the idea of the seven stars under the nation-wide house energy rating system. There is also the concept of a new whole-of-home annual energy use budget that needs to be met for new homes. This budget applies to the energy use of a home's heating and cooling equipment, things such as hot water systems, lighting, swimming pools and spa pumps.

What this change means is that there will actually be a change that is really beneficial, both for people and the planet. This will, in the longer term, save people significant money, as the thermal performance of their home is much more efficient, as well as seeing significant outcomes for the planet as well. It particularly works in well with some of the work that the ACT is doing, particularly around electrifying the city.

What we find is that people are really keen to make their buildings more sustainable and do not know where to start. This change means that there will be a standard set and it will be much easier for people to get much better performance of their properties. So it is a very exciting move.

MR DAVIS: Minister, what needs to happen to our homes, established and new, over the longer term to make them resilient to our changing climate?

MS VASSAROTTI: Thanks, Mr Davis, for the supplementary question. There is a significant task that we have ahead of us, in terms of ensuring that our homes are climate-wise and more climate resilient. There has been a lot that has been done through mechanisms such as the building ministers, in terms of what we can do to future-proof our buildings to ensure that they are more resilient. What we are really seeing, particularly in climates such as ours, is that we used to think a lot about heating and how we kept our buildings warm in the winter times, but summer is becoming much more an issue, particularly around extreme heat, and we saw, with the terrible bushfires a couple of years ago, the issues of smoke.

So we need to build our homes differently, and that is exactly what this change to the national Building Code is about. We also have to support people to look at how they renovate their homes and make sure that the buildings that are already built become more climate resilient. This is an issue that we all need to look at, in terms of our own homes. Governments need to look at, in terms of regulatory changes, how we support industry to move towards these changes, and how we really support people at the lower end of the income stream around adjusting emissions. Quite a few of the programs that the ACT government has been working on, in terms of the vulnerable household scheme, the Sustainable Household Scheme, are looking at really supporting that transition.

MR COCKS: Minister, why is the ACT still using an outdated approach to modelling energy efficiency for existing homes rather than the NatHERS system?

MS VASSAROTTI: Thanks, Mr Cocks, for the question. It is actually a really good question. We do have an issue in terms of the system that we use for existing homes. It is using a system that sits separately to the NatHERS process. This is something that we need to review and work has commenced around look at how we bring those two systems together.

Health—eating disorder support services

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. Minister, concerned families of children admitted to the Canberra Hospital with eating disorders have spoken to the Canberra Liberals about the care their kids receive. One parent reported that when their child was admitted to the adult mental health unit, they were not fed via nasogastric tube or intravenous line as happens in the paediatric high care unit.

Minister, why are children with eating disorders being treated in the hospital's adult mental health unit, and how many children have been admitted to the adult mental health unit since it opened?

MS DAVIDSON: I thank Ms Castley for the question, and I will take on notice the detail of exactly how many children have been admitted to the adult mental health unit for treatment of eating disorders.

Eating disorder treatment is quite complex because it needs to address psychological, medical, clinical and sociocultural aspects of that particular mental health condition. So the type of clinical care that is required for an individual can vary quite a bit between individuals and at different points in time in their condition.

I would certainly encourage you, if ever you are receiving feedback from people in the community about particular individual cases, to get in contact with my office so we can make sure they are engaged with CHS to make sure all of the concerns are addressed for that specific individual.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, why aren't children with eating disorders who are being treated in the adult mental health unit being fed via nasogastric tube or intravenous line, as happens in the paediatric high care unit? The service seems to be different, but the needs are the same.

MS DAVIDSON: As I was just saying, the needs of individuals who are experiencing eating disorders vary quite a bit from individual to individual. The kind of clinical treatment they receive needs to take into account their medical needs, their psychological needs and their sociocultural needs, and that will vary over the course of their condition as well. It is, very much, a response to the individual's specific needs as to what type of treatment they receive and in what setting.

I would certainly encourage you, if you are receiving feedback from a constituent in the community about an individual case, to get in contact with my office so we can make sure that CHS are addressing that individual's needs.

MR COCKS: Minister, why are children and young people having to rely on ministerial intervention in order to prevent them falling through the cracks between the physical and mental health systems.

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you for the question. CHS has a range of processes in place for people to raise their concerns, but it is really important in a healthy functioning democracy that people are still able to take their concerns to government directly and to ministers if they feel the need to.

If there are people out there that are looking for a response from government, I would certainly encourage them to get in contact with my office if they would like to.

Children and young people—Next Steps for Our Kids strategy

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Families and Community Services. Minister, in June the ACT government released Next Steps for our Kids 2022-2030: ACT Strategy to Strengthen Families and Keep Children and Young People Safe. Can you please explain how this strategy was developed and will be implemented in partnership with the community sector.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for the question and for her ongoing interest in this important matter.

I will go back to 29 March 2021 when I hosted a child and family services reform forum engaging a broad group of stakeholders for a day of discussion and workshops. The purpose of the forum was to consider the needs of children and families in the ACT, areas of reform that were currently underway and how to engage stakeholders in the ongoing planning and implementation of reform across child and family services. I would not say it was the start of it, but it really kick-started the conversation about the Next Steps strategy and some related pieces of work. It was followed by deep iterative engagement with our critical sector partners to develop the Next Steps strategy. The strategy acknowledges explicitly that partnerships between government and the community sector are key to achieving better outcomes for children, young people and their families when they are experiencing risk or vulnerability.

Partnering with the community is one of the six domains of the strategy. The domain outlines initiatives that will strengthen our partnerships with the non-government sector from the implementation of reforms through to how we work together to deliver services. This includes the formation of a ministerial council, or a similar kind of mechanism, to share responsibility for implementation and accountability of reform between government and the sector through the commissioning process delivering new funding models that allow flexibility so that services can better meet the needs of children and young people and be genuinely focussed on outcomes, and the development of common tools and assessment frameworks which can help achieve better and more consistent decision making, both within CYPS but also that common understanding with sector partners.

MS ORR: Minister, what do you hope this strategy will achieve for a child who is experiencing risk.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. We are continuing to work closely with the sector on the development of the Next Steps strategy and the four year action plan, which represent a real opportunity to accelerate our efforts towards building a truly restorative child protection and family support system, with early support and the voices of children and young people, their families and carers embedded in the way the system is structured and the way it operates. It is also an opportunity to activate the broader community in support of vulnerable

families. It is a longer term strategy and we know the evidence base will continue to evolve. The strategy has scope to adjust to the changing landscape.

One of the first things we are doing right now is commissioning a new residential care provider to deliver therapeutic residential care, including intensive therapeutic care, for those young people who have the greatest level of complexity and are not able to live with foster or kinship carers. Madam Speaker, every child in this system will have different circumstances, different needs and a different experience. But under Next Steps where a child is facing risks of neglect in their family home their parents will be better supported to engage in the services they need before the family reaches crisis point. A child who has experienced a break down in the safety of their family will have greater access to family-led decision making, meaning they will be more likely to be supported in a way that draws from their natural family network and makes use of kinship care arrangements and the strength of their broader community. A child in foster or kinship care will see their carer better able to access practical and wellbeing support. Carers will have a better understanding of their rights through a charter of rights with the benefits this brings to the carer flowing through to the child or young person. Importantly, an Aboriginal child engaged in the system will be more likely to receive support and services from an Aboriginal community controlled organisation and will have access and advocacy from the commissioner.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how do you envisage the role of Aboriginal community controlled organisations will grow and change, and how will this improve outcomes for First Nations children and families.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you Mr Pettersson for the supplementary. One of the most important priorities and the first domain under Next Steps is Our Booris, Our Way, the work we are doing to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the child protection system and to improve the experiences of families if they are engaged in statutory services. The response to Our Booris, Our Way is embedded in Next Steps but will also continue to be delivered alongside it and be accountable to the Implementation Oversight Committee. The strategy will support the development of Aboriginal community controlled organisations in the child and family support space with a view towards transitioning responsibility for case management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to an Aboriginal community controlled organisation over time. The government is committed to transitioning funding to Aboriginal community controlled organisations for early support and diversionary services as a priority. Our work to support ACCO development under Next Steps also supports our commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028, and our Labor election commitments.

We have already been having discussions with existing and emerging ACCOs and there is enthusiasm in the sector around building new partnerships. Indeed the government has worked with emerging organisation Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation to provide seed funding that will enable the organisation to hire an establishing CEO and take steps towards becoming a registered care and protection organisation in the ACT. Yerrabi Yurwang has committed to a range of performance indicators including undertaking ORIC training and developing

a strategic plan and model of care. CSD, the Community Services Directorate, have seconded a staff member to support the CEO in undertaking these activities. Madam Speaker, this is a very important commitment and I am pleased to have been asked a question about it today.

Business—support

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. The *Canberra Times* published a story in November 2020 about a sole trader unable to participate in the ChooseCBR scheme, saying:

It's a kick in the guts for someone who has managed to scrimp by.

On 11 September last year a Riotact article criticised the ACT government's lack of support for non-employing businesses with a turnover of less than \$75,000, saying that these businesses had been left out. Minister, how many non-employing businesses received business support grants?

MS CHEYNE: I will take that question on notice.

MS CASTLEY: How many non-employing businesses participated in the ChooseCBR scheme?

MS CHEYNE: Just going to Ms Castley's earlier comments, the article that she refers to from almost two years ago does actually reference someone who was not able to participate in the ChooseCBR scheme because they had not received the JobKeeper or JobSeeker grant. That was part of the eligibility criteria for the pilot of ChooseCBR. We took that feedback on board from that participant and in fact we relaunched the full rollout of the scheme with that person, at their business, if members need reminding. So we certainly did act, as much as we could—

Ms Castley: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order.

Ms Castley: It is just a simple question: how many non-employing businesses participated in ChooseCBR? That is all I need to know.

MADAM SPEAKER: The minister is in order. Ms Cheyne.

MS CHEYNE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I say this because I am giving broader context to the question that Ms Castley is asking. We did seek to ensure that we had a broad range of participation in the ChooseCBR scheme. According to many accounts, including the Canberra Business Chamber, there was very high participation in the scheme by Canberra businesses. I think it is worth reflecting that there are a number of businesses, including non-employing businesses, that would not have been eligible for the scheme because of the type of business that they are—

Ms Castley: A point of order, Madam Speaker: 10 seconds to go.

MS CHEYNE: Madam Speaker, I will take the rest of it on notice.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Mr Cain, you have the supplementary.

MR CAIN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, why did you wait over a year since the scheme was announced to conduct an external review?

MS CHEYNE: We did not. This is absurd questioning. The pilot of the scheme was announced back in August 2020. It was formally announced that the pilot had been created in November 2020. It began soon after that. The scheme then commenced full rollout in early June and concluded in June with all the funding expended. At the time, in this place, I committed, in response to questioning and also in my ministerial statement, that we would undertake an external review, an independent review, of that. That concluded in December last year. I tabled the report, with a tabling statement, then. I have also answered questions about it since from Ms Castley and I have also circulated again the report that I have already tabled.

Ms Castley: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order. Resume your seat, Ms Cheyne.

Ms Castley: We are asking about ChooseCBR, not the support grants.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think the minister is talking about ChooseCBR.

MS CHEYNE: Madam Speaker, I am talking about ChooseCBR, so I do not know what the opposition has been doing or what they have not been paying attention to. We did not take a year to commission the report. The report was delivered almost a year ago.

Yerrabi electorate—seniors services

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Veterans and Seniors. Minister, as the population of Yerrabi continues to expand there are an increasing number of seniors there. What are the services available for seniors in my electorate?

MS DAVIDSON: I thank Mr Braddock for the question. There are quite a range of services and supports available for old people in Yerrabi. As you would have heard Minister Stephen-Smith talking about earlier this week, this budget makes investments to reduce elective surgery wait times, delivering 60,000 more electives surgeries over four years through to 2024-25. The government is also continuing and expanding the Good Life with osteoArthritis program, which is a preventative program that delays or reduces the number of people needing lower joint replacement surgery.

There are quite a number of older Canberrans who are carers, or who benefit from the care of informal or unpaid carers. One in nine Australians is providing care to an older

Australian, and one in five women aged 65 to 74, is a carer. This budget includes \$825,000 over the forward estimates to implement the carers strategy, and that will ensure greater capacity to work with community partners, including those in the Gungahlin area to implement the strategy and support the ACT's 42,000 carers. We also have a number of supports for people who are experiencing dementia, and we are making sure that we are committed to funding support for dementia-friendly events and design in line with the Age-Friendly City Plan 2020 to 2024. This will support ongoing investment in dementia friendly events such as the film screening which is happening on 22 October, towards the end of Carers Week, of *The Sapphires* at the National Film and Sound Archive. That will be a wonderful experience for people to go to together.

The ACT is also continuing to fund week-day flexible public transport services to meet the accessible transport needs of Canberrans who are 70 years or older, or for people on a disability support pension. So there is quite a range of things that we are doing that will support people in Yerrabi.

MR BRADDOCK: How does the ACT Government ensure that services for seniors are delivered near where seniors live?

MS DAVIDSON: That is a very good question, and I thank Mr Braddock for that supplementary question. The Age Friendly Suburbs program, which sets out how the ACT government plans to make Canberra's infrastructure more accessible and inclusive for all of us, is currently open for public consultation on the YourSay website, and I would encourage all Canberrans, including those in the suburbs of Yerrabi, to be involved in this consultation process.

The Age Friendly Suburbs program is an ACT government commitment to improve paths, network infrastructure and connectivity in suburbs with a large proportion of residents who are aged over 55 years, and which are also a home to aged care and retirement facilities. We also have the seniors grant program, which provides \$80,000 in funding for innovative projects that promote seniors as valued members of the community and enable their active participation in community life. I would very much encourage any community groups in the Gungahlin area that are interested in being able to run some of these kinds of projects, to put in their applications for seniors grants for 2022-23. The applications will close on 24 October.

MR DAVIS: Minister, what is the ACT government doing specifically to help seniors from multicultural communities?

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you for that question. The ACT government funds quite a few initiatives for our multicultural community organisations, including through the 2021-22 seniors grant program. There were quite a few projects that received funding, such as the Federation of Chinese Community of Canberra, which provides English language programs, singing groups and music groups for older people from the Chinese community. There were musical art workshop and art therapy workshops for people in retirement villages and nursing homes delivered by the Australian and New Zealand Maori Cultural School of Dreams. Yeddung Mura received a grant to provide Aboriginal elders with holistic activities for spiritual and mental wellbeing to support healthy ageing.

The Bangladeshi Seniors Club received funding to maintain and uplift social inclusion of Bangladeshi Australians and awareness workshops. The ACT Chinese Women Cultural Association provided horticulture workshops for older people, and the ACT Chinese-Australian Association were also providing projects and group activities to engage with the older Chinese community.

But it is not just the seniors grants. There were also a number of grants provided through our Technology Upgrade Grant Fund, which I talked about earlier this week. That includes grants to the Canberra Hindu Mandir, to the Spanish Speakers Association, the Samoan Advisory Council, the Multicultural Hub Canberra, Navya Andhra Telugu Association, the Australia Sri Lanka Association, Canberra Oceania Community Alliance, the Sierra Leonean Community in Canberra, the Australia China Friendship Society, the National Ethnic Disability Alliance, ACT Chinese Women Cultural Association, and many more.

Arts—Creative Recovery and Resilience Program

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for the Arts. Minister, how has funding under the Creative Recovery and Resilience Program been used to support Canberra artists?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. The Creative Recovery and Resilience Program was established in 2021 to support artists in the wake of COVID-19. Through this program, the government has invested \$711,000 in supporting Canberra's artists and to creative industries. This funding has been used by artsACT to partner with local organisations and institutions to deliver seven projects, spanning a range of artforms, organisations and parts of Canberra.

Funding under the Creative Recovery and Resilience Program has specifically supported the following programs: the Creative Recovery and Resilience Forum with the University of Canberra, which comprised nine events that contributed to the ongoing growth of a well networked and more resilient sector; residencies in digital innovation and cross-sector engagement with the University of Canberra and the Belconnen Arts Centre; residencies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultural practice and community arts and cultural development with Ainslie and Gorman art centres through which two artists explored community engaged arts practice and three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists further developed their practice; Arts Infinity Lab, with Paper Giant, a six-week program of design-led workshops that supported with artists and arts workers to communicate their practice, including guest speakers and support, to develop small pilot projects; Good Company, with You are Here, through which 16 local arts events producers were each granted \$5,000 to support small live events in venues and businesses across the ACT; the ACT government Creative-in-Residence Project delivered by artsACT, which comprised six-month residencies for two creatives in an ACT government directorates; and City Commissions, with contour556.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what has the recent City Commissions element of the Creative Recovery and Resilience Program involved?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary. The City Commissions program brought three new temporary public artworks to Canberra. artsACT engaged Canberra Art Biennial, through contour556, to commission these three works. The three artists, Alison Alder, Michael Sollis and Sammy Hawker, were asked to explore how diverse communities experienced COVID-19 in Canberra.

The artists worked collaboratively with a chosen community group to deliver these works in public locations across Canberra. In Reconciliation Place, Alison Alder's work, created in collaboration with members of Hands On Studio, explored the group's experience of COVID through six-metre-high banners in various locations across Tuggeranong. Sammy Hawker's work with young people from headspace Tuggeranong showed traces of an individual's experience of the pandemic using photo negatives. At the University of Canberra Hospital, Michael Sollis's work took the form of a custom-designed sound bollard that played a combination of contemporary classical music along with recordings of Michael's conversations with immunocompromised people speaking about their experiences of the pandemic.

DR PATERSON: Minister, what are some of the other key outcomes of the Creative Recovery and Resilience Program and how have artists responded to this program?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Dr Paterson for the question. The outcomes of the program are incredibly pleasing. There were 189 artists supported across the Creative Recovery and Resilience Program, with 51 arts workers supported and 86 other arts professionals, including mentors and workshop speakers, engaged.

Particularly pleasing was the emphasis on diversity. Approximately 13 per cent of artists were people with a disability, 19 per cent identified as LGBTI+, 16 per cent were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, 14 per cent were culturally or linguistically diverse, and 17 per cent were under 25.

The program saw significant increases in professional practice capability through self-directed artist-led residencies, skills development workshop programs and through mentorship with local, national and international artists. It also of course fostered meaningful connections between artists and arts workers that strengthen networks. These connections are invaluable in a post-COVID environment supporting wellbeing, reengaging in creative practice and enriching perspectives and ideas.

Activities under the Creative Recovery and Resilience Program took place right across Canberra, including in Belconnen, Tuggeranong, Parkes, Civic, Braddon, Griffith, Turner, Dickson, Mitchell, Kambah, Lyneham and Holt. Better than my words is a quote from one of the artists engaged through the program:

To be part of a program that takes so seriously the idea that creative arts based research and practice is about engaging with this really wide cross-sector group of people... the questions about how creative arts knowledge and arts research can bring those people into conversation, to have that at the centre of this program, is astonishing.

Transport—Tuggeranong bus services

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services.

Minister, you stated in the *Canberra Times* on 9 October that timetables would be updated in 2023 to reflect community feedback, among other things. I can only assume that your office must have received similar feedback to mine regarding the removal and downgrading of Tuggeranong services and so those changes would include the return and the upgrading of a swathe of Tuggeranong services. Minister, are you able to detail all of those Tuggeranong improvements?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. We continually, every year, make changes to update the network and timetable based on community feedback. Since 2019, when I took over as the transport minister, we had made a number of changes to the network, including in Tuggeranong. One of those changes was to the route of the R5, going through large parts of Tuggeranong and into the city, where we addressed some feedback, as well as changes to local routes to cover more parts of Longmore Crescent, in Wanniasa, and tweaks right around the network that responded to community feedback, and we will continue to make improvements to the network as we move forward into the future.

We made a range of changes that we have announced that will take place in term 1 2023. I have outlined a number of those to the Assembly, but I am happy to go through them again. We have adjusted Belconnen routes to allow the Fraser West terminus to be downgraded as per our community commitment.

Mr Parton: On a point of order on relevance, the question was specifically about Tuggeranong improvements in the network.

MADAM SPEAKER: As you stood on your point of order, I understood the minister was referring to details.

MR STEEL: Yes, these are changes that we are making across Canberra in relation to the network. I have outlined a number that we have made in Tuggeranong already. If the opposition does not want to hear what changes we have made, that is fine; they are available on the Transport Canberra website, to have a look at. And we will be making the timetable available on the website before the end of the term so that we can communicate, particularly to the school communities and the broader community, about what changes will be made to specific timings of buses as well.

MR PARTON: Minister, why have you been getting on with the job of making bus travel from Tuggeranong slower and less efficient, resulting in fewer southsiders using public transport?

MR STEEL: We have not. We have been making improvements to the system. We introduced a new rapid service, the R5, under our government and that is what we continue to deliver: more services more frequently to communities, and we will continue to make improvements to bus services around Canberra as we listen to community feedback and also as we expand services like light rail, mass transit, into the future as well, and we want to take that system south. This is a continuous

improvement program that we will continue to make. We will listen to community feedback, we will use information that we collect through things like the household travel survey, through surveying of Transport Canberra customers, about what their needs are, and make improvements to the bus system going forward.

Of course, we have been in a challenging time over the last couple of years with COVID-19 that has seen changes to travel habits and patronage on public transport right around the world, and Canberra is no exception there. Of course, we have a Transport Canberra recovery plan that has a range of different actions that we are taking to welcome people back onto public transport over time as the health advice allows.

MS LAWDER: Minister, can you give a definitive delivery date for light rail services to Tuggeranong? Is it likely to be this century?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I think ironical expressions are in order. But certainly we have a Light Rail Master Plan that sets out the range of future extensions of light rail that we have an aspiration to build over time. At this stage, we have been very clearly, at the election, that we are going to, firstly, build light rail to Woden as the second stage of light rail, starting with stage 2A and raising London Circuit, and we are getting on with that job.

In order to get to Tuggeranong, you need to take light rail to Woden, so that is the work that we are doing at the moment. We are getting on with the work of bringing it south and it would be great to have some support from the opposition. As late as November last year, Mr Parton said in this place: “Of course we support light rail. Of course we support light rail.” I do not think he would be saying that now, just before they are about to make a backflip announcement about their position on light rail!

