



Debates

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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.

Legislative Assembly—unparliamentary language Statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: Yesterday after question time Ms Stephen-Smith raised a point of order in relation to comments made by Mrs Kikkert during debate on a motion on the Voice to Parliament. At the conclusion of the speech, Mrs Kikkert stated:

It is shameful and embarrassing that the ACT government wants a campaign to raise awareness with the broader community, yet when it comes to a program designed to help vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families when facing child removal, it fails to inform them that the program even exists. Who and what are they most concerned about: the Indigenous community or buying votes?

As members are aware, if there are accusations of improper behaviour, the proper course of action is to move a substantive motion, usually a censure or no-confidence motion. The accusation that a government or a minister is buying votes is a serious one. I consider that it was unparliamentary in that context. Mrs Kikkert, can you withdraw that statement?

Mrs Kikkert: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs Kikkert.

Professor Will Steffen—condolence Ministerial statement

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions

Reduction) (10.02): I rise today to express my condolences for the sad passing of Emeritus Professor Will Steffen, a brilliant and world-renowned climate scientist and a Canberran who gave so much to our community. Professor Steffen was an incredible force in global climate science, as well as being a genuinely lovely person and an active member of our local community. He will be sadly missed by me and by many. I would like to offer my sincere condolences to Professor Steffen's wife, Carrie, and daughter, Sonja, who are here in the chamber today, as well as to his friends and colleagues who are joining us. My thoughts are with you at this difficult time, and I am pleased that you can be here with us today.

Professor Steffen had an impressive career by any standard. He was an internationally renowned climate scientist with a long track record in global climate change research, as well as being a respected academic at the ANU and a strong advocate for action on climate change. Originally from the United States, he moved to Canberra in 1977 to do postdoctoral research at the Australian National University. Over the following years his career included a decade at the CSIRO; heading up the International Geosphere-Biosphere Program in Sweden; serving as Director of the ANU Fenner School of Environment and Society; being science adviser to the Australian government Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency; and serving as inaugural Director of the ANU Climate Change Institute.

Professor Steffen played an important role in climate change science, policy, and the intersection between these, for three decades. He was Chair of the Antarctic Science Advisory Committee and the author of numerous publications on climate science, including contributing to five Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change assessments and special reports between 2000 and 2018.

In addition to being a world-leading researcher, Professor Steffen was a tireless advocate for action to cut emissions and prepare for the unavoidable impacts of climate change. He was a trusted voice on climate science, and his patience in explaining, again and again, how climate change is affecting our planet and what we need to do to solve the issue was an inspiration to many. His considered and measured words helped to cut through the noise on the issue and encourage broader understanding and action on climate change.

Professor Steffen was a member of the independent Climate Commission that was established by the Gillard Labor government in 2011 to advise on climate issues. He was the principal author of the commission's first report, *The critical decade*, which was an important contribution in the climate debate in Australia, clearly laying out the need for urgent action.

When the commission was disbanded in 2013 by the newly elected Abbott Liberal government, Professor Steffen and fellow commissioners worked together to crowd-fund an alternative voice for climate science, and the Climate Council of Australia was launched less than a week later, after a crowd-funding campaign raised over \$1 million. Professor Steffen served as a climate councillor with the Climate Council for many years, and he showed great courage and conviction in continuing to call for urgent action on climate change throughout the difficult years of the conservative, climate-denialist governments of the time. His words and his work gave hope to so many people.

Despite a busy schedule and involvement in international fora, Professor Steffen took the time to care about local issues and to contribute to climate efforts in the ACT. He was a founding member of the ACT Climate Change Council, the advisory body that supports me in my role as the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction. He served as a council member from 2011 to 2019 and played a key role in establishing the ACT as a climate leader. I very much appreciated Professor Steffen's insight and considered advice over those years, as well as his humility, commitment and ability to work collaboratively and find common ground.

He was a member of the ACT Climate Change Council when they advised me on what the ACT's emissions reduction targets should be. Their advice was based on the best available science and was consistent with the ACT's share of the global carbon budget for keeping the global average temperature increase to well below two degrees. The ACT government adopted the targets as proposed by the council, which was a key step in our pathway to net zero emissions. The council's advice to me on these targets and so many other issues was invaluable, and I am so grateful for the time Professor Steffen and all the council members chose to dedicate to supporting local action on climate change.

I will remember Will as someone who lived a principled life, who cared deeply about people and the planet, who acted with integrity and kindness, and who gave so much to our community. His death is a sad loss for the global climate science community, for climate action in Australia, and for Canberrans. He will be sorely missed.

I present the following paper:

Condolences for the passing of Professor Will Steffen—Ministerial statement,
9 February 2023.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (10.07): I thank Mr Rattenbury for that statement and acknowledge Professor Steffen's family and friends who join us this morning.

As Mr Rattenbury has outlined, Will Steffen's impact on our understanding of the climate was significant. He was a passionate scientist and esteemed researcher, an incredibly effective communicator, but above all a great Canberran. As Mr Rattenbury has outlined, he undertook many notable roles throughout his career: Executive Director of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Program, inaugural Director of the ANU Climate Change Institute, and, as we have heard, a founding member of the Australian Climate Council.

In this nation he played a significant role in highlighting the challenges posed by climate change and the need for action, particularly during an era of Australian politics where the issue was relentlessly politicised. As Professor Steffen's friend and fellow scientist Dr John Finnigan recently wrote:

He didn't waste his time on the negativity of climate politics. While he was angry at the way the selfish actions of vested interests were sacrificing the future of coming generations ... he did not despair. Instead, he channelled his anger into action.

Unsurprisingly, the news of Professor Steffen's death has been met with great sadness but also with an array of tributes reflecting on his leadership, his intelligence, his generosity, his friendship and his humility. We know Professor Steffen's loss will be felt keenly locally, nationally and globally. He leaves our community and the world an extraordinary legacy. On behalf of the territory government, I extend my sincere condolences to Professor Steffen's family and friends, including his wife, Carrie, and his daughter, Sonja.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (10.09): On behalf of the Canberra Liberals, I pay tribute to Emeritus Professor Will Steffen and acknowledge his family, including his wife and daughter, who are joining us today. Thank you.

As we have heard already this morning, Professor Steffen was a giant in the climate science world and one of the most influential and respected climate scientists. Whilst originally from the US, Professor Steffen and his family are proud Canberrans. Professor Steffen was the inaugural director of the ANU's Climate Change Institute and a founding member of the ACT Climate Council. His career included a decade at the CSIRO; serving as director of the ANU Fenner School of Environment and Society; and adviser to the Australia government Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency.

Since his passing I have read many tributes to Professor Steffen. Former colleagues have spoken about his brilliant communication skills and his ability to cut through the complexity, and sometimes the uncertainty, about climate science. They have spoken of his humility, his bravery and his fearlessness and how he never shied away from a fight that needed to be had. We have heard of his patience and his generosity with his time, particularly in supporting his fellow researchers. In reading the many tributes to Professor Steffen since his passing, I was particularly touched by the tribute from one of his colleagues, Professor Frank Jotzo, who said:

I will remember him as a gentle, positive human being who made a difference in how the world understands climate change.

Professor Steffen leaves behind a lasting legacy and will be sorely missed by the broader ACT community. My sincerest condolences to Professor Steffen's wife, Carrie. This being Canberra, Carrie and I have known each other for many years, also through the ANU, although a different faculty. It was ANU Sport, where we would sweat it out together as fellow Body Pump instructors back in the day, so Carrie is one of the fittest women that I know in Canberra. Thank you for joining us. Sincerest condolences to you for your loss, and also, of course, to your daughter, Sonja, and his friends and colleagues.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong) (10.12): I stand to echo the comments made by my colleagues Mr Rattenbury, Mr Barr and Ms Lee, to remember and honour the

courageous, the kind and the brilliant Will Steffen and to add some personal reflections, both from me and from members of my team.

Will has been a giant in the sphere of climate science that I have been privileged to encounter. I have always been struck by his calm manner, his huge intellect and his graciousness and gentleness in the way he shared his knowledge and insight. At one point in the early 2000s I had the chance to spend time with him as part of a visioning project for Canberra, to look into the future, and felt so lucky to listen and learn from him.

One of my staff had the privilege of being both a student and staff member when Will was Director of the ANU Fenner School of Environment and Society. She will remember him not only as a brilliant science communicator but a gentle, optimistic human who always made time to support and energise younger people as they began their careers tackling the climate crisis. Not only did he make a powerful difference in helping the world understand climate change and in translating complexity for a general audience, but he was always kind and generous with his time and knowledge. I and my team are grateful for the important work that Will did in his later years, particularly supporting young climate activists.

We thank his family, who have shared him with us. It is hard to be loved by someone who is sought after and who you need to share. We know that he was a loving and loved husband to Carrie, a great father to Sonja and a friend to many, including Penny, David and Barbara, who join us here today. We stand with you in sorrow but also in gratitude. His passing is a heavy loss for us, but his passion, guidance and courage will stay with us as we continue his work to tackle the climate crisis and safeguard all that is precious to us in this world. Thank you.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Gambling—harm minimisation—update

Ministerial statement

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (10.14): I rise to update members about ongoing progress on delivering the government's electronic gaming commitments as set out in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement for the 10th Legislative Assembly. I last reported on this in October 2021.

The government knows well the vital contribution our community clubs make to the vibrancy and cohesion of ACT society. The local club is often the first point of contact for developing lifelong friendships, a love of sport, a familiar welcome for new migrants and now a potential refuge point in times of need. As Minister for Gaming, it is my privilege to work with the passionate people managing our clubs to create an environment that will allow these organisations to thrive, particularly as they emerge from the difficult environment of the past two years.

Yet the reliance many clubs have on gambling revenue and the consequent harms that that can bring to our community remains a challenge. The government's commitment

to reducing harm from gaming while supporting sustainable clubs, two important aims in one sentence, was given special attention in the parliamentary agreement.

The government has delivered on commitment 1. The Community Clubs Ministerial Advisory Council has been in operation since May 2021. It comprises 14 members representing clubs, gambling harm reduction organisations, young people, myself and Minister Cheyne, as well as in her capacity as the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. The Ministerial Advisory Council met regularly throughout 2022 and has proven to be a valuable conduit for maintaining relationships with key stakeholders on gaming issues.

Commitment 2 relates to targeting a further reduction in the number of gaming machine authorisations to 3,500 by 1 July 2025. In March 2022, I announced the government was re-establishing the gaming machine authorisation surrender initiative. I am pleased to update the Assembly that by the end of 2022, a further 70 authorisations had been surrendered and two club venues had surrendered their authorisation certificates to go pokie free. Gaming machine-free venues create spaces for the more vulnerable members of the community to attend which are free from the risk of gambling harm.

Work is ongoing in relation to commitment 3, ensuring that the ACT cross-venue self-exclusion regime is as rigorous as possible. A subcommittee of the Ministerial Advisory Council, the ACT Gambling Exclusion Regime Working Group, was formed to provide the council with advice about ways to improve the interface that gamblers and gaming venues have with the ACT gambling exclusion regime. The working group met throughout 2022 and heard from persons with lived experience of this regime. The working group will report back to the broader council in 2023 on recommended future reform.

Commitment 4, to match or exceed harm reduction reforms commenced in New South Wales, is being explored through an analysis of options to introduce lower gaming machine bet and credit limits. As members may have observed from recent news media, a proposal for cashless gaming has re-emerged in policy debate in the lead up to the 2023 New South Wales state election. The technology that the ACT government is investigating to lower bet and credit limits is also capable of supporting cashless gaming as proposed by the NSW government. We are considering how to future-proof the ACT environment to meet our commitment to progress harm reduction strategies, in line with New South Wales.

Commitment 5 aims to introduce a \$5 bet and \$100 load-up limit for gaming machines. Since my last report, the government received technical advice on options to deliver this, including the possible introduction of a central monitoring system.

A detailed explanation of this advice was outlined in a discussion paper released for public consultation in April 2022. During the consultation process, Justice and Community Safety Directorate representatives and I met with stakeholders and received written submissions, leading to a What We Heard report released in September 2022. In response to stakeholder feedback, I established an industry reference group to support a more detailed analysis of technical solutions, to achieve the government commitment. This working group met three times last year. Further detailed feasibility analysis is currently underway, including on the option of

introducing a central monitoring system. The government will update stakeholders and the community as this work progresses.

To implement commitment 6 the government is considering how to facilitate planning and other processes which allow the ACT to diversify from gaming revenue, including exploring opportunities for clubs to make better use of their land assets. At the last ministerial advisory council meeting, members agreed to establish a diversification working group, which will hear directly from club representatives to better understand barriers to diversification and explore strategic responses. The Justice and Community Safety Directorate is developing terms of reference to allow the working group to commence early this year.

Commitment 7 is to provide a just transition for workers in the community clubs and gambling industry. Delivery of this commitment will occur as part of considering a transition plan for introducing gaming machine regulatory reforms, such as lower bet and credit limits.

Regarding commitment 8, a discussion paper was released in March 2021 as part of a broader review of non-potable water costs for high-intensity club users, aiming for clubs to maintain operations without cross-subsidisation from other ACT water users. Alongside public consultation, ACT Treasury undertook a review which examined costs such as usage charges, infrastructure, operation and maintenance. The government is preparing a response that will consider the recommendations of the review against the ACT's obligations to the National Water Initiative, National Competition Policy and the ACT Water Strategy 2014-2044 *Striking the Balance*.

The government has delivered on commitment 9, the establishment of a five-year, \$5 million Building Energy Efficiency Upgrade Fund for community clubs, known as the Community Clubs Program. This grant scheme is being administered by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. The program provides up to \$75,000 per eligible community club in rebates to upgrade inefficient appliances; invest in renewable technologies, including rooftop solar and battery storage; to improve a club's building envelope; and to explore measures to transition off gas. The program is also intended to strategically support the government to meet its net zero emissions target by 2045 and reduce emissions from gas under the ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025. To date, seven clubs have been approved to commence upgrades or installation works up to an approximate value of \$850,000, including rooftop solar installations, refrigeration, heating ventilation and air conditioning and building insulation works. The identified savings amount to over \$120,000 per year.

Since my last update the government has been developing a legislative framework for the implementation of commitment 10 to support clubs to become heat and smoke refuges for local communities. Through the Ministerial Advisory Council, I established the Heat and Smoke Refuge Working Group, comprising two club representatives and two gambling harm reduction advocates, to advise on its implementation. As members will have noted, on 1 December last year I introduced the Gaming Machine (Club Refuge) Amendment Bill 2022, which seeks to reduce the impact that emergencies have on our community by allowing clubs to be used as refuges during incidents such as heat or smoke events. The Working Group was

consulted on the bill and the Justice and Community Safety Directorate will be holding a cross-directorate meeting early this year to discuss its implementation once it passes the Legislative Assembly.

In summary, Madam Speaker, my update today shows that the government is making significant progress on its commitment to reduce harm from electronic gaming machines while supporting sustainable clubs. Even more, the government has facilitated an open dialogue between a broad range of stakeholders, such as through the Ministerial Advisory Council, on some tricky issues.

I thank Minister Cheyne for her work and cooperation in this important space and I know she will join me in thanking stakeholders for their assistance. I look forward to further updating the Assembly as commitments are implemented throughout this term of government.

I present the following paper:

Progress of Government commitments to reduce harm from gaming while supporting sustainable clubs—Ministerial statement, 9 February 2023.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Environment—water quality

Ministerial statement

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (10.24): I rise today to update the Assembly on water quality matters associated with the ACT's lakes, ponds and other waterways and the government's ongoing investment and efforts to work with the community to improve water quality.

The ACT's lakes, ponds and other waterways are an important part of Canberra's landscape, its biodiversity value and visual and social amenity. They safely manage stormwater to help reduce the risks of flood and they also support social activities and host a variety of plant and animal life. Urban waterways also have a cooling effect that will help our city adapt to a changing climate.

Many of the urban lakes and ponds were originally designed to manage stormwater quality and mitigate flood risk. However, the community's demand for recreation and amenity value of lakes and ponds has increased, as have their concerns about the negative effects of blue-green algal blooms. The ACT government recognises the challenge to balance the need for water quality treatment while maintaining the amenity and recreational values of lakes. The government continues to invest in measures to address this challenge and the increasing pressure on our lakes and waterways from a growing population.

To accelerate and better coordinate the government's work to improve the ACT's water quality, we established the Office of Water in 2022 through a \$4.2 million investment in the ACT budget 2022-23. The Office of Water is up and running and is providing a single point within the ACT government to coordinate and progress the wide range of water quality program and policy initiatives being progressed. The office is already facilitating a more holistic approach to water management in the territory. The Office of Water combines scientific, technical, policy and program expertise in water in a single place within the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. It is a key part of the government's overall environmental portfolio.

To support a strategic approach to improving the ACT's water quality, the Office of Water is developing catchment plans over the next two years. These catchment plans will encompass Lake Tuggeranong, Lake Burley Griffin, Lake Ginninderra and Yerrabi Pond, as well as the Naas-Gudgenby River. The catchment plans will guide and inform a collaborative and well planned approach to current and future catchment management needs. The catchment plans will present government with evidence-based options for mitigating pollution so that toxic algal blooms are diminished or eliminated in our lakes and ponds. In the case of Yerrabi Pond, the excessive growth of ribbonweed and algae will be addressed to restore the pond's environmental, social and economic values. The plans will present both the benefits and the costs of different options to support government decision-making and the development of business cases to secure funding for future water quality improvement initiatives.

The catchment plans will outline improvements that need to be made in how water and pollution sources are managed across the community, business and government. With its remit to enable holistic water management, the Office of Water will play a key role in establishing and strengthening connections between stakeholders, both within government directorates and between government, business and the community.

The catchment plans will integrate other key government priorities into the solutions to enhance outcomes, including strengthening First Nations values; urban heat mitigation and living infrastructure; urban agriculture; community health and wellbeing; economic growth relating to blue-green infrastructure; and the mitigation of flood risks. The Office of Water will support the harmonisation of programs for water quality improvements with these allied government priorities.

Future implementation of the solutions presented in catchment plans will significantly reduce urban lake closures that currently adversely impact recreation, business, residents, cultural connectivity, the environment and downstream communities. The Office of Water will facilitate the implementation of future programs to solve Canberra's urban water quality problems.

Catchment plans are also being developed in rural areas where the impacts of sediment erosion are being felt. The beds of streams and rivers in rural parts of the ACT are often choked with sands that are eroded from pastoral activities or washed in after bushfires. The problem of excessive sedimentation is exacerbated in the

Murrumbidgee River by significant flow diversions from Tantangara Dam, which have virtually eliminated flushing flows.

The Healthy Waterways program has made improvements in Canberra's urban water quality but more will need to be done to solve the complex water quality problems seen in Canberra's urban lakes and ponds. This additional effort will require a unified approach between the government, business and community. Catchment plans will support these ongoing requirements. For example, the seven constructed wetlands recently built in the Lake Tuggeranong catchment, at a cost of around \$30 million, are estimated to be filtering 20 to 25 per cent of the pollution needed to begin to curb algal blooms in the lake. The wetlands and other infrastructure being built this year are predicted to intercept up to another 17 per cent of the target pollution load for the lake. More collaborative action and investment will be required to solve the challenges of water pollution and algal blooms in Lake Tuggeranong. Every individual, family and business will need to work together to suppress the amount of pollution, including leaves and grass in drains and fertiliser use in the catchment, from entering stormwater drains. The best antidote is preventing the entry of nutrients and pollutants in the first place.

Deposited sands obliterate riverbed habitats, leading to a loss of biodiversity. Some of the species impacted are locally and nationally listed threatened species and/or fish valued by recreational fishers. The catchment plan for the Naas-Gudgenby River system is being developed to guide future restoration works that target the problem of excessive sedimentation in these rivers and the Murrumbidgee River downstream.

As is the case for urban catchments, the Office of Water can contribute to the development of successful rural catchment plans by ensuring that stakeholders are aware of each other's role in catchment and water management and by promoting productive links between them.

The government continues to make improvements to water quality through investing over \$20 million in the ACT Healthy Waterways program. The government has funded the program to build up to another 13 wetlands and associated water quality infrastructure. Two of these 13 wetlands have been delivered. The first, a complex of four bioretention swales, has been built to filter water draining from the Kambah Playing Fields. University of Canberra research suggests that stormwater draining from these fields is enriched in nutrients. The bioretention swales are designed to intercept the nutrients before they enter the nearby drains.

The second, two floating wetlands for Yerrabi Pond, has now been deployed. One is in a protected bay that drains from Amaroo. This bay experiences odours from the breakdown of large amounts of uprooted ribbonweed. It is hoped that the smaller of the two floating wetlands, which was deployed in the bay, will eliminate some of the ribbonweed growth due to shading and reduce the odours associated with it. A larger floating wetland has been anchored in the pond a little to the south of the bay at Amaroo. As the water plants on the wetland grow, they will absorb some of the nutrients circulating in Yerrabi Pond that are causing the excessive growth of ribbonweed and the mats of filamentous algae that attach to the ribbonweed.

The floating wetland will not solve all of Yerrabi Pond's problems of nutrient enrichment but it is a step in the right direction. The catchment plan being prepared for Yerrabi Pond will guide further investment. The other 11 wetlands are in the planning stages and will be built this year and next year. The number of wetlands to be built in this round of infrastructure funding will depend on their final cost, which will be determined as detailed plans and costings are made.

Community engagement and education is another important part of our approach. The H2OK: Keeping our waterways healthy program, is a comprehensive stormwater education program that government delivers as part of the Healthy Waterways program. The program aims to reduce pollutants entering our waterways by engaging with the community and teaching people ways to keep pollutants out of our water. It highlights key habits that contribute to poor water quality, such as raking or blowing leaves into the drains, over-fertilising and washing cars in driveways. Successfully enhancing water quality across our city will require all of us to play our part in keeping nutrients out of waterways. Education and community partnerships will continue to be a critical element of our work to improve water quality.

In conclusion, good water quality is critical for the health and wellbeing of all Canberrans, the ACT environment and those living downstream of us. Clean water for recreation, amenity, drinking, agriculture, biodiversity and for greening the city requires action, particularly as our city grows.

Ongoing and significant investment by the ACT government; the establishment of the Office of Water; education programs; the development of catchment management plans; and, finally, the construction of healthy waterways assets are all helping to improve the quality of the ACT's water. Our waterways are precious and provide great value to our city. By working together and taking a strategic approach we can protect and enhance the health of these waterways for the future.

I present the following paper:

Update on the Office of Water, Catchment Plans and Yerrabi Floating Wetlands—Ministerial statement, 8 February 2023.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

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

Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee Report 7

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (10.34): I present the following report:

Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee—Report 7—*Inquiry into access to services and information in Auslan*, dated 6 February 2023, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

I would like to thank those that have joined us in the gallery today, and those online, from Canberra's deaf community.

In my role as Chair of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, I am pleased to speak to the report of the *Inquiry into access to services and information in Auslan*. The petition, 33-21, concerning Auslan rights, signed by 536 people, was presented to the Legislative Assembly on 8 February 2022.

At a private meeting on 26 April 2022 the committee resolved to inquire into this matter and report back to the Assembly. The committee hosted a consultation with members of Canberra's deaf community and also received 33 submissions. The committee conducted a public hearing in October 2022 and visited schools that cater to deaf students, both within the ACT and in Sydney and Melbourne.

As part of this report the committee has presented 25 recommendations to the ACT government. The overarching recommendation calls for the ACT government to establish a taskforce to co-design a territory-wide Auslan strategy with key stakeholders from the ACT deaf community, as well as service providers and peak bodies. The report includes additional recommendations for this prospective taskforce to consider. These pertain to a range of sectors, requiring a whole-of-government response.

The committee recommends that the ACT government and public agencies translate high-traffic web pages into Auslan and create provision for deaf people to forward queries, feedback and submissions in Auslan. The committee also proposes the establishment of a deaf hub that will serve as a one-stop shop for access to services for the deaf community.

The committee urges the ACT government to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing people are not left behind in an emergency. It recommends the establishment of an emergency SMS system that also has the capacity for deaf residents to send, not only receive, messages. The committee asks the ACT government to legislate that all emergency warning systems in buildings, including Bimberi and the Alexander Maconochie Centre, include mechanisms that alert deaf and hard of hearing people.

The committee noted evidence pertaining to the shortage of Auslan interpreters in the ACT—a workforce that is highly casualised. The committee therefore recommends that the ACT government implement the casual sick pay scheme to cover Auslan interpreters. The committee also asks the ACT government to adopt targets for higher numbers of certified Auslan-English interpreters within the ACT; reintroduce certified Auslan courses through the Canberra Institute of Technology; and provide subsidies to students of Auslan, include scholarships.

The committee paid particular attention to the needs of deaf and hard of hearing school students. The committee understands and appreciates the demonstrated care and commitment of Canberra teachers to the wellbeing of their students. But it

concludes that the current singular government policy of providing interpretation to an individual deaf or hard of hearing child in a mainstream classroom is unlikely to address the range of social, mental health and learning needs of all in this cohort.

It is important for deaf children and adolescents to interact with each other. Therefore, the committee recommends that the ACT government establish in a mainstream school a dedicated facility for deaf and hard of hearing students and liaise with relevant organisations in order to establish dedicated formal and frequent learning and social networks for deaf school students throughout the ACT.

The committee learned that services and information in Auslan benefit not only deaf and hard of hearing people; Auslan as a visual language improves the skills and understanding of visual communication for all, including hearing students. Therefore, the committee recommends that the ACT government investigate the delivery status of the subject of Auslan in ACT schools, as part of languages other than English within the Australian curriculum, from foundation to year 10, with a view to increasing the offering of this subject throughout a range of year levels and schools for both deaf and hearing students.

The committee also understands the importance of the families of deaf people being able to learn Auslan to communicate at home. The committee recommends that the ACT government liaise with the NDIS to encourage a scheme to fund Auslan courses for families of deaf children.

The committee thinks that it is important for the ACT government to amend local laws in order to legislate Auslan as an official language and to ensure that the right to an interpreter is enshrined in our laws. With regard to the place where our laws are made, the committee recommends that the ACT Legislative Assembly make proceedings and materials accessible via Auslan to the deaf community.

The committee has advocated changes for our justice system. It is important that deaf people have access to an Auslan interpreter in court, including to support their participation in the jury system. Auslan users should not be excluded from jury duty. The committee thus recommends that ACT courts update their practices for interpreting and associated communication throughout the judiciary and inform court staff, in order to ensure that courts are aware of their obligations for the provision of services, including Auslan.

It is also the view of the committee that the ACT government should provide mandatory training to ACT Policing on deaf awareness and booking interpreting services and should ensure culturally appropriate prison services for deaf inmates.

In terms of health care, the committee understands that the ACT government has existing policies and information about interpreting services that include the provision of Auslan. However, this inquiry revealed that the lived experience on the ground showed that some frontline staff may have neither used the Auslan interpreting services that are available nor heeded current ACT appropriate policy.

It is important that Canberra Health Services provide deaf awareness training and equipment and resources to hospital staff, which include the right to an interpreter in

emergency departments and during mental health emergencies, addressing the communication needs of deaf patients; access to face-to-face and on-call telephone and remote Auslan interpreting services; and information about Auslan to families immediately after newborn hearing screening.

For senior deaf people in Canberra, the committee urges the ACT government to provide aged-care facilities in the ACT. The committee also noted that the royal commission into aged care resulted in the Australian government providing free Auslan interpreting for deaf people aged over 65. However, this initiative does not extend to the provision of assistive technology for deaf people, such as alarms or Auslan interpretation through digital media. The committee recommends that the ACT government fund access to support technology for ACT deaf residents aged over 65.

There is also a need for investigation in order to determine how many deafblind people are residents of the ACT. In addition to the core provisions related to education, health and justice, the committee noted the importance of access for the deaf community to leisure activities. It therefore recommends that the ACT government incentivise local theatre companies, live entertainment venues and cinemas to provide accessibility for deaf audiences.

The committee also appreciates the importance of the advocacy role of DeafACT's work in lobbying for service provision for the local deaf community. The committee believes that it is important that the ACT government provide financial assistance to this organisation.

The committee thanks everyone who contributed to this inquiry, including all the witnesses who appeared at the hearing, those who made a written submission and those who so generously hosted the committee through their schools. I wish to thank the committee office and our secretary, Adele. I also wish to thank my fellow committee members, Mr Davis and Ms Lawder. I commend this report to the Assembly.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (10.44): In my role as Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, I am pleased, on the occasion of the tabling of this report, to express my thanks to all who have generously shared their experiences as part of this important inquiry. In particular, I thank my colleague Ms Lawder for sponsoring the initial petition of 531 signatures that led to this committee inquiry.

To say that the many incidents that the deaf community have endured are merely challenging is a vast understatement. The committee has learned about trauma and isolation—sadly, a profound disconnection that too often has struck at the hearts and minds of deaf and hard of hearing children—and a deep loneliness that may be echoed in aged-care facilities in the absence of sign language. One of the important components in bringing about social justice for the deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing, to ensure that their contributions are understood throughout the ACT, is through Auslan in all sectors.

I am grateful to all of those who contributed to this inquiry. I would like to name those who presented submissions: Deaf Australia, the ACT Disability Aged and Carer Advocacy Service, the Australian Lawyers Alliance, Legal Aid ACT, the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW and ACT, Advocacy for Inclusion, the Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association, Deaf Connect, Women's Health Matters, the National Association of Australian Teachers of the Deaf, Expression Australia, the ACT Council of Social Service, Convo Australia, and ACT Courts and Tribunal.

Many Canberrans may be unfamiliar with the committee process of this Assembly, but, on this occasion, I can say that I believe this committee process and this committee inquiry reflects very well on the Assembly and reflects well on the members who participated. Endorsing all 25 recommendations, I hope, can lead to lasting change for those people who are deaf or hard of hearing in the ACT. In particular, I would like to thank our committee secretary, Dr Adele Chynoweth, for her leadership in ensuring that we can present this high-quality report to the Assembly and to government today. Thank you.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.46): It was my pleasure to lodge petition 33-21, concerning Auslan rights, with the Assembly on 8 February 2022. It was a petition that sparked a critical inquiry into the importance of language and access to their language, Auslan, for the deaf community.

Now, a year later, on today's occasion of the tabling of the report of that inquiry, including 25 recommendations, I would like to acknowledge the work of my colleagues on the committee, Mr Pettersson and Mr Davis. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the committee secretariat, who gave excellent support to the committee in this inquiry.

I also say thank you so much to everyone who placed their trust in the committee through their submissions and during our public hearings and site visits. To the members of the deaf community, both in the ACT and interstate, to policymakers, to practitioners, to teachers and students who invited us into their classrooms, to all of you I say a very sincere thankyou.

I think members in this place would know of my longstanding interest and connection with the ACT's deaf community: deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing people. As far back as 2015 I introduced a change to our standing orders to enable an Auslan interpreter to be on the floor of the Assembly. I have done my best since then to represent the interests of the deaf community. That is why I am so pleased to have worked so collaboratively with Mr Pettersson and Mr Davis and all the communities who helped us and enabled the presentation of this important report today. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, members, and thank you to the Auslan interpreter.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motor Accident Injuries Amendment Bill 2023

Mr Steel, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement and a Human Rights act compatibility statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (10.50): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to present today the Motor Accident Injuries Amendment Bill to strengthen and improve our Motor Accident Injuries Scheme in the ACT. The Motor Accident Injuries Act 2019 provided a comprehensive support scheme to people injured in a motor accident in the ACT. There is no need to prove fault to access defined benefits under the Motor Accident Injuries Scheme, with a pathway to common law also being available to those with more serious injuries.

The scheme provides defined benefits for treatment and care, as well as income replacement, for up to five years to anyone who is injured in a motor accident. A quality of life benefit to recognise permanent injuries is also payable to people who meet impairment thresholds. The scheme provides for some exclusions for defined benefits, including for those who engage in serious criminal behaviour or who put others at risk of harm on our roads.

The purpose of the bill is to improve the operation of the MAI Scheme through providing additional regulatory tools to the Motor Accident Injuries Commission, and to make other minor and technical amendments to the act to address matters identified during the initial operation of the scheme.

The bill introduces a financial penalties regime and direction powers so that the commission can deal with non-compliance by licensed insurers in a proactive and timely manner. Insurers will also have an obligation to report to the commission any conduct involving significant contraventions of the legislation. Similar tools are already available to regulators who license insurers in other jurisdictions, and this bill is providing the same ability to the commission.

The bill will allow the commission to impose financial penalties on licensed MAI insurers for non-compliance with their licence and other legislative obligations. It was originally intended that these penalties be introduced through the Insurance Industry Deed, but uncertainty arose as to whether this would result in the penalties being able to be enforced. The financial penalty regime is instead being implemented by amendments to the legislation.

The penalties are based on a two-tier system, with a higher penalty applying to more serious contraventions and appropriate procedural fairness being adopted for each tier. The contraventions that may attract a higher financial penalty include dishonest or misleading conduct, underpayment or delay in paying defined benefits, and not protecting information in accordance with the act's requirements. The financial

penalty provisions will be subject to a public interest test, with the commission also needing to consider other criteria about the nature and impact of the breach before imposing a penalty.

Additional provisions will also enable the commission to direct licensed insurers to act—for example, reviewing or correcting their processes if the commission believes on reasonable grounds that an insurer is contravening or likely to contravene the act. A general power will allow a direction to be given to rectify or avoid a contravention or to otherwise comply with the legislation.

A specific direction can also require a remediation plan to be given to and approved by the commission. A remediation plan may be required where further contraventions are likely to occur, unless the insurer takes steps to minimise the risk of a contravention happening. This does not mean, however, that the commission can change the outcome of a specific decision of the insurer on a defined benefits application or in relation to a motor accident claim. There are formal mechanisms already in place for an injured person to dispute an insurer's decision.

The notification of reportable conduct is modelled on a similar requirement under the Australian financial services licensing regime. This provides a formal pathway for insurers to report anything that they identify through their own compliance monitoring or business operations that causes or is likely to cause a significant contravention of the legislation. Guidelines will set out factors for an insurer to consider when deciding whether a notification needs to be made. Additional licence conditions are proposed to support these new requirements.

The Motor Accident Injuries Commission recommended amendments to the MAI Act following the first two years of operation of the scheme. Many are of a technical nature. The amendments address issues such as the alignment of rounding rules for benefit calculations; clarifying when multiple convictions for driving offences result in entitlements ending under the scheme; and correcting some cross-references in the act. The bill will also now permit the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, in addition to the courts, to consider if the parties to a dispute have complied with the duty of good faith.

The quality of life benefit provisions are a key element of the scheme, especially for those more seriously injured with a permanent injury and seeking to proceed to common law. Amendments are being made to clarify the process for a quality of life benefit application and for obtaining a whole person impairment assessment. Clarity is also being given to time frames for responding to an offer for quality of life benefits and, in the event that a common-law claim is made, to ensure the offer is extended if quality of life damages are not subsequently awarded or paid.

The MAI Act provides for significant occupational impact assessments. These assessments provide an alternative pathway to common law for workers who receive long-term income support and have been unable to return to, or retrain for, suitable work due to their injuries. The MAI Commission engaged a rehabilitation consultant to advise on draft guidelines for significant occupational impact assessments. As a result of the consultant's advice, amendments are being made to remove references to "health assessor" and "health practitioner", as these terms limited who could conduct

the assessment and excluded occupations that were qualified. The guidelines will still require the assessor to have relevant qualifications to conduct the assessments.

Another amendment will bring the guideline power into line with the meaning of a “significant occupational impact”. Other amendments are to the treatment and care chapter and the future medical treatment entitlement. In the treatment and care provisions, an anomaly occurred during the drafting, where provision was made to give a notice to an injured person about suspending their benefit if they do not comply with a recovery plan, but no power was included. This bill provides that power.

The amendments to future medical treatment are to include time frames for an insurer to respond to an application and allow reasonable time for discussion on the calculated amount. It was also identified that the act was silent with respect to whether the final amount for future medical treatment could include legal costs. As the focus of the entitlement is to help cover future medical treatment costs, it would not be consistent to include legal costs.

In addition, it is a choice, and not a necessity, for the applicant to have legal representation, and the act is quite specific about how an MAI insurer is to calculate a future medical treatment entitlement. If the matter proceeds to a dispute in the ACAT, then the tribunal may be asked to award costs for the proceeding.

In conclusion, the improvements this bill makes to the regulatory framework and the operation of the MAI Scheme will assist in ensuring that all Canberrans receive the support that they need from the scheme. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Cain**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Cost of Living Pressures in the ACT—Select Committee Proposed establishment

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (10.58): I move:

That:

- (1) this Assembly notes that:
 - (a) over the last five years, Canberrans have experienced significant price increases for essential goods and services including medical, education, housing, electricity, gas and transport, and are continuing to rise;
 - (b) these escalating prices for essential goods and services will hit lower income households the hardest; and
 - (c) the *2022 ACT Cost of Living Report* by the ACT Council of Social Service found that despite Canberra having the highest average weekly earnings in Australia, around one in 10 Canberrans are living in poverty;
- (2) this Assembly establish a Select Committee on the Cost of Living to inquire into and report on:
 - (a) the cost of living pressures facing Canberrans;
 - (b) the drivers of the cost of living pressures in Canberra;

- (c) the Government's fiscal policy response to the cost of living pressures;
 - (d) measures to ease the cost of living; and
 - (e) any related matters;
- (3) the Select Committee shall be composed of two Members to be nominated by the Government and two Members nominated by the Opposition, to be notified in writing to the Speaker within two hours of this motion passing;
 - (4) the Committee shall elect as Chair one of the Members nominated by the Opposition; and
 - (5) the Select Committee will report to the Assembly by the last sitting day of 2023.

I feel like I have *deja vu*. It was only a few months ago, Madam Speaker, that I stood in this very chamber, trying to get some action from this Barr-Rattenbury government to deal with the cost of living crisis facing Canberrans—the tens of thousands of Canberrans, including over 9,000 children, that are living in poverty in our nation's capital. I stood in here and spoke about how mums and dads, how pensioners, how retirees, how our young people and some of the most vulnerable members of our community are doing it tough, with rapidly rising mortgage costs; skyrocketing grocery, transport and medical costs; and ever-increasing rates and rent.

What was the response from Labor and the Greens? They could not even bring themselves to acknowledge the very real cost of living crisis that is facing so many Canberrans. Instead, they got together, as they usually do, bunkered down and amended my motion, to absolve themselves of any responsibility. And then—this is the kicker—they moved an amendment which every single member of the Labor and Greens parties voted for, that stated:

Canberrans generally enjoy a high standard of living and access to free quality healthcare and education, and well-planned and delivered infrastructure—the lack of which leads to additional cost-of-living pressures for residents of other jurisdictions.

I kid you not. This is a government that absolutely is out of touch with the struggles of so many Canberrans. This is a government that has lost its heart when it comes to the plight of so many Canberrans that are doing it tough, so many Canberrans that are fearful that the worst is yet to come.

Instead of acknowledging how tough things are for Canberrans, they are slapping each other on the back and congratulating themselves on a job well done. Let's have a look at that job well done. We have a housing affordability crisis which has been greatly exacerbated by the policy failures of this government: failure to meet its own land release targets year after year, failure to provide real choice when it comes to affordable housing, and an uncaring rates hike year after year that is crippling home owners.

Make no mistake, Madam Speaker, many Canberrans are struggling because of the very deliberate decisions made by this Labor-Greens government. Only yesterday the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development confirmed this government's unhealthy obsession with their 70 per cent infill policy that is driving land prices up.

With only over 200 single dwelling blocks sold to date, out of their target of 799 by June this year, we can already tell that they are going to fail again on their promise to deliver more land for detached housing.

Our health system is in crisis. Emergency department wait times are longer than anywhere in Australia. Elective surgery waiting lists have stretched out for years. Our nurses and doctors are at breaking point. There is no prioritisation of women's and children's health, due to backing down on their promise to establish a permanent surgical service for gynaecological cancer and neglecting the need for a permanent paediatric emergency department.

We have the lowest police numbers per capita in the whole of Australia. We have hazardous materials and desperately needed maintenance in our schools that have been neglected for years. Our teachers are dealing with unprecedented levels of violence and bullying in our schools and classrooms every day. Our local roads and basic facilities are in a state of disrepair and neglect. Daily I get contacted by Canberrans telling me that they long for the days when they used to be proud of how neat, how clean and how beautiful our city used to look.

We saw only last week the release of the Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services*, which confirmed once again that the ACT, under this Labor-Greens government, is failing on almost every metric. There are fewer public housing dwellings than a decade ago. We have the highest rates of long-term homelessness in the country. We have the smallest police force per capita and the worst conviction and clearance rates in the country. We have the highest Indigenous incarceration rates in the country. We have the longest emergency department wait times in the country. So excuse me if I—and many Canberrans, for that matter—do not join in in giving the Labor-Greens government a round of applause when they tell us how good we all have it.

The stark reality is that many Canberrans are hurting. Families, pensioners, retirees, young people, small business owners who continue to struggle through the pandemic—they are hurting. It is cold comfort when their government, this government, just keeps telling them how good they have it. They keep reminding us that we have one of the highest average incomes in Australia, along with one of the lowest unemployment rates. That is true, but that does not mean that people are not hurting. That does not mean that people are not worried about whether the worst is yet to come.

The government continue to remind us about all the wonderful programs they have and how much they are doing to help Canberrans, and I have no doubt they will go through that list again in response to my motion. But when was the last time any member of this cabinet stopped congratulating themselves on a job well done, looked up from their pre-prepared list of spin and actually tried to understand what the reality of the situation is like for so many Canberrans that are doing it tough?

Yesterday in the Assembly Mr Davis raised concerns from a number of emails he has received from people in Tuggeranong who are feeling the pinch over increased cost of living pressures. In response to Mr Davis's question we once again got a lecture of self-congratulations from the Chief Minister. He keeps telling us about all these

wonderful programs in place, yet, as Mr Davis himself pointed out, people in Canberra are hurting. As Mr Davis said, it is a trend that he is seeing coming into his inbox. Whilst I am sure that the Chief Minister will repeat the list of everything that the government has on offer, and I am sure that Mr Davis will continue to say that he has confidence that this government is doing everything that it can, let's not sugar coat the reality. Despite the rhetoric, despite the spin, it is not working.

When mums and dads are waking up in the middle of the night and making the decision as to whether their child has to forgo the next school excursion or give up their swimming lessons; when seniors are putting off crucial medical treatment because they have chosen to buy groceries that week; when pensioners are forced to turn their air conditioners off on a 30-plus day because they cannot afford the electricity bill; and when our young people and some of the most vulnerable Canberrans in our community are worrying about how they are going to pay the highest rents in the country, any local government that has policy levers in its control must listen and must act.

The ACTCOSS report released last year found that, despite the ACT having the highest average weekly earnings in Australia, around one in 10 Canberrans are living in poverty. One in 10. This has been happening and is happening in our nation's capital, in one of the wealthiest countries in the world. So Labor and the Greens can slap each other on the back and congratulate themselves as much as they want, but we know that the reality is that many Canberrans are hurting.

Just last week we saw the ABS release data that I think shocked us all. It showed that, for the December quarter, living costs across Australia rose at their fastest pace since records began. Worryingly, it showed that those households that are reliant on wages and salaries for income had the largest increase in cost of living since records began in 1999. The ABS report showed that over the past 12 months all household types, including pensioners, wage earners and retirees, have had the largest annual cost of living increase ever.

I have stood in this place numerous times over the past few months, over a year, and recited the disturbing figures from the ACTCOSS cost of living reports, which show that over the past five years Canberra has experienced significant increases in the price of many essential goods and services. Housing is up by 19 per cent. Electricity is up by 28 per cent. Transport is up by over 19 per cent. Gas is up by 24 per cent. Medical and hospital services are up by 21 per cent. I could go on. This is even before we add in the steep increases in rates which have made mortgage repayments place many Canberra families at breaking point.

Once again, as I did only a short few months ago, I remind members that housing affordability in Canberra is at an all-time low, with the median house price remaining at close to a million dollars and the most expensive rents of any capital city in the country. As I said, it feels like *deja vu*. Time and again the Canberra Liberals have tried to get the Barr-Rattenbury government to support us. We have been trying to get them to look at cost of living issues, to work together to determine what we can do, as representatives of our community, as policymakers, to provide real cost of living relief.

What were they afraid of? Have they become so out of touch, sitting in their ministerial offices for so long, that they think they know all the answers? What were they afraid of? Were they worried about having an honest, frank discussion about the issues that are affecting the cost of living in Canberra—that there may be some actual, valuable solutions that come from not only across the chamber but across the community? Their federal counterparts were not afraid to work with the coalition in the Senate to establish a Senate select committee to look at cost of living.

To be honest, I did not actually have high hopes for establishing this select committee, given that, every time the Canberra Liberals have stood in this place and tried to do something to get Labor and the Greens to join us in looking at these issues, they have thwarted our attempts, glossing over the ugly truth and gaslighting the community into thinking they are already doing something.

I note that there is an amendment from Mr Braddock, which I will address once he moves it. What I do say is that I am pleading, once again, with all those members opposite to work together to ensure that, for some of the most vulnerable Canberrans, the Canberrans that are really, really struggling, the Canberrans that are staying up at night worrying about how they are going to make ends meet, their needs come first.

Be open-minded about what I am proposing today—what I have been proposing for well over a year, ever since I became leader in this place—which is to work together, with the broader community, different stakeholders and different players, to ensure that we, as a legislature, are doing everything we can to ensure that we support some of the most vulnerable members of our community. It is a duty that we have to not only be an advocate and a representative for our community but to ensure that no Canberran falls through the cracks. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (11.11): I move:

Omit all text after “That”, substitute:

- “(1) the Assembly establish a Select Committee to conduct expert, stakeholder and community consultation on policy measures to further support low and moderate income Canberra households to manage cost of living pressures;
- (2) the Select Committee will:
 - (a) identify cost of living pressures faced by low and moderate income households that are not currently alleviated by ACT or Commonwealth Government assistance programs;
 - (b) consider advice and ideas from the consultation process on how the ACT Government can further help address cost of living pressures;
 - (c) provide timely recommendations to help inform the considerations of the Expenditure Review Committee of Cabinet in the Budget process;
 - (d) look beyond the current economic cycle to make longer term recommendations on cost of living trends to inform the development of future budgets; and
 - (e) consider any related matters;
- (3) the committee be composed of:
 - (a) one Member to be nominated by ACT Labor;

- (b) one Member to be nominated by the Canberra Liberals; and
 - (c) one Member to be nominated by the ACT Greens;
- to be notified in writing to the Speaker within two hours of this motion passing;
- (4) the Chair of the committee shall be the ACT Greens Member;
 - (5) the Deputy Chair of the committee shall be the ACT Labor Member; and
 - (6) the committee will report to the Assembly by Thursday 11 May 2023.”.

I would like to thank Ms Lee for bringing forward this motion on a very important issue. Canberra, with its higher than average salaries, is not immune to what is affecting most of Australia and the world. Cost of living drivers are rising out of macro factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain disruptions, war in the Ukraine, energy markets being affected, federal tax settings and also commonwealth income supports.

This does not mean that we have to give up and wave our hands in the air. If factors within the realm of the commonwealth’s sphere of control and influence are contributing to cost of living pressures in Canberra, we have a responsibility to call those out and advocate for a change of policy. If supply chains are so disrupted, it provides further impetus to examine how we can make Canberra more resilient, such as through our Food and Fibre Strategy. An energy crisis driven by a conflict in the Ukraine should drive us to disconnect from global fossil fuel energy chains and get off gas.

For those factors or levers that are within the ACT government’s control, we, as representatives, owe it to our communities to search for any way we can to make their lives a little bit easier. The ACT government has a long list of supports and programs in place and should be applauded for this. However, as we face a maelstrom of different forces and drivers, we cannot rely on the government to be the repository of all good ideas on how to address cost of living pressures. We need to listen closely to experts, stakeholders and community members with lived experience to identify other measures, programs and ideas that have merit.

I think this goes to the heart of my amendment to Ms Lee’s proposal. There is a need to hold the government to account and to highlight where government efforts do not do enough to alleviate the struggles of those who are doing it toughest. There is also an important role of the committee to be a constructive contributor, bringing people into the Assembly. Under my amendment, the proposed select committee would add value to the budget process by engaging closely with the community, synthesising and elevating ideas for consideration by the government as part of its budget process. It should be said that for larger ideas that may not be able to be incorporated within this budget there is scope for them to be incorporated into future budgets where they are warranted.

The government’s current budget consultation practice has been in use for a long period of time. As we, as a community, face unprecedented economic pressures, it is time to work a little bit differently. Committees play an important role in our democracy, particularly when we have a unicameral parliament with no house of

review. They provide a valuable opportunity for the community to have their say on issues of interest or concern, examining policy options and making recommendations on the future direction of a policy area.

Committees offer the opportunity to listen deeply to the community about its lived experience and perspective, to synthesise these voices and elevate ideas for community discussion and incorporation into government planning. I imagine that this committee's report, and the government's response, will be read with great interest during the estimates process and will add value to that consideration.

I also seek to make some mechanical amendments to Ms Lee's proposal. Every committee for this term has been made up of three members, one from each party represented here in the Assembly. Every party here cares about the cost of living. It is not an issue that belongs to any one particular party. Here is an opportunity for tripartisan examination of the issue, a chance for the three parties to come up with ideas and recommendations for what can be done to address cost of living pressures.

I would also note that the Canberra Liberals have chaired every single select committee so far this term. They should not be automatically entitled to \$200 every time they pass go and create a select committee. Nothing in the Latimer House Principles says that it must be a member of the opposition every single time. There are particular times, such as estimates, when it is entirely appropriate for the committee to be chaired by the opposition. But there are other times when it should be shared around those parties which make up the Assembly.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BRADDOCK: If the Canberra Liberals disagree, I am happy for them to make their case. In closing, it is time to listen to the community that is grappling with a cost of living crisis that is not only impacting Australia and worldwide; importantly, it is also impacting the people here in Canberra. It is time to see what we, as an Assembly, can do to help them. I commend my amendment to the house.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (11.16): I thank Ms Lee for raising the issue and Mr Braddock for giving it some structure and focus through his amendment. Labor will support the amendment in its entirety. I note that there is another amendment from Ms Lee, seeking to change the chair. I will foreshadow that we will not support that.

Ms Lee: I am shocked.

MR BARR: Unsurprisingly, yes. On the second part of Ms Lee's amendment, in relation to the committee itself voting for the deputy chair, the government is relaxed about that. Should Ms Lee wish to split her amendment, she might find some support for the second part. That is a matter, obviously, for her in the procedural matters that will follow after this discussion.

At its heart, what we are debating is inequality in society. If I take on face value Ms Lee's contribution, what she would like to see is a more equal distribution of

income and support within our community. That is a principle that I am happy to sign up for. What that means in practice is that we need to take millions and millions of dollars away from the wealthiest Canberrans and transfer them, through concession programs, to the poorest Canberrans. That is a principle that successive ACT governments have pursued through our concessions program.

The taxes that are raised in order to provide support to low income households are ostensibly raised from wealthier households. That is the nature of our tax system and it is replicated at a federal level, where, largely, the bulk of tax is paid by high income earners and that is redistributed to lower income earners through the social security system. That is the Australian compact. That is how we have a more equitable society.

The debate here is around whether we need to go further and generate more tax revenue in order to redistribute to lower income households. That is the principle that we are working towards, which is a principle that is founded, I think, more in the left of politics than in the right of politics. We are happy to support such a process, but it needs to have structure; it needs to deliver timely recommendations that can feed into this coming budget process.

Equally, I think it is important—and that is why I particularly commend point 2(d) of Mr Braddock’s amendment—that the work of the committee look beyond the current economic cycle at some of the longer term cost of living trends. Mr Braddock touched on those, particularly as they relate to climate change adaptation and the like. We are going to see increasingly that fossil fuels will become more expensive.

That is why we are on a path to support Canberra households to make the transition to renewable electricity, and that is why today we announced an expansion of the Sustainable Household Scheme, and why it is fantastic to see that already five per cent of households in our city have participated in that scheme. That is making a real difference to the cost of living for those households, it is reducing our emissions and it has supported thousands of jobs in a sustainable and growing part of our economy. That is a great example of a policy and investment by the territory government that has been supporting lower and moderate income households to make an important transition. That is one example.

If this whole debate is going to be characterised by saying, every single time the government brings forward an initiative to support lower income households, that that is somehow self-congratulatory, which is the tone and tenor of the Leader of the Opposition’s contribution, then this debate is not going to go very far. If the opposition are genuine about joining with the Labor Party and the Greens to bring forward ideas, this committee could work. But if every idea that is put forward becomes “self-congratulatory”, in the words of the Leader of the Opposition, then we are not really advancing this debate at all.