Work health and safety—silica dust

MR COCKS: My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety. Minister, in July 2022 the Work Health and Safety Amendment Regulation 2022 (No 1) was introduced concerning crystalline silica.

After its introduction there were clear issues, and a three-month exemption was put in place by WorkSafe ACT for part of that regulation. This exemption period expired on 17 October.

Minister, I understand a further two-week transition period has now been put in place. How can the industry train and purchase the new technologies required with only two weeks’ notice?

MR BARR: I will take this question on Mr Gentleman’s behalf. There has been considerable discussion about this, so the suggestion that there is two weeks notice is rubbish: it has been talked about for months and months.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Years, I reckon.

MR BARR: Indeed, yes—so many months that they have become years, Ms Stephen-Smith! That is right, so I reject the assertion made in the question.

Mr Parton interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Parton, enough!

MR COCKS: Minister, what training is being provided by the government to help the industry follow what they generally see as an unworkable regulation?

MR BARR: I understand there has been extensive engagement on this issue. The exact nature of the training packages I do not have in front of me, but I am sure information can be provided. Again, this is not a new issue. This has been talked about for quite some time.

I understand the industry position, but there is a more important question at stake here and that is the health and safety of workers. We have engaged and we have provided additional time, but we now have in place, for the process, a time frame to get this done. I know the opposition may not want it done, but it is going to happen

MS CASTLEY: Chief Minister, given that technology needs to follow this regulation, do you believe that the transition period has been long enough?

MR BARR: So the question is: do I believe the transition period has been long enough?

MADAM SPEAKER: Is the transition period long enough—I would caution on the word “believe” because it is asking for a matter of opinion.

MR BARR: Indeed, Madam Speaker. The government has been engaging for quite some time. This is not a new issue. This supplementary question is, effectively, the first question again, and I reject that assertion.

City Renewal Authority—levy-payer engagement

MR CAIN: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, in budget estimates in August I asked questions of the City Renewal Authority and yourself about surveying levy payers on their satisfaction with the CRA’s administration and how the levy is expended. In answer to this you told me that Pollinate Group were engaged to do the annual survey earlier this year, which was posted to 650 levy payers but only 16 responses were received. You were advised by Pollinate that this was not a representative sample. Since then, you have had two workshops to gather more feedback, one other was cancelled due to low numbers. Will the CRA be using the feedback gathered from the Pollinate survey and workshops, noting it is not considered a representative sample?

MR BARR: I think we canvassed extensively in the hearings the questions of engagement in relation to a levy that has been in place for 15 or 20 years. So it predates the City Renewal Authority. Mr Cain may not be aware of that. The process of engagement in relation to its annual allocation is one that is undertaken regularly.

It is not that there is one engagement and then there is never another engagement. The Authority has to balance a range of competing priorities and needs. Of course, the government provides about six times the amount of funding to the Authority that it collects through the levy mechanism. As I indicated in the budget debate earlier today, the levy raises at the moment about \$2.35 million, with an expectation that over the forward estimates that will rise to about \$2.4 million and then \$2.45 million.

Mr Cain: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: What issue is there, Mr Cain?

Mr Cain: The question is very simple. Will the CRA be using the feedback from the Pollinate survey and workshops, noting it is not considered a representative sample. Simple question.

MADAM SPEAKER: The minister is responding to your question. I believe he is in order. Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, to be very clear. It is not the only point of engagement. If the government disregarded all consultation that was not representative, Madam Speaker—I can see that application applied across so many other areas; there are many forms of consultation and engagement. That will not be the only one Mr Cain. But the point I am making is that you seem to think the levy funds the entirety of the CRA. It does not. It is a tiny amount of revenue that is raised, \$2.35 million.

Mr Cain: Never said that. Never said that Chief Minister.

MR BARR: \$2.35 million, Mr Cain. So your obsession with it is extraordinary.

MR CAIN: Chief Minister, how many years previously has the CRA done these surveys, and how many years have these surveys not met a representative sample size.

MR BARR: Thank you. The CRA came into existence in 2017, so the maximum answer to that question is five years Madam Speaker. I do not believe they would have used this particular engagement methodology in each of those years, but I will have that confirmed. I know they have also held a range of other means of engagement across different regions within the City Renewal Authority precinct.

Mr Cain: You will take that on notice?

MS CASTLEY: Chief Minister, what will you be doing next year to ensure the survey receives a representative sample.

MR BARR: Thank you. Well that is really in the hands of those who wish to participate Madam Speaker. There is only so much the government can do if people do not take up their opportunities—

Mr Cain: Clearly you are not doing enough Chief Minister.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Cain.

MR BARR: If people do not take up their opportunity, Madam Speaker, that is provided, then there is only so much the government can do. But I am a big fan of the use of technology and for many people being able to engage online in their own time is a preferred method of engagement. So we will certainly look at the range of options that are available. But again, I repeat the point. This is a small part of the City Renewal Authority's responsibilities. It is a levy that was inherited. It was not a creation of the City Renewal Authority. This existed well before. It made sense at the time of the creation of the Authority not to have two city agencies: one sitting in the private sector and another in the public sector, managing a very small amount of money. So for the sake of efficiency and coordination it was brought together.

Gambling—harm minimisation

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Gaming. Minister, this week is Gambling Harm Awareness Week. Can you please update the Assembly on what activities have been planned by the ACT government for the week?

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, it is Gambling Harm Awareness Week. This is a really important opportunity that happens each year. We usually line up with New South Wales and Queensland to undertake this. Each year the Gambling and Racing Commission deliver the program. They seek to facilitate community discussion about gambling harm and its science, to promote action to reduce gambling harm and to support people experiencing gambling harm.

This year they have drawn on the work of last year's experiences. This year the theme is "Voices of gambling harm", giving voice to lived experience where possible. This goes further, in that the agency is really trying to work with partners so that it does not come across as government lecturing people to not get involved but rather using the voice of lived experience to hear stories that members of the community can relate to. This is a good approach that the commission has developed after conducting this for a number of years now.

In terms of events, there are a number going on. The ACT Gambling Support Service is hosting two public information, awareness and support service stalls this week, one in Tuggeranong and one in Gungahlin. There are a series of direct communications from the Gambling and Racing Commission, which will focus on the role of the commission. There was also an event that Dr Paterson, Mr Parton and I attended yesterday morning at the Vikings Club in Erindale, where Markus Fischer spoke of his personal experience. Markus is a peer support worker with Relationships Australia. He talked about the impact gambling had had on his life in a very personal way. I thank him for that because, in sharing his own difficult experiences, he gave us real insights into the issues that he faced from a policy point of view, as we seek to think about these issues as lawmakers and as members of this place.

DR PATERSON: Minister, given that we know that gambling advertising adversely impacts our community, do you support the call to the federal government to ban gambling advertising on TV?

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, I do. I think that this an area that is really problematic. Frankly, if you just chat to people in the community now, when you ask: “What do you think about gambling advertising on TV?” the answer, almost universally, is, “It is out of control.” Parents, particularly, are concerned about the amount of gambling advertising that their children are being exposed to, the normalisation of it, the fact that you cannot watch the football without being bombarded with these sorts of messages. I think it is extremely problematic.

To that end, I have raised these matters with the incoming federal ministers. For context, there are two federal ministers with responsibility in this space. One is the Minister for Social Services and the other is the Minister for Communications. The Minister for Communications has responsibility for the Interactive Gambling Act and the Minister for Social Services has responsibility for the Gambling Measures Act 2012. I have written to both those ministers since they have taken office. I am very pleased to say that I have had some engagement with both of their offices.

I met with the Minister for Social Services, Amanda Rishworth, shortly after writing to her. From that meeting, I think she really recognises and understands the issues and I was very encouraged by her response. As we know, a parliamentary inquiry on online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm has subsequently been announced, following a referral from Minister Rishworth. I am quite optimistic that we can work very collaboratively with the new federal government to examine the sorts of policy changes and regulatory changes we might make in this space in order to address these issues.

MS ORR: Minister, what awareness-raising initiatives is the government planning to introduce to reduce the impacts of gambling harm on our community, particularly groups in the population who are susceptible to online gambling harm?

MR RATTENBURY: The ACT government does fund a range of initiatives already to support people who might be experiencing gambling harm, including from online gambling, through the gambling harm prevention and mitigation fund. Under that, there are a whole series of initiatives. The ACT Gambling Support Service receives nearly \$950,000 a year—it is delivered by Relationships Australia—to provide specialised counselling, at no charge, to members of the community who may be experiencing gambling harm, including friends and family of people who experience gambling issues. The service provides telephone and face-to-face counselling and peer support, as I touched on earlier in regard to Markus Fischer, and outreach programs to the industry and community groups.

There is Gambling Help Online, to which the ACT government made a contribution last financial year. It is nationally run between Australian governments, and ACT residents have 24/7 access to that service. We have Gambling Harm Awareness Week, which I have spoken about. There is a research project by the University of Canberra called “Understanding gambling harms in the digital age”, which is designed to provide an evidence base for assessing awareness and understanding gambling harm among the general public and among those who gamble, to inform our ACT gambling harm prevention strategy. There are a couple of others.

I am mindful of the time. The last point that I will make is that this cannot be a place in which we stand still. The nature of this industry, the way it is advertising to people, the way it is being sold to people, is evolving so quickly that governments of all stripes need continue to be very agile in this space and responsive to the evolving nature of the industry.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice ACT public service—cultural and linguistic diversity

MS CHEYNE: Yesterday, in answer to Mr Cain's question about the pay rates of culturally and linguistically diverse people in the ACT public service and how that is reflected in the *State of the Service Report*, I committed to interrogating that and discussing with colleagues and coming back with some further information.

There has been steady growth in the proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse employees in the ACT public service workforce over the past five years. Members might wish to know that the highest number of CALD staff work as nurses, followed by administrative officers and general services officers, and work across a wide range of areas within the service.

The insourcing of school cleaning in the Education Directorate is the government's preference for internal resourcing in action. The direct employment of school cleaners since January 2020 has provided secure work for many who were migrants or refugees who are from a CALD background and previously were engaged in jobs with insecure work practices.

Additionally, we have had a surge workforce engaged by Canberra Health Services from March 2020 throughout the ACT public service's sustained COVID-19 response, and the Jobs for Canberrans initiative has provided employment for people who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse as well.

I want to draw members' attention to two figures. For culturally and linguistically diverse people, the recruitment rate has been at 15.5 per cent, compared to 11.9 per cent overall in the ACT public service, and 58 per cent of culturally and linguistically diverse employees have been in the public service for less than five years, compared to 48 per cent overall. These figures are important because that steady growth and the higher than average recruitment rates, along with the lower length of service, potentially place our culturally and linguistically diverse staff at those lower pay increments, compared with the public service average.

Also for members' awareness, going more broadly, I think to Mrs Kikkert's question, a deep-dive analysis of the employee survey in 2021 showed that respondents who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse were more satisfied overall than average and scored their workplaces highly on change management, inclusion and wellbeing indicators. But also, as I alluded to, the ACT government has committed \$3.3 million over the next four years to strengthen and expand diversity and inclusion within the ACT public service. That funding will drive overarching strategy program and resource development.

Within that, part of that new body of work is a dedicated mentorship program for aspiring senior executives from CALD backgrounds. As we identified yesterday, there is work that has been identified that does need to be done to ensure that we have that strong representation across all levels of the public service.

Business—support

MS CHEYNE: In relation to the first supplementary today, I was asked about ChooseCBR and how many non-employing businesses participated in that. Data was not captured as part of ChooseCBR because it was not part of the eligibility criteria. I do have the data on how many non-employing businesses participated or received business support grants, but, regrettably, my PDF keeps corrupting, so I will provide that tomorrow.

Suburban Land Agency—sales

MS BERRY: In response to the questions I was asked yesterday on the Indicative Land Release Program, for the five years from 2017-18 to 2021-22 the SLA-delivered Indicative Land Release Program identified residential releases totalling 16,999 dwellings. This excludes releases by the City Renewal Authority and Ginninderry joint venture, as well as direct sales by EPSDD. The SLA released 16,630 dwellings, a variance of just 369 dwellings, or 2.2 per cent.

It is important to acknowledge that the Indicative Land Release Program is indicative, by definition. It is the government's forecast of expected land releases in the financial year and, therefore, refinement and adjustment of those release numbers may occur during the year. Land releases are a complex process. They can be impacted by a range of issues, which I talked about yesterday, including planning and environmental process outcomes, due diligence processes, community engagement and consultation processes, legal issues, as well as commercial and market influences. The Indicative Land Release Program is not the cause of house price increases. In fact, the annual ILRP, as I have said previously, represents less than two per cent of the ACT's total established housing.

I was asked questions with regard to a shortfall of 114 against the target of 631 on the ILRP. That data is available in the SLA's annual report. I note that the delays in variance occurred for a number of reasons, which included, for the Jacka release, for example, that this release had been referred to ACAT. Macnamara was due to the outstanding finalisation of planning approvals, and Casey, Kingston, Holt and Oaks Estate were due to due diligence issues outside of the SLA's control.

For the SLA's target for single blocks, movement across the Indicative Land Release Program occurs for a variety of reasons. Page 3 of the current Indicative Land Release Program notes that the ILRP is indicative in nature, is reviewed annually and is subject to change. Most sites listed on the ILRP are in the process of being made release-ready. Many variables impact when and if the land will be released for development.

Page 4 of the ILRP also identifies the investment to achieve land release and the inherent risks associated with delivering land, most of which are often outside of the government's control. This includes issues that arise relating to contaminated land, sites that are culturally or ecologically valuable, as well as delays in completing necessary site investigations, due diligence activities due to climate change impacts over the last few years, and the availability of special consultants, particularly within the COVID environment.

Will the SLA hit its land release targets for single blocks this year? The target land release for multi-unit dwellings in last year's ILRP was 4,106 dwellings. However, the SLA annual report does not provide for the multi-unit dwellings for the financial year, which was the question—how much land was released? This is available in the SLA's annual report. I have all of those pages which reference all the details that the Canberra Liberals asked me questions about yesterday to table for their information. I present the following paper:

Suburban Land Agency Annual Report 2021-22—Statement of performance for the year ended 30 June 2022—Non-financial performance indicators 2021-22.

Fadden—Healthy Waterways project

MR RATTENBURY: During question time earlier today, Ms Lawder asked me about the rain garden in Fadden and how many letters were distributed to constituents in the area. The answer is that 100 pamphlets were distributed to 100 households. I have a map, which I am going to table, that Ms Lawder can have a look at. It indicates the areas highlighted where deliveries were made.

I was also asked by Mr Parton, in a supplementary question, about the nature of the education program. I have been afflicted by a similar problem to what Ms Cheyne was describing. My computer has just taken a moment. I was asked what community education components are included in stage 2 of the Healthy Waterways program. The answer is that the communications plan for stage 2 is currently being developed. A variety of engagement and information opportunities will occur as part of stage 2, and they will likely include face-to-face information sessions, web content, printer collateral, direct mail and communications, social media engagement and possible digital assets. I present the following paper:

Letters distribution areas—Map—Answer to question taken on notice from Ms Lawder.

Business—support

MS CHEYNE: I have the answer that I said I would give tomorrow. I have it now to hand. For non-employing businesses that had their business support grant applications approved, for all businesses it was 11,177, and for non-employing businesses it was 4,025. I also note that a proportion of those businesses received extension payments. I note that there were further payments made under what we termed TAP AF—the acronym of which—

Mr Barr: Tourism accommodation—

MS CHEYNE: Entertainment and hospitality—that group—for which there were another several hundred payments made.

Paper

Out-of-order petition

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (3.18): I present the following out-of-order petition received by Minister Davidson, Minister Stephen-Smith and me, from 4,787 Canberrans, regarding the age of criminal responsibility:

Petition which does not conform with the standing orders—Raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14—Mr Rattenbury (4787 signatures), dated 21 September 2022.

I seek leave to make a few brief remarks.

Leave granted.

MR RATTENBURY: I am pleased to present today to the Assembly a petition received from the Raise the Age Alliance which has been signed by 4,787 Canberrans, calling for the government to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years. I would like to thank the ACT Children and Young People Commissioner, Ms Griffiths-Cook, and Dr Justin Barker, who is the executive director of the Youth Coalition of the ACT, for presenting this petition to me and the other two ministers.

Raise the Age is a national campaign which is calling on all Australian governments to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility for children. This campaign has been joined by a range of organisations, including Amnesty International, the Law Council of Australia, the Human Rights Law Centre, Change the Record and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, just to name a few. There are many more organisations that have provided their support for this campaign advocating for a raised age of criminal responsibility for children.

The parliamentary and governing agreement for this term commits the government to raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility. On 21 September this year, I, alongside the Minister for Families and Community Services and the Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, announced that the government had agreed on how this would be achieved.

First, the age of criminal responsibility will be raised from 10 years old to 12 years old, removing 10- and 11-year-old children from the criminal justice system. Then, after a period of around two years to get our service system ready to respond to the more complex needs of 12- and 13-year-olds who might otherwise enter the criminal justice system, the age will be raised to 14 years. I expect that legislation will be

introduced next year to reflect this proposal. To be crystal clear: our intent is to enact both of those changes in one bill, with a staggered starting date.

This will continue the ACT's proud commitment to moving on this very important issue and doing our part to bring us up to the standards that so many contemporary nations have already set. We have committed to this staged approach to ensure that the service system is able to appropriately respond to the new cohorts. The existing service system is able to cater to the very small numbers of 10- and 11-year-olds who are currently involved in the criminal justice system. Raising the age to 14 after a further approximately two years will ensure that the service system can respond and cater for the 12- and 13-year-old cohort.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Minister for Families and Community Services and the Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services for their ongoing work and support in raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility and, in particular, developing the new service system. This is an imperative aspect to underpin the success of raising the age. The new service system will ensure that we have the right supports in place to address the needs and behaviour of children and young people.

Raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility is a critical and important reform that the government is pursuing. This petition demonstrates the significant ongoing support in our community for raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility. I would like to thank those Canberrans who signed the petition, as well as the many other individuals and organisations who are helping the government and community to work together to make this reform a reality. I look forward to updating this Assembly and all Canberrans on the progress of this reform when the government has further details to share with the community.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (3.22): I seek leave to also make a comment on this out-of-order petition.

Leave granted.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I know that sometimes in the community this discussion about raising the age is all about keeping children out of detention, and that makes sense; no-one wants to see children behind bars. Indeed, it is interesting to note that Tasmania has indicated that it will remove detention as an option for most young people under the age of 14 but does not intend to raise the age of criminal responsibility.

However, stakeholders like Ms Griffiths-Cook and Mr Barker and all of those actively engaged in the Raise the Age Alliance understand both the broader challenges and the complexity of addressing these, and I thank them for their engagement in this work, as well as for their public advocacy for this important reform. I also take the opportunity, as Minister Rattenbury did, to thank Minister Rattenbury and Minister Davidson for the way that we have all worked together in this complex area.

For me, this discussion is about what we need to do to keep children aged 10 to 13 out of the justice system and to support children who are engaging or at risk of engaging in harmful behaviour to establish a better life trajectory. As a government, we have asked not only what we need to do to raise the age but also the more important and more complex question that we have been grappling with, which is: what do we need to do to divert children and young people from engaging in harmful behaviour and to keep both them and the community safe when harmful behaviour occurs, without resorting to a criminal justice response for those young people?

This question was very much the focus of the *Review of the service system and implementation requirements for raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility in the Australian Capital Territory*, authored by Emeritus Professor Morag McArthur and Dr Aino Suomi from the Australian National University, and Belinda Kendall from Curijo Pty Ltd, which is often referred to as the McArthur report.

Raising the age is certainly one thing we can do to support the objective and we should do this. Indeed, we must. But our conversation in government has been about how we can build a better system for all children, young people, families and the community, including but not limited to children aged 10 to 13. The McArthur report acknowledged the importance of this and concludes:

Based on the findings of the current Review, we argue for taking the legislative change as an opportunity for comprehensive systems reform.

We are learning from others—for example, the Scottish whole system approach, which demonstrates that a more restorative, therapeutic approach can work to put children on a better life trajectory and divert them from later engagement in the justice system. We are working to implement a system that would keep children out of detention, largely divert them from court processes and deliver an intensive and coordinated service response for children and families at risk.

Raising the age sends a strong message about the value we place on children and recognises the evidence that children under the age of 14 are not sufficiently mature to form criminal intent. Raising the age also recognises that engagement with the criminal justice system can itself be harmful. It often does more harm than good, no matter how hard our incredible staff work to avoid that outcome. But this applies to all children and young people, not just those under 14. Given the number of young people engaged with the justice system who have significant cognitive and/or learning disabilities, the opportunity to change the broader system should not be lost.

A key challenge identified in the McArthur report is the fragmentation of the service system, due to age-related barriers to eligibility. A strong argument can therefore be made for an integrated statutory and non-statutory system that can provide a continuum of response for children and young people based on their individual circumstances and behaviours and the risk to them and the community.

The pathways that lead children and young people to engage in youth justice systems are complex. In the interests of time, I am not going to go through all of that. I think we all understand the very complex lives that many of these young people face. But where escalation of harmful behaviour leads to arrest rather than caution, most

children are subject to police bail and returned home. However, a small number are remanded in Bimberi due to having no safe alternative for the children or to prevent the children from harming others.

Most children who are detained are subsequently released on bail after appearing in court. However, short periods of detention are traumatising for children, particularly when they are repeated. Of course, most matters for these young people are not prosecuted. However, children may still be subject to bail conditions for a period and may then be subject to breach of bail. For a small number of children who spend a longer period of time in Bimberi, sadly, under the age of 14, it can be an opportunity for a time-out, to feel safe, to establish a routine, to be away from negative influences, to re-engage in education and to commence therapeutic work. But living in a youth justice centre risks early institutionalisation and is not in the best interests of children.

The government is doing further work on a therapeutic case management model in the context of broader reform in the children, youth and families area and the review of the Children and Young People Act. The reality is that many of these children and young people are known across the system. We need to work together and we need to get the system right. We are absolutely committed to doing that. I again want to thank the Raise the Age Alliance for its advocacy in this space, and Minister Rattenbury and Minister Davidson for the collaborative work that we are doing.