I pose the question: is it possible in your eyes, Ms Lee, that there are things the government does that are good, deliver good outcomes, and are not self-congratulatory? So far, I have yet to see any evidence of the Canberra Liberals being able to reach that somewhat mature position. Are you opposed to us giving more money through the utilities concession? Is that self-congratulatory?

Was it self-congratulatory, as part of this budget review, to include more low income households in the 100 per cent rebate on their motor vehicle registration? Is that a problem? Are you unhappy with that? Are you unhappy with us negotiating with the commonwealth government to see more energy price relief as part of their budget and our budget this year? That is what is on the table, now that we are debating and discussing real and tangible support to add to our already existing real and tangible support.

The amendment that Mr Braddock moved seeks to focus this committee's work to engage with experts—always a good thing—stakeholders and the community on policy measures to further support low and moderate income households, and to particularly look at cost of living pressures faced by low and moderate income households that are not currently alleviated by ACT or commonwealth government assistance programs.

We are seeing the commonwealth move decisively in a number of areas. Cheaper medicines are already in place. Cheaper child care is coming from 1 July. They are working with the states and territories on energy price rebates. They are important, significant programs that make a difference—not self-congratulatory. They are programs that make a difference. If you do not support them, that is fine. You are allowed to not support them, but do not come in here and say that we are self-congratulatory when we are endeavouring to address the substantive issues in relation to child care, medicine and energy that households are facing.

We do not want to just provide short-term solutions, though. That is why I reiterate that it is important that we look beyond just this current economic cycle. It cannot just be about one-off rebates for fossil fuel energy that we know is going to continue to get more expensive year on year. That is why we also have to have programs that look to the long term. That is why the Sustainable Household Scheme is such a good program and one that, in addition to the extra capital that we have put in today, I will be seeking commonwealth support for, as the commonwealth have announced that they, too, will put money into programs to support the transition away from gas into renewable electricity at a household level. We have a great program. It is operating incredibly effectively, and more capital from the commonwealth would support more households in the ACT. There is an example of a program and a policy that can make a difference. Those sorts of things should be on the table for further discussion.

What I am also conscious of is the need, within the framework that we currently have, to be able to do more, more quickly. Standing up new programs and new concession arrangements can take time, so one of the issues that the cabinet will be looking at through this budget round is whether we need new programs or more money into existing programs. That is something I hope the committee will give some consideration to as we work through the next few months, heading into the budget in the middle of the year.

I went through a long list of initiatives—some new, some longstanding—that the ACT government provides to support low and moderate income households in the territory. They are consolidated in one website to make it straightforward for people to access that information, and people are. The take-up of a number of those programs is very strong, so the money is getting to the people who need it.

We must also acknowledge that at a state and territory level we operate within an existing federal framework, and the commonwealth government is principally responsible for income support. I have made no secret of my support for the commonwealth further examining the level of statutory income support that they provide to those who require that assistance.

Equally, for the majority of people who are in employment, one of the best things that can occur to assist them with their cost of living is that their wages and salaries increase. We have been very specific in our enterprise bargaining approach this time around to deliver the most, in terms of additional pay rises, to our lowest income workers. That is a deliberate policy decision, and we have recently reached agreement with the general service officers, through their unions, to achieve a substantive increase in their income to address cost of living pressures.

Cost of living is a two-sided equation. It is not just about how prices might be rising; it is also our incomes rising. I do note that the economic architecture of the previous federal government was to suppress wages. Australia, over the past decade, saw amongst the lowest wage growth in its history, and people wonder why there are cost of living pressures when wages have been kept so low for so long. The change of government, though, has already had an impact on seeing wages and salaries start to increase. That will be an important part of the equation in addressing cost of living pressures, because if your income is higher you then have more money and more resources to meet rising costs. This is a two-sided equation.

In that context, being lectured by the Liberal Party—the party of suppressing wages—on the cost of living is a bit rich. But we can get beyond that. The Liberal Party is not in office federally anymore and hopefully will not be for quite some time. There is an opportunity for the industrial relations system to be reformed in a way that will see wages and salaries increase into the future. Hand in hand with that, it would be great if commonwealth income support could also increase.

But back to where I started: that has to be paid for. That is through tax. If we want a more equal society, then we have to acknowledge that we have income inequality in this country and that that means governments need to step in to redistribute.

Hopefully, you are redistributing a growing pool of income: grow the economy fast, have unemployment as low as possible and provide the support that those who are not currently in the labour market need to get back into the labour market and to be able to participate more fully in society. They are some pretty worthy economic goals, some pretty worthy social goals, so that is the challenge. That is what all governments face.

In the ACT context, our economy has been growing continuously for 32 years. No other state or territory has achieved that. We have the lowest unemployment rate in the nation. There are more job vacancies in the ACT than there are unemployed people, so part of this challenge now is to ensure that there are free training opportunities for those people who are currently unemployed, to give them the skills they need to move into employment, because there is no doubt that being in

employment is going to lift your income and that is going to help you address cost of living challenges.

I imagine everyone could agree on that point: that full employment is a worthy goal for any economy and any society. We are effectively there in the ACT at the moment. It does not mean there is not more to do, and we are focused on that. We have a partner, for the first time in a decade, on training, on cost-of-living measures and on housing. The commonwealth government is at the table, and that makes a world of difference to where we were about a year ago. There is a lot of work to do. We look forward to the work of the committee—focused, as it will be, thanks to Mr Braddock's amendment. I commend it to the Assembly.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (11.31): I thank Ms Lee for her motion and I thank Mr Braddock for his very thoughtful amendment. This is probably the hardest city in the country to be poor in. That is not necessarily any one person's fault or any government's fault; that is the consequence of a city with substantially high average wages, substantially high property prices as a result of those higher wages, and a secure jobs market, thanks to the federal government. It means that in this community, perhaps even more so than in other communities around the country, those living economically on the margins can really feel it more here than they may in other places.

That was before we saw a range of impacts on the household budget that have just started to flow through our economy recently, like interest rate rises, like inflation, making every single time you tap your card or your direct debit comes out for a monthly payment hurt a little bit more at the moment. I think that is why now is exactly the right time for this Assembly, and all three parties represented in this Assembly, to commit to a shared project through this committee, not only to identify where the gaps are but to provide practical and evidence-based solutions to assist the government in continuing to provide support to low and middle income people in this city.

Yesterday in the chamber I asked the Chief Minister about what the government is doing to provide supports to low income Canberrans. The Chief Minister outlined more than 60 programs and a one-stop shop website the government has set up to ensure that people know where to get supports. That is a really good thing. There are other governments in this country that have not done that work. They do not have a one-stop shop website; they do not have 65 programs. There are some governments where you would be hard pressed to find 10. That is a good reflection on the government.

In order to score a cheap political point, Ms Lee will categorise that as backslapping, but I try, when I contribute to debate in this place, to add a shade of nuance that one cannot expect from an alternative government simply trying to drag down the one that is in power. That is why I concede that Ms Lee's suggestion to have a select committee and to look at these issues is, in fact, a good one. The Greens agree. That is why Mr Braddock has tabled this amendment.

However, because I am so motivated in my work in this place to helping those in this community who live on the margins and who live with the least, who struggle to put food on the table and fuel in the car and to pay their rent, I am not interested in

supporting a motion from the Liberals stacked with their members to manipulate the committee process and use it as a battering ram against the government. I want to be practical. I want to be solutions-focused. I would like to have the ambition that all three parties could find consensus on some tangible recommendations we could make to the government about how to improve the economic situation for low income people in this city. Call me naive, call me too optimistic, but I hope we are able to achieve that today and I hope, with a member from each of the three political parties represented in this place on this select committee, we can do just that.

Just this morning we saw, in a report tabled by the education and community inclusion committee, 25 recommendations to government presented in a tripartisan way. It is the committee process working at its best. Let's see if we can get a commitment from everybody in this place today to engage with this new committee in good faith. Let's see if we can engage in this body of work and treat the committee process with respect. Let's demonstrate to those Canberrans who struggle to meet the rising cost of living that, through this new committee, we can once again show this Assembly working at its best.

There are a few points in Mr Braddock's amendment that I want to stress here, because, having been in this place for a little while now, I have got a bit of an idea about what raises an eyebrow outside this building. Firstly, I appreciate the relatively short reporting date. In Mr Braddock's amendment it is the ambition of the new select committee, should his amendment be supported, to report by Thursday, 11 May.

I want to explain why that is really important. The government will be going through a process of developing its 2023-24 ACT budget. If we want to land real supports for real Canberrans doing it tough right now, then we have to put our heads down and we have to put our bums up and we have to do this work quickly; and we have to do it well in order to ensure that a committee's report can be presented to government, that government can have time to consider the budgetary implications of those recommendations, and maybe, just maybe, a tripartisan committee coming out of this place could see some real policy change.

When I say real policy change I do not mean that the policies in place right now are not good. There are plenty of things that are very good. I cannot begin to tell you, Madam Speaker, how many of my constituents I spoke to in the weeks leading up to the first week of school coming back about how expensive it is to prepare back-to-school packs. I was delighted to be able to introduce people to the Future of Education equity fund. I know of many of my constituents who were able to access real money through that fund to support back-to-school programs. Maybe that is backslapping. Maybe that is self-congratulatory, according to those in this place that seek to make a political point.

I hope the members of the Canberra Liberals are introducing their constituents to these programs too, and helping their constituents who are really struggling to access the millions of dollars made available by the government to support them during this cost of living crisis. I hope we will not let politics get in the way of helping people who really need our help right now.

On that, I appreciate that Ms Lee's motion has presented an opportunity for this Assembly to establish a select committee to look into the cost of living crisis facing some of the poorest in this community. I thank Mr Braddock for a thoughtful and considered amendment that ensures that that committee will be represented by all three parties and will be able to report in time for the government's budgetary processes. I encourage every member of this place, should Mr Braddock's amendment be successful, to encourage their constituents, experts, peak bodies, to engage thoughtfully in this committee process so that we can work together to deliver real, tangible supports to people in our community who are suffering.

I implore with you, on behalf of the constituents that I have helped over the past two years that I have been in office, not to waste this opportunity on cheap political point-scoring and grandstanding. Try and bring yourself to concede that there are some good things the government is doing. Try and engage thoughtfully and deliberately and present practical suggestions about how those things could be improved to support your constituents. Anything less would be shameful.

Ms Lee interjecting—

MR DAVIS: I appreciate that Ms Lee is interjecting. I imagine these things might be challenging. I managed to sit quietly during Ms Lee's speech full of smears and political sniping because these people are too important to be politicised. I look forward to the select committee's establishment and working across this Assembly to provide real supports to people who desperately need it.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (11.41): I am going to turn to Mr Braddock's amendment, which came through quite late this morning, just before the debate this morning. I note he has removed it all and done a rewrite. Given that this is the very first time in this term that Labor and the Greens have actually made any, any attempt to actually address this issue and work together, I am going to give him a lot of it. But I have put forward an amendment to Mr Braddock's amendment and I move that now, Madam Speaker.

I move:

Omit paragraphs (4) and (5), substitute:

“(4) the Chair of the Committee shall be the Canberra Liberals Member;

(5) the Select Committee will vote for the Deputy Chair at its first meeting;”.

It is funny because, when Mr Braddock talked about my amendment and the reasons why he did not want to support it, foreshadowing that I was going to move the amendment, he says because, “Hey, the Chair should be shared around”. Now, that is absolutely absurd. What is he going to do next? Call for the ministries to be shared around. When is our turn, Mr Braddock? When is our turn to have some of the ministries? We all know the hypocrisy of the Greens is laid bare every single time.

You saw it yesterday. Blatantly. In relation to the Greens members all voting to endorse Federal Labor's cuts to Medicare funded mental health services and that was done yesterday. What about every single time that the Greens bleat about #Greens in

government whenever it fits and suits their political agenda. Then as soon as it does not, “No, we are the crossbench and we need to be treated as such.”

In terms of the #Greens in government let us unpick what that actually means. If they are so keen to be in government that they have actually created a hashtag for it, my initial motion specifically says two members of government, two members of opposition. But when it suits, no, no, no, “We are not in government. We are three separate parties here. Three separate parties here”. So, in that regard the fact that Mr Braddock’s motion specifically calls for the committee to be tripartisan, all right give him that. Then at paragraph 4:

the Chair of the committee shall be the ACT Greens Member

and at paragraph 5:

the Deputy Chair of the committee shall be the ACT Labor Member

All of a sudden, Madam Speaker, despite every attempt previously to dismiss any suggestion that more work might be done on this very important topic, all of a sudden even the Greens have realised they can no longer, they can no longer ignore the plight of the thousands of emails apparently Mr Davis is getting. The trend that he is seeing in his inbox.

It being 45 minutes after the commencement of Assembly business, the debate was interrupted in accordance with standing order 77. Ordered that the time allotted to Assembly business be extended by 30 minutes.

MS LEE: We do not know that this is not a blatant attempt, when you have an amendment that calls on a Greens member—Greens in government by the way, #Greens in government—to be Chair and a Labor member to be Deputy Chair of a three member committee. So Mr Davis can bleat all he wants and chastise and say, “Let us not make it political.” How is that going to be not a pre-emptive pushing of the government—#Greens in government—political agenda? This is hypocrisy at its finest from the Greens. Hypocrisy at its finest from the Greens. Once again, “You know what? We will say, hey yes we agreed to the select committee. We are doing something. But let us make sure that we run the agenda and run the show.”

Now, turning to Mr Barr’s comments. Leaving aside his attempt to verbal me because heaven forbid as a woman of colour, leader of a party, elected member of this place, I need a white man to tell me exactly what I have said and explain what I have said. Much of the chastising was for daring to say, “You know what? I will not. You have outlined all those programs. But clearly for all of the problems that are plaguing struggling Canberrans more can be done.” For daring to say that. But I have to give Mr Barr credit. This is the first time, the first time in how many attempts that I have tried to get the Assembly to work together on this. At least for the first time the Labor members are going to agree to the select committee despite all of the problems that I have spoken about.

All I ask, and have been asking for some time, is perhaps look beyond the government policy machine because if things are working so well, how on earth do we have one

in 10 Canberrans living in poverty? And if, as Mr Barr continuously points, high incomes are the answer, what is conveniently forgotten is the record high inflation rate and skyrocketing increase in cost of living at the same time. What has been conveniently forgotten is that although Canberra does enjoy the highest rates of income in the country, we still have one in 10 Canberrans in poverty. So I acknowledge and I thank my colleagues that we are actually finally going to get a select committee up. Whilst I have serious concerns about the fact that we are going to have this with a Greens member as Chair, #Greens in government, and a Labor Deputy Chair, we will have at least taken that one step that has not existed before in setting this select committee up.

To wrap up before my time, I want to put on the record every single time that I have raised these significant concerns what the Labor and Greens members responded with. So let me remind for members in this place: in February 2021 when I moved a motion to establish a poverty task force, every single member from Labor and the Greens voted it down.

In October 2021 when I moved to highlight the cost of living pressures for Canberrans, every single member of the Greens and Labor voted it down. In October 2022 when I put forward a Canberra Liberals motion to establish an independent inquiry into the prevalence of poverty in Canberra, every single member of the Greens and Labor rejected it. And just a few short months ago when we tried again to get the government to recognise the cost of living crisis, not a single member of the Labor and Greens supported it.

So today is one small step. I have outlined my concerns about Mr Braddock's amendment. I accept the reality that my amendment to Mr Braddock's amendment is not going to get up but I place on the record my concerns about the makeup of a committee chaired by the Greens with the deputy chair a Labor member, both in the government when it suits. But it is a first step and on that point I thank my colleagues for agreeing to vote to set up this select committee.

I thank through you, Madam Speaker, members of our community. Whilst it has taken this long to bring Labor and the Greens kicking and screaming to this point, the Canberra Liberals will never ever forget the Canberrans that have been long forgotten, long neglected and long abandoned by this government when it comes to cost of living and supporting the Canberrans that are doing it incredibly tough. We will continue to be their voice in this.

MR BRADDOCK: I welcome the Leader of the Opposition's amendments, #LiberalsinOpposition. I really appreciate your support and that Ms Lee has finally come to the view that the three-member committees are the way that we have been doing business this term. I have already forecast we will not be supporting that the chair of the committee become a Canberra Liberals. In terms of point 5, we are fine with that particular amendment; therefore, in accordance with standing order 133, I move:

That the question on **Ms Lee's** amendments be divided.

Ordered that the amendment be divided.

Question put:

That **Ms Lee's** amendment to paragraph (4) of **Mr Braddock's** amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 16

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

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

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

Question resolved in the negative.

Ms Lee's amendment to paragraph (4) of **Mr Braddock's** amendment negatived.

Question put:

That **Ms Lee's** amendment to paragraph (5) of **Mr Braddock's** amendment be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr Braddock's amendment, as amended, agreed to.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (11.55): In closing, I want to read out a quote in today's *Canberra Times* from Hands Across Canberra CEO Peter Gordon. I think this sums up exactly why I have brought this motion today. Peter Gordon says:

Families are being pushed over the edge from 'just getting by' to 'we need help'. And it's not just financial help. Fathers and mothers feel as though they are failing their families, which is adversely affecting their mental health. Children are undergoing drastic changes due to tightening family budgets and are feeling more isolated and uncertain. Our pensioners and those living with a disability went from surviving to only having one meal a day.

The fact is that every single one of us sits in this chamber and we do our very best to bring forward the voices of those in our community who are not always in a position to bring these issues. I just wanted to highlight that I am sure none of us, none of us, are immune to constituents who reached out to us, who continue to reach out to us, talking about the increasing challenges that they face because of the increases in the cost of living.

The sad reality is that we all know the worst is yet to come and whilst I acknowledge the establishment of the select committee today and the fairly short turnaround time, I absolutely want to assure that that select committee is going to look thoroughly into these very important issues that matter to so many Canberrans. We, all of us in this place, cannot sit here in all good conscience while we know that there is one in 10 Canberrans who are living in poverty, including over 9,000 children. That is a privilege that we have in this place. I thank all my colleagues, despite some of the differences in the debate, for engaging in this important debate. I look forward to the findings and the final report of the select committee when it reports back in May. Thank you.

Question put:

That the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

ACT Heritage Council—independent review

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.59): I move:

That the full report from the review of the Heritage Council, including recommendations, be tabled in the Assembly, pursuant to standing order 213A, as referred to in Minister Vassarotti's statement on 29 November 2022.

I rise to speak on this motion today because back in August last year we saw the minister take an extraordinary step in suspending the entire ACT Heritage Council. This is the best part of six months ago. At the time, the minister cited deep concern about how the council had been working with government staff, and the Nous Group was commissioned to review the council and report back with recommendations by September.

During annual reports hearings in November, I questioned the minister about the review and after a bit of back and forth she stated she would release the findings of the review but failed to commit to releasing the report in full. In fact, in other hearings when I asked the minister about the release of the report, she stated words—I do not have the exact words with me but to the effect that she would release the report, depending on what is in it—depending on what was in the report. Sure enough, Madam Speaker, in late November the minister tabled an executive summary of the Nous Group report and described how she had lost confidence in the ACT Heritage Council.

Under standing order 213, I then moved a motion that the document be tabled in full; a motion that was voted down by Labor and the Greens. Subsequently, under standing order 213A, I moved another motion that we see today, seeking the Assembly to order the document to be tabled in the Assembly. That is where we are today—a bit of background. And today we are asking for that report.

It is no secret that the ACT Heritage Council had not been working effectively for many years. People were getting very tardy advice from the Heritage Council and they deserved to know what was going on. What does it say about transparency and integrity when the minister is willing to take that extraordinary step to sack all the members of the Heritage Council but is not willing to release the report that explains to Canberrans why that step was taken?

At its core, heritage belongs to the people. Residents and stakeholders deserve to know the truth about what has been going on within the ACT Heritage Council. We know that, generally speaking, this Labor-Greens government likes to operate under the cover of secrecy, but residents do have the right to know why this body has continuously failed to deliver on its responsibility to the point where the minister has sacked the entire council.

The minister has confirmed she will be undertaking another review into the ACT's heritage arrangements. Will that one be hidden away too? If this Labor-Greens government—not just the minister, but the government as a whole—is serious about being transparent with Canberrans and improving the ACT's heritage arrangement, she could release the Nous Group review in its entirety.

I understand the minister has an amendment to my motion and I will speak more about that when closing. Generally, the government have declined to answer questions about the Heritage Council. Previous ministers have said that the council are an independent statutory body and are responsible for a range of provisions under the Heritage Act. Yes, they are an independent statutory body, but—and we have seen this in other instances—the government have a role to play here. The government have a role to play in ensuring residents of the ACT know and understand how money is being spent, how decisions are made and that the government is accountable to the people of the ACT. The government, when they take such drastic action such as sacking the entire Heritage Council, should be able to explain that to the people of the ACT.

I note according to the ACT government website and the EPSDD, the ACT Heritage Council comprises, according to this information printed out today, nine members appointed by the minister and two ex officio members: the Chief Planning Executive and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna. Presumably these two government ex officio members have not been sacked from their actual positions, only from the ACT Heritage Council. But it brings into question, as we have seen in other areas with this government, the effectiveness of these boards and committees and councils appointed by the ACT government—nine members appointed by the minister.

Yet for years we have seen problems in this area—for years. Back, I think, at least as far as 2017, I have raised questions about the ACT Heritage Council and the government have basically come back with a “nothing to see here”. Yet nearly six months ago in August last year, we had this extraordinary sacking of the entire ACT Heritage Council. A decision that this government is trying to keep clouded in secrecy, trying to keep away from the sunlight if you will, of public scrutiny and using every power at their disposal to keep this information secret.

I have asked in many different ways for the release of this report. As the minister's amendment alludes to, I have put in an FOI on the matter as well, on 13 December—13 December—that is the best part of two months ago, yet I still do not have a decision. I still do not have a decision. We have spoken in this place many times about how poorly the FOI process works.

I had a motion under standing order 213 last year; we have put in an FOI that we still do not have a decision for; and I have a motion today under standing order 213A, which apparently is going to also be blocked by this secretive, opaque, undemocratically representative, if you like—I guess that is not the right term—but unwilling to explain their reasons to the public, who deserve to know what is going on here. They deserve to know why this extraordinary step of sacking the entire ACT Heritage Council has been taken and if it makes perfect sense. And maybe it does, maybe it does, because as I have said, I raised questions about this since at least 2017. Maybe it is completely logical and maybe the whole ACT public would agree. So why not give them that opportunity? Why not give them the respect that they can make that decision for themselves as to whether this was a justifiable decision? I expect it probably is a justifiable decision. So why not? Why not lift that veil of secrecy over this decision and let us make that judgement for ourselves? I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (12.07): I move the amendment that has been circulated in my name:

Omit all text after “recommendations”, substitute:

“as released on the Disclosure log following the process currently underway under the *Freedom of Information Act 2016* that is considering any issues to protect public interests, be tabled in the Assembly after this process is completed.”.

I understand the public interest in the work that has occurred to address the issues that have arisen in the Heritage Council over the course of 2022. I have sought to be open and transparent. As you will be aware, Ms Lawder, I have briefed the relevant Assembly committee, answered questions in Estimates and arranged for a personal briefing for you from the director of staff, which I understand will occur on 22 February.

I have aimed to keep the Assembly and the community informed about heritage in the ACT. As Canberra continues to grow, the community and the government, now more than ever, require well-functioning heritage arrangements to ensure that the ACT's natural, cultural and First Nations heritage are recognised and conserved for now and for future generations.

The public release of the full Nous Group review into the ACT Heritage Council is currently the subject of a freedom of information request with the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. As I have previously noted, I released the summary report on the request of members from the council but also based on an assessment of what was in the public interest. I look forward to this

review of what is and is not considered in the public interest and will release this information publicly after the process has been undertaken. I feel it is utterly reasonable to wait until this FOI process is complete until I release further details.

As previously noted, I am very conscious of the potential reputational damage to individual members of the council in relation to this issue. While it was absolutely in the public interest to release the high level findings, I do not believe that it is appropriate to release the full report, particularly given that it might identify individuals and breach privacy. Releasing this information could cause unwarranted damage for the reputation and the careers of former council members, as well as heritage staff. I again wish to acknowledge the work of the previous Heritage Council, who have put themselves forward as heritage professionals committed to protecting the ACT's heritage. It is a difficult job and was particularly difficult over the period.

I can provide the Assembly with the following updates. The interim council is currently going through a recruitment process. Applications have been publicly sought and the selection process is currently underway. I hope to receive member recommendations shortly and then we will consult with cabinet colleagues and the standing committee to finalise these appointments. A comprehensive review of the ACT's heritage arrangements will be well underway by March. I intend to provide further information to the Assembly and the public about what we have learned from this review and the government's future plans as this process unfolds.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (12.11): To the amendment and to close. Thank you, Ms Vassarotti, for your amendment and your information today.

I reiterate that I feel the release of the document in full would be in the public interest, not sanitised, secretive, selective information. Ms Vassarotti has mentioned that she is concerned, and rightly so, about the potential for unwarranted damage to the former members of the ACT Heritage Council. I absolutely appreciate that. But can I say, surely, surely at the moment, they have been sacked. They have been dumped. They have been completely rubbished by this government. And without the information to back that up, I reckon their reputation is pretty much trashed right now. How would you feel if this was you and everyone you knew, who knew you were on the Heritage Council, knows you have been sacked. No further information. I reckon that is what does the damage. That is the reputational harm. The secrecy and the selective information rather than perhaps giving people the opportunity to talk about the reason for it. How much more damage can there be than people knowing you have been absolutely sacked? They have lost the trust and support of the government completely. Every single member, every single member. Yet this government continues to apply that secrecy and lack of transparency.

One of the most interesting parts to this is the FOI request. I will reiterate; 13 December, about two months ago, I put in an FOI request. There is still no decision. When will the decision be, let alone getting the information? How long will it be? How long will it take? Is it on the never-never, like many things with this government? How convenient that it has not been decided before today's motion, which was put on the notice paper back in the November sittings when my request for the release of the document under standing order 213 was voted down by all of the

Labor-Greens members in this place. One of the really interesting points here is that standing order 213A—

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Lawder, time for Assembly business has expired but I will call Mr Gentleman.

Motion (by **Mr Gentleman**) agreed to, with the concurrence of an absolute majority:

That so much of the standing order be suspended as would prevent the Assembly completing its consideration of notice No. 2, Assembly business.

MS LAWDER: As I was saying, standing order 213A was introduced by the Greens, by the Greens, to allow for greater scrutiny and transparency. What a turn up for the books this is. Who would have thought? The Greens, the great advocates for transparency and open government are now denying the release of information using the very standing order they wanted in our standing orders. Yet they are using every tool at their disposal to prevent the release of that document.