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) (3.28): I seek leave to say just a few words in support of this petition.

Leave granted.

MS DAVIDSON: I would also like to thank the Raise the Age Alliance for bringing this petition forward, and Ministers Rattenbury and Stephen-Smith for their collaborative work on a solution to this issue. We know that we need integrated early intervention services if we are going to take advantage of this opportunity to achieve transformational intergenerational change for these children and their families. It is our intention to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14 years. We will do so with improvements to service responses for children and for their families, and we will work with our community sector partners to make sure that we do this. In doing so, we will deliver a safer and more supportive community. Thank you.

Planning—land release program

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (3.30), by leave: I move the following motion standing in Ms Lee's name:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the Standing Committee on Public Accounts made a number of recommendations to address the ACT's housing crisis in the report on its inquiry into *Auditor-General's Report No 4 of 2020: Residential Land Supply and Release*;

- (b) recent ballots for single blocks for detached housing have attracted thousands of applicants;
 - (c) Canberra has the highest median rents in Australia; and
 - (d) land release in the ACT is not meeting demand, and is contributing to Canberra's housing affordability crisis; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) establish an inventory of serviced land;
 - (b) include in future Indicative Land Release Programs (ILRPs) a clearer set of classification for block types, and reporting requirements against delivery of those each financial year, such as the estimated dwelling yield and number of blocks for all housing types;
 - (c) publish for public scrutiny and analysis, its residential supply and demand model and methodology;
 - (d) publish for public scrutiny, the policy guidance and criteria for the identification and allocation of affordable housing in the ILRP;
 - (e) include in ACT Land and Property Reports the number of blocks not sold for the relevant reporting period, including the classification of block type and dwelling yield; and
 - (f) publish ACT Land and Property Reports not later than three months after the reporting period.

At its core, this motion is about transparency or lack thereof. This motion does not actually call upon the government to go about its business any differently than it is today. It calls upon the government to let the rest of us know what it is up to.

When any government goes about making it difficult for anyone to see what they are doing, when they set up frameworks that cloud data, when they distribute information in such a way that it is difficult to decipher, anyone could be forgiven for believing that that government had things that they were trying to hide.

In so many portfolio spaces we see this government behind closed doors. They know exactly what they are doing, but the voters of Canberra are the last people that they want to know that detail. They are probably the second last; I think that we, the Liberals, are the last. If you have nothing to hide, open up this process in such a way that the rest of us can see what you are doing and why.

We have brought this motion to the Assembly today because there are thousands of Canberrans who have been unable to secure a block of land to build a home as a result of the Labor-Greens government's inadequate residential land supply and release. I have seen the proposed amendment. I know that the government will assert that the land supply is adequate and that it is meeting needs. It is just laughable.

There are thousands of Canberrans who are struggling to meet the highest rental costs in Australia because the Labor-Greens government cannot even meet its own targets to deliver land for residential housing and multi-unit development. While I understand that there has recently been some easing of property prices in response to rising interest rates, Canberra's median price remains above \$1 million. That does not offer

much comfort to those looking to get into the market or renters who face high rents and limited supply of rentals.

Supply and demand is a pretty simple concept, really. The ACT government is completely in control of land release, to ensure that supply is meeting demand. Unfortunately for Canberrans, this Labor-Greens government has no interest in releasing enough land to meet our very high demand, which pushes up prices and results in super profits from land sales for the government.

The reality on the ground for Canberrans, especially those on lower incomes, is that they are locked out of home ownership and locked into increasingly higher rental costs. This is enough of a problem in Canberra that the Auditor-General undertook an inquiry into land supply and release in 2020. Unsurprisingly, since the Auditor-General's report was published, not much has changed.

The Suburban Land Agency's recently published annual report for 2021-22 showed that it released 517 blocks in 2021-22, a shortfall of 114 against a target of 631 in the ILRP. In the scheme of things, a shortfall of 114 is actually pretty significant. In the previous year, 2020-21, the Suburban Land Agency released 950 blocks, a shortfall of 244 against a target of 1,194 blocks.

The Auditor-General's report and the subsequent public accounts committee inquiry and report of 2022 have made a number of recommendations on ways to improve the delivery of residential land in Canberra. I am hoping that there will be some improvements as a result. We would all hope that when reports of that nature are made, from committees and from the Auditor General—you would hope, wouldn't you, Mr Assistant Speaker?—improvements would be made. But I suspect that it may be false hope.

Echoing the recommendations of the Auditor-General and the public accounts committee, I am calling on the Labor-Greens government to be far more up-front with Canberrans about how they classify land, how they come up with the Indicative Land Release Program, how they are tracking against their targets, how they set their affordable housing targets, and to publish their results much faster.

For example, the Auditor-General recommended that ACT land and property reports, which are six-monthly updates on activity in the ACT property market, be produced as soon as possible after the end of the relevant reporting period, which the government agreed to in its response to the audit report. However, the latest report for July 2021 to December 2021 was published more than seven months after the end of the reporting period. It is not good enough.

I have included in this motion today the public accounts committee's recommendation that ACT land and property reports be published no later than three months after the relevant reporting period. We certainly cannot see why that is not possible. The ACT land and property report should also include data on land released but not sold. That was a recommendation of the Auditor-General's report that the government did not agree to. Not only have the public accounts committee recommended that this information be included in ACT land and property reports from July 2022 onward; they have also asked the government to explain why they did not agree to this

recommendation made by the Auditor-General. Why didn't they agree? I hope that today we hear why.

I, too, am calling on the Labor-Greens government to include this information in ACT land and property reports. Given the current lateness and infrequency of the ACT land and property reports, I am calling on the Labor-Greens government to establish an inventory of serviced land and to publish up-to-date information online. Simply advertising blocks for sale does not provide the full picture of the pipeline. This is just one-way market information, and it could be made so much more transparent.

I am also calling on the government to publicly release its residential land supply model, methodology and the policy guidance and criteria used to make decisions about affordable housing targets and locations. The government should clarify their block classifications report against each of the classifications explicitly, clearly and consistently in the Indicative Land Release Program, ACT land and property reports and Suburban Land Agency annual reports.

Earlier in the week, the ACT Integrity Commission released a special report on the integrity of the land sales systems employed by the Suburban Land Agency. The report found that there was a significant risk of corruption involved in the process, and that the actions taken by the SLA to date are not likely to be enough to mitigate the risk. Again, I want to repeat those words from the ACT Integrity Commissioner. The report found that there was a significant risk of corruption involved in the process, and that the actions taken by the SLA to date are not likely to be enough to mitigate the risk.

The public accounts committee recommended that the government undertake analysis of the number and nature of registrants for land ballots and present this to the Assembly by the last sitting day of 2022. I look forward to seeing that analysis.

In summary, there are clearly many things that can be done to improve land supply and release in the territory, and to improve transparency and the community's faith in the system. I look forward to the government's response to the public accounts committee report and genuinely hope that significant action is taken by the Labor-Greens government to address the identified issues with land supply and release, because Canberrans are counting on it. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (3.38): I will speak to this motion on behalf of Minister Gentleman, who is away from the chamber today, and I will add some comments of my own in response to Mr Parton's motion.

The ACT government remains committed to supporting land for release in the territory, both now and into the future. Through our strategic planning work and the Indicative Land Release Program, we have programmed an ambitious five-year plan for land release in the territory. This plan seeks to make land available for a range of different uses and purposes to allow the territory to grow sustainably while also meeting the varying needs of the community.

I note the recent interest in land releases in the territory and welcome commentary from members of the Legislative Assembly, industry and community. I also acknowledge the private member's business motion from Ms Lee, which calls on the government to undertake a range of actions broadly related to land availability, changes to the Indicative Land Release Program, publication of the ACT land and property reports, and further publication of modelling guidance used in the formation of the ILRP.

I also note that the government has recently received a report from the public accounts committee entitled *Inquiry into the Auditor General's report No 4 of 2020: residential land supply and release*. I note that there are common themes in the private member's business motion and the public accounts committee's recommendations and findings. The government are carefully considering the recommendations and findings of the report, as we progress our work to release land in the territory in line with the Indicative Land Release Program. We will provide an update to the Legislative Assembly as this work progresses.

I also note that the government's position in relation to the audit and its findings was set out in the government response tabled on 2 December 2020. The government has since maintained that position for the purposes of the submission to the standing committee. Most recommendations were either agreed or agreed in principle. We are committed to working on releasing land to support development, in line with the Indicative Land Release Program, while noting that there are always challenges in this space. I look forward to providing an update to the Assembly on that work in responding to the committee's findings.

I want to comment on some of the remarks that Mr Parton made with regard to the ACT Integrity Commission's clearing of the Suburban Land Agency of any corrupt conduct. I draw Mr Parton's attention to the fact that the Suburban Land Agency referred itself to the Integrity Commission to ensure that there was no question of corruption and to take on board their advice on ways that it could improve its processes in providing land for development in the ACT. Those recommendations from the Integrity Commissioner are already being applied. The Suburban Land Agency will continue to work to ensure that there is appropriate governance and transparency around how it supplies and releases land for the public, and for the government to develop.

It is important to note that point that the Suburban Land Agency referred itself. As far as I am aware, there has been no corruption found or investigations conducted by the Integrity Commission in the three matters that he has brought to the public's attention. This particular one was referred by the Suburban Land Agency to the Integrity Commission for investigation. I note the focus that was placed on areas that needed to improve. Of course, the Suburban Land Agency has recognised that. It is doing that work and it has already made a number of adjustments to the way that it provides land in the put-and-call process so that there is more transparency around that.

That goes to ensuring that there is availability, so that, when builders and developers go to that put-and-call arrangement, there is clear advice and information provided and there is no opportunity for developers or others to double up on those land

release programs and purchase more, or enter ballots when they have already entered a ballot or a put-and-call arrangement, which is the requirement under those release programs.

I note that the government has already responded to an Auditor-General's report on this same matter with regard to land release, as I noted in my previous comments regarding Minister Gentleman. The Indicative Land Release Program forms part of the government's planning and housing policies through the Planning Strategy. It is a strategic document. It makes land available for a range of purposes to promote sustainable development.

The government remains committed to supporting development in line with the ILRP. I note the softening that it has been suggested has occurred within the housing market—although that has only been for five minutes, so I do not think we should place too much emphasis on that, until we see where things are heading with respect to interest rates, and house building supplies, as well as construction supplies. It is important to note all of these kinds of adjustments that have been occurring. In particular, the Reserve Bank's increase in the cash rate for six consecutive months since May 2022, which now sits at 2.6 per cent, does have an impact on people in our community and their ability to pay off their mortgages or to purchase land.

In the ACT the delivery of the annual land release program, as I went through in detail before, while responding to a question from yesterday's question time, is a complex process. It is not just a matter of driving past a piece of land, pointing at it, and saying, "We can build some houses there." There are many elements that are not in the direct control of the land delivery agencies. However, the SLA works within these constraints and challenges to ensure that the Indicative Land Release Program can be delivered. If specific releases are impacted, the SLA uses best endeavours to bring forward other releases or identify opportunities to refine the mix of land offerings to offset those impacts.

I have an amendment to Mr Parton's motion which I have circulated. I move:

Omit all text after paragraph "(1)(a)", substitute:

- "(b) the standing orders provide the Government with 4 months to respond to a Committee Report;
- (c) the Indicative Land Release Program (ILRP) is an indicative program that forms part of the Government's planning and housing policies from the Planning Strategy and the Housing Strategy, such as the 70 percent infill target;
- (d) these policies inform the Government's residential supply and demand model and methodology as well as policy guidance and criteria for the identification and allocation of affordable housing;
- (e) these policies are available online for public scrutiny,
- (f) the principles underpinning the Government's indicative land release program are:
 - (i) delivering housing diversity and affordable housing choice;

- (ii) balancing a sustainable supply of land with forecast demand to maintain an inventory of land in the planning, development and building pipeline;
 - (iii) contributing to building a compact and efficient city and supporting sustainable growth by working towards 70 percent of new housing within the existing urban footprint;
 - (iv) supporting the development of a sustainable and resilient city in the landscape by promoting the efficient use of land and being responsive to change;
 - (v) supporting a sustainable and competitive land development and construction industry to create jobs for Canberrans and attract investment into Canberra; and
 - (vi) achieving satisfactory returns to the Territory Budget;
 - (g) the ILRP includes information about land zoning and uses under the Territory Plan;
 - (h) the ILRP also accounts for the broader benefits of urban infill including affordability, access to infrastructure and services and environmental benefits;
 - (i) careful and considered land release for greenfields development is important to ensure proper protections for our critically endangered habitats such as grasslands, and critically endangered species such as golden sun moth;
 - (j) recent ballots for single blocks for detached housing have attracted thousands of applicants;
 - (k) Canberra has the highest median rents in Australia before adjusting for income; and
 - (l) the demand for land in the ACT is met through the combination of ACT Government, Commonwealth Government and private sector land release; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) publish ACT Land and Property Reports no later than six months after the reporting period;
 - (b) respond to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts report by the end of the statutory timeframe;
 - (c) maintain its commitment to publishing a land release program for public scrutiny; and
 - (d) ensure all publicly available information is accessible online for public scrutiny.”.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (3.45): I thank Ms Lee and Mr Parton for bringing this motion to the Assembly. As evidenced in a number of motions brought to this place and the recent report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the issue of land release and how it impacts on housing affordability is one of great interest to all members of this Legislative Assembly. It is true that the ACT is in a

unique position in relation to our land lease system. We are also a territory that is landlocked, both by borders and due to our reserve system that sees important environment conservation areas protected from future development.

Planning for the growth of our evolving city is vitally important. As I have commented before, we need to ensure that, in our consideration of the various crises we find ourselves facing, climate extinction and the housing affordability crisis are considered together. Key policy considerations, such as a commitment to the 70-30 split around greenfield and infill development, are one way that we can see this occurring in real time. This is not about a cruel government denying people a freestanding home; it is actually about creating new opportunities that reflect our modern living, protect our current biodiversity and futureproof our city in the context of a changing climate.

The Indicative Land Release Program is a useful document. It aims to provide visibility and accountability to the community on the work that is being undertaken by government to plan a pipeline of future land release. A particular element that I find valuable is the inclusion of affordable housing targets that outline the specifics of public housing, community housing and affordable housing purchase opportunities. The ILRP is the culmination of extensive work undertaken by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate and other agencies. It is not a simple recipe, and it is dependent on a range of inputs—some that can change quickly and others that evolve over time. It is an indicative program and it does change. There are elements of the program that do become subject to further work and discussion. Sometimes elements are subject to review by ACAT, for instance.

I look forward to further engaging with the recommendations of the PAC inquiry and reflecting on some perspectives on the issue of how the ILRP is put together and engaged with. There are discussions to be had. For example, in relation to the housing targets, I am interested in how we reflect on the new work that is occurring around models such as build to rent, as a mechanism to provide more affordable rental products, and whether or not they should be connected to the ILRP housing targets or a complementary element to the ILRP targets.

While affordable purchase is important, the discussion of how we support lower income renters is one that is becoming increasingly vital to have. It is useful for us to reflect on how mechanisms such as the ILRP housing targets align with work that is happening in other areas, including implementing the parliamentary and governing agreement. Given all of this, I commend the amended motion to the Assembly.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (3.49): It is pretty clear that the Canberra Liberals have today called on the ACT government to implement a number of improvements to the Indicative Land Release Program and land release policy. I thank Ms Lee and Mr Parton for bringing this matter to the Assembly's attention. I wholeheartedly support this motion and reject Minister Berry's amendment. I believe that this motion will inject some common sense and integrity into land release approaches.

As has become abundantly clear, reinforced by the community and key industry stakeholders, this Labor-Greens government's Indicative Land Release Program has had a crippling effect on Canberra's housing market, driving up prices. Why has this

been allowed to happen? Why have the government repeatedly failed to meet land release targets that they set for themselves? Why have the government provided so few assurances to the private construction industry when they are so desperately in need of such assurances?

Why, in the 20 years that the government have had to prepare a suitable land release policy program, have they failed miserably to deliver a variety of land and property for the population, including duplexes, high and mid-rise apartments, standalone dwellings, urban centres and leafy green suburbs? Why do the government continue to hide and deflect from the significant role they have played in accelerating the housing crisis that the ACT has faced in recent years? Why do the government mislead voters by telling them that their woefully inadequate land supply meets demand?

The Canberra Liberals have called for housing choice, and at the core of this is the supply of land, over which this government does in fact have significant control. I listened to Minister Berry, the Deputy Chief Minister, tell me in a hearing that the ACT government is only responsible for two per cent of the land release. She conveniently forgot that all land is, in fact, released by the ACT government. It might be secondarily sold by the private sector, and that proportion may well be 98 per cent, but the government refuse to acknowledge their role in the system.

The Chief Minister tried to tell me that, in relation to ACT land release, the supply of land would not impact housing prices. I called this unique economic theory “Barr-onomics”: if you strangle the supply of a highly sought after product, you do not affect the price. Again, this is a complete reversal of the usual law of supply and demand, and I look forward to economic theorists exploring this theory even further. It is my view that the Labor-Greens government do not have the skills to run the territory effectively. We saw, with the report into the SLA’s book-to-buy scheme, which it has converted to a ballot system after scrutiny by the Integrity Commissioner, that they are not up to the job.

As the first step, I would encourage the Labor-Greens government to read the report recently submitted by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts—and I mean really read it. They should not just say, “Yes, we’re going to respond to that.” They should take on board its recommendations. It makes an interesting read. The government must develop a housing strategy based on reliable and concrete data, and in collaboration with the community and key stakeholders, that will improve, accelerate and add value to land release in the territory. Opening the Indicative Land Release Program models used for residential supply and demand to public scrutiny will support this process and enable the community to have greater oversight of the allocation of land in the territory.

Canberrans want integrity and transparency from their government. They do not want to be misled, and they are sick and tired of the exorbitant cost of housing. This is what the Canberra Liberals believe that the ACT government needs. This is at the heart of Ms Lee’s motion. It does not take a seasoned economist to understand that there are evident land pressures in the ACT—pressures that can be relieved by pulling the appropriate levers. It is not enough to say, “It’s the commonwealth tax settings that explain the price rises and the high demand.” The government needs to better use the lever which is at its control—the supply of land and the supply of a variety of land.

We are getting very weary of this conversation. We do hope that the government is listening. It has an Integrity Commission report to look at that is related to its processes. It has a standing committee report—again, made up of representatives of all the parties—that has made strong recommendations on its land release program. It has an Auditor-General’s report to reflect on. I trust that the government will start to listen and will implement real solutions that improve the affordability and variety of land available to Territorians.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (3.54): We have spoken a lot in the chamber this year about land release. It is usually done in the context of individual sites—CSIRO Ginninderra or areas south of Tuggeranong. We have had less conversation about general land release. I would like to thank Ms Lee, and Mr Parton in her absence, for moving this motion, but I question the timing of the motion.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts released a report: *Inquiry into the Auditor-General’s report No 4 of 2020: residential land supply and release*. A number of the calls in the original motion are contained in the recommendations in the standing committee’s report. We have a really careful committee process. Committees look at the subject matter, they get expert evidence, they talk to members of the community, they come up with careful recommendations and the government responds. I, for one, would like to see how the government is going to respond. We have not yet seen that response, so it is difficult to leap immediately into action on these recommendations.

I am particularly interested in a few of the recommendations, and the government response to those recommendations. We have calls for more publicly available information; measures to support housing affordability, such as further advocating for tax reform to the commonwealth government; measures on reporting social and affordable housing dwellings and plots purchased by community housing providers; and the recommendation that the ACT government release more land, particularly in the context of the government’s commitment to 70 per cent infill development.

I would like to reiterate the importance of the careful future development of Canberra. Again, it is important that we do this carefully. We are in the middle of a planning review at the moment. We have a new Territory Plan coming on. We know that there are a lot of moving pieces to this. We also understand that we need to limit greenfield development on the outskirts of Canberra. There are so many reasons that we do not want to keep sprawling. Greenfield land costs a lot of money to develop. That is because it does not have all of the necessary infrastructure. It does not have roads, sewerage and electricity; we have to build that. So it will not be cheap housing when we have to spend a lot of money developing it first.

Greenfield land is likely to have important environmental, Ngunnawal and First Nations cultural values. That land has not been developed. We have to look at it really carefully. We have to study it and see what is there, and we have to make a conscious choice about whether we should protect it or whether we should develop it. It is a choice that we can only make once. If we make the wrong choice, our children cannot come back and restore it. The choice has been made; it is gone forever.

Greenfield land needs careful consultation with the community about what they want in their local area. That is not a good conversation to have on the fly, in the chamber, without a lot of policy work behind it. Greenfield land needs careful thought about how it fits in with our planning and transport system. This is really important. We do not want to keep building distant suburbs that can only be serviced by cars. That does not lead to a good lifestyle for anybody living there. It leads to an extremely expensive lifestyle. It is costly in petrol and diesel, and in buying cars. It is costly on the environment; it is costly on the climate. It is not a good way to do it. We need public and active transport connections, and that gets increasingly harder the further out we build.

You have heard me talking about all of these points many times. I understand Mr Cain's weariness. I am also feeling slightly weary about having the same conversation over and over again. I would love to see something new, a new solution, and some careful policy work behind it. I think that would be really good. I am really keen to see the government response to the recommendations. I think it is good that we are highlighting those recommendations. The Greens will be supporting Minister Berry's amendment. We are looking forward to further work when we get that government response and when we have had the policy work done on that.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (3.59): I rise today to speak in support of the original motion brought on by Ms Lee and Mr Parton. At the heart of this motion is housing affordability. Any member here today who goes out and speaks with Canberrans, and actually listens to them, will hear time and again about housing affordability. It is not a new concern. I have been having those conversations with people in Canberra's south for nearly a decade.

I have heard from so many people who desperately want the security of owning their own home—people who share the Australian dream of home ownership but feel locked out of the Canberra property market. I have heard from first home buyers looking to find their first home. I have heard from parents and grandparents hoping to see their grandchildren be able to afford a home and get that leg-up that home ownership can bring. I have heard from parents of adult children who hope that their kids can find a home so that at some stage they might get some well-deserved space for themselves.