I am trying to use every tool at my disposal to get that document. That is why we have the use of standing order 213, now the use of standing order 213A and the FOI. And still, the best part of six months after the sacking of the entire ACT Heritage Council, I still have no answers. The public still have no answers. Because this government is doing their best to deny it, using every tool they can, every power they have, to stop the people of the ACT getting access to this information. I feel it is enormously disappointing. Enormously disappointing for everyone. And yet we have learned not to be surprised by this. So we will not be supporting Ms Vassarotti's amendment.

I feel so disappointed that this government is denying that release of information. They are denying the use of standing order 213A, which the Greens themselves had inserted into our standing orders. It is shameful. It is shameful, Madam Speaker. I hope that they are feeling a bit of disquiet on the inside, even though we know they will vote with the government and they will vote to deny access to openness, transparency and the sharing of information, which we feel the ACT residents should be entitled to.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Sitting suspended from 12.17 to 2.00 pm.

Questions without notice

Canberra Institute of Technology—chief executive officer

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Skills. Minister, is the stood-down CEO of CIT, Leanne Cover, still being paid her salary?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I will take that question on notice. Employment matters are a matter for CIT.

MS LEE: Minister, why is it that you cannot answer this question, given that you are the responsible minister?

MR STEEL: I have taken the question on notice.

MR CAIN: Minister, are Canberra's taxpayers footing the bill for the acting CIT CEO's travel from her residence in Melbourne?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. I am advised by CIT that, under Remuneration Tribunal determination 4 of 2022—full-time statutory office holders, Ms Robertson, who is the acting CEO of CIT is entitled to a relocation allowance of up to \$55,000, and that allowance is paid on a reimbursement basis.

Minister for Mental Health—conduct

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. Minister, the inquiry into your office identified several factors that had a detrimental impact on workers and noted that workplace conflict had forced staff to leave. Consultants found that former staff of your office continued to be disparaged after leaving and branded as disloyal, or said to have been fired despite voluntarily resigning.

As quoted in the *Canberra Times*, you said that staff had resigned from their roles “for reasons including moving overseas, moving interstate and other career opportunities”. Former staff, however, told the consultants that they had left because of internal conflict. Minister, which is correct: your explanation of why your staff left you or their explanation?

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you for the question. There have been a number of staff who have left my office for a range of different reasons. I would also like to say from the outset that what we all want is healthy and safe workplaces where people feel supported to do the best work they can. The kind of people who come to work in an office such as a government minister's office are highly skilled professionals who are passionate about progressing good policy outcomes, and that is the kind of work they want to do. It is certainly the kind of workplace that I was trying to achieve and wanted to be able to—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, I wish to raise a point of order. The question was quite specific. Is the truth that the staff left because of internal conflict, as they are saying, or because of the other reasons, as the minister is saying. Which is the truth? That is what we are asking for.

Mr Rattenbury: Madam Speaker, on the point of order I seek your advice. What we have seen from the Liberal Party, on Tuesday and immediately again today, is the use of points of order to hector the minister. She should be allowed to develop a point of argument for the point of answering the question without getting interrupted 20 or 30 seconds in, just because Mr Hanson or Ms Lee do not like the way she is answering the question. I seek your guidance on how the minister gets a chance to answer the question properly.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The minister's first response was "a range of reasons" and then went on to how she expects her staff to behave, and she had some time left to go into further detail. Minister, you have time left.

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you. I would like to thank the current and former staff members who took the time to participate in that review, and I would also like to say that I am very sorry that not all of the staff members have had the experience they wanted—(*Time expired.*)

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, how did giving the CPSU open access to your office prove detrimental to workplace communications in your office, as reported by the consultants?

MS DAVIDSON: Could Mrs Kikkert please repeat the first part of the question?

MRS KIKKERT: How did giving CPSU open access to your office prove detrimental to workplace communications in your office as reported by the consultants?

MS DAVIDSON: I think that would be a matter that goes to how individual people interacted, and I do not think it would be appropriate to discuss that in chamber.

MR COCKS: Minister, was it you or one of your staff who branded a former employee "disloyal" and claimed that someone had been fired when they had actually resigned?

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you for the question. That is not something that I—the people who come to work in an office such as a minister's office are people who are—

Ms Lawder: Madam Speaker, I wish to raise a point of order. Standing order 118 says the answer to a question should be:

"... concise and directly relevant to the subject matter ..."

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Ms Lawder. I take your point; if you jump in within seconds of the answer being given, there is limited time to provide the answer. The question was quite direct, Ms Davidson, so to the question.

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you. As I was just starting to say, the people who have come to work in my office over the period of the past two years have been people who are intensely loyal to being able to progress good policy outcomes for the people in the community we are trying to help, and I do not appreciate people insinuating that there would be any such disloyalty.

Housing affordability—rental relief fund

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Attorney-General. Minister, according to the most recent census data more than 20 per cent of the homes in my electorate of Brindabella are lived in by people who rent. In fact there are more renters in Brindabella than

there are people who gave their first preference votes to any one of their representatives in this place. Rents are going up and they are staying up. That is putting huge pressure on the household budgets of all renters in Canberra. What support does the ACT government provide to those struggling to pay their rent?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Mr Davis for the question. I think there are a number of answers to that question. In part, the government is undertaking a number of legislative reforms in order to ensure the tenants will feel more secure in their property, in their home. Members will know of course we have introduced a bill that includes the removal of no-cause evictions. That is based on the idea that many tenants have expressed to government they feel they cannot assert their rights under the Residential Tenancies Act for fear of what is colloquially known as a 'retaliatory eviction'. I think that is a really important part of tenant security. The other side of it though is, as Mr Davis speaks to, the financial pressure that some tenants are finding. I was very pleased that as part of the mid-year budget the government has confirmed the re-establishment, and I guess re-imagining, of the rental relief fund that was put in place during COVID. Members will recall the details of the provision during COVID. It has been updated based on the experience and the lessons we have learned from that period. There is now a payment available, a support available, to tenants who are struggling to meet their tenancy bills of up to \$2,500. It is to enable them to cover some of their rental shortfall and help them get back on their feet or get over some financial gaps that they are experiencing. I think this program worked very well as part of the COVID response and that is why we have brought it back to assist those that are finding it difficult to pay.

MR DAVIS: Minister, who is eligible for this new rent relief fund and how can they access payments?

MR RATTENBURY: It is designed for those who are struggling to meet their rental payments and they can access it through a third party provider. This is an approach we used during the pandemic. In that case it was Care Financial Services. We found that worked very effectively because Care also, of course as members will know, provide financial counselling. So people who were applying for the support payments were actually often also engaging with Care in that broader financial counselling space. The feedback was those seeking the support found this extremely beneficial because they had that broader support spectrum.

MR PARTON: Minister, are you expecting demand for this fund to increase dramatically if indeed the number of landlords who say they will sell as a consequence of the residential tenancies changes do so?

MR RATTENBURY: No, Madam Speaker.

Health—cancer research centre

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, an important milestone was reached with the unveiling of designs for the new cancer research centre. Can you tell the Assembly about the plans for the centre?

Mr Cain: That's deep, very deep.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Cain! Enough, Mr Cain and members. Ms Stephen-Smith.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. He is right: last week I unveiled the fit-out designs for a more than \$7 million cancer research centre at the Canberra Region Cancer Centre—an ACT government commitment that we took to the last election and that we are delivering on. It was great to unveil these designs, ahead of World Cancer Day on 4 February, to demonstrate the ACT government's ongoing commitment to enhancing cancer treatment and care for ACT residents and those in the surrounding region.

The centre is part of the ACT's multibillion-dollar infrastructure investment program and record health infrastructure investments that we have made over recent years and continue to make. The cancer research centre is another example of the modern healthcare facilities we are designing, building and integrating into our health system and our commitment to deliver person-centred care for generations of Canberrans.

What is really great about this state-of-the-art centre is that it will create a more holistic approach to cancer care. It will increase access to new clinical trials, innovation and supportive therapies. It will also be co-located with a new cancer wellness centre. It is situated on level 3 of the Canberra Region Cancer Centre, on the Canberra Hospital campus.

It is an innovative hub that will provide the right environment for our clinicians, research academics, industry and health professionals to work together with consumers to deliver better care, really taking that innovation from the lab to the bedside. It will have a research laboratory integrated into the clinic space and will become a source of incredible information that will help to progress evidence-based cancer research in the ACT and potentially world-leading innovation. The integration of the cancer research centre and the cancer wellness centre will mean that our Canberra Region Cancer Centre is a truly comprehensive care centre.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what will the new cancer research centre mean for Canberrans and our health workers into the future?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary question. We all know that, for patients and their families who are going through treatment and medication pathways to reduce the impact and, at best, eliminate the insidious condition that is cancer, it is an incredibly difficult pathway and can be really quite debilitating. Knowing that there is a place in which clinicians and researchers are dedicated to finding out more and giving them the very best treatment that they possibly can supports patients and their families to have a bit more peace of mind as they travel this very difficult journey.

The cancer research centre will provide a focus for cancer research being conducted across Canberra Health Services, bringing together researchers, clinicians and patients in the same space. It will facilitate all kinds of research, ranging from biomedical research to nursing research and implementation science. Cancer treatments are often combined with research, and this is one of the ways that the Canberra Region Cancer

Centre will continue to improve quality and knowledge and instil a culture of inquiry and enthusiasm in the staff.

The cancer ambulatory support division has developed a research strategic plan focused on implementing the Canberra Health Services research strategy, which was released in early 2022, as it relates to cancer, blood disorders, rheumatology and immunology. Proudly, our Canberra clinicians and scientists have already contributed to the international body of knowledge. A new cancer research centre will build on this. Translational research projects integrating laboratory research and clinical research will be a focus of the cancer research centre. A great example of ongoing translational research that will be further supported is the breast biomarker study, looking at early breast cancer being treated with neoadjuvant chemotherapy that will further support better outcomes for patients in the ACT and the surrounding region.

DR PATERSON: Minister, the new cancer research centre will be important to enhancing research and innovation in the ACT. Can you please update the Assembly on the ACT government's plan to continue enhancing health research and innovation in the territory?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. Yes, she is right: in July 2022 the ACT Health Directorate launched Better together: A strategic plan for research in the ACT health system 2022-2030, after much consultation and collaboration. The strategy outlines three key strategic objectives. The first is that the ACT health system becomes a learning health system, building access to evidence while capturing information about the consumer experience, to improve health outcomes.

The second objective is to build the capacity to undertake research in the health system, which will require both the development and support of staff and stakeholders, including consumers, to meet the future healthcare needs of the ACT and surrounding region. The ACT government has allocated a million dollars through the 2022-23 Research and Innovation Fund Fellowship Program to support early to mid-career researchers in the ACT. Applications for the fund close on 17 February. I really look forward to seeing how our early career researchers are going to be supported by this investment.

The third objective is that the ACT research infrastructure supports high value research to enable that research to occur, to target strategically important projects and to support dedicated staff time for research. The ACT government is strongly supportive of research and innovation across the health system—for example, through the ACT Health vaccination study program, building the capability of students; the Canberra Health Annual Research Meeting, better known as CHARM; and the appointment of joint positions across our specialties and professions between health services and our university partners. All this is about building a learning health system, a stronger health system for Canberrans and those in the surrounding region.

Transport Canberra—bus timetables

MR MILLIGAN: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Transport. On Monday, 30 January, many primary and secondary students at Harrison School

were left stranded after their regular bus did not show up. There was no consultation with the school to inform parents of this bus change, nor was there information sent out by the government letting parents know before the school term began—just a quietly released timetable change in December of last year.

There is only one school bus route which services Harrison School, route 1003, but this route now completely misses Gungahlin. Minister, why was the bus route through the Gungahlin town centre, specifically Anthony Rolfe Avenue to Harrison Primary School, cancelled?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question, and I am happy to come back to the Assembly with some detail about what communications were made with the Harrison School community, but of course there were quite extensive public communications about the changes to the bus timetable, and as I committed to, in October, last year to the Assembly, we did release the timetable before the end of term 4 so that school communities could get their head around what changes were being made from term 1, 2023.

A media release was put out by me; a media release was put out by Transport Canberra; and indeed, there were direct communications with schools, and I am happy to come back and provide some more information about the specific communications that were provided to the Harrison School.

In relation to the specific bus network change, we are always interested to hear from school communities about what improvements could be made to the timetable and network. We make those usually on an annual basis. We have made many tweaks to support school communities in the network for the start of this term and will continue to—through a process of continuous improvement—make further tweaks to the network based on that feedback.

I am happy to receive that information and the issues that they have had from Mr Milligan and investigate further.

MR MILLIGAN: If there has been no direct consultation by the government with the parents of the children who attend this school, can you please provide an explanation as to why?

MR STEEL: Of course, we do consult with schools about issues that are coming up with the timetable, and if there are issues that being raised with the timetable and network changes then we will consider those and look to make improvements in future timetables and networks, Madam Speaker.

If Mr Milligan wants to provide some further information about what those specific concerns are, I am happy to have a look at them in conjunction with Transport Canberra.

MR PARTON: Minister, would you consider reinstating or rerouting the new bus route 1003 to take in the school?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. We will, of course, as I said, look at what improvements we can make based on how we can serve the greatest number of people possible. Maybe people, of course—most students, in fact, use the regular route bus network and light rail to access schools, but there are, of course, school special services, and tweaks were made during the work that has been done on the term 1 network.

I am happy to have a look at that if there have been concerns raised, but I need to be made aware of those concerns first before we have a look into it. I am happy to receive further detail from the member.

Schools—staffing

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, the Australian Education Union recently released a report on the stressors faced by school principals. It talks of “the crushing workload” shouldered by principals, and highlights again that the directorate “lacks the necessary resources to meet the demands of schools.” The union’s position is: “We cannot continue to ignore such blatant exploitation of our school leaders.”

Minister, why are not sufficient administrative supports or resources available to our school leaders, either within schools or within the directorate?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. Of course, we are working very closely with the Australian Education Union, with their members and with the school principal groups who participated in that workshop to develop that report. The Education Directorate has noted that discussion paper and the feedback and the recommendations in it.

Of course, the wellbeing of school principals is a top priority for the Education Directorate and this government. We are actively working with the Education Union, through our negotiations but also through the Teacher Workforce Taskforce, to understand and to properly implement processes that will alleviate some of the concerns that the principals have raised both through this workshop and paper and also through negotiations and as part of the task force.

MR HANSON: Minister, when will what the union describes as “the crushing workload and blatant exploitation of school leaders” stop?

MS BERRY: These are very much the issues that we are in active conversation with the Australian Education Union and school principals on, to overcome. We know that teachers, school principals and school staff did a lot of the heavy lifting for our community during COVID and, even before COVID, during the bushfires. That has exacerbated the issues surrounding the workload and the workforce crisis within our schools. I think we are all in agreement that that is the case and that it is an issue that is facing the country.

But here in the ACT we were the first to set up a taskforce with the Education Union to understand some of the complex issues that surround those workload issues. We particularly set up a recruitment program to actively recruit new permanent

teachers and move casual teachers to more permanent positions in our public schools. We have been, as I said, actively working and we continue to work with the Education Union through the task force issues that have been raised so that we can overcome some of the issues here for the ACT, noting that, in the federal space, we are also working with the federal minister, Minister Clare, to understand recruitment across the system and how we can improve that across our schools as well.

ACT Policing—resourcing

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Police. Minister, the Chief Police Officer recently said:

The population of the territory has risen 19 per cent in the past 10 years while police numbers have fallen by 0.7 per cent in raw terms ...

So we have actually gone backwards. He also said:

At the moment, demand [for police services] is exceeding supply and we need to balance that up.

Minister, why do you continue to say that you have increased police numbers and are providing sufficient resources when that is plainly and provably false?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Hanson for the question and, of course, for his support for police in the ACT—as with my support for police in the ACT.

The ACT government has injected record funding into ACT Policing over the years. The ACT Policing's workforce continues to grow and welcome new members, with 42 recruits joining in the last year. The deployment of these new recruits is delivering on our commitment to grow police numbers across Canberra. As the opposition well knows, police numbers in the ACT cannot be readily compared to other jurisdictions, which of course cover much wider geographical areas.

I do understand the comments from the Chief Police Officer and, as he said in the public, he is working with the government on future funding for police through the budget process.

MR HANSON: Minister, what is the effect of low police numbers on the mental health of our frontline officers?

MR GENTLEMAN: I do appreciate the pressures on ACT Policing, of course. Having done shift work for 11 years in a similar role, I can attest to the pressures on police when doing particular shifts, and I thank them for the extra work that they have been putting in, particularly over the last couple of years with COVID.

We have an employee assistance program for them and we have outside providers to assist them in their time of need and when needed. We will support them in that sense at the same time as supporting them with more resources into the future.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, why has the size of our police force decreased over the past 10 years?

MR GENTLEMAN: That is a matter for conjecture. We always have this debate—and we have it again this afternoon. As I have just put forward, we have more police coming into the service—we had 42 come in last year—and we will continue to do that. Of course, the challenge is: will the Canberra Liberals support that in the budget process or will they vote against it again next time?

Drugs—roadside testing

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Police. Minister, last year the ACT had the highest death toll on our roads for more than a decade. Information provided by the Chief Police Officer and published in the *Canberra Times* showed that in those fatal car incidents 70 per cent of the drivers had drugs in their system, including cannabis, meth or both. The CPO described 2022 as a horror year. Minister, how can the AFP possibly police our roads for drug drivers effectively when we have fewer officers now than ten years ago?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. Of course, we are looking at drug driving on the roads. ACT policing have taken a strong operation stance with Operation TORIC looking at dangerous driving on our roads. They have had an incredible success with that, so I support them in their operations and in the way they can move staff around to provide the best safety options for the ACT. We will continue to support them into the future.

MR HANSON: Minister, how will the police cope with drug driving when hard drugs such as meth and heroin are decriminalised?

MR GENTLEMAN: They will do it in the way they are doing a fine job at the moment. They will move their resources around where they see the need and provide those operational responses where those needs arise over time. When we see need for police in certain areas of operation, ACT Policing are flexible enough to be able to move resources around and address those concerns. As I have said, they have had incredible success in Operation TORIC. I wish them all the best in the future, and we will continue to support them.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what are you doing to make sure drug drivers do not make 2023 another horror year on Canberra roads?

MR GENTLEMAN: I will be doing that by supporting ACT Policing and continuing to ensure we have the best support for them. When you look at the *RoGS* those figures start to speak for themselves. If you look at the results in certain crime categories, ACT Policing has done an incredible job. In fact, they lead the country in some of those aspects, so they certainly have this government's support. I would hope that the opposition support them too.

Education—public schools

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, with school returning last week what is the ACT government doing to ensure every public school is a great school?

MS BERRY: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. Madam Speaker, over 51,000 students headed back to the classroom across the ACT's 90 public schools last week. On the first day of school I was at Evelyn Scott senior campus to welcome new students and celebrate the completion of this \$70 million school. Some of the students gave great feedback about the state-of-the-art facilities at the school as did the teachers, the school principal and parents. The school of course exemplifies the ACT government's commitment to sustainability in public school infrastructure design and this school won the ACT Master Builders Association 2022 Sustainable Commercial Project award. Last week, I also announced over \$10 million to replace the rooves at Dickson College as well as at both campuses of Melba Copland Secondary School. This funding is in addition to the \$99 million that the government has invested in public school infrastructure upgrades. Every public school is a great school but every individual school is a great school for the students and families who participate. So over their summer holidays there were 63 public schools who benefitted from \$17 million in capital upgrades as well as repair and maintenance work to ensure our public schools are great places to learn and to work.

DR PATERSON: Minister, what supports does the ACT government provide to ensure every student can access a quality education, regardless of their family circumstances?

MS BERRY: Members will recall that in 2016 ACT Labor made the commitment to provide free chrome books to senior secondary students. Since 2018 we have been providing free chrome books to all students in year 11 to 12. We were the first and the only Australian jurisdiction to do so. In 2023, 4,250 free chrome books have been handed out to secondary students across the ACT. This is a nation-leading initiative and it meant the ACT was uniquely well placed to ensure that education could continue as the impacts of COVID-19 and the pandemic were felt. The ACT is also the most affordable jurisdiction in Australia to put a child through public education. But we know there is always more we can do to ensure that every child has equal access to great educational opportunities and the life changes that flow from it. ACT Labor also committed to establishing the Future of Education Equity Fund to help low income families cover the costs of education expenses such as school uniforms, school excursions, sport equipment and other activities. This has been delivered too with the applications for the equity fund being available from this month. Eligible families can access payments of \$400 for pre-school students, \$500 for primary school students as well as \$740 for high school and college students.

MS ORR: Minister, how is the ACT government ensuring our public education system can continue to cater for our expanding city?

MS BERRY: The ACT public education system is one of the fastest growing in the country. The ACT government has committed over \$490 million to building and upgrading public schools. We have built six public schools over the past decade to cater for our growing population. In addition to the opening of Evelyn Scott School senior campus this year, which is our first high school in the Molonglo Valley, we are currently building new schools in Kenny, Taylor, Strathnairn and Whitlam. New high schools in Kenny and Taylor will be open in 2024 to cater for 800 students. This will deliver vital public infrastructure to one of Australia's fastest growing regions. School

expansions are also being planned at Majura Primary and Margaret Hendry schools. Modernisation projects are being planned for Garran Primary and Narrabundah College. It is an exciting time to be part of our ACT public schools as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of our progressive public education system this year.

Waste—ACT Materials Recovery Facility

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for City Services. I refer to the fire that broke out at the ACT's Materials Recovery Facility on 26 December. Minister, has all of the stockpiled waste that was at this facility been sent to landfill and, if so, what was the additional dollar cost for this transfer?

MR STEEL: To date, no stockpiled materials have been sent to landfill. We have been working incredibly hard to make sure that we have continuity of recycling as far as we can, given the disaster that occurred on 26 December last year. I want to put on record my thanks to NOWaste staff, Re.Group staff and emergency services staff in particular for their work in controlling the fire and putting in place the arrangements to ensure that we can continue to recycle materials.

The stockpile peaked at 2,200 tonnes, but we have since been able, through extra trucking and transport up to materials recovery facilities interstate, to reduce that to 1,783 tonnes. That is expected to be cleared by late March at this point in time, with all those materials hopefully going on to recycling. However, they have been exposed to weather. Until we get to the bottom of the pile and are able to assess any spoilage of those materials we will not know for some time yet.

MS LAWDER: Regarding the recyclables trucked to other recycling centres, has there been a cost to the ACT taxpayer and, if so, how much?

MR STEEL: Yes, there will be additional costs as a result of paying for increased gate fees at materials recovery facilities interstate. At this stage we are using three from Sydney and one materials recycling facility in Victoria, which have the capacity to take the ACT's co-mingled recycling for processing. We continue to work through the insurance claim as well. At this stage I cannot provide an update in relation to the insurance claim. That may provide some resources to offset any increased cost, including not necessarily just the damage to the building but also business continuity. That is still under assessment.

MR COCKS: Minister, how has this fire impacted the planning of the new recycling facility?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question and his interest in our government's commitment, together with the federal government, to build a new materials recovery facility. We had already planned to build a new, modern facility for the ACT and the surrounding region and had already funded that. What we are assessing now is what we can do to help expedite that as much as we can. That work is still underway.

Planning—parking

MR CAIN: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, I refer to media reports on 6 February—and today, even,

in the *Canberra Times*—that new developments in the future would have fewer car parks in apartment complexes. Minister, when do you anticipate that planning changes allowing for fewer carparks will be implemented?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Cain for the question. We are going through quite an exercise at the moment with the Territory Plan, of course, and the district strategies with the Canberra community, and we want to hear their say and what they would like to see for the future. So, transport is a key consideration in the draft district strategies, and the way people get around Canberra is addressed by one of the five big drivers.

The ACT government is working to reduce the dependence on cars and to grow public and active transport works and networks in all corners of the territory, so we will always invest in our road network, of course, and we will always need some parking as we move forward in the residential area too.

It is not an overnight transformation, and the draft strategies incorporate, of course, those big, long-term projects like the proposed light rail extensions to Woden, Tuggeranong and Belconnen—that we support, of course, Madam Speaker—and the work is the cornerstone of the government's preparation for Canberra's future, but we must think about how Canberrans will live in that future.

So, the draft new Territory Plan—in this plan, the current parking requirements have generally been maintained but have been simplified and consolidated as well, so new provisions have been introduced to ensure the use of electric vehicles is encouraged, and new multiunit housing developments will be required to provide at least—

Mr Cain: A point of order, Madam Speaker. The question was when does the minister anticipate these changes for fewer car parks will be implemented. It is a simple question.

MADAM SPEAKER: And he is talking about the planning arrangements that are in place to consider that. Mr Gentleman, in your 20 seconds.

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, exactly, Madam Speaker, and I was talking about the work that we are going through now, and, of course, it has a timeline associated with it. I ask Mr Cain to go and have a look at the Territory Plan, Madam Speaker, and the district strategies. Of course, they have a timeline. But what we are asking Canberrans to do right now, Madam Speaker, is to have their comment on Your Say.

MR CAIN: Minister, will this lead to more on-street parking, as has happened in Molonglo and Lawson—in my electorate—where there are insufficient car parks?

MR GENTLEMAN: I do not think so, Madam Speaker.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what impact would such changes to fewer car parks have on people such as tradespeople, disability support workers, cleaners, couriers, delivery drivers and many others who have to travel widely throughout the day?

MR GENTLEMAN: Of course, the discussion that we have been having with the public in this particular genre is around residential parking, but of course tradespeople

need parking in the areas that they go to do their particular work; delivery drivers—as Ms Lawder has explained, too—need parking for the places that they go to.

We have a loading zone parking allowance, Madam Speaker, in every jurisdiction. That is run, of course, by TCCS and the minister, but I have been involved with it in the past so I understand how it does work, and of course, we do need the opportunity for those tradespeople to be able to live in those areas, so I would imagine that that will stay in place.

Planning—proposed governance arrangements

MS CLAY: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Planning. Minister, I lodged question 7 on the Planning Bill, which specifically asked what was the structural relationship between the Chief Planner, the Territory Planning Authority, EPSDD, the Director-General of EPSDD and the referral entities, including the Heritage Council.

You replied, and I quote, “Administrative support is provided to the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, the ACT Heritage Council and the NCDRP by staff employed by EPSDD, not the Planning and Land Authority.” You further said that “Referral entities do not have any structural relationship with the Territory Planning Authority or Chief Planner in current legislation or the bill.”