It seems light-hearted, but this stuff genuinely matters. What gets to me most is when I hear from people who have, time and again, put their names down for government land ballots and who are willing to live in any of Canberra's new greenfield sites—people hoping to win the housing lottery and get a start for their families, people who, time and again, have been disappointed because the odds are so stacked against them.

It is a lottery, with thousands of people applying for so few blocks. Just imagine how it feels to turn up, time and again, to try again and again, in Whitlam, in Harrison, in Bonner or in Wright. Imagine how it feels to turn up repeatedly, to have done the right thing and then to miss out, time and again—all while you are watching prices go up and up; all the time wondering whether you will ever get there and too often doubting that you will.

Minister Vassarotti said words to the effect that this is not about a cruel government saying you cannot have separate houses. Minister, that may not be your intent, but it is the impact of the policies that this government has brought about. Home prices and rents have skyrocketed in Canberra, especially for homes with backyards, because that is what people want. During the COVID pandemic, if you were lucky enough to have a safe, private outside space to enjoy, you were equipped with a valuable protective factor to help you withstand the pressures of lockdown. Some members opposite even highlighted on social media how lucky they were to have private outdoor space to help endure the lockdown. The Canberra Liberals and I believe that it should not just be the lucky or the privileged in Canberra who can afford to buy or rent a home.

The current ACT Labor-Greens government, in spite of their stated aspiration, not only have set low numbers for release in the Indicative Land Release Program but have fallen short of their own low bar. Their performance is a real disappointment, with real impacts for many people that I hear from. People across Canberra deserve certainty and clarity on the availability of land in the ACT. For the thousands of Canberrans who have missed out in previous ballots, the introduction of an inventory of serviced land will give them some clarity. This motion would give Canberra buyers a somewhat more transparent view of what is happening with the land release program in the ACT.

For most families, the purchase of a home is one of the biggest transactions of their lives. The whole process can be extremely stressful. The lack of up-to-date information and lack of actual properties to buy only adds stress for many families. If people had the information called for in this motion, the process—again, one of the biggest transactions of their lives—would be made less stressful. Adding transparency to the government release of land has to be a good and helpful idea, especially given the amount of control this government has over land release in the ACT.

The release of new land directly impacts those looking at purchasing a new home for their family. It also has an impact on the many Canberrans and Canberra families who rent in Canberra. I believe everyone, whether buying or renting, ought to be able to afford a home and should be able to choose the type of dwelling that they lease or purchase. The land release program may only play a small role in the total property market each year, but it represents a very large proportion of the growth in properties available each year; therefore, it has a big impact on supply.

I have no doubt that Labor and the Greens will continue to try and blame other people for this problem. They point to national trends. They might blame investors; they might even try and blame the federal government. But the fact is that none of this is new. It was predictable, and the government has failed to make any meaningful dent in housing affordability.

After more than 20 years, this government owns the problem. It is not good enough that the government is big on ambitions, like a home for all, and so terrible on delivery. This government has left the ACT without enough homes for the number of people who live here. This motion sets out important, practical measures to begin to address the housing affordability failures of this government. This motion is important for everyone worrying about the possibilities of finding a home for their future, for everyone struggling with Canberra's housing market. I can assure you that,

for them, this is the most important thing happening in their lives. I wholeheartedly support the motion.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.05): We will not be supporting the amendment from the government because it simply continues the deception. The amendment calls upon the government to continue doing business exactly as they are doing it now. The amendment, just like the government's typical MO, says, "We know better and we will not be pressured into giving any more information than we wish to." That, as far as I am concerned, and as far as the vast majority of Canberrans are concerned, is not good enough.

The amendment omits all of the cold, hard truths that appeared in the original motion, because the government is not keen for the truth to be widely trumpeted. It is no surprise that the government want to remove any mention of the recommendations from the public accounts committee, because they want to pretend that that inquiry did not occur and that those recommendations were not made. Dare I say it: this is what the Chinese and the Russians do with their publications. They just take out all the news that discredits the Kremlin or the governing party. You just erase it. You just pretend that nobody said it. You just take it out.

It is no surprise that the government does not agree with the pure fact that land release in the ACT is not meeting demand and that this is contributing to Canberra's housing affordability crisis. You can pretend all you like, but the reality is that supply is not meeting demand.

I love it that Ms Berry, the champion of the battler, from out there at west Belconnen, has left in the bit that Canberra has the highest median rents in Australia. She has left that in but she has added a few words. She says that we have the highest rents in Australia "before adjusting for income". So Ms Berry, the union hero, the champion of the battler, is saying: "Sure, rents might be high, but not for those of us that earn a good quid. It is okay for us. Those of us who are MLAs or work in executive public service positions, we are okay. We are all good because we can afford those absurdly high rents. Those on basic wages or relying on government income support are very clearly going to struggle, but let them eat cake."

With the insertion of the amendment, the minister is signalling that her party, who used to actually give two hoots about the battlers, just do not care anymore. They do not care. My message to the government would be that you have nothing to lose from establishing an inventory of service land or, indeed, if you do have something to lose, you should explain what it is. You have nothing to lose from including a clearer set of classifications for block types and reporting requirements, as well as some reporting requirements against the delivery. You have nothing to lose by including in the ACT land and property reports the number of blocks not sold for the relevant reporting period, including the classification of block types and dwelling yield.

I would note that, in my remarks to this motion, I have steered away from comments on whether the land release program is working or failing. The comments that I have made, by and large, have referred to what the motion in its original form actually called for, and that is just greater transparency in the reporting of what you are doing.

That is what the motion calls for. The government know that the ILRP is having a massive impact on housing unaffordability. They know; they just do not care. They have got away with it for this long. They are not going to change their MO now. We will not be supporting the amendment.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 14

Noes 7

Mr Barr

Dr Paterson

Mr Cain

Mr Braddock

Mr Pettersson

Ms Castley

Ms Burch

Mr Rattenbury

Mr Cocks

Ms Cheyne

Mr Steel

Mrs Kikkert

Ms Clay

Ms Stephen-Smith

Ms Lawder

Ms Davidson

Ms Vassarotti

Mr Milligan

Mr Davis

Mr Parton

Ms Orr

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Public housing—debt to commonwealth

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.14): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the ACT Government has a housing debt of \$98.3 million owed to the Federal Government;
- (b) other state and territory governments also have historical housing-related debts to the Federal Government from the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement; and
- (c) the waiving of state and territory housing debt is not without precedent from both sides of politics:
 - (i) in 2013, South Australia had \$320 million in debt waived by the Federal Labor Government; and
 - (ii) in 2019, Tasmania had \$157 million in debt waived by the Federal Coalition Government;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) in opposition, Labor Senator Katy Gallagher was critical of the Federal Coalition Government for not having waived ACT's historic housing debt;

- (b) Senator Katy Gallagher campaigned to waive the ACT Government’s \$98.3 million housing debt during the 2022 Federal election campaign;
 - (c) Senator Katy Gallagher in Senate Estimates on 22 October 2019 said to Senator Seselja as Assistant Minister for Finance, in respect to waiving the ACT’s historic housing debt, “you’re in a position of power. You get to sign it off.”;
 - (d) Chief Minister Andrew Barr stated on 24 October 2019, “I would observe that it is an odd state of affairs when a crossbench senator from Tasmania can achieve more through Liberal Government than an ACT Liberal senator who is a member of the government executive as an assistant minister, Senator Seselja”; and
 - (e) now as Labor Finance Minister, Senator Katy Gallagher on 12 October said “the Federal Government is not in a position to waive the Territory’s \$98.3 million historic housing debt”; and
- (3) calls on:
- (a) the leaders of all parties represented in the Assembly to write to the Finance Minister condemning in the strongest terms her backflip on her pre-election promise and call on the Finance Minister to waive the historic ACT housing debt; and
 - (b) table this correspondence, and any response received by the Finance Minister, in the Legislative Assembly by Thursday 24 November 2022.

The core of this motion is the premise that the government cannot have it both ways. The long-term \$100 million housing debt was so desperately important—it was so important, when Scott Morrison was the Prime Minister, when Zed Seselja was an ACT senator and in those years. This was one of the most important things in this space, according to Labor and the Greens. They were being held back by the evil LNP. It was the federal Liberals that were stopping the ACT from reaching its potential. It was the uncaring conservatives who were stopping the ACT from reaching its potential in the housing space. All of a sudden, it is not so important. All of a sudden, these matters are outside our control. It reeks of the most extreme political hypocrisy and it must be called out.

We know that in September 2019 the Chief Minister and Minister Berry wrote to the Prime Minister and the federal housing minister, asking them to waive this debt. We have had a number of conversations about this. I have stated publicly that, during the last term and into this term, I have had a number of conversations with Senator Seselja and with other federal Liberal members and ministers, endeavouring to bring about this outcome.

In February 2020 Mr Barr made a statement regarding the housing debt and regarding the commonwealth’s move to set aside Tasmania’s own state housing debt. I will remind Mr Barr of what he said:

It is entirely untenable for the Commonwealth to do one special deal with Tasmania and leave the rest of the country out. That just won’t stand politically.

That is what Mr Barr said a little over two years ago. It is why, I would have thought, the Chief Minister must support this motion in its original form. It seems that that is not the case.

In the federal election campaign there was a stack of discussion about this housing debt. The summary of this discussion, if you could put it into a couple of sentences, was: “The Liberals don’t care about people and Labor does.” That was the summary. The summary of the discussion was that if you change the government, and if the caring people are in charge, it is a foregone conclusion that this debt will be waived. It turns out that that is not the case. Despite all of the grandstanding from Senator Pocock, despite all of the rhetoric about the utopia that Canberra would become once we got rid of Senator Seselja, it turns out that nothing has changed.

This is truly remarkable and unacceptable, and it goes to the long-running behaviour from Labor and the Greens of saying something and then turning around and doing something completely different. While in opposition, Labor Senator Katy Gallagher was scathingly critical of the Morrison government for not having waived the ACT’s historic housing debt. Senator Katy Gallagher actually campaigned, during the federal election campaign, for the feds to waive that debt. Senator Gallagher said in estimates on 22 October 2019, to Senator Seselja, in respect of the waiving of this debt: “You’re in a position of power. You get to sign it off.” That is what she said. The Chief Minister, also in October 2019, said:

I would observe that it is an odd state of affairs when a crossbench senator from Tasmania can achieve more through Liberal Government than an ACT ... senator who is a member of the government executive as an assistant minister ...

That is from Mr Barr. He was absolutely incensed that Senator Seselja, as an assistant minister, could not achieve an outcome. Now that Senator Gallagher is the finance minister, now that Mr Albanese is the Prime Minister, now that Senator Pocock is in place, it would be unthinkable that this debt would not be waived. Then there is this. As Labor’s finance minister, Senator Katy Gallagher said, on 12 October this year, that the federal government is “not in a position” to waive the territory’s \$98.3 million debt. You cannot trust them. You cannot trust their promises. Once again, they do not deliver.

Given the grandstanding that has occurred in this space, did you honestly expect that we would not call this out? Given the importance that this government has placed on putting this issue front and centre, how embarrassing is it when your mob have their hands on the steering wheel and they have not lived up to this strong rhetoric? My message to Senator Gallagher would be: how could you possibly believe that you could be so scathingly critical of Senator Seselja and the Morrison government in this space then do a complete backflip and not be called out on it? Mr Assistant Speaker, you could not make this stuff up.

Along with the narrative on the ACT’s infrastructure spend—let’s be honest about it—during the election you could be forgiven for believing that if the city removed Senator Seselja Canberra would be instantly awash with bright, shiny, new things. Even though those bright, shiny, new things were not specifically named. They were, in suggestion, promised. This is what would happen: “There wasn’t enough money being spent. Once we get rid of this bloke, it’s all going to change. Once we’ve got a new independent senator and a new government, it’s all going to change.”

The ACT was not even mentioned in the big government infrastructure announcement on the weekend. We are just going to be an afterthought. We had the big announcement on the weekend involving Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, the Gold Coast and Perth; then, a week later, we will have the afterthought announcements that may include Port Augusta, Geraldton, Condobolin and Canberra. There was all of this talk during the election campaign that the Liberals were holding us back with the long-term housing debt and a lack of infrastructure spend. The government changes, we install an independent senator and what is the result?

I know that we will hear amazingly optimistic words from Ms Berry because she is an optimist. She has chooks. I do not know what that has to do with it, but she is an optimist. I know, based on her words in this chamber yesterday, that she will talk about how the federal Labor government is such a godsend in the housing area. I have seen some of the words in the amendment. They have made all of these promises about what they are going to do. We are sick of promises. We are looking for outcomes. Senator Gallagher and others from the left gave a very clear indication that the housing debt would be waived. It is not being waived, and that must be called out.

Given the level of rhetoric when we last debated this issue, there should be no problem whatsoever with all party leaders in this place expressing a view about some of that rhetoric to the finance minister, for leading us up the garden path and severely letting us down. We should be writing to Senator Gallagher, condemning in the strongest terms her backflip on her pre-election promise, calling out the finance minister and calling for her to waive the historic debt. If it was so desperately important when Morrison was the Prime Minister, it should be as important now. I look forward to some weasel words from the other side.

MR BARR (Kurrajong) (4.22): I thank Mr Parton for bringing this matter forward. Yes, I accept that it was inevitable that he would do so. As I have reiterated both inside and outside this place, we are advocating for a waiver of the ACT's housing debt. As my amendment to Mr Parton's motion indicates, the understanding from the territory government, very clearly—and, I think, expressed by all parties in this place—is that any savings from principal and interest repayments from a debt waiver would be reinvested in new social and community housing. Implicit in any outcome here is that, following the forgiveness or discharging of that debt, the proceeds, such as they are, the principal and interest payments over the remaining balance of the loan, would be invested in social and community housing. That has been very clear.

Mr Davis raised this issue in the Assembly about four months ago. At that time—and I will repeat it again—I felt it was worth clarifying what is effectively a two-way flow of funds in relation to this debt. Under the national partnership agreement, the commonwealth provide the states and territories with funding to support housing and homelessness activities. They provide an annual allocation to us through their budget. The point we have been making is that we then give about half of that back to them in interest and capital repayments on this historic outstanding loan. That is not a particularly efficient way to manage the flow of funds between the commonwealth and the territory.

I have sought to engage with the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance on this matter and have taken the opportunity, at appropriate times, to advocate for a change to that money merry-go-round. My position, and that of the government, has been entirely consistent. Regardless of the persuasion of the federal government, we have argued strongly to waive the debt. We have outlined why it should be waived and what we would do explicitly with principal and interest payments that we would otherwise be making back to the commonwealth: we would commit to directing them into more social housing.

Senator Gallagher has indicated that there will not be a line item in the budget next Tuesday night that is the ACT's social housing debt being waived, with a net cost to the commonwealth of \$100 million in capital and \$39 million, or whatever the number will be, in forgone interest payments. There will not be an initiative within the federal budget that is ACT-specific next Tuesday night. Just to be clear: that will not be in the budget. That is understood, and it is disappointing that it will not be as explicit as that. But we are—this is, of course, something I am privy to that the rest of you are not—involved in discussions with the commonwealth and, indeed, other states and territories, because we are not the only jurisdiction with a historic housing debt. We are seeking to engage with the commonwealth to maximise new investment in social and affordable housing, not just here in the ACT but nationwide.

My amendment commits the government to reporting back on progress in relation to this work and its implementation. We acknowledge and understand our responsibilities if we are successful in negotiating—and it will not just be the ACT, this point needs to be understood. In fact, it is entirely consistent, Mr Parton, with what I said previously. I am as much in favour of other jurisdictions being able to negotiate a better outcome in relation to a future housing and homelessness agreement as I am of the ACT. What should not happen is what did happen for Tasmania, which was just about Tasmania and not about the other states and territories. I think there is a pathway forward to resolve this issue, and that pathway is through the commonwealth government's commitment to work with the states and territories around the Housing Australia Future Fund and the construction of at least 30,000 additional social housing dwellings across the country.

What I will point to, as a point of difference between the approach of the new government and that of the old government, the former coalition government, is that the new government does believe there is a role for the commonwealth in social housing provision. The previous federal government were very clear that they saw that as exclusively a state and territory responsibility, that they would not be involved, and their record in office demonstrated that they would not be involved in providing funding for the construction of more social housing at a commonwealth level. They never did and they were never going to.

What changed in May was that the community elected an Australian government that is prepared to use the commonwealth budget and the commonwealth balance sheet to provide funding for more social housing to be built. That is an uncontested and unchallengeable difference. Scott Morrison, the former Prime Minister, and Josh Frydenberg, the former Treasurer, were on the public record dozens of times saying that they did not believe there was a role for the commonwealth in the provision of

financial support of social housing, that that was a state and territory responsibility. That is very clear. That is what has changed, Mr Parton. Zed Seselja was a casualty of that along the way. He was an added bonus, from my perspective, but it is not just the housing issue that was the undoing of former Senator Seselja. There might have been a few other issues. Housing was amongst them, but it was not the only one. I think we all know that, and we all know the reasons why.

We are seeking to work constructively with the commonwealth Treasurer, the commonwealth finance minister and the federal Minister for Housing on the delivery of a clearly stated election commitment. We look forward to some further announcements in relation to that between now and the federal budget. We will work in partnership with the commonwealth to deliver more diverse and affordable housing options. This is entirely consistent with the parliamentary and governing agreement, which outlines the territory government's commitment to improve social housing and housing affordability, to continue to grow and renew social housing and to increase affordable housing supply.

What we have in 2022, 2023, 2024 and, hopefully, 2025 and beyond, is both the territory government and the federal government willing to work together to provide financial resources and land to achieve the objectives that are already outlined in the parliamentary and governing agreement, and indeed to meet commitments that were taken to the federal election by the federal government. That is what is different. The vote in May delivered an alignment of policy objectives between the commonwealth and the territory which was not there before. That is the result, a really important result, of the way people voted in May.

We outlined a series of commitments in the budget that passed at lunchtime. In the absence of Minister Gentleman, I feel it is appropriate to point out that you voted against the housing commitments within that budget, Mr Parton. I draw that to your attention because I know Minister Gentleman would do so if he were here. We have made commitments. We have funded them in the budget and we voted for the budget that has just passed.

We look forward now, ahead of the budget next Tuesday and a further budget that the commonwealth will deliver in May 2023, to working with them to deliver the ACT share of that national program that they have committed to, building on what we have already committed to. Hopefully, the productive discussions that have occurred to date can come to fruition—that we will be in a position to do more than what the federal government has already committed to and what we have already committed to, and that we will be able to work together, along with institutional investors such as superannuation funds, to bring even more capital to this task of building more social and affordable housing.

That is what we are working towards. What is different now is that we have a partner, in the federal government, that we did not have before. We have interest from institutional investors that we did not have before, and we are seeing that in the large-scale, build-to-rent programs. We have the first site on the market now, a government-released site, and we are looking to work with the private sector to see more large-scale, build-to-rent projects come into our market, all with a view to increasing the supply of rental housing, which we know, at certain times of the year,

can be incredibly challenging. There is a cyclical element to Canberra's housing market and, particularly at the beginning of the year, when new public service recruits, university students and others come to Canberra, the market can be very tight.

We want to see a rental vacancy rate that does not shrink below one per cent. I have come to the view—and I have expressed this publicly—that, with respect to the best way that we can get the currently around 50,000 out of 185,000 properties that we have in the city that are rented, if we can get 50,000 to 60,000, we will increase the supply significantly. We are not going to do that one investor at a time. We need large-scale build to rent, and that is exactly what we are pursuing. That will shift the dial more quickly than any other form of government intervention. It is important that there is commonwealth government investment in more housing, territory government investment in more housing, and that we bring new capital into the field. That new capital is coming from superannuation funds and, I would say, socially just investors who are looking for long-term returns through stable, build-to-rent housing products.

That is the pathway forward. That is what we are pursuing. Part of that mix can also involve the transaction that is an ACT government commitment to spend the equivalent of principal and interest repayments from that historic housing debt on new housing. That is what we are putting forward. That is what I am seeking to negotiate. It will not be done by next Tuesday; I acknowledge that. But we are working on it. I am looking forward to delivering a good outcome, in partnership with the commonwealth, for this community. That is what the government is focused on. That is what Minister Berry and I are working on, through Housing and Treasury, and that is what we intend to deliver. I commend my amendment to the Assembly. I move:

Omit all text after paragraph “(2)(c)”, substitute:

- “(d) ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr stated on 24 October 2019, “I would observe that it is an odd state of affairs when a crossbench senator from Tasmania can achieve more through Liberal Government than an ACT Liberal senator who is a member of the government executive as an assistant minister, Senator Seselja”;
- (e) now as Labor Finance Minister, Senator Katy Gallagher on 12 October said “the Federal Government is not in a position to waive the Territory's \$98.3 million historic housing debt” in the October 2022 Budget; and
- (f) the Assembly on 2 June 2022 unanimously voted to support a Greens motion that the debt be reinvested into further public housing if it was waived;

(3) further notes:

- (a) the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement for the 10th ACT Legislative Assembly includes a shared commitment to deliver more and better housing options for all Canberrans, including:
 - (i) improving social housing and housing affordability, as outlined in the ACT Housing Strategy; and
 - (ii) continuing to grow and renew social housing and increase affordable housing supply, including the delivery of 400 additional public housing dwellings by 2025; and a goal of delivering 600 additional dwellings by 2025-26;

- (b) the Commonwealth commitment to work with States and Territories to construct an additional 30,000 social housing dwellings across the country;
 - (c) the Chief Minister and the ACT Government have publicly committed that savings from a debt waiver would be reinvested into new social and community housing; and
 - (d) the Chief Minister will, on behalf of the ACT Government, continue discussions with the Commonwealth to maximise social and affordable housing construction in the ACT; and
- (4) calls on:
- (a) the ACT Government to report back to the Assembly by the final sitting day of 2023 on the progress of these discussions, including the total debt waived, the interest saved, and plans for public housing investments, in accordance with the motion passed by the Assembly on 2 June 2022; and
 - (b) the leaders of all parties represented in the Assembly to continue to communicate with the Commonwealth Finance Minister, and other relevant Ministers, to advocate and seek clarification from the Federal Government on the potential to waive the historic ACT housing debt, given the ACT Government's stated policy to reinvest this funding in further housing."

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (4.35): I am pleased to speak to this motion and to the Chief Minister's amendment. For those Canberra families who no doubt have livestream of the Assembly on permanently at home but have not yet learned about some procedures of this place, let me walk you through it!

On Monday, when you get into the office, one of the wonderful attendants around here will deliver one of these. It is the notice paper. It will tell me and other members what members intend on debating in the Assembly this week. I saw on the notice paper here notice No 2 from Mr Parton. I got to reading it over a morning coffee, and I thought, "Gee, this is good stuff; the bloke has seen the light," and then I got to point (c), and I thought, "This is starting to look awfully familiar," and then point (2), and I thought, "I have seen some of this before." It is an absolute carbon copy of the motion I brought to the Assembly in June of this year!

I really appreciate the continued endorsement from the Canberra Liberals of the work of the ACT Greens in this place and the policy positions brought forward by the ACT Greens and by the Greens across the country. It was just earlier this week we saw the Leader of the Opposition bring a motion to this place to discuss the issue of poverty in this country. She wanted the government to inquire into using Australian Greens terms of reference for a brand-new Senate inquiry launched and led by the Australian Greens Senator Janet Rice, taking a national approach to this issue.

I wonder if we are foreshadowing for the 2024 ACT election—"The Canberra Liberals: they are Greens policies but we just do not like Labor," which might be a bit of a vision into the Canberra Liberals' real inability to have to compete in the game of politics against two political parties who, while they often sometimes agree sometimes do not agree.

Historically, the issue of investment in public and social housing has been an issue on which we have disagreed. In fact, it was in the lead-up to the 2020 election that the ACT Labor Party and the ACT Greens had differing position on social housing and how many new public housing properties we wanted to build over the course of the next term. Of course, both of those policies, while they were different in number, stood in stark contrast to the Canberra Liberals, who had no policy on an increased number of social and public housing in the ACT—not a one that I could find.

Mr Parton: No; that is not correct.

MR DAVIS: I am happy for you to correct me in the closing remarks, Mr Parton, because I could not find any. I noticed most of your election issues have already been taken down from the website; so the wholesale review starts in earnest!

But, of course, the ACT Labor Party had a commitment to a certain number of properties and the ACT Greens had a commitment to 400 properties. We worked really hard, and I am really proud that we secured that commitment to 400 new properties over the course of this term until 2025 as part of the agreement negotiated in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement.

Of course, as we know it is not going to be enough. It is what we promised and it is what we are delivering, but we know it will not be enough. Those two things are not mutually exclusive. We have 3,060 people right now currently sitting on our public housing wait list, and, as economic pressures continue to affect Canberra families, with the rising cost of inflation and the even tighter job market, I suspect we will see that number rise in the future. I know that Minister Berry and Minister Vassarotti, in particular, know the pressures on that number, know those economic factors that are contributing to that number, and are working together collaboratively to address how the government is going to approach those things.

But, on the particular question of the public housing debt, it was my view, from where I sit all the way over here in the shadowy crossbenches, that we had not formed a unified position as a parliament, as an Assembly, all 25 members and all three parties, about where we stood on that. We heard some members talk about the advocacy that they had made with their colleagues. Of course, we never saw a letter tabled or phone records shared, but there was advocacy—“Just trust me; I had a chat with him at the pub and I told him that I thought this was a bit rotten and we should give it a go.”

Of course, the Chief Minister, as the leader of the government, has made efforts that he has assured the Assembly on—to the last government and to this government. But I thought it important, before the brand new Albanese Labor government prepared their budget, that this Assembly, all 25 of its members and all three of its parties, were on a clearly defined unity ticket on the question of this debt, because we had seen too much politics played with this debt over many, many years!

Of course, Senator Seselja was dealt with in a way that he deserved by the electorate, based on his representations of Canberrans—and the question of this public housing debt was certainly a contributing part of that. In his place, the Canberra electorate elected David Pocock. I welcome the election of Senator David Pocock and

I welcome Senator Pocock's advocacy around this issue. I particularly welcome his advocacy around this issue because, as he said in a *Canberra Weekly* article today:

Senator Gallagher may of course say the government won't be doing any deals, but the fact remains that the government doesn't have a majority in the Senate. I wouldn't be doing the right thing by the people who elected me if I didn't try everything possible to see this debt forgiven.

Right there, in black and white, from the mouth of Canberra's newest senator is, in practice, the value of electing minority governments, power-sharing governments, and avoiding, at all cost, giving absolute power on any occasion to either one of the two old parties. I think Canberra has shown historically how that can work and how that can work well, and I am pleased to see a crossbench senator in the federal parliament flexing his muscles—pardon the pun—on this particular issue. I think this is a really important one to stake a flag in the ground on and say that it is really important.

In my position as a non-minister, I do have limited opportunity to present new ideas and fresh perspectives to this Assembly in the form of private member's business. This important issue is why on 2 June I made the choice and I thought it was so important to talk about this historical public housing debt.

For those playing at home, this is literally the situation as I see it. For nine years, we had a federal coalition government that did not want to do anything about this debt. We saw two things: the Labor Party here in the ACT take the hit that was kind of obvious, because the federal coalition just would not pony up the dough and help us out; and a silent Canberra Liberal Party that had nothing to say on the issue for nine years.

Now we have a brand-new Albanese Labor government that has not done anything yet. This Assembly is obviously frustrated about it. So we have shades of defence coming from my Labor colleagues and we have absolute, apoplectic outrage coming from my Liberal colleagues. No outrage for the last nine years. This is not a new debt; it is just a new government, which shows that the Canberra Liberals continued new activism around this space is motivated purely by politics!

Mr Parton: Come on!

MR DAVIS: Mr Parton, I will share. I was very disappointed to hear Senator Gallagher's comments and I am very disappointed to hear that the federal budget will not include the waiving of the ACT's historic housing debt. It is my view, for what it is worth, and I think the view of most Australians watching this debate, that the fact is that we are in the middle of a housing crisis that most subnational governments have acknowledged, and we continue to have a piddling contest on debt between who owes it, the commonwealth government or states and territory governments. I think most Australians go: "It is all debt. It is all government. Figure it out and build more homes."

I think that is where most people sit on this issue, rather than the constant, "You did not do it when you were in office, so you are bad" and "You have only been in office for a couple of weeks. Your business cards probably are not printed. You have not

fixed it yet. Therefore, you are bad.” I think most Australians, right across the board, think that the idea, in the middle of a crisis as bad as it is on housing, that two tiers of Australian governments owe debt to one another and are paying interest on that debt in an area of policy where we have all identified a crisis is a bit ludicrous.

I would hope to see national reform perhaps inclusive of other jurisdictions. But I do not represent other jurisdictions; I represent the good people of Brindabella and Canberrans in this place. So I brought a motion based on what I could do and also to secure a commitment from the Chief Minister to ensure that any debt forgiveness was dollar for dollar reinvested back into public housing. I accept that has been part of the commentary over this for some time, but I really just thought that underlining it and bold printing it and getting all 25 of us on board would count for something.

Unfortunately, on this occasion it has not. It would appear that the shared collective will of all duly elected 25 members of this Assembly and the three parties inside it do not have nearly as much sway with the new government as we had thought. That is disappointing. It is disappointing.

Fortunately, however, the ACT is represented by somebody in the Senate who does not represent either of the two old parties, and he has made it very clear that this is an issue that he will not only be active on but also will do deals and will have conversations on. It is not for me to tell Senator Pocock how to do his job, but I am very pleased that the job that he is doing relates specifically to this debt and the rising rates of people waiting for public housing here in the ACT. So I encourage him to continue to be pretty active on that.

For those playing at home, at the risk of repeating myself, I get a bit frustrated. With my two years here, I have an appreciation of the amount of important issues that come across my desk, of the amount of important public policy issues that I am asked to grapple with and of the infrequency with which I and other members of the non-executive have opportunities to bring PMBs, private member’s business, to the Assembly. I am frustrated that Mr Parton would choose to use this opportunity by recycling my work and whacking on a big slap to the federal Labor Party!

This could have been a motion with a fresh idea on public housing. This could have been a motion with a new perspective, like we will try tiny houses. Mr Parton, you could have brought a motion to the Assembly saying that we should trial that to fix our housing crisis. You could have contributed to the conversation I am trying to lead about the vacancy rate and a vacancy tax to try and create an economic situation which does not allow property speculators to withhold property from the market over a long period of time. You could have contributed to the conversation I have been trying to have around short-term rental accommodation and Airbnbs and how this new market player risks impacting our supply of long-term housing in the territory. But you did not. You brought my work to this Assembly and you slapped a big mean whack on federal Labor at the end of it. It just seems like a wasted opportunity for a political party that wants Canberrans to believe that they have now, all of a sudden, decided to take seriously this issue of wealth and income inequality, the rise in the public housing wait lists and poverty. Those are the people of course who will disproportionately be benefited from an investment in public housing.

It seems like a wasted opportunity, in the same way as did Ms Lee's proposed motion earlier this week to discuss poverty. Ms Lee had 15 minutes in her opening remarks and 10 minutes to close—25 minutes in total—and could not once bring herself to say: "Maybe it would be a good idea if we raised the rate of income support. As long as we are having this big conversation about poverty and people who are doing it tough and ways governments could support them, maybe I could just slip in here, 'Hey, keeping people living on incomes that sit well below the Henderson Poverty Line is kind of criminal and an egregious abuse of power in a country as rich as Australia.' Maybe I will mention that so that we can then move on from that sort of shared position, like the one we now have on the public housing debt, and then we could have a serious conversation like adults about what is now in the ACT government's control, and we could talk about that." But they will not.

Maybe it is because members of this place, right across the political spectrum, aspire to move up to the hill and do not want to upset future colleagues. Maybe it is because they do not believe that the rate should be raised, as an example. Maybe it is because—and dare I say it again at the risk of really upsetting people—conservative right-wing Liberal economic theory insists on a certain degree of poverty and insists on a certain amount of people struggling. You cannot have a society where people aspire to be the haves unless you can, by contrast, point out the have-nots—right? I know that is difficult, but that is the economic theory to which those to my right, literally and figuratively, subscribe to, which makes participating in this debate really difficult.

You could overcome that, of course. You could say, "Let's raise the rate." You could have used this motion to talk about other ways the ACT government could impact the public housing wait lists, but you did not. We are going to continue to see cheap political shots in this space. We are going to see it while the public housing wait list continues to grow. It solidifies my resolve and—forgive me for saying this, Mr Assistant Speaker Cain; I am probably biased—it makes me even more grateful that there were six Greens elected to this Assembly. That gave us huge weight in formulating the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement, and we were able to secure our election commitment to buy or build 400 new public housing properties by 2025. And I am pleased that Minister Berry and Minister Vassarotti are going to continue to work hard together on delivering that.

In my last few seconds, I would just encourage Mr Parton and the Canberra Liberals, on the few rare occasions they have to bring new public policy debates to this chamber, to do their own homework.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (4.50): I have a few words to say in support of the Chief Minister's amendment to Mr Parton's motion. I thank Mr Parton for highlighting Mr Davis's very similar resolution from June of this year advocating for more and better quality public housing for the ACT and seeking to improve the ACT's ability to fund that increase through seeking the waiving of the historic ACT housing debt. If this debt to the commonwealth is cancelled, it will mean that the ACT government is able to invest millions of dollars more into Housing ACT each year.

The ACT Greens want public housing that works for people, and the cancelling of this debt means more money to ensure that Housing ACT can deliver this. We know that there is an increasing need for social and affordable community housing in the ACT, as home ownership and private rentals are more unaffordable than ever before and this impacts the most on those with the lowest incomes.

Over the decade from 2007-08 to 2017-18 housing costs as a proportion of gross household income for those in the lowest quintile, the lowest 20 per cent of household incomes in the ACT, rose from 23.5 per cent of their income to 35 per cent. For those in the second quintile, housing costs rose from 19.9 per cent of their income to 24.2 per cent, but for those in the top 20 per cent of household incomes in the ACT housing costs as a proportion of gross household income actually dropped, from 10.9 per cent to 8.3 per cent of their income.

I know that this is the exact same speech that I gave in June, but I am very excited that Mr Parton was listening the first time. I am hoping that I can overcome the usual difficult second album problem, with better delivery of my speech today! Because he was listening the first time, I do not feel the need to table all the reports I am referencing today, but I just want to say that I really do love recycling, both of the original motion and of my response to it!

A significant factor has been the impact on the property market of many years of negative gearing and capital gains tax discounts encouraging speculative property investment at a time when many aspirational first home buyers are just looking for a home to live in. From 2007-08 to 2017-8 the percentage of Australian households who owned their own home dropped from 70.8 per cent to 63.8 per cent and the percentage of households living in state or territory owned public housing dropped from 8.5 per cent to 6.8 per cent, while the percentage in private rental housing rose from 17.3 per cent to 26.1 per cent. In addition, the proportion of dwellings in the ACT that were community housing remained unchanged from 2007-08 to 2017-18, at 0.4 per cent of all properties in the ACT. Increasing investment in community housing will also help to increase affordable housing supply.

Keep in mind the rise in housing costs as a proportion of gross household income that I was just speaking about for the lowest 40 per cent of household incomes. What I am talking about here are the people in our community who can least afford to compete in the private rental market having to do just that. This also has a gendered impact, and I am talking about single women with children. The 2016 census showed that there were 3,477 single women with children in low income households with equivalised household income of \$500 per week or less in the ACT. In addition, 46.4 per cent of women and girls living in middle income households with equivalised household income of \$52,000 to \$103,999 per year in the ACT are reliant on the income of a partner or parent for their middle income status. This is part of the reason why a 2014 report from the Domestic Violence Crisis Service found that 54.6 per cent of women with home ownership and 62.5 per cent of women renting lose their homes within a year of separation.

For many women who are sole parents on low incomes, housing choices are almost non-existent because, as the Anglicare rental affordability index tells us year after year, the private rental market has nothing they can afford. This is why we are seeing

increasing concentrations of low income households in areas that are further away from employment opportunities, education, health, and other services or social networks, because that is the compromise these women need to make to avoid homelessness. Low income households reliant on the private rental market also have to compromise on the appropriateness of housing to be able to afford somewhere to call home. They may need to live in overcrowded accommodation or live in housing that is not adaptable or accessible to their physical needs.

We know that the needs of Housing ACT tenants are changing and we need the public housing stock to reflect these changes—for example, through delivering more accessible and class C adaptable properties. I thank Minister Vassarotti for the work she has done as ACT Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction in achieving mandatory accessibility standards in the National Construction Code so that all homes in future will be built to universal design standards.

We know our public housing stock is ageing and we need our public housing stock to be climate wise and energy efficient so that everyone can afford to heat and cool their home. The ACT government is already responding to these challenges through the growth and renewal program by investing over a billion dollars to build 400 more properties and renew 1,000 properties. But if this historic debt is abolished, we will be able to do more. The provision of an energy efficient class C adaptable property for each tenancy is life-changing, and it is what our community deserves.

Everyone needs a safe place that they can call home, one that they feel proud of and where they can live with dignity. We must do everything in our power to provide this to everyone who needs it here in the ACT. While we are writing to the commonwealth government, one last thing: raise the rate. Thank you.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (4.56): I rise today in support of the amendment moved by Mr Barr. I welcome Mr Parton bringing the motion to the Assembly. It is, as we have noted, very similar to a call made—and supported by all parties—by my colleague Mr Davis earlier this year. As I have acknowledged before, I believe the issue of responding to our housing affordability crisis is something that binds all parties in this chamber. While we have different ideas about how to respond, I do see this as an area that we can find common ground on and work together to support everyone in our community to have a decent home. In this place, we have extensively ventilated the reasons why we are in this situation, the issues faced here in the ACT and nationally. My colleague Minister Davidson continues to awe us with her grasp of the data and information around these issues.

Mr Parton: And we love it.

MS VASSAROTTI: We do. In an area that is complex and challenging, easy measures should be welcomed and actioned quickly. Given this, as I expressed last week, and as I think many fellow colleagues in this room felt, I was feeling extremely disappointed on hearing the news that the federal Labor government will not be acting immediately on this much-needed relief. It was particularly disappointing to hear this news, given that they were not in a position to provide debt relief to the ACT

government to the amount of \$98 million while remaining certain that they are in a position to proceed with stage 3 tax cuts which will overwhelmingly benefit the richest in our community. As we reflect often, budgets are about priorities, and as someone who would benefit from the financially irresponsible stage 3 tax cuts, I would implore the federal government to prioritise those who are doing it tough rather than those who are doing okay.

I remain hopeful that this is a temporary pause and there will be movement on this issue. I look to the Chief Minister to advocate strongly to ensure that this measure is implemented as quickly as possible. This is a historical debt that was created before the ACT even had self-government. This debt eats a hole in the ACT government's financial ability to provide much-needed social housing, and this debt has, in reality, probably been paid many times over. We do need to acknowledge that the clock is ticking. Building homes takes time and, if this debt is to be forgiven, it will take time to reinvest into social housing.

The ACT Greens do not, and will never, believe that an economic downturn should be met with austerity. We see it as vital that we continue our investment into public housing and measures that alleviate housing stress for those who cannot afford it. The ACT government, through the growth and renewal program, is making the biggest investment in public housing in the history of self-government. Over the last two years the government has invested an additional \$12 million into the homelessness sector. The ACT government is working hard to respond to the housing crisis, but it is true that the public housing wait list continues to grow. On 30 September it reached 3,114. We need the support of the federal government.

The circumstances of each of these households weigh extremely heavily on my mind. We know that these are families who are dealing with immense challenges. In addition to financial stress, families are also often dealing with issues such as domestic and family violence, disability and mental health. It is true that we have the highest proportion of public housing in Australia, but due to our population growth the proportion is reducing. This is at a time when need is increasing. COVID-19 created a huge increase in need and, while some of that was temporary, due to border closures, job losses and other stresses, a significantly high level of need continues. We know that we do have a shortfall in social housing as compared to need.

While the ACT government is investing in building more social housing, there is no way, with our revenue base, that we can meet the full gap on our own. Waiving the historical housing debt is a simple and effective way to assist in addressing the issue of housing affordability now. It provides the ACT government with additional capacity to deliver more social housing—something that is desperately and urgently needed. The reason that we have a government is to make citizens' lives better. Decades of neoliberal economic policy from the old parties show that we may have forgotten this. The cancellation of this historic debt would mean that more people in the ACT would be able to be provided with energy efficient class C adaptable properties. What that would mean for each of these households cannot be overstated.

As discussed in the context of the budget debate yesterday, the ACT Greens did take an unashamedly ambitious agenda to the last election. We did articulate our vision of

providing a decent home from all and to eliminate homelessness. We set out a range of initiatives which we believe would make a big difference to achieving this vision. Key to this is building more homes for people who need them. Key to this is shifting back to a community where we see how things are placed for people to live and build a good life, and we will continue that work.

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) (5.02): I am happy to rise to speak to the Chief Minister's amendment to Mr Parton's motion today. As the Chief Minister has said, we have been continuing to engage ministers in the federal government in our various portfolio responsibility areas and will continue to do that with regard to housing matters. Whilst at the moment there has not been an immediate outcome, which would have been our preference, we will continue to advocate to find a way for the debt to be waived and for the savings to be redirected to social and affordable housing. We have always committed to do that.

For many years, since I have been in this place, we have been calling on the federal government to waive that debt. As I said, we will continue to advocate for ways for that to occur. The more recent resolutions that were moved in the Assembly by Greens members that have supported those calls have been very much appreciated. It shows that, here at least, we have a willingness to advocate together for public housing debt waivers.

There is a big difference, though, between the new federal Labor government and the previous government. The willingness to engage and work with the territory on matters like this, which require all governments to work together across the country, is something that has, unfortunately, become unique but is a real thing for the new Albanese Labor government. Housing is one of those issues that we are working very closely on with all our state and territory government partners, as well as the federal government.

Since the Albanese Labor government has been sworn in, there have already been two housing ministers meetings, with another one likely on the way; the development of a new national plan; and a range of other commitments, including the establishment of the Housing Australia Future Fund, a \$10 billion fund to build 30,000 social and affordable homes in five years—20,000 social and 10,000 affordable, with 4,000 homes as a priority for women and children escaping family violence; the re-establishment of the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council; developing the national housing and homelessness strategy, as I said; and opening a federal shared equity scheme to allow 10,000 lower income households each year to buy into their home sooner.

Over the last five years or so, since I have been minister for housing, from the Liberal coalition government there has been nothing, not a single commitment to addressing housing and homelessness across the country or here in the ACT. It has been crickets for the entire time that I have been working as minister for housing, and I definitely do not recall anything prior to that. What I find is that when I write letters to this federal Labor government on matters such as housing, we get engagement and we get

a substantive response on the issues that we raise. Just yesterday I took Minister Julie Collins on a tour of the ACT government's joint venture project of Ginninderry. There are going to be some exciting affordable housing proposals to consider as part of this development, and there is genuine engagement and interest from the minister and the federal government on the role that they can play in helping to deliver on these projects.

I want to go briefly to finance minister Katy Gallagher's comments. She continues to engage with us, and all states and territories, on this matter. Minister Gallagher was clear in her response that the way it was done by the previous government as a vote-buying exercise to overturn the medevac legislation was not going to be the approach of the federal Labor government. I admire her integrity in that space. Whilst I hear Mr Davis calling on Mr Pocock to consider doing deals of some sort with the Labor government, I hope that Mr Pocock has the integrity to not make deals on matters like medevac or indeed the IR legislation changes that are being sought by the Labor government. In those cases I am sure that, as the Chief Minister and I have been doing in meetings with Minister Katy Gallagher and various other ministers, we will be able to work through this. It requires a grown-up response from a grown-up government, and that is what we have with federal Labor.

I look forward to having these issues resolved and getting on with the job of delivering even more social and affordable housing projects. As I said, I have been writing to Minister Julie Collins to pursue the discussions that we continue to have with her and with Katy Gallagher around the waiving of the housing debt owed to the commonwealth. The Chief Minister has gone through the detail of that: the funding that is required and where we could redirect those costs, and particularly those servicing costs, towards new and expanded public housing in the ACT.