But, minister, section 17 of the Heritage Act makes the Chief Planner a member of the Heritage Council. This is quite a significant structural relationship. Would you like to correct the record?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Clay for the question. Of course, the Chief Planner is appointed by the Heritage Council under the Heritage Act, not the Planning Act, Madam Speaker. That answer that I provided on the QoN was correct. The answer to the question on notice is correct, but I am happy to provide some further context which might assist.

The Chief Planner and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna are ex officio members of the Heritage Council; the answer provided said that.

The referral entities, such as the Heritage Council, do not have a structural relationship with the Territory Planning Authority or the Chief Planner in current legislation or the bill. That is correct.

The Chief Planner is appointed to the Heritage Council directly by the Heritage Act 2004, not the Planning Act. I understand the Chief Planner’s role on the Heritage Council is advisory only. I also believe the Chief Planner has no decision making powers on the Heritage Council, and the Heritage Act provides that the Chief Planner is not eligible to vote on any questions being decided by the council.

So, I am unable to answer any question in regard to the operation or decisions of the Heritage Council, Madam Speaker, as we do not have oversight over those matters.

MS CLAY: Does the Chief Planner have a structural relationship with the Heritage Council?

MR GENTLEMAN: I think I made that pretty clear in my answer, Madam Speaker.

MR CAIN: Minister, why did you rule out governance as a consideration during the planning review, and yet much of the changes, particularly through the bill, involve the governance of the planning regime?

Dr Paterson: Point of order, Madam Speaker. That question I do not think was relevant to the original question.

MR GENTLEMAN: I might ask Mr Cain just to repeat the question so that I have it right, because I am not sure how it is relevant to the heritage appointments, but I am happy to listen to the question again.

MR CAIN: Minister, during the planning review you ruled out governance as an item of consultation during this planning review, and yet, as Ms Clay has touched on, we have a planning regime in draft form with senior roles for bureaucrats and significantly impacting the governance of the planning regime.

MR GENTLEMAN: The arrangements that I have just spoken about within the Heritage Act are those within the Heritage Act, not the planning changes that we are proposing in the changes to the Territory Plan and the other work that we are doing. There are good governance arrangements already, and I refer Mr Cain to the evidence provided to the planning committee.

Kippax Fair—parking

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, I quote from pages 32 and 36 of the Kippax Masterplan, where it states that any redevelopment of existing car parks must “provide replacement public parking” and that “the existing provision of convenient and accessible car parking should be retained as development” occurs.

When your government sold off a public car park with no replacement last year, hundreds of frustrated Kippax users petitioned you to help the developer reopen the car park by resuming public liability insurance before Christmas and/or increasing the capacity of remaining car parks before the end of last month by reconfiguring them, as indicated on page 96 of the master plan. You have failed to fulfil either request.

Minister, how much would it cost the government to temporarily resume public liability insurance on the closed car park, as welcomed by the new owner, and why did you reject this proposal?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question, but I am advised that the ACT Insurance Authority does not provide public liability insurance for non-government entities, like Mrs Kikkert is suggesting.

In relation to what we have done at Kippax to ensure that there is parking, particularly during the time when some blocks are being redeveloped, as in the interim discussion with some of the businesses and Kippax Fair, we have relocated 16 Park and Ride spaces from the Kippax Fair car park to the car park on Moyes Crescent. This allowed for those spaces closer to the shopping centre to be converted to long-stay parking to cater for demand in the group centre car park.

So we have not done nothing; we have responded to that concern by looking at practical ways to provide for parking as well as establishing new Park and Ride facilities on Moyes Crescent to cater for the community.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, do you have any definite plans to reconfigure the remaining car parks or open additional public parking at Kippax before redevelopment of the centre occurs, or are signs in the car park the most that residents can expect from you and your government?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. Of course, we will continue to monitor parking arrangements at Kippax Fair. We have further upgrades there occurring as well, so we will look at future opportunities around parking. As the development occurs, I am sure those parking matters will also be considered.

This original matter was brought to light as a result of a specific block, which is section 53 Holt, which was sold by the Suburban Land Agency. We have responded to that one, and I am sure that we will continue to monitor parking arrangements in Kippax going forward as well as promoting other forms of transport to the centre, including public transport.

MR CAIN: Minister, can you guarantee this Assembly and the public that your government will not sell off any more public car parks at Kippax before replacement public parking is available?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. We already have parking policies in place around replacement car parking. I am sure that it will continue to be considered as development applications are put in. Of course parking matters are considered against the parking code and the Territory Plan, including any changes to the Territory Plan. There are parking arrangements being discussed there that may be implemented in the future. Of course, those will also apply to Kippax in relation to replacement parking and be assessed by the Development Authority, including the opportunity for the community to have their say on those developments.

Government—public holiday policy

MR BRADDOCK: My question is for the Minister for Industrial Relations. Minister, following the federal government's recent support for Australian Public Service employees to be able to work on Australia Day and not be required to observe the national holiday, what steps has the ACT government taken to provide ACT employees the same flexibility?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Braddock for the question. The government is, of course, aware that many of our employees do not wish to celebrate Australia Day.

I also recognise and acknowledge the impact this day has on our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and the community. January 26 is an Australia Day public holiday in the ACT and the applicable Fair Work legislation enterprise agreement sets out the penalty rates and other conditions that apply where an employee works on Australia day, or any other declared public holiday, so in effect the government is bound to follow these provisions. However, as members would be aware, the enterprise arrangements are being discussed with employees and the unions at the moment, and any changes to existing arrangements will be driven by that process.

MR BRADDOCK: To clarify, Minister: will you be seeking, as part of that enterprise bargaining process, to provide that flexibility for ACT employees?

MR GENTLEMAN: That would be a discussion had with our enterprise group and employee groups.

MR DAVIS: Minister, how does the ACT government provide flexibility for public sector employees across the board to observe or not observe holidays significant to them?

MR GENTLEMAN: There is a host of opportunities for people to observe or not observe holidays. There are particular positions where we ask people to work on those public holidays—particularly our frontline responders. In their enterprise agreements, or in their workforce conditions, they are paid the appropriate penalty rates for doing that. I do thank them for doing it. I did it for 11 years, and I understand the pressures it does put on you when you want to observe particular public holidays, particularly with your family. It will be up to our employer and employee groups to work together to see whether there can be even more flexibility around those arrangements.

National Multicultural Festival—25th anniversary

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Minister, what can Canberrans expect from the 25th anniversary of the National Multicultural Festival?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Orr for the question. Canberra is a proudly multicultural and inclusive city. The festival is the embodiment of this where our multicultural communities showcase and share their culture, history and heritage through food, art, music and dance. This summer we have seen the appetite Canberrans have for returning to the events they know and love. The buzz from the community around the festival is at an all-time high ahead of this milestone 25th anniversary event. This year features eight stages across the festival. So no matter when you attend or where you are you will find loads of entertainment, culture, food and fun. Glebe Park is also part of the festival this year. A perfect place to sit and snack on culinary delights, enjoy great cultural entertainment and participate in workshops. It is also where the parade will end on Saturday afternoon. Our sensational headliners this year include Mitch Tambo, Lisa Hunt, Parvyn, Justine Clarke, James Morrison and Jay Laga'aia who will be supported by 30 multicultural showcases. For the first time, the festival will include hands on and free workshops to allow communities to share their cultural heritage through dance, art and heritage. Another first for the anniversary year will be a dedicated a cooking demonstration program at the City Walk stage across all three days. This stage will feature more than 15 community and professional chefs sharing

their stories, techniques and most importantly, recipes. The full program and map are online at multiculturalfestival.com.au. I encourage all Canberrans to plan out their amazing weekend at the festival.

MS ORR: Minister, the last National Multicultural Festival took place in February 2020 in a pre-pandemic world. What changes have been made to ensure a safe and positive festival experience?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. Accessibility, crowd management and ease of movement are key considerations to ensure attendees and participants can access all features of the festival. The layout of this year's festival has been informed by festival and event survey findings and particular surveys about the impact of the pandemic on events as well as surveys from the last time the festival was held, as well as lessons learned from other large scale events like Floriade and Enlighten. Those survey findings identified COVID-19 as a potential barrier to attendance, suggesting increased space would make festival goers more comfortable to attend. They also highlighted potential barriers to attendance could be congestion and crowding, accessibility and conditions such as lack of shade or cover and adequate seating. The community's valuable feedback has directly informed this year's footprint, which is spread out to provide more space for attendees to move around while also providing greater access to amenities like shaded areas and quiet spaces to take a break. Ahead of this year's event we have also worked with specialists in accessibility planning to improve access outcomes throughout the festival footprint and other event design considerations.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what is being done to support city businesses during the National Multicultural Festival next weekend?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary. The National Multicultural Festival team has worked very closely with the City Renewal Authority to engage with city businesses and to seek their feedback on the improved event footprint. Stalls have been re-orientated to increase crowd movement and reduce congestion, increase business visibility and to better connect to Glebe Park.

The City Renewal Authority has developed an online platform to promote offers from city businesses to the 250,000 Canberrans and visitors that are expected to attend the festival, leveraging the greatly increased foot traffic into the city. The CRA directly engaged with businesses to encourage their involvement in the promotion and there are some great offers for festival attendees available through the festival's website. Advice regarding road closures was provided to local businesses in December 2022 and further communication has been provided this week to assist access planning and support business operation throughout the festival build and delivery.

Local businesses are key to our continuing economic recovery. Low cost and free activities like the festival are important ways to attract interstate and international visitation, encouraging locals and visitors to shop, dine and experience the ACT during one of its most vibrant weekends in our annual calendar.

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

Supplementary answer to question without notice Canberra Institute of Technology—chief executive officer

MS LEE: Madam Speaker, I am not sure if this is going to elicit a response, but earlier in question time Mr Cain asked Mr Steel a question about travel and Mr Steel referred in his answer to relocation costs. I just wanted to give the minister an opportunity to answer the question directly, because it was a totally different thing.

MADAM SPEAKER: That can be raised another time. The minister took questions on notice. He can provide it there if he needs to.

Cost of Living Pressures in the ACT—Select Committee Membership

MADAM SPEAKER: Before we move to papers, members, I have been notified in writing of the following nominations for membership of the Select Committee on Cost of Living Pressures in the ACT: Mr Davis, Dr Paterson and Ms Lawder.

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

That the Members so nominated be appointed as members of the Select Committee on Cost of Living Pressures in the ACT.

Papers

Mr Gentleman presented the following papers:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 13—Annual Reports—2020-2021—

Justice and Community Safety Directorate—Corrigendum, dated February 2023.

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to subsection 21(1)—Auditor-General's Report No 9/2022—ACT Emergency Services Agency cleaning services arrangements—Government response, dated February 2023.

Budget 2022-2023—Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 10—

Budget Statement C—ACT Health Directorate | Canberra Health Services | ACT Local Hospital Network—Corrigendum to Canberra Health Services Budget Statement, dated February 2023.

Coroners Act, pursuant to subsection 102(8)—ACT Coroner's Court—Annual report 2021-2022, dated 22 December 2022.

Education and Care Services National Law as applied by the law of the States and Territories—Education and Care Services National Amendment Regulations 2022 (2023 No 2), dated 4 January 2023, together with an explanatory statement.

Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee—Report 5—Inquiry into memorialisation through public commemoration—Government response to recommendation 9—Update about the commissioning of future public artwork, dated February 2023.

Financial Management Act—

Pursuant to section 30E—Half-yearly directorate performance reports—December 2022, for the following:

ACT Health Directorate, dated February 2023.

ACT Local Hospital Network, dated February 2023.

Canberra Health Services, dated 10 February 2023.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, dated February 2023.

Community Services Directorate, dated February 2023.

Education Directorate, dated February 2023.

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, dated February 2023.

Housing ACT, dated February 2023.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate, dated February 2023.

Major Projects Canberra, dated 9 February 2023.

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, dated 9 February 2023.

Transport Canberra Operations, dated February 2023.

Freedom of Information Act, pursuant to section 39—Copies of notices provided to the Ombudsman—Freedom of Information requests—Decisions not made in time—

Community Services Directorate—

FOI-CSD-22/21, dated 18 November 2022.

FOI-CYF-20/25, dated 17 March 2021.

FOI-HOU-22/22, dated 18 October 2022.

Health and Community Wellbeing—Standing Committee—Report 8—Inquiry into Period Products and Facilities (Access) Bill 2022—Government response, dated 8 February 2023.

Teacher attraction and retention plan 2023-28—Investing in teachers to support the future of education—Education Directorate, dated February 2023, in response to Assembly Resolution of 1 June 2022 relating to the number of teachers in the ACT.

Planning and Development Act, pursuant to subsection 242(2)—Statement of leases granted for the period 1 October to 31 December 2022, dated February 2023.

Remuneration Tribunal Act, pursuant to subsection 12(2)—Determinations, together with accompanying statements for:

ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal—Determination 8 of 2022, dated 15 December 2022.

ACT Magistrates Court Judicial Positions—Determination 7 of 2022, dated 15 December 2022.

ACT Supreme Court Judicial Positions—Determination 14 of 2022, dated 15 December 2022.

Director of Public Prosecutions—Determination 12 of 2022, dated 15 December 2022.

Full-time Statutory Office Holder—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People’s Commissioner—Determination 1 of 2023, dated 25 January 2023.

Full-Time Statutory Office Holder: Chief Executive Officer, ACT Integrity Commission—Determination 10 of 2022, dated 15 December 2022.

Part-time Public Office Holders—Determination 13 of 2022, dated 15 December 2022.

Part-time Public Office Holder—Chair, Official Visitors Board—Determination 2 of 2023, dated 25 January 2023.

Part-time Statutory Office Holder: Integrity Commissioner—Determination 9 of 2022, dated 15 December 2022.

Principal Registrar and Chief Executive Officer, ACT Courts and Tribunal—Determination 11 of 2022, dated 15 December 2022.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 11—Inquiry into the Auditor-General’s Report No. 4 of 2020: Residential Land Supply and Release—Government response, dated February 2023.

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate—directorate performance report

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (2.59): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 30E—Half-yearly directorate performance report—December 2022—Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (2.59): I would like to speak about the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate half-yearly performance. I would like to thank the minister for tabling this update. I look forward to digging into the details over the next few days. We have carefully followed previous updates and we have been tracking performance against accountability indicators. I would like to flag some concerns that I have noticed, and some concerns that have been raised with me by constituents.

On Monday, 30 January, Network 2023 was launched. Canberra’s bus users are not happy. I have heard this loud and clear. We are trying to encourage more people to use public transport, in the short term due to construction disruption in the city, and over the longer term as we try to address climate change and traffic congestion, but this network is not helping us.

Canberrans want a better bus network. People from all across Canberra, in all parts of the community and from all walks of life, have spoken to me about the need to improve our bus network. That is why I moved a motion last May to improve bus

services by delivering minimum hourly services across the weekend, and to see a return to the full bus network in 2022, but we have not yet seen either delivered.

We also have not seen the full transition away from Disability Discrimination Act non-compliant buses. I do understand the supply issues detailed by the minister earlier this week. That was a really detailed explanation, and I thank the minister for being so open about these issues. I understand the role COVID has had to play in this, but the ACT government has had 20 years to become compliant with the standard.

The minister's statement on Tuesday set out that the government only finalised the procurement of the last 26 leased diesel buses to replace the remainder of the non-compliant buses in March 2022, nine months before the due date. In an environment where we knew that COVID was creating significant supply chain constraints, we should not have left this important procurement until such a late stage.

Accessibility is essential for many Canberrans who have no other option but to rely on our public transport network. I want many, many more people using our public transport network as their best and first choice, and not as their only option, so we have to do better. All of these people have been let down by the delays in procurement. We need to plan our upgrades better and we need to implement them early enough.

We also need to deliver our infrastructure on time. We need a greater level of investment in building new infrastructure, including the long-awaited Woden bus depot, so that we can expand our bus network. Despite contracts being signed in 2018 for the design and construction of the Woden zero emissions bus depot, it was only last week that \$26.3 million was announced to deliver the electrical infrastructure upgrades to facilitate these buses at Woden and Tuggeranong. We have had no announcement yet about electrical upgrades to facilitate zero emissions buses at Belconnen or any other north-side depot.

The September 2020 Zero-Emission Transition Plan for Transport Canberra put forward that the Woden bus depot would be complete by 2022, with another zero emissions bus depot delivered by 2026. We are not on track for that. We are delayed. In November, in response to my question on notice, we found out that the Woden depot is now not expected until late 2024. I am lodging some more questions with the minister this week. I want to find out when we will get a fourth bus depot for Canberra. I am concerned that this new zero emissions depot may not be complete by the original deadline of 2026, based on what I have seen so far.

We also need more buses. We have not increased our fleet in line with our growing city and our growing population. In fact, in the last 33 years our bus fleet has shrunk. In 1990 the ACT had around 282,000 residents. In 2022 we had more than 456,000 residents. That is a population growth of more than 61 per cent. We have also grown geographically in that time. Every year we have new suburbs being built: Lawson, Whitlam, Molonglo, Ginninderry, Jacka, Kenny and more.

In 1990, ACTION had 479 buses. This year we have 456 buses. That is 23 fewer buses in our fleet now than we had 33 years ago. This is why we need to choose which services to run during disruptions, because we do not have enough buses. How

can we deliver improved services to all these new suburbs and all of our new people, and how can we maintain our existing suburb routes if we are running fewer buses than we had over 30 years ago?

Light rail is our great public transport success. I love light rail. The people who use light rail love light rail. I want to see it expand as soon as possible. But light rail is just one part of our public and active transport network. We also need to invest in our buses. We need to transition faster to zero emissions buses. We need more bus lanes and bus priority measures. We need more bus shelters and we need better footpaths connecting them. Without this investment, next year's bus network will be no better than this year's. That will be the same story every year, until we plan properly and invest sufficiently. We will not have a better bus network until we have more buses and better bus infrastructure.

I want to quote from the 2022 Infrastructure Australia *Infrastructure Market Capacity* report. This report is not about ACT infrastructure; it is about Australian infrastructure. It sets out the situation nationally. This is the situation that is going to apply to all of our major projects from hereon in. The report says:

The market is arguably at capacity, so project slippage is now expected ...

... it is no longer a question of if a project will slip, but more likely when, by how long and at what cost.

I would also like to amplify one of their recommendations. They said we must “improve industry capacity and capability by prioritising procurement and portfolio management and increasing pipeline transparency, certainty and confidence”.

It is going to get harder to deliver on our major projects, and to deliver well and on time. So when we are deciding on our transport infrastructure priorities we need to choose carefully. We need to choose public transport and active travel first. The Greens understand this. It is essential if we are going to reduce our climate emissions and keep Canberra as a liveable city that we can all move around in comfort in. We need to plan well. We need to follow through. We need to invest properly. We need to prioritise clearly. If we do not do that, we will have a bus service that does not meet the needs of our people.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Schools—teachers—government response

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.06): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Teacher attraction and retention plan 2023-28—Investing in teachers to support the future of education—Education Directorate.

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) (3.06): Teachers play a key role in shaping our children and young people to be informed, active and involved members of their communities. Today I am proud to table the ACT Education Directorate Teacher Attraction and Retention Plan 2023-2028.

The ACT government highly values its teaching profession. We are committed to ensuring that all ACT public schools are great places to learn and great places to work. The ACT government's Future of Education Strategy, which was released in 2018, outlines the important role that teachers play in student outcomes and acknowledges that teachers are expert professionals, highly skilled at working with their students to lead them through their learning journey.

Australia is facing a nationwide teacher supply and retention challenge, with the shortage in teachers regarded as one of the biggest issues facing education systems across the country. Teacher supply is a key issue for all states and territories and sectors, including early childhood education and care sectors. National projections over the next decade forecast strong overall growth in the demand for teachers but a recent decline in the number of teaching graduates.

The ACT government has been working on this issue since mid-2021, when I established the joint Education Directorate and Australian Education Union Teacher Shortage Taskforce to examine a range of workforce issues in the ACT public education system. The Teacher Shortage Taskforce report positioned the ACT as nation-leading in our shared understanding of teaching workforce challenges and our ongoing commitment to addressing workforce challenges, working closely, collaboratively and productively with the workforce.

In August 2022 the Teacher Shortage Taskforce provided its final report, outlining 20 recommendations for action. These recommendations provide us with a path forward for meeting the workforce requirements of the public education system in a way which values and supports the teaching profession. I have accepted all 20 recommendations of the Teacher Shortage Taskforce report. The Education Directorate continues to work on their implementation, in partnership with the Australian Education Union. I want to thank the ACT branch of the Australian Education Union for their collaboration on this seminal piece of work and for their fearless advocacy for the interests and contribution of public school teachers and leaders in the ACT.

Teachers change lives, and recognising, valuing and supporting our teachers is not just a local issue but a national one. On 12 August 2022, Australia's education ministers met with teachers, school leaders and other education experts to prioritise actions to address teacher supply, demand and retention. Ministers committed to developing a national teacher workforce action plan to increase teacher attraction and retention. Following a four-week public consultation period, the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan was agreed to by education ministers on 15 December 2022.

The ACT Education Directorate Teacher Attraction and Retention Plan 2023-2028 builds upon these ongoing efforts to address the teacher shortages across Australia. It projects teacher requirements in the ACT for each year until 2028, based on changing enrolments and staff turnover.

All these projections are based on expected system growth and staff turnover over a five-year period. They represent a point-in-time analysis and will be subject to change over the period. Therefore, an annual target will be established and published, with reporting on the outcome detailed in the Education Directorate's annual report for the life of the plan.

The directorate is projecting a need to recruit between 210 and 348 teachers each year from 2023 to 2028, based on current teaching and staffing requirements. The main variable in these projections is the separation rate for teachers, the number of teachers leaving the public system, or the profession more broadly, each year. The number of additional teachers required each year relates to system growth.

The ACT has a world-class public education system that is one of the fastest growing education systems in the country. ACT public school enrolment projections show that demand will continue to grow each year until 2028. The ACT Education Directorate Teacher Attraction and Retention Plan 2023-2028 also highlights the critical importance of retaining current teachers within the public education system. Simply put, every teacher we retain is one less that we must recruit.

We know that day-to-day working conditions are key to ensuring teacher satisfaction and retention. Therefore, our government continues to remain committed to nation-leading salaries and working conditions, through the current enterprise bargaining discussions, for teachers and school leaders.

Funding commitments to meet future teacher workforce requirements will be fully funded by the ACT student enrolment-based school funding, as outlined in the current and future ACT budget papers. All ACT public schools are well resourced with funding that exceeds the national school resource standard. The funding required to employ the necessary numbers of teachers for 2023 is already reflected in the education budget.

I look forward to our continued partnership with the Australian Education Union as we deliver on the recommendations of the Teacher Shortage Taskforce report and work to ensure that our broader policy settings actively address the ACT teacher workforce requirements as identified in the ACT Education Directorate Teacher Attraction and Retention Plan 2023-2028.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

ACT Health—directorate performance report

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.12): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 30E—Half-yearly directorate performance report—December 2022—ACT Health Directorate.

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

ACT Local Hospital Network—directorate performance report

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.12): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 30E—Half-yearly directorate performance report—December 2022—ACT Local Hospital Network.

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

Canberra Health Services—directorate performance report

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.12): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 30E—Half-yearly directorate performance report—December 2022—Canberra Health Services.

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

Canberra Health Services—budget statement—corrigendum

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.12): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Budget 2022-2023—Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 10—

Budget Statement C—ACT Health Directorate | Canberra Health Services | ACT Local Hospital Network—Corrigendum to Canberra Health Services Budget Statement.

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

Hospitals—emergency department waiting times

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (3.13): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) freedom of information (FOI) documents reveal that more than 80 percent of outpatients are waiting longer than clinically recommended;
- (b) the FOI documents showed the following results across three divisions:
 - (i) 82 percent of patients under the Division of Surgery are waiting longer than clinically recommended;
 - (ii) 84 percent of patients under the Division of Medicine are waiting longer than clinically recommended; and
 - (iii) 81 percent of patients under the Division of Women, Youth and Children are waiting longer than clinically recommended; and
- (c) across these three divisions:
 - (i) patients who are triaged as urgent, who should be seen in 14 days, are waiting an average of 52 days;
 - (ii) patients who are triaged as category one patients, who should be seen within 30 days, are waiting an average of 152 days;
 - (iii) patients who are triaged as category two patients, who should be seen within 90 days, are waiting an average of 399 days; and
 - (iv) patients who are triaged as category three patients, who should be seen within 365 days, are waiting an average of 591 days;

(2) further notes the:

- (a) Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services* showed that the ACT has had the longest Emergency Department wait times for the past five years; and
- (b) ACT treated less than half of patients within clinically recommended timeframes; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) table by the first day of the next sitting week, current figures for outpatient waiting times and Emergency Department wait times by triage category; and
- (b) report to the Assembly by the first day of the next sitting week, a one-year target to reduce the percentage of outpatients who are waiting longer than clinically recommended.

Two weeks ago, the government's own figures from March 2022, obtained under freedom of information, showed that more than 80 per cent of outpatients in the ACT are waiting longer than clinically recommended. The ministerial briefing obtained under FOI showed that 23,065 patients were overdue for their surgery out of a total of 28,472 who are on the waitlist for certain specialties. These figures paint a very bleak

picture for any Canberran needing surgery, as well as for the tens of thousands of Canberrans who will have to live in pain, and sometimes with debilitating conditions, until they are treated.

Patients who are triaged as urgent, who should be seen within 14 days, are waiting on average 52 days. Category 1 patients should be seen within 30 days; however, there are 130 urgent patients waiting for an average of 163 days for ear, nose, and throat surgeries. Category 2 semi-urgent patients should be seen within 90 days, but the general surgery specialty had more than 1,300 people waiting an average of 575 days. Category 3 non-urgent patients should be seen within 365 days. Canberra Health Services has 1,250 category 3 patients waiting on average 1,085 days—that is just under three years for orthopaedic surgery.

Some of these patients have contacted my office. They feel forced to pay for private surgery or to move states, because they do not want to live in pain, sometimes for hundreds of days, before they receive their surgery. It is tragic that Canberrans are forced to take this drastic action because the Barr-Rattenbury government has failed to address major issues in our public hospitals.