I do just want to go to the point about providing more social and affordable housing in the ACT. Usually I would ignore this, but I find myself in a place where I have not been able to, so I will say this and draw people to the record of public housing in the ACT delivered by the ACT Labor Party. Under the previous government here in the ACT, when it was the Canberra Liberals, a thousand homes were sold off, privatised and not replaced.

Mr Parton: Which century is this?

MS BERRY: I know that it is the only data we have got to rely on from the Canberra Liberals, even though it was some time ago. There is nothing new to reflect on. As you say, "Which century?" It was 20 years ago, and it is the case that there are 1,000 fewer homes. There also would have been more than 100 fewer homes, had the Canberra Liberals got their way, when we were replacing public housing during the last public housing renewal program. The Canberra Liberals and, in fact, some of the ACT Greens members stood in between us and building more, better, modern public housing properties in the ACT.

It was noted at the time as well that the ACT Greens did not support Common Ground in Dickson initially. They have come round to that, which is excellent, but initially the Greens did not support Common Ground in Dickson. They suggested that that it might not be appropriate for single women with children to live at Common Ground

in Dickson. The primary tenants that are living now at Common Ground in Dickson are single women with children, in fact.

It is an incredible challenge to build and deliver public housing, social housing, in the ACT when sometimes even your own colleagues are trying to push you in a different direction, but I am very pleased now that we have joined together, as a government, to deliver on social and public housing. We have built on that public housing. We are working very closely to deliver, both in the ACT and working with our federal colleagues.

Mr Parton, I would just like to comment on your advocacy for public housing and public housing tenants, particularly in the ACT. You have—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Cain): Ms Berry, you are meant to address the chair.

MS BERRY: Through you, Chair: Mr Parton, you do advocate for public housing tenants in the ACT. I know that you care deeply about every one of the tenants that you represent and draw to the attention of my office. In my office's dealings with you and your office around individuals and concerns that they raise confidentially, I have appreciated that approach from you. I do sense a change in direction from the Canberra Liberals, albeit a small one, when it comes to supporting public housing. I think that is because of your advocacy and work on that side of the chamber.

Finally, I bring attention back to the amendment that the Chief Minister has moved. We are not giving up on our conversations with the federal Labor government. We will continue our conversations with the finance minister, Minister Katy Gallagher, as well as, in my portfolio responsibilities, with Minister Julie Collins. As I said, there has been an incredible amount of work in a very short period of time—commitments made by the federal Labor government that I have never seen before—and a real commitment to improving and working with states and territories to provide even more social and affordable housing. I look forward to continuing that work, and I look forward to continuing that work with my colleagues here in the government.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (5.12): I had hoped earlier on in the piece that all three parties had a silly chance of arriving at a conclusion that we could all agree on. I know that there was some toing and froing between Labor and the Greens to arrive at the amendment as it currently stands, but it just does not quite cut the mustard for us. It tiptoes around the issue at hand, and I think it completely ignores what is valid criticism of the federal finance minister.

I understand that Mr Barr and Ms Gallagher spent a fair bit of time working together. But this is not the time or place for the Chief Minister to be running a protection racket for Senator Gallagher.

Members interjecting—

MR PARTON: Well, it is not—and the motion was pretty clear. I think it is weak and pathetic for the Chief Minister to completely ignore that a clear promise was made by the now finance minister to—

Ms Berry: Point of order: referring to the Chief Minister of the ACT government as pathetic, and also his references to the Chief Minister before that, is unparliamentary, and I seek your advice.

MR PARTON: Which part?

Ms Berry: Protection racket.

Mr Barr: It might be crossing a line.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Cain): Mr Parton, do you—

MR PARTON: I withdraw.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR PARTON: There was a promise that was made that has been broken. I understand that on the Labor side of politics broken promises are a dime a dozen. But the rest of the community take that stuff quite seriously. As embarrassing as it may be for ACT Labor, they should be bold enough to condemn their own and call out the finance minister for failing to fulfil a very clear promise.

If the federal Liberals were in power this would have been pile-on. Imagine if the federal Liberals were in power and Senator Seselja had promised to waive the \$100 million housing debt and then backtracked on that in four months. Mr Barr would have brought a burning effigy of Zed into the chamber, and he would have been crash tackled by Lyndell and Jim! They would not have known what to do. That is what would have happened if the tables were reversed. But it has turned into a sort of “As you were; there is nothing to see here; please move along motion”.

I am pleased to hear that Mr Barr is disappointed that there will not be a line item in the federal budget waiving that debt. It is one of the things that everyone in this chamber agrees on. That is good. It does not happen very often. We are all disappointed. It is embarrassing and it is shameful, based on what has been said.

Mr Barr also tells me that great things are coming from the feds in this space, but (a) where are they; (b) when will they be coming; and (c) how much of it will be for the ACT? I think Mr Barr should let his federal colleagues know that, if there is not a fair share of big picture housing funding that comes to the ACT, we have got this pesky Parton bloke here that will call it out—and he will call it out loudly and clearly.

Mr Barr: I am not sure that is my strongest argument!

MR PARTON: Let them know that if they do not deliver, the ACT opposition will shine a very bright light on it. And you can trust that, if it occurs, I will shine a bright light on it. I love it that in the housing space I do not have to get any motions passed to actually effect outcomes! The heat is on and the heat will continue to be on.

With regards to the contribution from Ms Berry, I have to try and be nice, but can I just say that I am not sure the Greens did indicate they were against common ground at Dickson. But I am sure they will have that conversation with you.

Ms Berry: They did.

MR PARTON: The minister said that she has long been committed to having that debt waived. I would have thought that that commitment would have led her to supporting the motion in its original form. Ms Berry, as expected, talked up the stuff that the new government is going to deliver and that this excuses the finance minister for backtracking on her promise. I do not think it excuses her at all.

Her suggestion that the federal Liberal government achieved nothing in the housing space is not quite correct. They did do some solid work in that space. The federal Liberal government achieved a hell of a lot in the national housing space, not the least of which was the establishment of the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation. There was much achieved and there was much national spending in that space.

As far as Mr Davis goes, I was expecting quite a performance from Mr Davis—and Mr Davis does not often let us down. I note that Mr Davis suggested that the original motion was, according to him, a complete carbon copy of his motion from earlier in the year. That is not quite the case. But, nevertheless, I would have hoped that his opening statements meant that, like us, he would be rejecting the amendment and supporting the original motion.

Mr Davis suggested that in the lead-up to the 2020 election that the Canberra Liberals did not have a suite of housing policies on the table. I completely reject that. Our very solid housing policies were heavily endorsed by the community sector, and they would have delivered many more sociable and affordable dwellings to Canberrans than the current policies. The Canberra Liberals 2020 housing policies were very, very solid, and they would have resulted in more Canberrans being able to get into a secure home. I completely reject that we were found wanting in that space.

Mr Barr indicated at the start of his speech that this motion was inevitable from me. It probably was not at the forefront, but down the list of the 10 things that he thought of when the rejection of the waiving of that debt came from Gallagher, he said, “Bloody Parton”. So he knew that it was inevitable. And I would have thought that you would sense that inevitably in that you cannot have it both ways—you cannot call this out that strongly and then ignore it.

As far as Ms Davidson: I loved your speech! I thought it was great. I just wish that I had the ability to deliver such passionate speeches, chock full of data, because the fans love it! They love it. There are so many people that mention to me when I am out doorknocking, that they are just loving your data heavy speeches. So please continue, because I think you are absolutely hitting the mark!

I did thank Ms Vassarotti for working with Labor to make sure that this amendment was not a complete knock-down/re-build. But, irrespective of that, we cannot support it.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 14

Noes 7

Mr Barr

Dr Paterson

Mr Cain

Mr Braddock

Mr Pettersson

Ms Castley

Ms Burch

Mr Rattenbury

Mr Cocks

Ms Cheyne

Mr Steel

Mrs Kikkert

Ms Clay

Ms Stephen-Smith

Ms Lawder

Ms Davidson

Ms Vassarotti

Mr Milligan

Mr Davis

Mr Parton

Ms Orr

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Climate change—public health

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (5.23): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) fair, equitable and universal access to quality public health services is a human right;
- (b) access to primary and preventive public health care is vital and people should be encouraged to interact with public health services before they become unwell;
- (c) climate change adversely impacts public health;
- (d) climate change impacts public health in a variety of ways, such as exposing people to increased temperatures, heatwaves, and smoke from bushfires, and increasing the spread of disease;
- (e) people on low incomes or experiencing economic disadvantage are the most vulnerable to health complications related to climate change; and
- (f) as a nation leader in the fight against climate change, the ACT Government should have a strategic, health-based response to climate change including a plan for the health sector to reduce its own contribution to climate change;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) in May 2019, the ACT Legislative Assembly declared a climate emergency;
- (b) on 11 November 2021, the Minister for Health and the Minister for the Environment released the ACT Government's *Bushfire Smoke and Air Quality Strategy* to establish a whole of government approach to

- managing smoke from significant bushfire events and household wood fires;
- (c) on 8 June 2022, Johnathan Davis MLA successfully moved a motion in the Legislative Assembly calling on the ACT Government to reform the *Wood Heater Replacement Scheme* to increase uptake of the scheme, improve access to the scheme and remove upfront costs for the scheme, especially for low-income households;
 - (d) the ACT Government joined the Global Healthy Hospitals Network in 2021, a worldwide group of hospitals and health facilities that are committed to sustainable healthcare operations, including reduced emissions;
 - (e) the *ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025* includes a commitment to establish and implement a pathway to a zero emissions ACT Government health sector by 2040 informed by an assessment of all current and planned public health facilities; and
 - (f) the ACT Greens took a commitment to the 2020 election to include a right to a healthy environment in our ACT Human Rights Act. On 27 February 2022, Jo Clay MLA successfully moved a motion in the Legislative Assembly calling on the ACT Government to investigate the inclusion of a right to a healthy environment into the *Human Rights Act 2004*; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) ensure that public health services are adequately prepared for the impacts of climate change;
 - (b) ensure that the ACT Government brings a proposal to the National Council of Australian Governments (or equivalent) for a national strategy on climate, health, and wellbeing for Australia;
 - (c) develop an ACT Government climate change preparedness strategy for the ACT public health sector, ensuring that the sector recognises and responds to climate change risks to the health of patients, the delivery of care, infrastructure, service provision, the health workforce, and supply chains. This includes continued work on the impact of smoke on air quality;
 - (d) ensure that ACT Health collects and reports on data to monitor progress against resilience indicators, including continuation of the longitudinal survey and climate-related health impacts and costs; and
 - (e) report back to the Legislative Assembly by the last sitting of 2023.

The goal of a café or a shop or any other business is to get more customers. But the goal of a hospital is to have as few customers as possible.

There are many things that the government does to try to keep people out of hospital. We have provided alternatives like walk-in clinics and telehealth services. We have created public awareness campaigns around health choices like wearing sunscreen, eating vegetables and reducing alcohol consumption. We ensure that our water is pathogen-free, our sewage is treated and our bins are emptied often. We train our doctors, nurses and ancillary health staff to a very high standard. They are all good things, but not enough, especially when we are talking about the climate change future that is now, to a certain extent, locked in.

Ten, 20 or 30 years from now there are going to be a lot more customers for our hospitals and our health systems if we do not start some serious thinking on the subject right now. Our lives are going to dramatically change. The flooding in Victoria and Tasmania right now demonstrates that the climate catastrophe that we have warned of for decades is now upon us. Our whole lives are going to have to adapt to living in a warming climate. The question I am asking the government to focus on today is: what does that look like from a public health perspective?

When it comes to the health effects of climate change, we will need a whole-of-society approach. Thinking in silos or with a single-issue focus will not deliver the solutions that we need. It is not going to be enough to know how to treat heatstroke. We are going to need buildings and green spaces that prevent heatstroke from developing in the first place, especially in a hotter world where Canberra might see summer temperatures into the high forties or even the fifties.

Humans cannot withstand a so-called wet-bulb temperature of 35 degrees or above for more than a few hours. But what does that actually mean? What does it look like and how can we live within it? To quote from an article in *The Economist* from May this year:

The wet-bulb temperature is that which would be recorded by a thermometer wrapped around a moist towel. The wetter the surrounding air, the less moisture is able to escape and the higher the wet-bulb reading will be. At wet-bulb temperatures above 35 degrees, it is thought that even young, healthy people will die within about six hours.

A 2010 paper that appeared in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science USA* stated, "At these levels of temperature and humidity the human body switches from shredding heat to the environment to gaining heat from it, even in the shade and next to a fan." Wet-bulb temperatures this high have already been reported for short periods in some parts of the world, including in Yannarie, near Carnarvon, in Western Australia.

How do we prevent temperatures in Canberra reaching this point, and how do we protect people if they do? Making buildings, public spaces, housing and green spaces cooler is neither quick nor easy. Efforts on that need to ramp up now. We need creative, future thinking and leadership on these issues.

How many heat deaths are we willing to tolerate as a society and how many can our public healthcare system cope with? These are two quite different questions. One is a moral one and one is practical and economic. We have seen both questions asked and answered, at least to a certain extent, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am not sure that the answers have been encouraging, especially as the pandemic has ground on.

Climate change will exacerbate the spread of certain diseases. Many mosquito species are likely to increase their range. Different mosquitoes carry different diseases and do best at different temperatures. Malaria spreads best at 25 degrees, while zika prefers 29 degrees. The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which is responsible for the transmission of malaria, dengue fever, chikungunya and West Nile virus, does not like Canberra at the moment but might love it here in the summer months 50 years from now. The good

news seems to be that, if you move to the Gulf of Carpentaria, you might be better off on that front, as *Aedes aegypti* will be finding it too hot by then even there. Other mosquito species in Australia spread diseases such as Ross River virus, Barmah Forest virus and Murray Valley encephalitis. The range of these species is also likely to change as Australia warms.

What does the potential for mosquito-borne disease in Canberra look like from a public health perspective? If you have ever been to Disneyworld in Florida, you may have noticed the eerie absence of insect life in what should be inviting habitats for mosquitoes and their like. Their methods for eliminating them are actually quite enlightened from an environmental perspective. Apparently, they do not use pesticides, apart from garlic spray. Instead, their drainage systems and building constructions are designed to ensure that there is never any standing water for mosquitoes to breed in. Any bodies of water on their landscape are kept moving. All good. And there is a page on the ACT Health website on reducing mosquito risk around our homes, using these same principles.

But, at the moment, we do not need to have a massive push on that, because the risk of serious mosquito-borne disease is not that high here. But what if this changes? Is the landscaping of our public spaces, like that of Disneyworld, designed to prevent water collecting in odd little spots where mozzies love to breed? Or will we discover that hundreds of expensive changes need to be made?

And what about mental health and wellbeing? How prepared are we for epidemic levels of stress, anxiety, depression and the climate grief that many climate scientists and others are already reporting—that huge sense of anticipatory loss for the things humans are already destroying and will destroy in the future? Young people, in particular, report powerful feelings when it comes to climate change. A work experience student in my office, Isabel, wrote down her perspective on this and gave me permission to quote her. She writes:

Climate change from the perspective of a young person is infuriating. As a young person myself, I feel obliged to explain the significant impact the dying world has on my own life, and the lives of the 1.2 billion adolescents in the world ...

In year 2 they taught us about recycling and reducing water usage to save the world's resources. In year 4 we would have sustainable lunch box days where you earned points for having no plastic packaging, those points going towards a lucky dip where all the toys were plastic that ended up in the bin a week later.

In year 7 they taught us about the world's food security and the water usage it takes to create different products, including the fact that it takes almost 500 litres of water to make one cup of milk.

Throughout all of this we were being told it was our job to save the world before it is too late, like we are superheros, and the task will be easy for us. This is a lot of pressure to put on children, which creates a lot of stress. On top of that we are forced to live through the consequences of climate change

... Worldwide, governments need to understand that the climate change they are so willing to ignore is not only killing the world, but it is affecting the health and wellbeing of the population.

Despite all of this, young people are still doing what they can to help, including myself. I buy almost all of my clothes second hand, or I make them myself. I don't eat meat very often because of the water usage it takes to create it. I recycle everything possible. I pick up litter when I see it, and I encourage the people in my life to do what they can to help too. But this is not enough to fix the problem.

Isabel will probably have my job before I am prepared to give it up.

I believe it was former Prime Minister Scott Morrison who at one point admonished those of us who care about climate change not to frighten the children. Perhaps there are some in this chamber who think that Isabel should not have been taught those things at school and think that the solution is censorship in the classroom. That is certainly happening in some parts of the United States.

Are we simply supposed to tell them comforting lies instead? Surely, at some point, knowing that you have been lied to only adds to what Mr Morrison described as, "needless anxiety". But is it needless? Is it really? The anxiety seems all too appropriate to me. The median age of the Australian person is 38 years, as of 2021. I am below that age myself. And I share all of the anger, frustration, fear and determination that work experience students like Isabel in my office have demonstrated, like in this powerful piece of writing. Shame on us for doing this to our kids and to our young people.

We are certainly not making it easier for everyone to be climate ready either. We know that the people most at risk in our community are also the most worse off. If you are a renter, like so many young people are, you get very little say on whether your rental uses gas cooking or gas heating. When money is tight, doctor bills take up a criminally large portion of your salary. If you are made to choose between groceries or a visit to the doctor to find out something is wrong and expensive, I know which I would pick. I know which I have picked.

When we start tackling health and climate change, I trust that as a progressive, community-oriented jurisdiction we will, and we must, centre on the economically vulnerable. We know prevention is better than cure, and it would be a disservice to both them and to us to rob some people of the opportunity to protect their own health.

According to the ACT's Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, Dr Sophie Lewis, developing traditional evidence-based policy will not equip us for this frightening future, either, because the future is unprecedented. We will not be able to act only on existing data; we will need to act on imagination and anticipation as well. We saw this with the fires three summers ago. There were predictions and planning for fire, but not for the smoke. It turns out that MRI machines cannot run in the smoke. It turns out that babies gestated in a smoke-filled atmosphere are born underweight. It turns out that people do not just need indoor heat refuges; they need indoor smoke refuges as well.

In my office, we have heard from so many Canberrans struggling to breathe, not just from serious disasters like bushfires but also from smoke over the fence from the

neighbour's wood heater. Some wood heaters are more efficient than others, sure, but not everyone is burning right tonight, despite our pleas. God help the people that know this and cannot afford to make the switch to a safer, more efficient electric unit.

As I hoped my motion from not three months ago would show, we are trying to make sure that everyone who can make the healthy choice for their community is making the switch. That is a work in progress, but it is a small piece of a very big puzzle that has to fall into place, and quickly. What else might turn out to be like the smoke, something we do not even consider until it happens and needs an instant solution? We managed the smoke pretty well, considering. Might there be other unimagined symptoms of the climate crisis that are far harder, yet far more urgent to deal with, and far worse?

In preparing this motion, my office talked to and read the work of several local people doing important work and thinking in this space, including Sophie Lewis, who I have already mentioned, and also Dr Arnagretta Hunter, from the ANU Climate Change Institute, Dr Anthea Roberts, from the ANU's School of Regulation and Global Governance, and Professor Sharon Friel, Professor of Health Equity and Director of the ANU's Menzies Centre for Health Governance. As Dr Hunter told us, we have tremendously challenging times ahead and we need to practise the integrative thinking that Dr Friel talks about in her book, *The Six Faces of Globalisation*—a good read, members.

We need to look at what other jurisdictions are already doing. For example, Victoria has the Health and Human Services Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2022-2026, published earlier this year. That could serve as a starting point or a partial model. But we also need to regain our place as one of the world's leaders in our action on climate. Let us offer the kids of Canberra the hope and inspiration they need by taking the action they are desperate to see.

My motion calls on the ACT government to ensure that public health services are adequately prepared for the impacts of a change in climate. It proposes that the ACT government pushes the National Health COAG, or equivalent, to create a national strategy on climate, health and wellbeing. It proposes the development of an ACT climate change preparedness strategy for our public health sector. It asks the ACT government to ensure that ACT Health collects and reports on data to monitor progress against resilience indicators. And, finally, it calls for reporting back to this Assembly on the progress of those endeavours by the last sitting of 2023. It is not enough to do this quietly, either; we should tell people, loudly, that we are doing all this.

That sense of betrayal that so many young people feel needs to be addressed in a real way. They need us to show them that we are really, really, seriously and responsibly thinking about what life will look like for them when they are our age or older. They need to see that we are acting really seriously, ambitiously and responsibly now to protect them from the things we may not live to see ourselves.

We also need to show other jurisdictions what is possible. We have a proud tradition of that here in the ACT, and perhaps most notably in the work we did to achieve our 100 per cent renewable energy target.

As people like Dr Arnagretta Hunter and Professor Sharon Friel say, this needs to be a whole-of-society endeavour, an endeavour of imagination and lateral thinking and cross-fertilisation. We need to inspire one another, build off each other's ideas, and race each other to make the best contribution to the rising tide that lifts all boats—though I do hate that phrase.

I trust that the ACT government, in its nation-leading responses to climate change, can be the flagship and the first to tip the scales against this climate disaster. Let us do it to demonstrate continued national leadership. Let us do it to give Canberra's young people hope. Let us do it to live up to the promise of what people expect when they elect a Labor-Greens government. And let us do it to protect the health of everyone in our community.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (5.38): I want to thank my colleague, Johnathan Davis, for his important and timely motion on climate and health, and to add my own insights, as Minister for Environment and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction.

Increasing evidence mounds up on the links between a healthy environment and healthy humans. It is a reminder that this distinction we often create between the environment and our human health systems is such an artificial one. Our whole planet is part of the environment. Human life, like all life that we know of, exists wholly and totally within it.

It is hardly surprising that when the health of the environment is challenged or compromised, our own health suffers as well. The good news is that we are already doing a lot of detailed and practical work in the ACT to capitalise on our understanding of the connection between the environment and health. For example, our work around air quality. The end of the drought and the fires brought home just how much our air quality is affected by climate events. Average levels for particulate matter in 2021 were at some of their lowest levels in 10 years. Why? No bushfire smoke; no dust storms. The only pollutant that exceeded the national daily standard at any point during 2021 was PM2.5—fine particulate matter, that went slightly over the standard on just five days that year. On three of those days the pollutants were related to controlled burns, and on the other two days they related to woodfire heater emissions.