When these appalling figures became public, the minister was quick to blame COVID, which undoubtedly did have some effect on the capacity for people to access outpatient services. But the brief to her from the CEO of Canberra Health Services made no mention of COVID. It said that the overarching issues that have led to the build-up of long waitlists included: staff availability and recruitment issues; clinic space availability; mismatch between demand and capacity; dated models of care, systems and processes; manual and non-intuitive administrative requirements to maintain the waitlist; inability of systems to talk to each other and to provide a holistic view of patient care; and siloed working patterns. In other words, it is a complete shambles. Nearly every one of these factors is within the control of this government and this minister.

In a moment of candour on ABC radio's drive program, the minister said, "It isn't a good story." But it is not a good story, and it is something that we have been working on for quite some time. How many years has this government been in power? Twenty-two years! Incredibly, the minister could not even tell ABC listeners how many people are currently on the waiting list. She said, "So, we don't have point-in-time figures today, because the rollout of the digital health record has meant we've got some challenges getting that data out of the system at this point in time."

You have got to be kidding me! Asked when she might have some more point-in-time figures to present to Canberrans about whether we are doing better overall, the minister said, and I quote, "Well, look, I think we are doing better overall. I can't give you a time frame on when we can actually get the full up-to-date data on that. We're still working through some of those issues in detail and pulling some of that data is quite a manual process, at the moment, through the digital health record." So, the minister is blaming the \$145 million digital health record intended to solve some of the problems causing long waitlists for being unable to tell us how many people are currently waiting on waiting lists. Not only that—she could not even say when she would be able to tell us. Honestly, you cannot make this stuff up!

Yesterday, the minister said that we should get this information by the May sitting period, which is three months away. Will it then be three months out of date? If you think this is farcical, we found out from her department that in 2021-22 Canberra Health Services decided that outpatients were not a priority area of active focus, given other priorities—and even now, and I quote, “There is not a specific target to demonstrate an improvement in outpatient waiting times.” If the minister does not know the length of the current outpatient waitlists, how can she properly fix them?

It is not just outpatient waiting lists which are unavailable. Wait times at Canberra emergency departments are also unavailable, because, according to the minister, when a new app introduced the digital health record and went live, the results did not make sense and were not meaningful. The government is now rethinking the presentation of the data to eliminate those cases that skew the average, including those waiting the longest. Last week the minister said they would now give only the 90th percentile. Yesterday, she changed this to the 80th percentile, which will exclude 10 per cent of people waiting the longest.

Last week the minister said that there is an explanation on the website about why ED wait times are not available—not on Canberra Health Services website; at the ACT Health website, it just blames “server maintenance”. If you go to the CHS website you will see that the number of patients waiting at Canberra Hospital and Calvary—their average waiting time, treatment time, and total time spent waiting—are all not available. But you will be reassured to know that that non-availability—of all these wait times—is being updated every minute; another complete shambles! Yesterday the minister said she was hoping this could be rectified by the end of the month, but she could not guarantee this. Meanwhile, Canberrans planning their trip to an ED to get to the treatment they need are completely in the dark about wait times. As I said, you cannot make this stuff up!

The Labor and Labor-Greens government have been in government for 22 years, and they have had that long to fix this problem. Canberra should have Australia’s best health system, and yet it is failing badly. As the *Canberra Times* editorialised:

Why is it that despite paying some of the highest rates, land taxes and government charges in the Commonwealth Canberrans must make do with health services that continually fall short of national benchmarks?

Two years ago, the minister reiterated her target of completing 16,000 elective surgeries in 2020-2021. Only 15,324 were delivered, and 773 patients waited longer than recommended. In 2021-22 the target was 14,800, but only 14,011 elective surgeries were performed. Incredibly, 1,364 people waited longer than clinically recommended in that year. Honestly, the lower this government sets the bar, the worse they perform.

This financial year the target is still 14,800 elective surgeries. Yesterday, we heard from the minister that 16,000 elective surgeries was, “a very ambitious target”. We heard that 14,800 is “actually still quite an ambitious target”, and that we are trying “to get as close to that target as possible, if not exceed it”. How inspiring—to try and get close to a target! Another of the minister’s excuses yesterday was that we had to slow down elective surgeries because we are implementing the digital health record,

which “successfully” went live last November. Given that you cannot provide outpatient waiting lists, there is no data for the public on ED waiting times, and we now hear the digital health record has slowed down elective surgeries, I would not be calling this a successful rollout yet, Minister!

Last week the Australian Medical Association released its 2023 report into the hospital logjam and hospital performance around the country. A table which *The Australian* newspaper extracted from this report shows that in 2021-22 Canberra Hospital was the worst performer on the eastern seaboard for urgent presentations to ED, with only 32 per cent of cases handled on time. The Canberra Hospital and Calvary Public Hospital were the only hospitals in the region that received red lights for every category outside of resuscitation, meaning fewer than 84 per cent of people received care within the clinically recommended time frames across all categories.

AMA ACT President Professor Walter Abhayaratna said that the ACT persistently lagged behind other Australian jurisdictions and showed little signs of changing. He also noted that the ACT had been the worst performer for category 3 ED presentations—which are recommended to be seen in under 30 minutes—in the country since 2012-2013. Data for 2015-16 has not been available. As far as elective surgery is concerned, the AMA report showed that in 2021-22 only 49 per cent of semi-urgent and 64 per cent of non-urgent patients at the Canberra Hospital received treatment within the clinically recommended time. Semi-urgent surgery requires treatment in 90 days and non-urgent within a year.

The AMA report was followed by the Productivity Commission *Report on Government Services*, which once again showed that the ACT remains the worst performing jurisdiction for emergency department wait times. In 2021-22 the ACT had the lowest proportion of people treated in emergency departments within four hours: at 50 per cent; down from 57 per cent the year before. For all triage categories, including emergency, urgent, semi-urgent and non-urgent the ACT was again the worst performer, with only 48 per cent of patients being treated within the national benchmark waiting time—the same figure as a year earlier—compared to the national average of 64 per cent of patients. These statistics are abysmal. Every year the Barr-Rattenbury government has managed the health system, it has performed worse than the national average. It is embarrassing and, more importantly, it is having a real impact on Canberrans’ health outcomes.

Two years ago, the health minister set a target of 70 per cent of ED patients to be seen on time by October 2021. She said:

Our target — and the national target — is 70 per cent ... We want to get to that target within nine months.

In 2021 the figure was 57 per cent. In 2021-22, it was worse at 54 per cent. Yesterday, the minister said she had not made that promise. The minister said that she had a long conversation with a journalist and said to her that Canberra Health Services had a plan with an objective to reach 70 per cent of ED presentations treated within four hours within that nine months. I am sorry, Minister, but you own this. You said that your target was 70 per cent within nine months. Each year we hear excuses from the health minister about what she is doing to fix the crisis. Last week she said that Canberra is

different; that we are unique, that these reports do not compare apples to apples; that it is swings and roundabouts. Yesterday we were doing as well as our peers! When is the minister going stop offering cliches and solve the problem? After 22 years there are really no excuses.

After a decade below the national average and no improvement, Canberrans are tired of excuses and spin from this government. As the nation's capital, with an affluent, concentrated population, Canberra should have the best performing public hospital in the country. Last week the minister admitted her failure on ED wait times. Rachel Stephen-Smith said, "I think, also, it is fair criticism to say we have tried a lot of things in our emergency department that either haven't been sustained, or we haven't seen the impact of those yet." When she was asked if these things had not worked as she wanted, the minister said, "Yeah, they haven't worked as we wanted."

On nearly every measure you look at, Canberrans are waiting longer than they should for outpatient and emergency treatment. Canberrans like Rohan Goynes, a former staffer for former health minister Simon Corbell. He said that he should have been seen in 90 days but now has been waiting close to two years to see a specialist about his hernia, which could now be inoperable. He said:

... once it's beyond 500 days in a circumstance where the benchmark is 90 days
– that's not reasonable.

He is right. Then we heard about Kathryn Hailey, who broke her neck in a nasty fall helping decorate a church 18 months ago. At the Canberra Hospital, Mrs Hailey was left lying in a corridor for three hours with several other people:

People were passing by. [I'd say], "I needed assistance," and I couldn't get anyone to come. Finally a cleaner came by and I said, "Please can you get a nurse? I'm in big trouble," and so she did, but I probably waited 20 minutes for that.

The statistics tell us the ACT's health system is in crisis. Patients tell us horror stories about their experiences. Every year we have new failures, more excuses and no real improvement; but rather than outlining a credible path to improvement the Barr-Rattenbury government is set on spending more than \$3 billion for a new tram from Civic to Woden.

Cooking up announcements so the minister and chief minister can pose in front of the Canberra Hospital construction is not going to fool Canberrans. Yesterday the health minister said, "It is going very well." It is not. It is too little, too late. Yesterday the minister talked about beds built elsewhere and more plans for beds, but we are still 150 beds short. Canberra's public hospital system is failing, the health minister is flailing, and the government is taking Canberrans for a ride.

On Tuesday I listened to the transport minister's elaborate justification for the tram, and I think it boiled down to this: it is shiny. This Labor-Greens government is putting its shiny tram over the health of Canberrans, and that is not acceptable. I note that there is a proposed amendment to this motion. We will not be supporting the amendment, as we want current data, not old data. We, and Canberrans, want a target.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (3.28): I move:

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

“(1) notes:

- (a) waiting lists across health services are dynamic with removals and additions occurring on a daily basis;
- (b) waiting lists and waiting times in all public hospitals in Australia, and internationally have been under additional pressure due to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (c) additional pressure has also been placed on all public acute services with the underfunding of primary care and Medicare by the former Coalition Government to reduce downstream impacts;
- (d) Canberra Health Services is working to improve outpatient experiences through a whole of health system view that recognises the upstream and downstream impacts of changes to single points in the system;
- (e) Canberra Health Services conducted approximately 130,000 specialist appointments last financial year and receive more than 60,000 referrals each year, which is increasing every year;
- (f) Canberra Health Services has actively reduced outpatient waiting times with there being more than 30,000 patients with significant long waits three years ago compared with a total waitlist for outpatients of 30,000 as of July 2022;
- (g) the ACT Government implemented the Digital Health Record in November 2022 which required a decrease in outpatient activity to facilitate training and implementation;
- (h) when fully embedded the Digital Health Record will support automation processes, timely reporting and improved visibility of patient needs in relation to outpatient referral and waitlist management, however implementation has impacted reportable data sets including outpatients and live emergency department waiting times in the short-term;
- (i) Canberra Hospital Emergency Department when compared against peer hospitals across Australia, performed better than its peers in Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and Northern Territory on percentage of patients seen on time in 2021-22;
- (j) Canberrans receive some of the most timely critical care treatment in Australia in 2021-22 the ACT achieved the second highest rate of seen on time for Category 2 emergency presentations and 100 percent of Category 1 resuscitation presentations; and
- (k) the ACT regularly provides public reporting of emergency department waiting times against national indicators, including through Quarterly Performance Reports; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) table the October 2022 outpatient waiting time figures at the conclusion of this motion;

- (b) table updated outpatient waiting time figures in the May 2023 sitting week; and
- (c) continue to monitor Canberra Health Services 2022-23 performance measure to increase the percentage of initial medical specialist outpatient appointments to 35 percent of all appointments.”.

This motion was quite specifically about outpatients. It was about freedom of information documents in relation to outpatients. At the beginning of Ms Castley’s comments it was very obvious that she has absolutely no idea about the difference between an outpatient waiting list and an elective surgery waiting list. She repeatedly talked about people who were waiting for elective surgery and related this back to the outpatient numbers. If that is the level of Ms Castley’s knowledge and the level of Ms Castley’s commentary on these matters, probably we need to take everything she says in regard to this with a grain of salt.

She also implies consistently that I am out there saying everything is fine and everything is rosy. Of course we have a lot of work to do, but what she neglected to say when she was talking about elective surgery is that the most recent *Report on Government Services* actually showed that the ACT is the only jurisdiction to have removed more patients from the elective surgery waiting lists than were added to it every year for the last five years. So, we are not going to fix these problems overnight, but we are in fact moving in the right direction when it comes to elective surgery.

Before I get to the substance of Ms Castley’s actual motion and my amendment, which is outpatients, I want to touch on the emergency department. Again, if she looked in more detail at the *Report on Government Services* she would see that it does also include peer hospital comparisons. It is absolutely true to say that any jurisdictional comparison of the ACT’s emergency department performance with other jurisdictions as a whole is not an apples to apples comparison.

The ACT is unique in having two quite large hospitals and no smaller regional outer metropolitan-type hospitals that do not have busy emergency departments. Canberra Hospital is one of the busiest emergency departments in the country. In comparison with its peer hospitals, principal referral hospitals—and look this up in the *Report on Government Services*—Canberra Hospital performed better than its peers in Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

The larger jurisdictions hospital perform better, and in part that is because they exist within network systems where the load can be shared across different hospitals. Ms Castley also referred to the AMA data, where the AMA have made up their own benchmarks. What the AMA data for this region absolutely demonstrates is that small regional hospitals have an easier time meeting targets. It actually reinforces the point that I have been making: that interjurisdictional comparisons are completely inaccurate when it comes to the ACT because of the structure of our hospitals and because we do not have those smaller regional and outer metropolitan hospitals.

Finally in relation to emergency department data, Ms Castley talked about the ED wait times not being available on the ACT Health app. That is true. I did think there was a more substantial explanation, and I think there is on the ACT Health website.

I looked up the Canberra Health Services website while Ms Castley was taking, and it is a very brief statement. The app itself says:

We are still working on the emergency department data flows, following the go live of the Digital Health Record. This data will be made available through this app in the coming weeks.

That is transparently there for consumers. The reason is that they are working through it. It will be made available as soon as possible in the coming weeks.

I really refute Ms Castley's characterisation of the way the team is working to change that data. What they are doing is finding a data point that is more meaningful for people. We heard consistently that the median wait time was something that did not reflect people's experiences and that being able to say to people, "In the last two hours, four out of five patients attending this emergency department have been seen within this time," is something that is making clearer for people what is happening in the emergency department.

The way Ms Castley talks about it, people are planning their trip to the emergency department! If you need to go to the emergency department, you need to go to the emergency department. If you do not need to go to the emergency department, I strongly encourage Canberrans to look at the other options that are available to them, including the nurse-led walk-in centres—a unique model in the ACT and a model that has been embraced by the Canberra community.

Our nurse-led walk-in centres, across all five of them, see more patients in a quarter than Calvary's emergency department. The time was a little bit longer in the last quarter that we reported on because they were so busy and because of some of the COVID impacts, but mostly people are waiting less than 20 minutes when they turn up to a nurse-led walk-in centre. All of those are people who would otherwise be in an emergency department. None of that data is captured in our ED statistics.

Those people with minor injuries and illness are the same people that would be going to one of the smaller hospitals in another city, and that data would be captured and counted for interjurisdictional comparisons. In the ACT that data is not captured because it is not an emergency department, but people are getting treated for the same thing. They are getting seen and treated very quickly by our very highly skilled advance practice nurses and nurse practitioners.

I digress from the main point of the motion and my amendment, as Ms Castley did. We cannot, obviously, agree that Ms Castley's motion was factually correct. The information in the brief that was released under freedom of information reflected long waitlists at Canberra Health Services only, and those waitlists that were in the previous legacy patient administration system that has now been decommissioned. So the way Ms Castley has presented this information is not entirely accurate, but it is absolutely true that we have people waiting for outpatient appointments longer than the recommended time frame in which they should be seen.

It is important to recognise that there are other outpatient appointments across a range of specialities and across both public health services, not just Canberra Health

Services. But we are focused on Canberra Health Services today because that is the data that Ms Castley had access to. Any data that you pull out in relation to outpatient wait times is going to be a point in time. That is the way the system works. The numbers change from day to day, so we pull out point-in-time data. There are a complex range of issues that sit around many of our waitlists and wait times across health services.

There are things that impact on our waitlist. We provide services to the surrounding New South Wales region. We see in the ACT relatively high out-of-pocket costs for private specialists, which means more people are not able to access private specialists, compared to other jurisdictions. We also have a different model of care than other jurisdictions. We have a lower number of GPs and we do see some inappropriate referrals from GPs as well. Sometimes we are seeing a higher level of complexity. Some of these issues have driven some significant demand in our public health services, but we are working through how to address that.

When Ms Castley talks about the numbers on the waiting list, I think it is important to put them in the context of the fact that more than 130,000 specialist medical outpatient appointments are delivered annually by Canberra Health Services, with more than 18,000 patients removed from outpatient waitlists over the last financial year. More than 60,000 referrals are received each year, with this number increasing year on year. So the net reduction is 18,000, and 130,000 specialist outpatient appointments. That is the context in which Ms Castley's numbers need to be seen.

It is also really important to recognise that waiting lists change every day and throughout the day, as patients are both added and removed from the waiting list. Waiting lists include patients who are unable to be contacted for an appointment; those who have already had their treatment elsewhere and have not let Canberra Health Services know; those who no longer require treatment; and those who in fact were not appropriate for a referral to a specialist in the first place. Some of the long-wait patients, for example, have previously declined treatment at a given time, for a variety of reasons. That might be a range of personal reasons. But that does have an impact on what we see on the overall waiting list.

Outpatient appointments are a very important part of our public health services. That is how we provide access to specialists to assess what treatment someone might need. We do know there is more work to do. It was a little unfortunate that the brief Ms Castley FOI'd was phrased in terms of not giving priority to this particular issue in the corporate plan. It has been the case that this issue has been prioritised. I think the context of that comment related to: "There are a whole lot of other things going on this year, so we will continue the work that we are doing but we will not make an extra push in relation to outpatients."

But the work that they have been doing in Canberra Health Services has made a difference. For example, three years ago there were more than 30,000 patients with significantly long waits. This number has reduced, such that in July 2022 the total waitlist for outpatient appointments was 30,000. We went from 30,000 significant long waits to a total waitlist of 30,000.

That data was provided at that point in time, prior to the implementation of DHR. We know, with the implementation of DHR in early November 2022, as Ms Castley has indicated, that hospital data is not currently available for reporting purposes. That is because we are going through a quality assurance process. Ms Castley would like to cast some aspersions around that, but actually what we are trying to do is to ensure that we can provide the best possible data to people that is actually meaningful.

Health Services are working towards whole-of-organisation level of reporting being restored before May 2023. That is why my amendment says that I will be happy to table that up-to-date data—and that will be, again, point-in-time data, because that is the way it is—in May 2023. It does mean that that external reporting will be withheld for a short period. As I mentioned yesterday, that is because we really need to prioritise, in relation to the Digital Health Record implementation, addressing those issues that impact patient safety and clinical care first.

They were the highest priority issues to address. Where our frontline health workers were having to work around some challenges with implementation, we wanted to get those issues sorted before we addressed the data issues. Data issues are very important and absolutely have to be addressed, but the more important issues to address most quickly were those issues relating to the quality of patient care.

I have talked on and on, but I do want to say that my motion calls on me to table the October 2022 outpatient waiting time figures at the conclusion of this motion. I am actually going to table those now. I table the following paper:

CHS Outpatient waiting times—Extracted 8 February 2023.

I know that Ms Castley will draw on those numbers, so I do just want to make a couple of quick points about those. There will be things you can draw out of them to say, “This is a high number; this is not great. This is a high percentage.” The number of patients waiting for an urgent appointment reduced from 76 patients to 43, so that is a decrease of 43 per cent. It is still too many. Obviously, we have got more work to do. The percentage of overdue patients has seen marginal decreases: moderate reductions across ear, nose and throat, general surgery, orthopaedic surgery, urology, cardiology, endocrinology, gastroenterology and neurology.

There were reductions to average time to actual appointment across division specialties and categories in general surgery. Between March and October the average wait time reduced by 42 per cent. In endocrinology the average wait time reduced for categories 1 and 3; in gastroenterology for categories 1, 2 and 3; and in urology for category 1, by 75 per cent. Thank you.

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) (3.43): I would like to acknowledge the hard work of staff in Canberra’s emergency departments and in the health system more broadly. Delivering health care, including mental health care, and keeping our medical facilities running always takes dedication.

The past years of the COVID-19 pandemic have added to the complexity of this work. I would like to extend my appreciation to everyone who has contributed to the vital work of providing health care throughout Canberra. For anyone thinking about what our healthcare workforce have been through over the past three years, I can highly recommend visiting the exhibition currently at the Canberra Museum and Gallery. The audio, photography and watercolour artworks can help all of us make meaning of what healthcare workers have been through.

I would like to thank Ms Castley for opening up a conversation about the high level of demand in our hospital system. In particular, I would like to talk about the impacts on our hospital emergency departments. While I agree with Ms Castley on the importance of reducing hospital waiting times, I also want to acknowledge the bigger picture and the complexity in the healthcare system, including mental health services, in Canberra.

I am grateful for the opportunity to talk about the work we are doing to ensure that more Canberrans are able to access mental health care support closer to home and at an earlier point in their illness, so that fewer people need to go to hospital emergency departments. We know that people in mental health crisis need the right kind of care, and that care is best delivered outside of emergency departments. That is why we have expanded community-based support for Canberrans in need of mental health treatment, including when they need immediate help.

This includes our funding for Safe Havens, where people in need of support can get help when they need it from peer mental health workers in a more appropriate setting. Safe Havens provide a safe, welcoming and non-clinical space that offers connection and mental health services without the need for payment or an appointment. We are proud of how effective the Belconnen Safe Haven has proven in diverting people in need of mental health support away from emergency departments. We are expanding the availability of this service so that more Canberrans can access a Safe Haven in their neighbourhood.

This includes planning for a Safe Haven located in Canberra Hospital, where those in need of mental health treatment will be able to access a more appropriate, non-clinical setting, instead of presenting to the emergency department. There are two key aspects of the ACT's Safe Haven model that are critical factors in the success of the Belconnen Safe Haven and, I am sure, will be important in any future Safe Haven spaces in the ACT. Our first Safe Haven in Belconnen and the future Safe Haven on the Canberra Hospital campus were co-designed with people with lived experience. In understanding how we can best support a person in mental health crisis who might otherwise end up in a hospital emergency department, with its bright lights, noise and people everywhere, we have listened to those people who have been there.

Secondly, Safe Haven is a place where people are supported by peer mental health workers. We are creating opportunities for people seeking to incorporate their lived experience into their professional career, and in a space that truly reflects what advocates, experts and the co-design team had in mind for our first Safe Haven. We will continue to support the development of our peer mental health workforce through the ACT's mental health workforce strategy and its first action plan.

I also note that there are fee-free places at CIT for the Certificate IV in Mental Health, for people interested in a career as a mental health support worker. I thank Minister Steel for his work in promoting these free tertiary education opportunities for Canberrans. The ability to develop skills without cost to the individual—who may be someone on a low income—that lead to meaningful and rewarding employment opportunities is part of the range of actions for which I would love to see more commonwealth support. I am thankful to everyone for passing the amendment to yesterday's motion by Mr Cocks that enables me to advocate for the full range of programs and policies for which commonwealth support would be helpful.

As well as expanding options for people needing mental health treatment outside of emergency departments, we are committed to funding the expansion of the Police, Ambulance and Clinician Early Response, or PACER, service. Where police would traditionally be the first responders to a mental health call-out, the PACER team provides a more holistic response to Canberrans in mental health crisis. PACER teams consist of a paramedic, a clinician and a police officer working together seven days a week. An additional PACER team operating on the south side of Canberra would ensure that more people in crisis can benefit from this effective tri-service approach and potentially avoid the need to present at an emergency department.

We also know that mental health care is best delivered flexibly, with a focus on prevention and continuity of care. That is why we fund the step up, step down services, which allow people to step up into a highly supportive residential treatment environment when they are becoming unwell, and then be supported to step down from a hospital setting to enable a more graduated return to the community. This responsive approach diverts Canberrans in need of acute mental health treatment from emergency departments into a more suitable setting, providing up to three months of support at no cost to patients.

Additionally, through the national agreement, the ACT government are working with the commonwealth and other states and territories to address mental health system reform priorities. Importantly, this work includes the review of psychosocial support services for people with moderate to severe mental illness. The moderate to severe end of the spectrum has had several successful schemes for coordinating and partnering in care.

Our focus in working to improve mental health services in Canberra is on early intervention and community-based support, providing more ways to provide care outside of emergency departments and hospitals. Early and ongoing connection to services reduces pressure on emergency departments and the limited clinical workforce, including care delivered by peer workers with lived experience.

Emergency departments are a critical part of Canberra's healthcare system. We are committed to improving mental health services beyond emergency departments and hospitals to provide more options for Canberrans to get the right kind of mental health treatment and support when they need it. Our development and expansion of programs, including Save Havens, PACER and step up, step down, not only deliver better mental health care to Canberrans; they also reduce pressure on emergency departments and hospitals. I commend Minister Stephen-Smith's amendment to this motion.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (3.49): When we look at the *RoGS* data and trends over the last few years, unfortunately it comes as no surprise that the trends are abysmal. The minister likes to talk about an apples to apples comparison and how you cannot compare our territory with other jurisdictions. So we looked at the figures that CHS executives use to benchmark the Canberra Hospital against similar sized hospitals. The CEO of CHS has said that this is a useful tool because it compares like with like. That is just what our minister likes. The data shows that in ED, between July 2021 and August 2022, CHS has never performed better than average. So even when you do that apples to apples comparison, the minister is failing.

Let's look at people leaving the ED within a four-hour period, if we are going with our apples to apples. Back in 2016-17, 73 per cent of ACT patients left the ED within four hours. The most recent data showed that this has dropped to 52.4 per cent. That is a 20 per cent decrease. The minister replied to this trend by a contradiction. She says that, actually, in this case, we can compare the ACT against other jurisdictions. So let's do that against all of the other states.

New South Wales and Queensland declined by 10 per cent. Western Australia and Tasmania declined by less than 10 per cent. South Australia and the Northern Territory declined by less than six per cent. The only state that comes close is Victoria, and they saw a 16 per cent decline. Let me reiterate that during this period the ACT declined by 20 per cent—far more of a decline than the rest of the country. The minister gives excuses and seems to have no accountability for these atrocious figures, no matter what fruit we are comparing!

I receive countless emails from Canberrans who have had dealings with our health system and the emergency department. One person wrote to me saying that he and his wife attended the Canberra Hospital ED and waited three hours outside, then another three hours inside, before being seen. Similarly, another mother and daughter attended Canberra Hospital ED and it was three hours before they were transferred to the paediatric ED and another three hours before they were told, "There is nothing we can do; come back tomorrow."

I have mentioned many times the patient with a hernia, needing an operation. He has been waiting 800 days. There is someone needing help with respiratory concerns, but records have gone missing. There are others where referrals are being lost. Maternity has been telling new pregnant mums that the books are closed. People prepped for surgery, dressed in hospital gowns, having fasted for hours, are told to go home and come back tomorrow. Families and Canberrans are left feeling neglected by our health system.