On the subject of wood heaters, we recently did a review of the Burn Right Tonight campaign and the woodfire heater replacement program, and this yielded interesting and largely positive findings. First, Canberrans are proud of our clean air. They support government action on air quality and want to see woodfire usage reduced over time. Financial incentives for removing wood heaters were not a big factor. The main issues were the work and the mess involved in woodfire heating, as well as increasing awareness of the environmental issues.

Second, this year's Burn Right Tonight campaign focused on the promotion of the woodfire replacement program, and that appears to have been successful. There were

24 applications under the wood heater replacement program this year compared to just five in the previous year. And there has been a 904 per cent increase in traffic to the website, and a 255 per cent increase in traffic to the wood heater replacement program page. There are plans to continue refining these initiatives, including the possibility of the no-cost replacement of wood heating for low-income households, and targeted campaigns in Tuggeranong and Belconnen, which have a higher proportion of wood heaters. In the ACT we are already at the forefront, nationally, in addressing woodfire smoke pollution via these types of initiatives.

The ACT is also pushing hard on building energy efficiency, and, as Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction, I am really happy to be a part of the progress that we have made. We know that human health is significantly impacted by indoor environments that are freezing in winter and baking in summer. For example, studies of the effects of improved cooling in hospitals on patient health showed that after cooling systems were installed, there were measurable improvements in blood pressure and respiratory rates and benefits in cardiac function. Patients with chronic diseases, such as congestive heart failure and asthma, also benefited from cooling.

At the other end of the spectrum, one study conducted in almost 20 countries found that there seemed to be a significant connection between consistent exposure to high temperatures and increased levels of depression and anxiety. By including more stringent energy efficiency requirements in the National Construction Code, we can not only lower our emissions but ensure that fewer people will have to struggle with the negative effects, on both physical and mental health, of extreme temperatures in their homes. The ACT will be bringing in these new requirements from October 2023 onwards, giving the construction industry time to adapt.

The NCC also provides a mix of practical solutions for homes that can be customised to the climate and the location of each build. As well, from early next year, rental homes in the ACT with a ceiling insulation level of R2 or less will be required to upgrade to R5, with a phase-in period of several years to spread insulation industry demand and allow rental providers time to make the changes. The new regulation is designed to target the worst-performing rentals, since it is estimated that around 60 per cent of rentals already meet or exceed the standard. There is a lot of technical and practical detail to this—which I will not go into now—which will ensure that there are no unforeseen downsides for stakeholders.

I am glad that we have this positive progress to report, but I am also aware of how much more needs to be done, and how much of it is hard—in fact, how much of it is impossible, to some extent. I am often confronted by the fact that we are just one small jurisdiction trying to battle what is a massive global problem—and some are still denying that it is even happening. Yes, we can address the mental health challenge of growing climate grief through local mental health programs, but on our own we cannot solve what is causing the grief in the first place.

But we can do our part. There is no doubt that the ACT has been a leader on the climate action front. We need to keep leading, and we will. Enhancing our efforts to address the health impacts of climate change is a vital part of this.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (5.45): I am pleased to rise today to speak to the motion brought on by Mr Davis, on the impact that climate change is having, and will have, on our community’s health and wellbeing. It is a good opportunity to talk about how our health system is positioned to respond now and into the future.

Mr Davis’s motion continues the vital debate on climate change and health care that we had when debating my executive motion on 7 April, in recognition of World Health Day, with its theme for this year: Our Planet, Our Health. Noting that a lot of the information will in fact be similar given the subject matter, I encourage members to also review the *Hansard* of that debate, which is directly relevant to the motion we are considering today.

But new things have happened, as well—most notably, the election of a new commonwealth Labor government that is committed to real action on climate change, including as it relates to health. In that context, I move my amendment:

Omit all text after part (2)(f), substitute:

- “(g) on 7 April 2022, the Minister for Health moved an executive motion in the ACT Legislative Assembly noting World Health Day and its 2022 theme of “Our planet, our health” and the work the ACT Government is progressing to respond to the impact of climate change on our community and health system;
 - (h) the ACT Government has been investigating formal participation in the World Health Organisation’s Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health, which is working to realise the ambition set at COP26 to build climate resilient and sustainable health systems, and the Minister for Health participated in an associated Health Leadership Roundtable on Climate Action on 29 June 2022;
 - (i) the Albanese Government committed to developing Australia’s first National Climate Health Strategy and make climate health a national health priority, ahead of the 2022 Federal Election;
 - (j) On 1 July 2022 at the first Health Ministers’ meeting with the new federal Labor Health Minister, the Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister Stephen-Smith raised the importance of responding collaboratively and nationally to the challenge climate change presents to public health and Australia’s health system; and
 - (k) on 3 August 2022, Minister Butler publicly confirmed that the Albanese Government has commenced early work on developing a National Climate Health Strategy in collaboration with state and territory governments; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) continue delivering the ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025 and the Bushfire Smoke and Air Quality Strategy 2020-2025 to ensure that public health services and the community are prepared for the impacts of climate change;

- (b) continue to work with the Albanese Government, through National Cabinet and Health Ministers' meetings to support the development of a National Climate Health Strategy;
- (c) develop a nation leading ACT climate change and health plan that reflects the ongoing work of National Cabinet and Health Ministers on a National Climate Health Strategy;
- (d) continue to participate in knowledge and information sharing through the Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health and expedite consideration of formal membership;
- (e) ensure that the ACT Health Directorate collects and reports on data to monitor progress against resilience indicators, including continuation of the longitudinal survey and climate-related health impacts and costs; and
- (f) report back to the ACT Legislative Assembly by the last sitting of 2023."

I thank Mr Davis and his office for the work that they have done with us on this amendment.

As we have previously discussed, the interaction between health and climate change is broad and complex. The health sector plays an important role in contributing to the problem, with estimates that it is responsible for about seven per cent of Australia's total emissions. We all know that the effects of climate change on health and wellbeing are mediated through direct and indirect impacts, with effects felt across individuals, communities, all of the health sector and through the social determinants of health.

With more frequent and intense extreme weather events, these impacts are tangible, and are being seen globally, nationally, and locally in the ACT. Our predicted rates of climate change, air quality, and water and food security, will continue to be intermittently at risk in the future, and patterns of infectious and vector-borne diseases will change. We only need to cast our minds back a few months, to the outbreak of the Japanese encephalitis virus across the eastern seaboard of Australia to find a recent example of the challenges that the rapidly changing climate presents to all of us. I was reflecting on that when I was listening to Mr Davis's comments about mosquito-borne diseases, and the things we need to do in our physical infrastructure to reduce the risk. It is, in fact, already here, in JEV.

We all remember the Black Summer bushfires that blanketed our city in smoke, and the impacts that that had on the community. These examples reflect the diverse and complex challenges to our health system and community. Whether it be at the level of the coordination of a sector-wide public health response to JEV, or the community-wide response rolled out during the smoke of the bushfires, we need to be prepared to respond to complex health, environmental, social and economic impacts of these climate related events. Being prepared, and improving the resilience of our community, and our health system, is critical. As I stated in the debate on 7 April:

The ACT government has been considering and responding to the growing risks of climate change and these impacts on the ACT community and government operations for more than a decade.

Members will not be surprised that this has not changed in the few months since we discussed this work.

A number of key strategies have guided the ACT government's nation-leading approach to tackling the global challenge of climate change. Mr Davis's motion refers to the government's *ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025*, which is central for setting the government's vision and actions to tackle climate change. The strategy aims to build resilience to climate change impacts and lay the foundations for the government's commitment to net zero emissions by 2045, and net zero in the health sector by 2040. As part of this commitment, the government has already made significant progress.

I am pleased that Mr Davis's motion highlighted the government's membership of the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals network. This network, stretching around the world, has more than 1,450 members in 70 countries, representing hospitals, healthcare facilities, health systems and health organisations, working to achieve significant improvements in sustainability while promoting environmental health in their communities.

The government has completed a 20-year master plan for the Canberra Hospital. The master plan will guide how the campus will become fully electric; promote better sustainability outcomes, such as walking and cycling; and encourage canopy cover to ensure that buildings are better able to cope with a changing climate. While it may be a 20-year plan, in an Australian first our new emergency and critical services building is being designed and constructed to achieve a five star green-star rating. It will be an all-electric building, significantly reducing the carbon footprint of Canberra Hospital.

Once operational, the new building will mitigate the release of an estimated 1,886 tonnes of carbon dioxide every year—the equivalent of taking 760 cars off Canberra's roads annually. This also has an immediate impact on improving the local air quality around the hospital. The design approach demonstrates the government's focus on the territory's major capital works to strive to achieve appropriate sustainability and building performance outcomes in supporting the ACT's target of net zero emissions by 2045.

In paving the way for the critical services building, the demolition of buildings 24 and 25 produced demolition materials, of which approximately 76 per cent will be available for reuse for future projects within the ACT. In managing the reduction of emissions during the construction phase of the critical services building, the project will utilise locally sourced concrete with a 40 per cent reduction in carbon content when compared with standard concrete mixes.

We are now consulting with the community about planning for the new northside hospital, officials having attended both Gungahlin and Belconnen community councils this week. While the need to replace our major hospital infrastructure over a relatively short period of time might not make the Treasurer happy, at least I can assure him, in his role as Minister for Climate Action, that this new infrastructure will have a positive long-term impact on carbon emissions.

While the ACT government is leading the nation in responding to reducing the impact of our health infrastructure on our climate, we are also preparing the community and health services to respond to the impacts of climate change. Members will be aware that the government has, in recent years, responded to extreme weather events, bushfire smoke pollution, and outbreaks of emerging zoonotic diseases—that is, diseases transmitted from animals to humans, such as monkey pox and the aforementioned JEV. The government continues to work closely with the commonwealth and other jurisdictions to address these emerging zoonotic diseases through the collaborative development of national plans and response frameworks, enhanced surveillance and monitoring, and implementation of vaccine programs.

As members would be aware, and as Mr Davis has pointed out, we are also progressing delivery against our *Bushfire Smoke and Air Quality Strategy 2021-2025*, which is guiding the government's approach to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from, significant bushfire smoke events. It maps a wide range of policy areas, including emergency management, regulation of environmental pollution, monitoring of air quality, public health advice warnings and directions, work health and safety, building standards, and support for business and our community. The first action plan includes actions for ACT directorates for the first two years of the strategy, covering 2021 to 2023, and the whole of government will report on progress of items at the end of this plan.

Two of the objectives in the strategy aim to improve monitoring of air quality. In order to address these objectives, ACT Health has initiated a study to assess options for expanding the air quality monitoring network, using low- and medium-cost sensors. This study investigates the reliability, accuracy, and limitations of low- and medium-cost sensors in providing air quality data in the Canberra environment. This information will then inform investigations into the most effective strategy to expand our current air quality monitoring, through the addition of complementary data from low- or medium-cost sensors. If my memory serves me correctly, we are due to get that report quite soon. I seem to recall that in my last response to Mr Davis on this matter I said that it would be in October.

In addition, forecasting capability options for the ACT are being explored. This is occurring through partnerships and engagement with interstate governments and relevant organisations. Consideration of forecasting options includes assessment of the tools available and the relevance of different forecasting models to the Canberra region, with its unique topography. This work is critical to the government because we know that health services will bear a significant burden from the impacts of climate change—of which smoke is just one example—and we will see additional demand from related acute and chronic morbidity as a consequence of climate change.

The consequences of climate change to health, housing, livelihood and security will disproportionately impact disadvantaged individuals and communities, including First Nations peoples, older people, those with disabilities and those living in poverty. The Chief Health Officer has a key role to play in establishing and reporting on relevant data against resilience indicators. A new approach to the biennial Chief Health Officer's report will enable more frequent topic-based reporting. I am sure that the Chief Health Officer will be keen to support our response to climate change through data collection and reporting.

In June this year, I was pleased to participate in a health leadership roundtable on climate action, with representatives from across Australia's governments, the World Health Organisation, the United Kingdom's National Health Service, and more. It reminded me that only together, nationally and internationally, sharing lessons, innovations, and expertise, will we ensure that we minimise the impact that climate change has on our health systems and on our community's health and wellbeing.

Key to this will be the COP26 Health Programme, which will be taken forward in the form of an Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate Health, ATACH. The ATACH is a broad initiative to support national and sub-national governments to make a set of commitments on healthcare resilience and decarbonisation. The ACT government and other jurisdictions have been invited to join the Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health. We will continue to work with other jurisdictions and the Australian government to understand how membership of the Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health could help us move towards our shared goal of boosting sustainability in the healthcare sector. My amendment commits the government to expediting these considerations.

I just want to make a brief reflection on that conversation. One of the things that really leapt out at me was the advantages that larger health systems have in some ways in being able to do policy work in these areas—things like looking at the carbon impact of different medications and making decisions for an entire health system. The presentation from the National Health Service in the United Kingdom really highlighted that. That informed some of the conversation that I subsequently had with Mark Butler, the new commonwealth health minister.

My amendments to Mr Davis's motion reflect the significant work and energy that the new federal Albanese Labor government has brought to the fight against climate change. Importantly, my dealings with my federal counterpart Minister Butler, on climate change and health, have not only been extremely encouraging, and diametrically opposite to the previous federal government, but have also been carried out with great urgency.

At the first face-to-face health ministers meeting with the new federal health minister, I took the opportunity to raise the ACT government's desire for national leadership, national action and coordination by the commonwealth in tackling the health impacts of climate change, and I reflected on the conversations at the leadership roundtable. Minister Butler advised all health ministers at the meeting that this was a key priority for the Albanese government.

Minister Butler has publicly confirmed that this work has commenced. ACT Health Directorate officials, I am pleased to say, are also involved in this work. This is a key example of how Labor in government federally can benefit us here in this place, particularly compared with the former climate-denying Liberal-Nationals government, which the members opposite supported, even when they did not agree with them. That is something I am sure all Canberrans will not forget in two years.

The amendments I move today reflect the fact that the ACT is well positioned to drive the national discussion and to ensure that we can continue to lead the country on climate action. These challenges, I note, were not and are not ACT-specific. Indeed,

members here would recognise that the impact of climate change does not respect state and territory borders, which is why it is critical that the ACT lends its knowledge and leadership to the national conversation, but also benefits from the critical mass that is delivered by national action. We also know that we need to continue our work locally to be prepared, leverage the lessons learnt nationally and internationally, and support the most vulnerable members of our community in responding to climate change.

My amendments reflect the opportunities that the new federal government presents to work collaboratively while providing leadership to protect our community's health and wellbeing. So I welcome Mr Davis's motion. I thank him, again, for his, and his office's collaborative engagement. I thank everyone who has spoken on the motion today, and commend my amendment to the Assembly.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (5.59): I rise to speak about this motion in relation to our public health system and how it responds to climate change. The Canberra Liberals recognise climate change as a key public health issue and have consistently supported the ACT's transition to 100 per cent renewable energy and transitioning to net zero emissions by 2045. The Canberra Liberals want to achieve sensible and sustainable solutions to reduce our emissions—solutions that will not penalise the most vulnerable people in our community, who can least afford it.

We have all mentioned the Black Summer fires. It was in January 2020 that we experienced the worst air quality since air quality monitoring started, more than 15 years ago. Canberra had the unenviable title of having the world's most polluted air—more polluted than Deli or Lahore, when the opposite is usually the case.

Almost every unit at the Canberra Hospital was affected, with unhealthy levels of smoke detected throughout the buildings. Weeks into the bushfire crisis, hospital staff discovered sterilised equipment was contaminated and complained that the smoke was disrupting services and irritating workers. It is no surprise that some medical diagnostic procedures had to be cancelled due to the smoke impacts on equipment. MRI machines were rendered inoperable.

While Canberra Health Services say that patients and staff were not endangered by smoky conditions inside the hospital, the 2019-20 bushfire crisis highlights the intersection between climate and our health. Tackling climate change and protecting our environment is important for our health and wellbeing, but imposing extra regulatory burdens on a broken and already overstretched health system is not the way to go about it.

You only need to look at the headline in yesterday's *Canberra Times*, "More forced to wait longer for surgeries ..." to be concerned about the dreadful state of Canberra's health and hospital system. The recently released ACT Health annual report reveals that, again, our health system has failed to achieve key targets for elective surgery and emergency department treatment. The number of people waiting longer than the clinically recommended time for elective surgery in the ACT has almost doubled, from 773 in 2020-21 to 1,364 last financial year. The government's target, the target set by ACT Health, was 430. So the Barr-Rattenbury government is happy for 430 people to wait longer than the clinically recommended time for their

much-needed elective surgery! The reality is that last financial year more than three times that number of people were forced to wait longer than they should. It is a disgrace that a total of 1,364 sick people, people living in pain and waiting for much-needed surgery that will significantly improve the quality of life when they get that surgery, languish on waiting lists due to this government's underfunding of our health system, which has resulted in the crisis we face today.

Climate change is a real concern and a challenge we all confront. A healthy environment is integral to a healthy life, but imposing additional regulatory burdens on our already broken and overstretched health system is not the best way to address these issues. This government has much work to do to fix a smorgasbord of problems in our broken and overstretched health system that is failing Canberrans. This has to be the top priority. We will not be opposing this motion today.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (6.02): I want to thank Mr Davis for bringing on this motion. It is a really important motion. I am conscious of the time today, so I am going to speak more briefly than I would have. It is ironic to be conscious of the time when we are talking about climate change, because I think most of us are feeling that the clock is running pretty fast on that one.

We have heard a lot about the health impacts of climate, and I do not need to go into that. I think it is really well understood and well proven. I just want to talk a bit about the biggest event that most of us lived through recently, which was the smoke event—the smokepocalypse—in the Black Summer fires. Thirty-one Canberrans died from that. That is a huge death count! We had a woman step off a plane in Canberra and drop dead on the tarmac. It was absolutely terrifying. That is the direct health impact of just one climate change event. We have no idea how many of those we are going to get. We have no idea what the long-term health effects are for our whole city for that whole summer when we could not breath.

I speak to a lot of women who work in sustainability, in climate, in activism and in recycling. It is good for us to catch up. We vibe; we feel this shared collective urgency. Inevitably, what happens whenever we are talking about whichever field we are working in, whatever progress in whatever we are trying to do, we always end up talking about the kids. We talk about my kid, we talk about your kid, we talk about all of the kids, the school strikers, because they are that next generation. I think in sustainability there is this fairly abstract notion of future generations. But when you put a face on that future generation, when it is the face of your child and you go home to her every night, it becomes a lot more real.

My daughter is eight years old, and she has never experienced a year of normal temperatures. She was born into a changed climate, and she will live for the rest of her life in a changed climate. She lived through that Black Summer with me. We went quite primal during that time. We had our little Fires Near Me app, to see if we needed to evacuate. We could not breathe. I brought her into the bedroom because I just did not feel comfortable. I thought we might not wake up. So we all moved into this tiny little world of fear. We became so, so conscious that we are part of our environment. There is no notion of human beings and the planet as if they are two separate things. We are part of our environment. If our environment is not healthy, we are not healthy. It is simply not possible to separate those two things. This is why the Greens

campaign for a right to a healthy environment. This is why we campaign for all of our environmental protection and our climate protection measures.

I want to pause for a moment and talk about art and climate change. I think this probably touches a lot of people in different ways. Most of us have seen it. We are kind of awash in apocalyptic fiction at the moment. We have all seen it on TV and in movies. I was recently at the second National Capital Art Prize, and almost all of the artwork there was about environmental collapse. This is what happens. I think a lot of artists get asked why they choose the topic they choose. I often see people a bit puzzled when they are asked that question. I think most artists have a similar motivation. It is quite easy to make out. You just open up a vein and bleed on the page. You are projecting what is in you and what is all around you. So the reason we are awash in all of this apocalyptic environmental disaster at the moment is that that is what we are thinking about. That is what we are literally breathing in at different points.

I am part of that movement. I wrote rom-zom-com once. I thought I would put a bit of humour in there, because it is quite difficult to deal with otherwise, and it was a lot of fun writing that book. It was girl meets boy, girl loses boy, zombies attack. You have probably seen the same sort of story quite a lot! I remember doing interviews at the time, with media asking me: “Why zombies? Why are there so many zombies around?” It seemed so obvious to me: armies of mindless consumers destroying everything good. This is the world that a lot of us feel like we are living in and feel like we are trapped in.

There is a lot of fear and anxiety there. It is real, it is genuine and it is completely and utterly rational—an absolutely rational response to what is going on around us. But the problem with fear is that it is quite paralysing. I think we all understand now that there are few different human responses to threats—fight/flight/freeze. I sort of feel like Australia has been frozen for a couple of decades and it is really, really, unhelpful.

I take hope from the fact that we are not frozen on other environmental disasters. With the hole in the ozone layer, leaded petrol and lot of things, we did not politicise it; we just leapt in and fixed them. I think we are finally getting there now. I think it is really, really good to think about the action that we are taking and the action that we can take. It is much more helpful, as a response, than fear and anxiety.

Here in the ACT we have done a lot. We have a plan to get off fossil fuel gas. That is amazing. We are the first in Australia to do that. I hope everybody else is going to follow us. I hope the federal government is going to follow us. That is fantastic. We have a plan to electrify our transport. It is so good to see that plan.

We are capable of change really, really fast as a society. I am a new politician. I campaigned in 2020, and both of those policies—getting off fossil fuel gas and getting on to EVs—were labelled as crazy Greens policies. I have heard people in here dissent to them and label them crazy Greens policies. Now they are mainstream. They are simply getting on with it. This is what climate action looks like. It is a whole collection of decisions that you make that are sensible decisions, and you make them every day.

We have seen other great progress. We have seven-star buildings coming through, so we know that our buildings, our homes into the future, will be climate resilient. It is really, really good—and it is quick—to have change when you are motivated to make that change. I am finally feeling like we might see that federally. There is quite a lot of work to be done there. But we recently had an election and we had two old parties who did not talk about climate. It worried a lot of us that there was no mention of climate. The media pretty much did not cover climate. But Australia picked climate people. Australia picked people who were talking about climate, and that is really, really good.