It is crucial to note that each person that contacts my office always says that the staff are amazing—they have been on their feet all night, attending to patients. Still, our families are waiting. We know that this government has failed to provide enough hospital beds for the hospital and not enough support for our hardworking hospital staff. The government have failed to implement their own nurse-to-patient ratios or even staff the hospital so that there is a reserve bank of nurses. As a consequence, we

have a health system that is overworking our amazing staff and neglecting Canberra families that need to use our public health system.

You just have to read through some of the older articles in the *Canberra Times* about the ACT's terrible ED performance to see the litany of excuses that are being used by this government. New South Wales has been blamed because too many patients use our ED. Then of course there was COVID, an increase in demand and not enough staff. The list of excuses is almost as long as the list of meaningless platitudes that the minister has trotted out over this time.

After the release of each damning *RoGS* report, we hear that we have robust strategies, we have a strong plan and we have done a deep dive, just to name a few. Whatever the minister does in between the annual shaming by the Productivity Commission, it is clear that it is inconsequential because the ACT is the worst, year on year.

Since the media broke the FOI figures for outpatient appointment waiting times, my office has been inundated with calls from people sharing their appalling experiences of trying to receive surgery or a follow-up appointment. One person contacted my office with a story about trying to get his follow-up colonoscopy appointment. This person had a colonoscopy in 2016. The doctor then wrote to his GP saying that a follow-up in 12 months would be of benefit. The patient did not receive a time for his follow-up appointment until Monday this week, after I wrote to the health minister. An appointment that he was meant to receive in October 2017 was not booked until more than five years after he should have received the colonoscopy. The health system is in crisis, and it cannot cope with the current demand of patients. Waiting over five years for a follow-up appointment is unacceptable and goes to show how much strain the health system is under.

Members of the Labor-Greens government in this place continue to support the tram to Woden by arguing that, with a growing population, the ACT needs the infrastructure ready to cope with this future demand. The Canberra Liberals understand that. However, the Canberra Liberals also understand that our public health system is not coping with current demand. The fact that the population is increasing scares me, as this government has failed to prepare our health system for that growth.

I would love to know if any Labor-Greens members can honestly say that they are more concerned about commute times than a Canberran waiting more than five years to receive their follow-up appointment for a colonoscopy. The two do not come close to being comparable. It is embarrassing that certain members think that it is acceptable to spend \$3 billion on a tram that is not improving commute times, at the expense of the health of their constituents. It is irresponsible. Shame on you!

The government have also tried to argue that they can walk and chew gum at the same time, but these *RoGS* figures show us that they just cannot. In a brief to the minister it was revealed that outpatients was not a priority area for active focus, given other priorities. Another shame. I cannot understand what priorities the minister did have throughout 2021-22, because we know that ED wait times have not improved.

We know that there are still serious concerns in paediatrics. We know that they did not implement their nurse to patient ratios or improve the terrible culture that they have let fester in the hospital. Shame! Gosh, I hope I am not starting to sound like Derryn Hinch!

The fact is the Barr-Rattenbury government have failed. They have failed Canberrans. We have a health system in crisis, due to constant underfunding and neglect. This motion is simple: to table by the next sitting week the current figures for outpatient waiting times and emergency department wait times by triage category, and then to report to the Assembly, by the first day of the next sitting week, a one-year target to reduce the percentage of outpatients who are waiting longer than clinically recommended.

Unfortunately, we see today that, again, the minister cannot or will not provide crucial data in a timely fashion. Canberrans are left in the dark because this minister harbours a culture of secrecy. This motion has also called on the minister, as I say, with regard to the target. We know that CHS revealed only a couple of weeks ago that there is no specific target. Then they said that there is an opportunity to make a target. Great; that is what I am here for. That is what I am asking the government to do.

But the minister has passed up that opportunity. I cannot help wondering if it is because she does not want to be accountable for these abysmal figures. The government and other members that vote against this motion should have a read of the ACT public hospital figures, read in their inbox the stories from Canberrans, and think about the crisis in our health system. It is a crisis caused by the Barr-Rattenbury agenda and a crisis which you are neglecting. We will not support the complete rewrite of my motion, by way of an amendment, today.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 14

Ms Berry	Ms Orr
Mr Braddock	Dr Paterson
Ms Burch	Mr Pettersson
Ms Cheyne	Mr Steel
Ms Clay	Ms Stephen-Smith
Ms Davidson	Ms Vassarotti
Mr Davis	
Mr Gentleman	

Noes 7

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

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

ACT Policing—resourcing

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT Government has underfunded and under resourced ACT Policing for years;
- (b) the 2023 *Report on Government Services* from the Productivity Commission shows that the ACT has:
 - (i) the lowest number of police per-capita in Australia;
 - (ii) the lowest funding per person for police in Australia; and
 - (iii) the lowest clearance rates for property crime in Australia;
- (c) the ACT is the only jurisdiction in Australia to record a negative average annual growth rate in real recurrent expenditure from 2016-17 to 2020-21;
- (d) the 2022 ACT Policing Annual Report shows that ACT Policing numbers have declined since 2012 despite population growth of over 70,000 during the same period;
- (e) in 2022 a Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) report supported by modelling from Nous Consulting detailing the demand on ACT police services resulted in the Chief Police Officer stating that “It’s become clear to me that the number of police we have currently needs to be increased to meet current and future demand.”; and
- (f) the Minister’s repeated assurances that there are sufficient police numbers in the ACT have been shown to be inaccurate; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) increase the number of police to fully meet operational requirements in the 2023-24 ACT Budget; and
- (b) request that the Australian Federal Police release the PWC report and Nous Consulting modelling.

We have had quite some debate about police numbers, not just this week but in previous weeks, and there are some facts that have remained pretty consistent through all of the data—through annual reports and through various *RoGS* data. I will reiterate them because it is important to emphasise that we have the lowest number of police per capita in Australia, we have the lowest funding per person for police in Australia, we have the lowest clearance rates for property crime in Australia, and we are recorded as the only jurisdiction in Australia with an average growth rate that was negative in real expenditure from 2016-17 to 2020-21.

What is new since we last were in here calling for additional police numbers is that the Chief Police Officer of the ACT has come out very strongly and, in essence, backed what we have been saying—that is, that the ACT does not have enough police to do its job and that the police numbers have gone backwards. That is new. That is important because previously the minister had hidden behind the Chief Police Officer and said, “He is saying he has got enough to do his job.” That is no longer the case. It is very clear that he does not. I will read quotes from the media, from what the

Chief Police Officer has been saying. This is from an article entitled “A workforce that is clearly suffering”:

... the ACT Chief Police Officer again has pitched strongly for an increase and extra funding and more police numbers, expressing his concern for how workload demands are resulting in a health impact on his officers ...

... his biggest concern was how the pressure of an understrength workforce was causing internal health and welfare stress issues.

“We’re seeing health matrices around our workforce deteriorating,” he said.

“They [his officers] are not taking as much leave as they should, they are doing more overtime than they should, and there’s more unexplained absences so there’s more people taking sick leave.

“So for me not only is it an issue of demand and supply, we’ve also got a workforce that is clearly suffering.’

That is a consistent theme, it seems. We have a suffering teacher workforce, a suffering nursing workforce and a suffering police workforce under this government. Another article, entitled, “A thinning blue line is crumbling, warns Chief Police Officer”, states:

The ACT’s top police officer says the Territory is at a tipping point when it comes to the number of police required to maintain safety and order ...

It’s not the first time Deputy Commissioner Gaughan has questioned the resources at his disposal, but the *RoGS* figures add urgency to the issue.

He said 205 sworn police officers per 100,000 was well below the national average of 280.

... the figures show police numbers had clearly not kept pace with the Territory’s growing population.

“We’re not meeting our priority one and priority two targets. We haven’t been beating them for a number of financial years,” he said.

That is shameful, isn’t it? Shameful! When you look at the *RoGS* data—when you look at population growth, and even regardless of population growth, whilst Canberra has been growing, 70,000 in the last decade—the number of police has fallen under this government. Again, this is not just us saying it. It is there in black and white in annual reports and the Chief Police Officer has backed that up. He said:

In the last 10 years, the population of the ACT has grown 19 per cent ... police numbers have gone down by 0.7 per cent. So we’ve actually gone backwards. We need to do something about that.

I would have to agree. The article continued:

He said falling crime rates were not the whole picture, outlining a more complex policing environment with more suicides, domestic violence and mental health issues that are taking a toll on his officers.

“They’re not taking as much sleep as they should, they’re doing more overtime than they should and there’s more unexplained absences.”

It is not just in terms of numbers of police officers; it is a matter of resources. The CPO said that there needs to be a conversation not just about numbers but also about equipment and resources:

The city police station was built in 1966. We need to ensure we have fit-for-purpose infrastructure,” he said.

The article continues:

Deputy Commissioner Gaughan warned that Canberra was no longer a Sleepy Hollow and was experiencing crime in all areas, including across the border in Queanbeyan where there were now 60,000 people.

“That area is growing as quick as we are, about 20 per cent per annum. Queanbeyan has a brand new police station. We don’t,” he said.

No. Queanbeyan are ahead of us, it would seem, in terms of their facilities but also police numbers. There is no other way you can describe that than defunding the police. That is what has happened. They have got lower numbers, they do not have the facilities they need and they do not have the equipment. It is causing stress for their members and the police are not making their priority 1 and 2 targets. All the time, Minister Gentleman yucks it up, saying, “You didn’t vote for the budget.” He has been saying there are enough resources out there. That is simply not true.

The Federal Police Commissioner—I imagine getting pretty sick of all this in the ACT—commissioned a report into ACT Policing by PWC. An article about this, titled “Research shows policing needs greater numbers in force”, stated:

Demand for police services has exceeded supply in the ACT, spurring the territory’s Chief Police Officer to go public on the dire need for more officers as rising family violence and mental health-related cases put the squeeze on available resources.

Chief Police Officer Neil Gaughan will lead the charge backed by independent modelling, which will call for boosted staffing numbers to match the rapid growth in the territory’s population.

“It’s a demand and supply issue. At the moment, demand [for police services] is exceeding supply and we need to balance that up ...

It’s become clear to me that the number of police we have currently needs to be increased to meet current and future demand.”

That report, I think, is a very important document because it will detail, one would imagine, the actual number that is required to meet the operational requirement. To meet the national average, there would be about an extra 350 police required; to meet New South Wales, about another 150; and to meet the same number as in Tasmania would be 250. I think the PWC report that has an analysis of what that is, through that review, would be very useful.

In recent years the AFPA have said:

The territory's population and geographic nature have increased and expanded, yet the number of police officers hasn't. This has meant more calls to service which has put pressure on all ACT Policing members and portfolios within the organisation. A lack of police officers on the ground in the ACT is also a welfare issue. Instead of having some downtime away from the pressures of being a police officer, they accept overtime or extra shifts because they do not want to let us down.

What has Mr Gentleman said and what has Mr Barr said throughout this whole process? I think it is very important. In response to the latest report, this is what Mr Gentleman said:

The government has already significantly boosted funding as part of a phased transformation of ACT Policing that will enable more police on the street and boost police numbers. The workforce continues to grow. We welcomed new recruits in the last year. Record investment through phase 1 of the reforms has delivered an extra 60 staff and enabled more police to be on the streets.

Well, where are they? We have heard Mr Gentleman, budget after budget saying, "There are more police. We are putting it in the budget." Well, where are they? The evidence in annual reports, *RoGS* and what the Chief Police Officer is saying is that there are fewer police now than there were a decade ago. So where are all these police that Mr Gentleman promised, that he said he was delivering? Either that was not true or there have been some secret cuts along the way. Either they have been cutting behind the scenes, cutting police numbers, or they have not put the additional police in that they said, or Mr Gentleman is calling the CPO a liar. Which one is it? I look forward to Mr Gentleman explaining where all these police have gone.

Mr Gentleman said the workforce continues to grow. That is not true. The Chief Police Officer said it has fallen. So when Mr Gentleman says it continues to grow, that is not true. He said there is record investment. This government cut \$15 million from the budget for policing in 2015. Listen to what the Chief Officer is saying: he is in rundown facilities, he does not have the staff, and he does not have the equipment. The investment is not matching the need.

And what has Mr Barr been saying? He said:

In 2019 the government delivered a significant investment package for the transformation in the way police deliver their service, with an increase in funding for some 70 officers.

Well, where are they? Where are these officers that the government said they delivered? Was that not true? Were we being hoodwinked or have they been cutting by stealth? Which one is it? I want to know the answer. We will do some more analysis on that to find out if they have been cutting by stealth, did they get rid of a whole bunch of officers and not tell anybody about it or were they lying? They are the two options. Which one is it?

As we have heard from the CPO, the numbers are actually fewer now, not more. If you had increased by 70 officers, that would not be true—that could not possibly be true! The facts are there in black and white. I commend the Chief Police Officer for coming out as he has, to be honest. What he is doing I imagine is not particularly popular within government circles because they have been trying to hide this for a long time. But he is putting his officers first. I commend him for his leadership in doing that.

Despite this disgraceful deception from Mr Barr and Mr Gentleman over what has been years now, it is good that it has finally been called out. The mistruths have been exposed. We now have the truth before us and we have a chance to rectify it. At its nub, that is what my motion calls for. It calls for two simple things. Firstly, let's increase the number of police to fully meet operational requirements in the upcoming budget. Let's see what those numbers are. Let's fully resource police.

Secondly, what I want the government to do is get hold of the AFP's PWC report and Nous consulting modelling. I do not know if they have a copy. Mr Gentleman can let us know. It is pretty negligent if they have not got a copy, to be frank. But that will provide us with the information that we need to provide the right analysis to say, "This is the number that we need, year by year, to meet operational requirements." Let's get a copy of that.

I must say, it is pretty disappointing to see that Mr Gentleman has circulated an amendment that removes any "calls on". All it has is a bunch of notes. It does not say that we will meet operational requirements at all. It removes mention of the PWC and Nous consulting report. It is a bunch of wishy-washy words and platitudes and: "Trust us. We will give you more police." This is the same minister and the same Chief Minister who have been saying, "We are giving you more police," for year. I have just shown you that that is not true. How can you trust them? They are the most deceitful, distrustful government in Australia. We have proved it here today. They have been saying for years that they have been increasing police numbers. That was a lie.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (4.17): I thank Mr Hanson for the motion. I do agree with some of the intent in the motion, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I cannot agree with some of the commentary both in the motion and in Mr Hanson's comments to the motion this afternoon.

I move:

Omit all text after "That this Assembly", substitute:

- “(1) extends its thanks and appreciation to ACT Policing for continuing to keep our community safe;
- (2) notes the latest *Report on Government Services* from the Productivity Commission shows that:
 - (a) ACT Policing continues to enjoy the trust and confidence of the community; and
 - (b) Canberra residents feel safe with one of the highest levels of perceived safety in both the home and public places; and

(3) further notes the:

- (a) new purchase agreement signed with the Australian Federal Police provides base funding of \$800 million over four years;
- (b) Government will invest in a range of community safety, harm reduction and criminal justice initiatives during the 2023-24 Budget process including increased police resourcing;
- (c) commitment from the Chief Minister to increase police numbers in the 2023-24 Budget, reflecting the increase in population; and
- (d) the Assembly Resolution of 9 February 2022 in which the Government recommitted to continue resourcing ACT Policing in line with an evidenced based approach.”.

I begin by recognising and, of course, thanking ACT Policing for continuing to keep our community safe. Every day our members work tirelessly to serve our community, ensuring the incidents of crime remain low and that, when they do occur, they are responded to quickly. Like they have been doing so many times before, the Canberra Liberals are once again trying to score political points by degrading the service of our hardworking officers. Yet again Mr Hanson and the Canberra Liberals are disregarding the excellent results our police continue to achieve, and they are disrespecting officers in the process.

But it is clear from the 2023 *Report on Government Services* that Canberrans still are not buying their lies and scaremongering. The *RoGS* data once again demonstrates that ACT Policing continues to enjoy the trust and the confidence of the community. Canberrans feel safe, with one of the highest levels of perceived safety in both the home and public places, with high perceptions of safety at home, walking their neighbourhoods and travelling on public transport. As I have said many times before and the opposition well know, police numbers in the ACT cannot be easily compared to other jurisdictions, which cover a much wider geographical area. Comparison to other jurisdictions is fraught and it does not account for the unique nature of the territory, which enables resources to be moved around as quickly as priorities arise. We have seen that with Operation TORIC.

While the ACT government has injected record funding into ACT Policing and the workforce continues to grow and welcome new members, we do recognise the need for increased police resourcing. That is why in the 2023-24 budget we will continue to invest in a range of community safety, harm reduction and criminal justice initiatives that increase police numbers in the 2023-24 budget. This will be in addition to the new purchase agreement signed with the AFP which provides base funding of \$800 million over four years as well as our record investment in ACT Policing in the 2019-20 budget, which delivered more than an additional 60 members.

Unlike those opposite, the government has a strong record of investment in our police and will continue resourcing ACT Policing as Canberra grows. In the 2022-23 budget we further built on this investment, providing \$3.839 million over four years to bolster the Sexual Assault Child Abuse Team within ACT Policing, to increase the level of service to the community, as part of the government’s and ACT Policing’s continuing efforts to improve the justice system response to sexual assault. There was \$2.522 million over four years through the establishment of the Joint Organised Crime

Task Force to enhance ACT Policing's response to serious and organised crime including criminal groups, drug trafficking and supply within the ACT. There was also \$440,000 to extend the second team for the Police, Ambulance and Clinical Early Response program and \$263,000 to continue to support law enforcement and mental health professions in ACT Policing and Canberra Health Service to assist with the identification of fixated threats to government officials and the ACT community. The Chief Minister has already indicated that the government will build on this investment in the 2023-24 budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, while the Canberra Liberals are scare mongering for their own political advantage and trying to score cheap political points, we are actually getting on with the job of supporting our police officers. I will continue working with the CPO to support our officers and keep our community safe. In closing I once again offer my thanks and gratitude to all members of ACT Policing for their commitment and service to our community. We will continue to work together to ensure Canberra remains a safe city and that ACT Policing is well-resourced.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (4.22): I do not simply want to repeat my speech from yesterday, but there are a few key points I would love to remake today. As I previously stated and will continue to do so, the Greens believe everyone has a right to live in a safe, peaceful community, free from crime and fear of violence. We sincerely appreciate our police officers for the important and difficult role they play in protecting our community and thank them for their services. It is Greens policy that we need ACT Policing to be well-resourced, well-supported and skilled, to have close relationships with the ACT's diverse community and to be able to respond to the community's needs.

It should be noted that the *Report on Government Services* showed Canberra residents feel safe, with one of the highest levels of perceived safety in both the home and public spaces. People feel safer here in Canberra than in any other jurisdiction. This is a tribute to the Canberra community and all involved who help make our community safe. We also believe that the goal of creating a safe and peaceful community is not met simply from increasing force. The Greens support the proposed amendments by the police minister, including noting the \$800 million of funding to be allocated over the next four years with the AFP as part of the purchasing agreement.

We note the investment in a range of community safety, harm reduction and criminal justice initiatives to be announced in the 2023-24 budget process, including increased police resourcing. We note, as the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has already mentioned, the commitment from the Chief Minister to increase police numbers in the 2023-24 budget, reflecting the increase of population in Canberra. Finally, we note also the Assembly resolution of yesterday in which we discussed this matter at length, which re-committed to continue resourcing ACT Policing in line with the evidence-based approach.

I will note that it is more than just police that we need. Often what is needed is peer support, restorative justice, social workers, drug and alcohol counsellors, and rehabilitation programs. These are all parts of the puzzle to help make our community feel safe. We also need to prioritise investment in the programs where people are exiting detention to support their transition back into the community and to reduce rates

of recidivism. That is the point of justice reinvestment. It is to make sure that our money is invested in programs and approaches that we know reduce crime. We must work to target and solve the problems people have in their lives that lead them to interacting with the police in the first place. That means we work together as a community to build support around those in the justice system because we know that reduces crime.

I want to talk one moment about how I attended the Gungahlin Community Council last night along with my colleague Mr Milligan, and there we received a briefing from the ACT police in terms of the state of the service in the Gungahlin district. And yes, I fully acknowledge they requested additional space in that police station, which is something the government has fully recognised and is working to address. Also, as these “notes” have mentioned, there are additional resources that have already been committed to and are on track to be promised in the next budget. These will go directly to addressing the concerns that Mr Hanson has raised.

In closing, the Greens support evidence-based policy that will ensure the ACT continues to be a very safe place in which to live, whilst addressing the injustices experienced by vulnerable Canberrans, so they do not need to interact with the police in the first place.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (4.26): I thank Mr Hanson for bringing this important motion to the Assembly. Of course, Mr Hanson has been campaigning on this for quite some time, calling on the government to deliver on its promises, and yet nothing seems to have happened.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my concerns on this matter relate to the Gungahlin Joint Emergency Services Centre. I have spoken of this several times over the last six years and of the need for this government to finally do something and deliver for this overcrowded facility. The Gungahlin JESC was built in the 1990s and is well overdue for a complete refurbishment. According to the government’s own estimates, Gungahlin is expected to grow to around 90,000 residents by the time it matures. This is an increase of 12,000 people on current numbers. Some data suggests it is going to reach 108,000, which is quite a significant increase.

Due to the substantial growth of the Gungahlin region, the outdated Joint Emergency Services Centre is no longer equipped to house all five services. It is overcrowded and is no longer fit for purpose. Gungahlin’s population has more than tripled since the opening of this centre in 1998. There were fewer than 25,000 people at the time living in that region. Twenty-five years later, with the population close to 90,000 people, this centre is in dire needs of refurbishment. The under resourcing continues and the appalling lack of appropriate infrastructure means poor response times to outlying areas of Gungahlin and increased crime, which could mean the difference between life and death in some instances.

In early January this year, 19 businesses across Gungahlin suburbs were broken into and burgled. There were nine break-ins in Casey Market Town, three in Nicholls, three in Palmerston, two in Gold Creek and two in Crace. For this all to happen in one night is beyond ridiculous. What if it were homes instead of local businesses that were broken into during the early hours of the morning? What if serious injury had

occurred—or, worse, a death? Would these break-ins have occurred if there were more police on the beat or even a police presence in these areas at all times? Gungahlin suffers due to the lack of police presence, which is a direct result of the ACT having the lowest number of police per capita in the country.

What is truly appalling is that Canberrans are now required to complete an online form through Access Canberra when reporting an incident instead of calling the police. Yet another level of bureaucracy where there should not be. Has the government even considered how this might affect the elderly residents in Canberra, those who might not have access to a computer, or internet, or who might not be confident enough in using a computer? Has the government really considered every Canberran in its decision when tackling crime? Is it yet another result of not having enough police personnel to respond to every incident? I am then left wondering, along with constituents I have spoken with, who is filtering this online form and what response is being made?

I have heard many reports of police officers being relocated to other stations due to shortages, including Gungahlin. Instead of employing and recruiting more officers, the government is pulling resources from other areas to cover shifts. This is just one impact of low resourcing for our police department. Minimal resourcing also impacts on the welfare of police members, including increased stress on families, increased incidences of sick leave, impossible work-life balance and a greater uptake of AFP welfare services.

I recently ran an electorate-wide survey of my electorate Yerrabi. In that survey, I asked the community what the most important issues to them are. Over half of the respondents said that crime in their local community is their major area that needed to be addressed by this government. I understand you cannot fix crime, but you know what you can do: act on your election promises, deliver a separate police station to service the Gungahlin community and employ more police officers. I support Mr Hanson's motion and call on the government to deliver on their promises and increase the number of police to fully meet operational requirements in the 2023-24 ACT budget.

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) (4.32): I would like to thank Mr Hanson for today bringing a motion that enables a conversation about ACT government's role in helping create a safer community for all of us.

Our community and academic sectors here in the ACT contribute greatly to our understanding of reducing harmful behaviour, leading to reduced recidivism, reduced homelessness and improved mental and physical health, health and social impacts associated with alcohol and other drug use, and better family and community relationships. Indeed, the 2023 Senior Australian of the Year, Professor Tom Calma, has been talking about social determinants and justice reinvestment for years.

Many of you in this chamber, I hope, will have read the final report of the *Review of the service system and implementation requirements for raising the minimum age of*

criminal responsibility in the Australian Capital Territory. Led by Emeritus Professor Morag McArthur and published in August 2021, this report talks through the issues we need to consider in a service pathway for young people aged 10 to 13 years and is critically important to the work this government is progressing to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14 years.

The report included a review of 10- to 13-year-old Canberrans who were engaged in the youth justice system, to better understand what had contributed to their harmful behaviour and what service responses might have been needed to avoid it. Only 29 per cent of the young people in this age group were on child protection orders in the year before their first supervised youth justice order—closely aligned to the national average. And yet, we also know that 72 per cent of those ACT young people had been suspended or expelled from school, 90 per cent of those young people had experienced family violence and more than two thirds of those young people had witnessed violence perpetrated by their father.

These children and their families need multidisciplinary support with the ability to receive referrals that engage services in a therapeutic rather than punitive way. Police do not want to be dealing with situations that would be better addressed by youth workers or social workers, and this is why the ACT government is investing in supports for our police to better assist them.

I also want to recognise the great work done by our community sector to support young people and families. We have community sector organisations in Canberra who support young people and their families with the problems that can result from drug and alcohol use, mental illness, homelessness, and domestic and family violence. These organisations are our ACT government partners in delivering services to the most at-risk young people and their families, who might otherwise slip through the cracks in more mainstream services and I thank them for the lives they save every day. I also thank the young people who have come to meet me in my office to talk about the specific kinds of support that they most needed.

In December, ACT police and a very experienced army veteran from Victoria were very helpful in getting me to jump off the top of Lovett Tower in Woden with all the right safety ropes attached. This was part of a big day of fun activities aimed at raising funds and awareness for PCYC, who support young people at risk of ending up in the youth justice system to re-engage with education, rebuild relationships with families and carers and do things that they find meaningful and rewarding and transform their lives.

Last year, I had the opportunity to meet with Youth Insearch, who provide peer-led youth interventions in New South Wales. All week, I have been wearing a blue heart-shaped pin from Youth Insearch, in support of their work to support the mental health of at-risk young people as End Youth Suicide Week begins on Monday, 13 February.

I want everyone to know of the impact that programs such as these have on reducing the engagement of young people in harmful behaviour that might bring them into contact with the justice system.