We have had a lot of change happening really fast. We need that change. We need it to happen quickly, and we need tangible action. I am really pleased to see this motion. It is extremely tangible—tangible solutions to real problems. It is so simple and so obvious that we need good data, we need to prepare our health services to deal with the things that we know are going to happen and we need to bring forward a national strategy. It is fantastic to see this, and I am really pleased to support this motion.

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) (6.09): I speak in support of this motion. Climate change is not coming; it is here. I am done with trying to explain the blindingly obvious to people who wish it was not true and who think that they do not have to change the way we all live in order to reduce the impact on those least able to live with it.

When we talk about the future impacts of climate change, the conversation, quite understandably, often focuses on bushfires and floods. But today I want to talk about the health impacts of heatwaves. The *ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025* tells us that more people die in Australia from heatwaves than from all other natural disasters combined.

As documented in the Victorian Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration report on the Department of Health's response to the January 2009 heatwave in Victoria, in the week before the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria a heatwave resulted in a 62 per cent increase in deaths—around 230 people—while another 180 people died as a direct result of the bushfires. We also know that pre-term births are almost twice as likely in a heatwave. This is from the 2015 CSIRO publication *Climate Change Adaptation for Health and Social Services*.

The 2008 Garnaut climate change review projected an increase in days over 35 degrees in Canberra, from an average of five days per year in 2008 to eight days in 2030, 21 days in 2070 and 32 days in 2100. The 2014 report of the NSW and ACT Regional Climate Model project, titled *Australian Capital Territory: Climate change snapshot*, projected that Canberra will experience up to five additional days per year above 35 degrees by 2030 and up to an additional 20 days per year by 2070. So that is what is ahead of us.

But let me be very clear: climate change is here, and it is now. Between 1 November 2019 and 16 January 2020 Canberra had already experienced 15 days with a maximum temperature higher than 35 degrees. Between 1 October 2018 and

28 February 2019 Canberra experienced 23 days above 35 degrees. And then we had the bushfires and the smoke that suffocated our city.

A study published in March 2020 by the *Medical Journal of Australia* titled “Unprecedented smoke-related health burden associated with the 2019-20 bushfires in eastern Australia” found that the bushfire smoke resulted in an additional 229 hospital admissions, 82 for cardiovascular issues and 147 for respiratory issues; 89 emergency department presentations for asthma; and, sadly, an additional 31 deaths. This is why we are working so hard to reduce the carbon emissions driving climate change and to protect biodiversity and our natural environment.

I cannot tell you how reassuring it is for me to know that ministers Shane Rattenbury and Rebecca Vassarotti are working so hard on this, to know that my colleague Jo Clay is so relentless in her efforts from the crossbench to ensure that our transport network is geared towards reducing carbon emissions in the most effective ways possible, and that it is such a key part of the parliamentary and governing agreement for this ACT government.

Climate change health impacts are here, and they are not evenly distributed. People over 65 years old and children under five years old are at greater risk from the health impacts of a heatwave. The social determinants of health and wellbeing are important to consider in our health response to climate change. Where those older people or small children are living in a low income household in an urban heat island, those impacts will be felt more intensely. The 2017 CSIRO report *Mapping surface urban heat in Canberra* tells us that areas with the greatest concentration of households experiencing both urban heat island effects and low socio-economic circumstances are in west Belconnen, Watson, Gungahlin, Molonglo Valley, Weston Creek, Woden and Tuggeranong.

A study of around 500 people who had registered with the ACT government’s bushfire recovery centre after the 2003 Canberra bushfires found that after the fires their relationships with family, friends, community and neighbourhood were worse. There were long-lasting negative effects on their financial situation for 44.2 per cent of respondents, and lasting negative effects on their work situation for one in five respondents. This was in “Recovery from bushfires: The experience of the 2003 Canberra bushfires three years after”, in the *Journal of Emergency Primary Health Care*, volume 8, issue 1, published in 2010.

As documented in the CSIRO publication *Climate Change Adaptation for Health and Social Services*, studies have found that violence against women increases after natural disasters. Domestic violence and sexual assault rates also increase during even a short heatwave. There is also a relationship between what is happening in our natural environment and mental wellbeing. We have seen an undeniable rise in worries about climate change from ACT young people in recent years. The annual Mission Australia youth survey has consistently shown over the past few years that ACT young people believe that the biggest issues facing Australia are the environment and mental health, but they now have the additional layer of worry about the pandemic, both its public health and associated economic impacts.

Our young people are experiencing a layering up of existential crises. The planet is burning, the air is not safe to breathe, and they face a future with serious economic barriers to securing employment and housing, and all of the flow-on impacts that these problems have for their family and social relationships. It is no surprise, then, that our young people are making use of the increased mental health early intervention services being delivered in their community, closer to where they live—investments not just for young people but for everyone in our community.

This is why we have invested in the MindMap portal, with youth navigators supporting young people to find mental health supports; the first Safe Haven, opening in Belconnen last November, providing people experiencing distress with a warm and welcoming space to talk with peer mental health workers; the Garran Step Up Step Down, open for just over a year now, providing residential mental health care before a person reaches the point where they need a hospital inpatient stay, and a gentle and supported transition back home again; increased services in the community for people with eating disorders; and, in this budget, the expansion of child and youth mental health services in Gungahlin, closer to where we have a concentration of young people living, and mindful of those social determinants I talked about earlier that have such an impact on youth mental wellbeing. We will also work with the community to co-design a new youth at risk trauma service.

We intend to do much more: more prevention, more early intervention, more delivery of services in the community closer to where people live, more data-driven, evidence-based policy work, and more co-design of new services with people with lived experience. The social determinants of health that I have talked about today need to be considered in planning for the future of our health system, and we need to incorporate the effects of climate change into that planning work. For this reason, I support the motion.

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

Executive business—precedence

Ordered that executive business be called on.

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

Debate resumed from 2 August, on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Estimates 2022-2023—Select Committee Report—government response

Debate resumed from 11 October 2022, on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That the Assembly take note of the paper:

Estimates 2022-2023—Select Committee—Report—*Inquiry into Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023—Government response, October 2022.*

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (6.18): This month is Australia's Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a wonderful opportunity to turn our minds to those who have lived experienced of the disease, and their loved ones, in our community. Breast cancer is one of the most common types of cancer affecting Australian women. I have members in my family who have suffered from breast cancer, including my grandmother and several of my aunties, who all sadly passed away from their cancers. The journey from diagnosis to treatment and ongoing care is not easy. Nor is it short. It is not simple and it is not without pains and heartaches.

As a member of the ACT Legislative Assembly, I am committed to advocating for better health care and health outcomes for all Canberrans. Today I particularly wish to repeat my commitment to advocating for women to receive the best care when it comes to fighting breast cancer, no matter who you are, where you come from or what stage your diagnosis is at.

I am grateful for BreastScreen ACT, which is part of our national breast cancer screening program. Survival rates for those who are diagnosed with breast cancer are on the rise, with 89 out of every 100 women diagnosed with invasive breast cancer now surviving five or more years beyond diagnosis. Early screening for cancer has played a big part in improving these outcomes.

I took the opportunity to book in for a breast screen earlier this year, in February, and found the appointment very straightforward, with quick and friendly service that made me feel very comfortable. I doubt that there is anyone here in this chamber that needs a reminder to go and book a breast screen, but I am thankful to be in a position where I can encourage and raise awareness in our community.

I have had constituents call my office in the past, asking for more information about cancer screening or help with booking a screening appointment for breast cancer, as well as other types of cancers. My staff have enjoyed being of assistance. It is a

simple and straightforward job, but we are always happy when we hear back from people saying that they are booked in for a check-up or that they have received screening test results back revealing no concerns. Occasionally, we receive word of concerning results or a cancer diagnosis, and although this is not good news we are glad that the lumps were detected relatively early as a result of getting screened.

Last Sunday I had the pleasure of attending a Pink Ribbon lunch fundraiser hosted by Saara Holidays travel agency, where we heard from guest speakers Dr Roopa and Avani, who shared their knowledge and experiences of the impact of breast cancer. \$3,000 was generously raised for the for the National Breast Cancer Foundation on this special occasion. I would like to give my thanks to Archana Venkat from Saara Holidays for hosting this event, as well as Sushant from 7 by the Lake restaurant for the delicious food and hospitable venue, and all the other people who helped organise and support this wonderful and memorable event.

Lastly, I would like to express my appreciation to all other organisations, groups, families and individuals who dedicate themselves to providing support and raising awareness and much-needed funds for ongoing research into breast cancer. Thank you for all that you do.

Ms Helen Oakey—tribute

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong) (6.22): I start this adjournment speech with a story. Some time early in the 2000s I was standing on a street in Civic when another woman approached me. She admired the handbag that I had and asked me where I had got it. I happily swapped notes about my beautiful, Australian made Spender and Rutherford briefcase and went on my way.

About 12 months later, when I was working at the YWCA, I organised to meet with members of the ACT Greens who were keen to discuss the radical idea of minimum energy standards for rental properties. In walked Helen Oakey with the same bag and exclaimed to me, “You are the woman with the bag,” and displayed her version of it. A friendship was born. I would like to acknowledge that Helen is here in the gallery today.

I have known Helen for a couple of decades, but today I want to particularly focus on the work that she has done in recent years in her role as Executive Director of the Conservation Council, ACT Region. It is through this role that she has shown leadership, vision and strength in environmental advocacy and standing up for our environment, our threatened species and our biodiversity.

Helen thinks big and is thoughtful about how she engages with communities, and she meets them where they are at. Two great examples of the work she has led at the council that demonstrate this creativity include the Make the Switch campaign, which supports people to transition to all-electric homes, and the Make the Move campaign, focused on supporting people to use active transport. With both these projects, Helen was smart, using digital platforms that were easily accessible and practical, providing easily digestible and fun information, and encouraging people to give things a go and involve others in the journey towards a less carbon-intensive life.

Helen believes in the power of partnerships. She has worked hard to bring together groups through the umbrella of the council and to bring other local groups together to coordinate efforts and action. She has spearheaded collective efforts on issues such as the Red Hill Nature Reserve and the protection of Bluetts Block; increasing areas of biodiversity protection in the ACT; and the campaign to protect the critically endangered natural temperate grasslands at Lawson north from the DHA housing development, which has resonated across the environmental groups and inspired support amongst artists and the wider community.

I am personally extremely grateful for the leadership role she has taken in co-chairing the Biodiversity Conservation Council. This was a forum that she advocated for as an important addition to advising the government's work in the area of biodiversity. This has been a very important forum that has assisted us in developing a partnership approach to addressing the issue of biodiversity in the ACT.

Seeing the need for a wider conversation about the ACT's high consumption of resources and the associated impacts on local, national and international environments, Helen was instrumental in bringing people together for the ACT's first ever Circular Economy Symposium. This was an event to create local discussion about a society that is kinder on the environment, that uses less resources and that is more careful. The council hosted a one-day event in September that brought 200 people together—people from academia, small and large businesses, the community and government. It really was a day of inspiration and energy and one that the council will build on.

As well as being an environmental powerhouse, Helen is also a caring mother, a good daughter and a great friend. As she starts her adventure in Victoria, we want to say thank you, Helen. We wish you the very, very best, and we will miss you very, very much.

Thank Your Cleaner Day

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (6.27): Today I want to talk about the important work cleaners do across our community. Cleaners are often unseen workers, quietly moving through our city's buildings while the rest of us have gone home to our families. Cleaners work hard. Their work is physically demanding. It is low paid. It is often insecure, due to the contracting nature of their work. It is often forgotten work. These invisible workers showed us how vital they were to the safety of our community during COVID. More than at any other time, their work became visible. Today is Thank Your Cleaner Day, and today I thank all of our cleaners across the ACT. I want to particularly mention our ACT government school cleaners, as well as the cleaners in this building. Thank you for keeping us all safe and clean.

Ms Helen Oakey—tribute

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (6.28): I would like to follow on from where my colleague Minister Vassarotti left off and acknowledge the contribution of Helen Oakey, the outgoing Director of the Conservation Council, to the ACT as she prepares to move to Victoria.

I, too, have known Helen for some time, I first met her around the turn of the century—which is frightening when you put it that way. Helen and I worked together at Greenpeace, here in Australia, from around 2001. Helen then joined my team when I was elected to the Assembly in 2008, in my role then as the Speaker. She was also a policy adviser and stayed on through the 2012 term, when we held the balance of power—just me. There were some fairly amazing adventures through that time.

I was reflecting when Minister Vassarotti spoke about Helen consulting on minimum energy performance standards. Back in around 2010 in my office we drafted a bill on minimum energy performance standards which we brought to the Assembly and were not successful in passing. I want to flag that the government is in the process of finalising now the passage of minimum energy performance standards for the territory. So, hopefully, Helen feels a little sense of legacy as she leaves the ACT that finally—and sometimes good reform takes a while—we have convinced enough members of this Assembly that this is a good idea, and it will shortly become the policy of the ACT government. So, Helen, rest assured, good things do finally land.

Helen is a very passionate and committed advocate, fired up for her cause. I want to take this opportunity, as she leaves to move to Melbourne, to thank her for her contribution to Canberra, to the ACT and to the cause of sustainability. It is often a long journey, as this story of minimum rental standards shows. Sometimes the victories come quicker than that, and sometimes they do take a lot longer. But Helen has been someone who has stuck to her guns on these issues. The territory is better off for her contribution, and we thank her for it.

Women's rights in Iran

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (6.30): On Saturday night I attended the Persian Australian Community Association of Canberra's Mehr celebration of the Iranian deity who represents friendship, affection and love. I would like to acknowledge those in the chamber tonight from the Canberra Iranian community. The Iranian community in Canberra and across the world are suffering. I have deep compassion for those people who have made Canberra their home but are desperately worried about family and friends in Iran.

Canberra is a city that celebrates and commits to valuing diversity and welcoming people. Our commitment to inclusion extends to all cultures, races, genders, sexualities and ages. We are very proud to be accredited as an established Welcoming City. This means that, when events happen across the world, our ACT community is affected. Being a Welcoming City means being one that supports each other through the good times and the difficult times, and I am here to express my solidarity with you all, as people take to the streets of Iran.

The scenes of protest across Iran, of women leading the uprising in Iran and across the world, have impacted me. What happened to Mahsa Amini at the hands of the morality police is horrifying. At 22 years old, Mahsa was at the beginning of her life. She should have been able to follow her dreams, with basic freedoms. To be detained for supposedly wearing her hijab incorrectly and then dying in custody is unthinkable to most Australians.

The Persian Australian Community Association of Canberra's work in making sure that Canberrans are aware of what is happening in Iran is very important. I am alarmed by reports of people being killed and many more injured, arrested and detained, including teenagers, during the heavy-handed measures of the Iranian authorities cracking down on the ongoing protests. Journalists have been banned from entering Iran and government-imposed internet restrictions mean that the internet and social media sites have been blocked. These reports are deeply troubling and are a sustained effort by the Iranian regime to stifle freedom of information and human rights.

Seeing women lead the way in fighting for their rights is incredibly powerful. The protests have rippled across the world, and I have seen the protests here in Canberra. The message is loud and clear: the world is watching and we are with the people of Iran. Women's rights are human rights. Something that has really struck me has been the strength of the community. Whilst women are definitely the leading voices, seeing people of all genders and cultural backgrounds gather and support each other is something we can all learn from. I understand that, in standing up and taking part in the protests, those in the Iranian community are putting their lives on the line. I have heard their stories and I understand the impacts on their families in Iran and the deep pain that is felt.

Here in the ACT, we support the right of the Iranian people to protest peacefully. I stand to express my solidarity with all people in Iran who are fighting for human rights. I stand with Iranian women and girls in their struggle for equality, and I commend the federal government on their work in calling on Iran to cease its oppression of women. The Iranian embassy is located in Yarralumla, in my electorate of Murrumbidgee. I implore the ambassador, who enjoys his freedoms here in our country, to condemn the violence occurring against the citizens of Iran.

Here in the ACT and across Australia, we are committed to promoting gender equality and women's human rights, empowerment, and ending violence against women and girls worldwide. I commend the Iranian community's fight for women, life and freedom.

Ronald McDonald House Canberra

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (6.34): Tonight I would like to speak about Ronald McDonald House Canberra, which celebrated its 10th birthday last weekend. Ronald McDonald House Canberra has been providing a home away from home for over 3,600 families with children in the hospital over the past 10 years. They have the Ronald McDonald House, the Canberra family room, and the Batemans Bay family retreat, a home-like environment for families that are going through a difficult journey of childhood illness, premature birth or serious childhood injury, to get support, relax and recharge or spend meaningful bonding time together.

Ronald McDonald House Canberra provides holistic support to families throughout their child's journey in the hospital. It also supports families in between and after hospital stays. Because whole families can stay at Ronald McDonald House in the hospital, they can visit their sick child at any time. Many people create long-lasting friendships with other families staying at Ronald McDonald House as well.

They accommodate, on average, about 240 families a year, with no government assistance. They rely on the 150-odd volunteers and the generosity of the ACT and south-east New South Wales community to raise the approximately \$650,000 a year that they need to keep the big red doors open. They raise those funds through a variety of fundraising events, so a big shout-out to their fantastic fundraising team. Of course, during COVID, reduced numbers were applied, both in the house and for fundraising events, making their life more challenging.

Because it is located inside the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, it is very close to Canberra Hospital's NICU. The house has 10 rooms, each with two single beds and a bathroom, and one that is large enough to accommodate an additional bed for bigger families. Communal spaces include a kitchen, where the shared pantry and fridge are stocked with cereal, eggs, milk, bread, tea and coffee, and other non-perishable staples. Here, in-house or corporate and community volunteers often cook for the families staying in the house, to help sustain them as they focus their energy on their children recovering in intensive care.

Ronald McDonald House Charities ACT & South East NSW is an independent, not-for-profit organisation. The programs in the ACT and south-east New South Wales chapter are run by a very hardworking team of staff and volunteers, led by the wonderful executive officer and aided by the generous support of many donors, sponsors and corporate partners. Research has shown that, for every \$1 invested, \$3.60 of social and economic value is created by Ronald McDonald House Canberra.

I have a few quick statistics about Ronald McDonald House Canberra's impact in 2021, which of course was under COVID-safe arrangements. During 2021 159 families stayed at Ronald McDonald House Canberra; 2,606 visitors were supported in the Ronald McDonald family room at the Centenary Hospital for Woman and Children; 33 families took time out to relax and reconnect at the Ronald McDonald family retreat ACT and south-east New South Wales; 20 per cent of nights used at Ronald McDonald House Canberra were used by families staying more than 90 days; 2,059 beds were filled by families with a sick or injured child; and 879 wrapped-in-love care packs were provided to families. So, at a time when a parent needs to be completely focused on the health and wellbeing of their child, the Ronald McDonald House Canberra volunteers and staff can take the stress out of everyday life for them.

To the board, past and present: thank you for your commitment. Thank you to the former chief executive, Michelle McCormack, who recently left to take up a role at the national Ronald McDonald House charities level. Welcome to the new CEO, Lee Maiden, and well done to other staff. And thank you to the many, many wonderful volunteers who have worked at and continue to work at Ronald McDonald House Canberra. Happy 10th birthday to Ronald McDonald House Canberra.

Community advocates—acknowledgement

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (6.39): One of the great privileges of this job is the people that you meet. We have got so many community advocates working tirelessly. Some of these people are unpaid; some are merely paid much, much less than they would be

and are working much harder. It is really, really sad when they move on. We do not just lose their skills; we lose the people; we lose the friendship. We lose all that shared work with somebody who shares our values.

I want to mention four of those really special people tonight. Helen from the Conservation Council is moving on, and I would like to echo the words of my colleagues Rebecca and Shane. Helen has done an absolutely marvellous job. She has pulled together so many different groups and so many different personalities in the environmental movement. I am really sorry that she is leaving us, but I am really, really excited about where she is going. The divestment movement will be so much richer for having Helen with them.

I also want to mention Ian Ross. Ian has been the CEO of Pedal Power. I have known Pedal Power for a couple of decades, as a member, as a volunteer and as a participant in events. I have actually known Ian my whole life. We are family friends. Our dads used to go on fishing trips together. It has been really lovely. It was really nice coming into this job and seeing some familiar faces, which is what happens in Canberra. You realise that people move in the same circles.

Ian did a marvellous job at Pedal Power. He took a whole lot of passion and enthusiasm for community inclusion, disability advocacy and climate advocacy, along with his own passion for cycling, and he really helped raise the profile of cycling, which was great. Like everybody at Pedal Power, of course he rides everywhere and his family rides everywhere. I realise, as I am saying this, that we have never been for a ride, and I wonder whether we might have time now. It seems ridiculous after knowing somebody for 45 years, when you are both cyclists, but maybe we will go for a ride.

I also want to mention somebody else who is stepping down from Pedal Power: Kate. Kate did a fantastic job on advocacy. She was so delightful to work with. It was great to meet her and to work with her. She had such an amazing commitment and grasp of detail. You spend an awful lot of time, when you are talking about cycling and active travel, talking about footpaths and bollards and lanes. Actually, the detail really matters—different line items in the budget. She was really, really good at that and so patient at explaining it all to us. I am really grateful that we had a woman like that working in that field.

I also want to mention Glen Hyde. Glen has been the chair of our Belconnen Community Council. Everyone in here knows what community councils do, but I think a lot of people out in Canberra do not know what those councils do. Glen, like most of the chairs, loves his area. He loves Belconnen. He reads DAs, he reads government strategies, he assembles really careful agendas for the monthly meetings, he gathers people together, he talks to the media, he gives interviews, he runs sausage sizzles and he learns everybody's name. He basically does our job, but he does not get paid to do it. That is what chairs of community councils are doing. They are really advocating for their community and they are doing a lot of that detail, which is often dull but it is really important work. They are connecting all of the people and all of the different interests together.

Glen worked on lots and lots of different projects that a few of us also worked on, and we worked on them in our office too. He worked really hard on the Umbagog bridges, on William Hovell Drive, on a lot of different aspects of Ginninderry, and on a lot of the really rapidly developing issues in Belconnen. He is stepping down. He is heading off for other adventures. I think his future is going to contain a lot more fun and a lot fewer DAs. I am really happy about that, but I am really sad that we will miss him.

To Helen, Ian, Kate and Glen: thank you so much for your work. I hope we cross paths again.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.43 pm.