Mr Deputy Speaker, these social determinants are not only an issue for young people. I present two reports from Women's Centre for Health Matters that speak to the need for health and social services:

ACT Women and Prisons—Invisible Bars: The Stories behind the Stats—Deb Wybron and Kiri Dicker, Women's Centre for Health Matters Inc., dated May 2009.

The Stories of ACT women in prison—10 years after the opening of the AMC—Women's Centre for Health Matters Inc., dated 2019.

These issues are often intertwined and occur in intergenerational cycles. I quote from the 2009 report, *ACT women and prisons*:

I see a lot of myself in her; the choices she makes, her feelings of less than, her total lack of self worth, it is the same as I was in my life.

The trauma and abuse that many of these women experienced as children leads to mental ill health and substance addiction and increases the likelihood of domestic violence in their adult relationships. While in the justice system, some women talked about the opportunity to work on some of those social determinants. From the 2019 report, *The stories of ACT women in prison*, one woman said:

... In custody, I have a huge range of supports that I would not have in the community, I am very fortunate to have people around me who are able to give me advice and support. In the community, my support network is minimal to say the least, but I am going to change that, continuing to engage with services that I am currently engaging with as well as reach out with other agencies, services and individuals.

Since the publication of that report in 2019, the ACT government has increased funding for drug and alcohol support services, including investing in: better facilities for some of the non-government organisations who deliver those services; mental health services, including dialectical behaviour therapy programs that we know can make a real difference in intergenerational trauma and psychosocial mental illness such as complex PTSD or borderline personality disorder; and increased funding for homelessness services. We know that there is more to do and we know that this needs integration and multidisciplinary teamwork. I look forward to seeing more of those services delivered.

Justice reinvestment really matters because justice really matters. As Dr Cornel West says:

Justice is what love looks like in public, just as tenderness is what love looks like in private.

If we can support programs that better enable people to better express support for each other as individuals, through investment in those mental health, housing, domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol support, and family support programs, we will see

more justice for those people who have very complex life circumstances and we will see a safer community for all of us.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I support Minister Gentleman's amendments to Mr Hanson's motion and I am committed to doing what I can as Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Justice Health, Minister for Disability and Minister responsible for youth justice to reduce the number of people engaging in harmful behaviour that requires police involvement.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.38): I move the following amendment to Mr Gentleman's proposed amendment:

Add after paragraph (3)(d):

“(4) That this Assembly calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) increase the number of police to fully meet operational requirements in the 2023-24 ACT Budget;
- (b) request that the AFP release the PWC report and Nous Consulting modelling.”.

The problem with Mr Gentleman's amendment is that it does not have any “calls-ons”. It is full of platitudes. I have already established in this place the assurances from Mr Gentleman and Mr Barr that police numbers will increase or have been increasing have been proven to be false. The Chief Police Officer has outed them. The statistics have outed them. The number of police has decreased in the last ten years, not increased. As I said, they have either made secret cuts to police that we are not aware of or, when they said they were increasing police by 70, that simply was not true. Mr Gentleman's amendment takes away any effect of the motion. It just “notes” a bunch of things.

So, I amend Mr Gentleman's amendment by saying two things. Firstly, let us actually commit to increasing the number of police to fully meet operational requirements in the budget. Are those opposite saying they will not resource police to meet operational requirements? I mean, it is a pretty simple thing to ask for. It is what the police are asking for. So if they are going to put their money where their mouth is, they will support that amendment. Secondly, let us have a look at this Nous consulting model and the PWC report, because that provides the data, the information, we need to make the right decisions in terms of making sure that ACT Police is properly resourced. Mr Gentleman did not even mention it. It was a substantive part of the motion; he just ignored it. So, with those two amendments, I am happy to support everything else that Minister Gentleman has put forward in his amendment. I am taking the negative rhetoric out of my motion. I am happy to—happy to. We could take that out because the substance of it is fund—

Mr Barr: I am pleased you have identified it as for what it is—

MR HANSON: Well of course it is negative, because the story is negative! The story is negative—you have been defunding the police, Mr Barr. It is hard for me to put

positive light on the fact that you have been defunding the police. That is not a happy story to tell. But I am happy to gloss over that, which is what Mr Gentleman has done, if we accept the substantive bit is the calls on to increase the number of police to fully meet operational requirements in the budget. If you vote against this today, you are accepting, acknowledging and admitting that you are not funding police adequately. Also, let us have a look at the PWC report.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (4.41): I thank Mr Hanson for the amendment. We will not be supporting it. The Chief Minister has made it very clear that he will be providing, with assistance from me, extra funding in this budget to meet operational requirements where needed. And we will not be telling Commissioner Kershaw what to do with his own report. He will certainly provide it for us. I am quite confident of that. I will mention this discussion to him tomorrow. But we will not be supporting this amendment.

Question put:

That **Mr Hanson's** amendment to **Mr Gentleman's** amendment to **Mr Hanson's** motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 6

Noes 13

Mr Cain
Ms Castley
Mr Cocks
Mr Hanson
Mr Milligan
Mr Parton

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

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

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Gentleman's amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Standing orders—suspension

Motion (by **Mr Gentleman**) agreed to, with the concurrence of an absolute majority:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Treasurer to present the Appropriation Bill 2022 (No 2) and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023 (No 2).

Financial Management Act—budget review 2022-2023

Paper and statement by minister

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (4.47): For the information of members, I present:

Budget 2022-2023—Financial Management Act, pursuant to subsection 20A(2)—
Delivering for Canberrans: now and into the future—Budget Review, dated
February 2023.

I seek leave to make a statement in relation to the paper.

Leave granted.

MR BARR: I am very pleased to present the budget review for fiscal year 2022-23. This updates the economic forecasts and budget estimates for this current financial year after the 2022-23 budget last year.

There is no doubt that over the last three years Canberrans have endured bushfires, COVID outbreaks, hailstorms, natural disasters and flooding, and they are now experiencing cost-of-living pressures. Despite all of these challenges, the Territory's economy has continued to grow. Economic growth was at 3.9 per cent in 2020-21 and 1.9 per cent even during the lockdowns of 2021-22. There are some risks as we look to the rest of this fiscal year, principally the Reserve Bank's trajectory of cash rate increases and some of the ongoing geopolitical tensions.

In summary, the outlook for the Territory economy remains positive. The updated 2022-23 economic forecasts show stronger growth in gross state product, employment, wages and population growth than was expected last August. Strong population growth over recent years, combined with the return of international students and migrants, will further support the ongoing resilience of the Territory's economy, including our near full-employment labour market. I am pleased to advise that the 2022-23 budget review is the third consecutive budget update to report improvements in the Territory's headline net operating balance across all years.

The government has a clear fiscal strategy to restore public finances as the community and economy recover from the impact of the pandemic, by systematically reducing debt over the long term whilst also investing in infrastructure that improves the wellbeing of Canberrans and supports economic growth and jobs over the longer term. So the headline net operating balance is forecast to be in this fiscal year a deficit of \$461.5 million, that is a \$21.5 million improvement on the earlier budget estimate. The deficit is forecast to be lower in every year of the forward estimates. Over the four years this is a cumulative improvement in the territory's budget position of \$261.3 million. The 2022-23 budget review also includes improvements in all key balance sheet metrics for this current fiscal year and across the forward estimates. Net debt, net financial liabilities and net worth all improved, noting the 2022-23 budget also reported improvements on all of these metrics relevant to the 2021-22 budget.

A key factor in improving the budget outlook and health of the territory's fiscal position is our nation-leading employment and wage outcomes. Having such high labour utilisation has driven strong wage growth, which has been an important shield for many households as externally driven inflation has hit the economy. As an employer, the government's negotiations on enterprise bargaining have prioritised wage increases for the government's lowest paid employees. Lifting the wages of lower income ACT government employees is one of the more practical measures the government can take to address cost of living concerns for these workers and their families.

The Reserve Bank's current monetary policy settings, which have seen nine cash rate increases for the purposes of combatting inflation, remain a risk to future levels of private investment and household consumption. As I said in my speech to open the parliamentary year on Tuesday, we begin this year as the fastest growing state or territory in the nation over the past decade. Our population has grown from 370,000 to 460,000, and by 2027 Canberra will reach a population of half a million people. This requires government investment now and planning now for that future to ensure that as our population increases Canberra continues to be one of the world's most liveable cities.

So, through the budget review we are further investing in services that improve wellbeing providing additional funding to support a number of measures, including ensuring that the ACT public health system is equipped to meet future demands through additional funding for the COVID-19 response, upgraded and expanded pathology infrastructure and more specialist cancer nurses. There is more support for our most vulnerable with greater access to crisis accommodation, a new perinatal early intervention program and expanded services for children with developmental vulnerability. We are acquiring more properties for therapeutic residential care to support the implementation of the Next Step for Our Kids 2022 to 2030 strategy.

We are upgrading our public transport network including the purchase of five new light rail vehicles, upgrading the existing light rail fleet to include on-board batteries and upgrades to the Woden and Tuggeranong bus depots to support 300 battery electric buses. There is more funding for sport and recreation, with additional grants for community-owned facilities and infrastructure expansion, including upgrades to the Phillip District Enclosed Oval. There is more support for environmental sustainability and climate action through an additional \$50 million in loans to extend our very successful and highly demanded Sustainable Household Scheme, and there is funding to improve road safety and the quality of travel through investment in the Strategic Road Maintenance and Renewal program.

These are just some of the initiatives contained within the budget review, with a focus on meeting the challenges of a growing population, addressing cost of living pressures, continuing to invest in Canberra's people and places, investigating measures to improve housing access, choice and affordability and embedding a long-term plan for the delivery of services and infrastructure.

This year the budget process returns to June for the first time since pre-pandemic in 2019. As we move into the budget round for 2023-24 we will seek to further embed

our wellbeing approach to budgeting, which enables consideration of the potential impacts of policy and investment choices across the 12 wellbeing domains. I look forward to continuing to outline further details of that budget deliberation process on budget day in late June. I commend the budget review to the Assembly.

Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 (No 2)

Mr Barr, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement and a Human Rights Act compatibility statement and the following paper:

Budget 2022-2023—Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 13—
Delivering for Canberrans: now and into the future—Supplementary Budget
Papers, dated February 2023.

Title read by Clerk.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (4.56): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I present the Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 (No 2) and table the supplementary budget papers in accordance with section 13 of the financial management act.

This bill provides for the appropriation of additional funds in the current fiscal year totalling \$300,696,000 for new initiatives and employee expenses. The funding comprises \$158.168 million in additional net control recurrent payment appropriations, \$129.794 million in additional capital injection appropriations, \$9.75 million in additional payments on behalf of the Territory appropriations and an additional \$2.984 million for Treasurer's advance. The bulk of new funding in the appropriation bill goes to fund the government's enterprise bargaining commitment offer as well as the new initiatives that I outlined in my earlier speech. I commend the appropriation bill to the Assembly.

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

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023 (No 2)

Mr Barr, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement and a Human Rights Act compatibility statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (4.58): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

This is a straightforward bill, an appropriation for the Office of the Legislative Assembly. It provides for the appropriation of additional funds in the current fiscal year totalling \$711,000. The funding comprises \$429,000 in additional net controlled recurrent payments and \$282,000 in additional payments on behalf of the Territory appropriations. These are for employee expenses for the Office of the Legislative Assembly and the Officers of the Assembly, the Integrity Commissioner, the Auditor-General and the Electoral Commissioner, again to meet the parameters of the government's enterprise bargaining offer. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Public Accounts—Standing Committee Reference

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (4.59), by leave: I move:

That, notwithstanding the provisions of the resolution of the Assembly of 2 December 2020, as amended, that established general purpose standing committees, the Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 (No 2) and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2022-2023 (No 2) be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to decide whether or not to undertake an inquiry, and, if they decide to inquire, report by 21 March 2023.

This committee reporting date will allow almost six weeks for the committee to inquire into the bills, if they choose, consistent with past practice, while ensuring the timely passing of the supplementary appropriation to support government operations.

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

Paper

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (5.01): I present the following paper:

Analysis of Recent Land Ballots conducted by the Suburban Land Agency, undated.

I understand that there may have been an issue with papers tabled in accordance with the schedule and that this attachment may not have been provided, so I am tabling it for members to have a copy.

Multiculturalism Bill 2022

Debate resumed from 11 October 2022, on motion by **Ms Cheyne**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.01): The Multicultural Bill 2022 is designed to support the recognition, promotion and valuing of a culturally and linguistically diverse ACT. The bill includes a formal statement that recognises the value of multiculturalism in the ACT, as well as a system of reporting obligations for the ACT government in its development of legislation, programs and policies that aim to ensure equity of access to services and opportunities for members of the multicultural community.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Ms Shobha Varkey in the gallery, a member of the Multicultural Advisory Council who has come all the way from Yass today and has been waiting very, very patiently all day for us to get to this point. Welcome, Shobha.

The bill was created to address the absence of a formalised commitment and agreement to address multiculturalism being positively actioned in the ACT. The bill has three distinct elements: to establish and promote a charter for multiculturalism, to establish the Multicultural Advisory Council as a statutory body, and to promote a framework for the review and continuous development of the government's promotion of multiculturalism.

The charter is something that I would encourage the community to have a look at and to really embrace. It is something that the Canberra Liberals support. Establishing the Multicultural Advisory Council as a statutory body, I note, comes with some extra cost to the community, as there is a stipend paid per council member in the order of \$30,000 to \$50,000 a year.

The framework for review and reporting on the government's promotion of multiculturalism requires directorates to report on their conformity with the charter and other principles in the bill. I trust that this is not just a tick-box exercise and that this is something that the various ministers in the ACT government take seriously in encouraging their directorates to reflect the diversity of the ACT community—growing diversity, I might mention. We will be very carefully monitoring, in annual reports and directorate reports, just how adherence to this new charter is expressed, and that there is real action, not just words, to support this implementation. I want to thank the directorate for the briefing on this bill.

I want to finish on something that I am very, very pleased about. I am very, very pleased to be part of a Canberra Liberals team that includes two members from the CALD community. Some of you might be able to reflect back to the 2020 ACT election. The diversity in the Canberra Liberals candidates was something to be applauded and, quite frankly, as good an expression of the spirit of this charter as I think you will find across all the parties.

I am very, very proud to be part of a Canberra Liberals team that, at its grassroots level, has shown an expression of embracing the diversity of the ACT community. The actual result of that candidate list is that we have two members of our team of nine. I think that, proportionately, we are way ahead of the other parties in embracing and expressing the diversity, and growing diversity, of the ACT community. That is something I am very, very proud to be a part of. The Canberra Liberals will be supporting this bill.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.06): I commend the introduction of the enshrined multicultural charter in the ACT. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this work, including Minister Cheyne, the Community Services Directorate, members of the Multicultural Advisory Council, and other leaders and stakeholders in the multicultural community. This legislation is an important step in building the community that Canberrans deserve. It sets out a clear standard for all Canberrans and gives culturally diverse Canberrans increased representation, through the Multicultural Advisory Council.

This is yet another sign of the government's ongoing commitment to multiculturalism. This commitment to multiculturalism will be celebrated next week at the very long awaited Multicultural Festival. I am sure a large proportion of Canberrans, including members from this chamber, will be joining in celebrating the diversity of peoples, food and cultures of those who call Canberra home. This is something we should be celebrating, because of the incredible richness this brings to our community.

The multicultural charter not only enshrines the importance of multiculturalism and cultural retention but also calls on each and every individual in the ACT to stop racism, discrimination and the negative effects these have on our community. Every provision in this charter is contingent on the active work of dismantling racist structures and challenging racist views. I want to dwell on this point, because the uncomfortable truth is that racism does exist in Canberra.

In November of 2022 the inquiry into racial vilification released its report. Some of its findings were deeply troublesome. The Children and Young People Commissioner noted that children and young people in the ACT and across Australia face significant levels of racism. The report found not only that racism is relatively common in schools and in peer-to-peer interactions but that incidents of racism are perpetrated as much by adults as they are within peer settings.

The commissioner found that when children report these experiences, the responses to reports can be inadequate and dismissive and can discourage young people from taking further action. The Human Rights Commissioner also found a lack of a clear protocol for involving parents and guardians in responding to racially motivated incidents, as well as challenges. These experiences can leave our culturally diverse youth feeling isolated and unwelcome and can have significant mental health and social repercussions.

The report found that public transport is a ubiquitous site for racism, including repetitive racism. This can be traumatic and discourage social engagement within the broader community. The report also found that workplaces are a common site of racism and that there is a need to introduce a positive duty for organisations to take steps to eliminate discrimination, harassment and vilification in their workplaces, in service delivery and in engagement with the public.

In my own office I have received passionate pleas for help from culturally and ethnically diverse Canberrans who are disadvantaged because of the racism that persists in our society, despite our best efforts. I have heard reports of exclusion in the workplace, of highly qualified applicants with degrees from Australian universities

unable to secure employment or being surpassed by less qualified colleagues with European surnames. I have heard reports of gross under-representation in senior levels of organisations.

How can we live in a community where there is mutual respect irrespective of your culture, language, religion or spiritual belief, without tackling racial and cultural discrimination? How can culturally diverse children feel recognised and respected for their cultural identity when school staff are ill-equipped to respond to their reports of racism and prejudice in a sensitive and supportive manner? How can migrants participate on equal terms in social, cultural, economic, civic and political life in the ACT when racial and cultural biases prevent them from gaining employment and advancing professionally?

There is no true multiculturalism without anti-racism. Just as this government has invested resources and energy into multiculturalism, it is equally necessary that we invest in anti-racism. We will need to demonstrate how we are tackling racism as part of the Welcoming Cities framework. I look forward to substantial and significant steps being taken that contribute to a Canberra where everyone has the right to live without fear of racial violence, abuse and discrimination. But for today let us celebrate, with the passing of this act, and next week with the Multicultural Festival, because it is truly something worth celebrating.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (5.11): I am very grateful for the opportunity to speak today on this bill. I have had many chats within my community and the many multicultural groups up my way, in Yerrabi, about this legislation. In the spirit of the bill, I wanted to include their remarks on the importance of this bill to them and the impact that it is going to have on them. I went out to a number of the groups. The first one, the ATN, or the Australian Triumphant Network of Canberra, is a Bangladeshi community organisation that does outstanding work to:

... promote inclusivity, strengthen, to keep Bengali cultural heritage alive and provide a platform of opportunities to the whole community to showcase their skills and uplift their cultural images to the wider community.

They said of this bill:

As one of Australia's most culturally and linguistically diverse cities, the bill is important for our local community as it aids to formally recognise the contribution diverse communities have made in Canberra.

Like ATN Canberra, there are many other cultural and religious organisations which run as a not-for-profit. The majority of members in these organisations are everyday public servants. They invest their own money to deliver events and programs for the public to enjoy. They are motivated to promote and establish multiculturalism and community harmony in Canberra through their love and pride of their cultural heritage and vision of a culturally diverse Australia.

As members of these diverse communities, sometimes we feel that our cultural contributions to the wider community are not necessarily recognised by mainstream media or governments. Some of these community members have linguistic barriers, cultural shyness and may not be aware of their rights and obligations or how to get access to government services to promote their event.

These organisations want to see their efforts appropriately acknowledged and measured and recognised and valued, as the impact their efforts have across generations of Australian migrants are invaluable. As such, ATN Canberra believes that the Multiculturalism Bill 2022 is an important step in acknowledging and valuing diverse communities' cultural and religious contributions. We believe this bill will help migrant communities to move forward and contribute more within the ACT and Australia.

The bill will strengthen inclusiveness and give more opportunities to multicultural organisations to participate in government-funded programs, self-funded programs, and provide them with access to government facilities, understanding their rights, behaviours, due diligence, obligations and services to promote and showcase their religious and cultural heritage and celebrate with the wider community.

We think once the Multiculturalism Bill has passed and matured, it will encourage more communities to participate and will aid further in highlighting and fostering positive cultural awareness and appreciation in the ACT. Some organisations or community members may feel that it will divide the community and disturb community harmony, but we believe with a proper campaign and clear communication strategy the bill will help spread the concept of multiculturalism, the advantage of having the multiculturalism charter, its principles and community responsibilities and obligations, and government's due diligence and more to greater communities across Canberra.

We hope the multicultural charter's principal message will be an effective tool in encouraging communities to take access of government services and add value to our local community by sharing their rich cultural diversity in a positive and impactful way.

That was ATN.

NATA, the Telugu association who represent Canberra's Telugu community, do fantastic work providing workshops and seminars and organising a variety of cultural and spiritual events. They have provided this place with the following comments:

The bill's principles echo our shared vision for a harmonious and welcoming modern Canberra. Hence, the bill is very important for our community. We all came from different backgrounds, ethnicities, skillsets and speak different languages, but we are all here to live peacefully and contribute to building a harmonious and prosperous Canberra, so it is important for us to have recognition, acknowledgement for our efforts, and promote equal participation in building and shaping all aspects of modern Canberra's society.

We are hoping that the bill will bring a sense of belonging, and most importantly, mutual respect, and promote equal participation. The bill's principles will help us to overcome and eliminate barriers to participation and the bill cultivates an appreciation for diverse communities, energising diversity positive thought across Canberra. We are hoping that the bill will make Canberra the most welcoming city for current and new migrants.

FINACT, the Federation of Indian Associations in the ACT, are an organisation seeking to foster coordination, cooperation and collaboration among Canberra's

various Indian communities. They do a really good job of this, as I think all of us in this place would know. As FINACT describe on their website, India and Indians are no strangers to the concept of multiculturalism, with 22 major languages, written in 13 different scripts, and over 720 dialects. FINACT are an organisation with a commitment to mutual respect, harmony, progress and happiness in the country where they come from and the country they live in. They had this to say about the bill:

Canberra is a truly international city where people from all over the world come to live and work in this beautiful city. Migrants not only bring professional skills but also a diverse range of cultures, practices, faiths and values which we share with the broader community.

The bill recognises these diverse cultures, rich heritage and customs of migrants. This is a first step to nurture inclusiveness, ensuring harmonious and united communities, and we are glad the ACT government is embarking on this journey. We hope to see positive life experiences for newly arrived migrants, students and vulnerable members of the community who at times feel left out and discriminated.

We hope to see the newly established advisory council play an active role in promoting harmony and inclusiveness and bringing communities together to embrace multiculturalism, celebrate migrant stories and cultures.

The last organisation who were kind enough to provide me with their thoughts on the bill to read in this debate were IAMSA, the Indian Australian Multicultural Sports Association, run by Mr Cricket—Sanjay—himself. IAMSA organises a lot of cricket tournaments up in Yerrabi that are dearly loved by the community. Here are the comments that they provided:

The Multiculturalism Bill is important to the multicultural communities in Canberra because it recognises the cultural diversity of the city and ensures that the rights of all minority groups are respected and protected.

The bill seeks to promote a culture of acceptance and understanding while also advocating for the social and economic development of minority communities. It also recognises the importance of language and cultural heritage and seeks to promote the use of languages and cultures in public spaces.

The bill also seeks to ensure that members of minority communities can access services and resources and participate in decision-making processes. In this way, the bill is an important step forward, creating an inclusive and equitable society for all, and is a vital tool for the Indian multicultural communities in Canberra to ensure that their voices are heard and their rights are respected.

The Multiculturalism Bill is expected to have a positive impact on the multicultural communities in Canberra. It will promote inclusivity and understanding of diverse cultures while allowing the communities to celebrate their heritage and identity.

By creating a more open and accepting society, the bill could help to foster better relationships between the Indian multicultural communities and the rest of Canberra's diverse population. Additionally, this bill could help to reduce discrimination, racism and other forms of prejudice within multicultural communities.

Finally, the bill could help to create more economic opportunities for members of the multicultural communities, as it will make it easier for them to access resources and services. It will also provide access to services, resources and opportunities that are tailored to the needs of all Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This will create a more equitable and welcoming environment in Canberra and promote understanding and respect between all its citizens.

I would like to publicly express my gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the commentary that I have read out in today's debate on this bill. Many of these people were also directly involved in the development of the bill, in the consultation process, so their time, effort and commitment to its success cannot be understated. I share their hopes for the positive impact this bill is expected to make across the ACT and look forward to it being passed today and implemented.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (5.20): I am really pleased today to speak in support of the Multiculturalism Bill 2022.

2023 is an exciting year. It marks 50 years since Al Grassby, the then federal Minister for Immigration, delivered a speech entitled "A Multi-cultural Society for the Future", recognising multiculturalism as the preferred social policy in Australia. 2023 is a year to reinstate our commitment to being an accepting, welcoming and inclusive country to people from all backgrounds. Since 1973 we have seen many changes in Australia, with people arriving, settling in and thriving in our community. People from many diverse backgrounds are now calling Australia home, and we can proudly say that Australia has largely managed this transition well.

The ACT is also becoming increasingly diverse, with people in our communities representing many cultures, languages and religions. For yet another census period, the 2021 numbers showed that the ACT had the fastest growing state or territory population of the nation. In 2021, 28.8 per cent of ACT residents were born overseas. Over 21,000 have arrived since 2017. The most commonly reported countries of birth for those born overseas were India, England, China, Nepal and New Zealand.

This is a wonderful mix of diversity that we have here in the ACT and something to be so proud of and to celebrate. We, as a community, must make sure that we do not take this diversity for granted but nurture it and ensure that everyone, no matter their cultural and linguistic background, can continue to enjoy the many benefits that the Canberra community offers.

While the ACT is a welcoming city, with many support services for new arrivals, it is essential that we strive to continually improve. People continue to experience challenges in accessing services, and barriers to inclusion and participation. Racism and discrimination remain a daily issue for many. The Multiculturalism Bill is an important instrument in recognising and addressing these challenges. The bill lays the foundation and a vision for a society which upholds, respects and protects the inherent dignity and worth of each person, regardless of their immigration status, cultural background, physical appearance or religion.

The inclusion of the charter for multiculturalism, the Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism, and the mechanisms for accountability and transparency take us a step closer to ensuring equity in all our program design, planning and implementation within the territory. I believe that the Multiculturalism Bill, through these three components, will contribute to building a more cohesive community where everyone can experience a sense of belonging and inclusion.

What makes this bill even stronger is the community support, as Ms Orr outlined, and the engagement in its development. Throughout the past two years there have been several consultations with diverse communities, stakeholders and peak bodies to ensure that this bill covers all areas that are considered important in our community to achieve equity. This consultation and the inclusion of community feedback in the development of the bill will lead to increased ownership and engagement with the legislation. It will ensure more engagement with the advisory council, through having provided members of the public with an understanding of how this bill can improve the lives of many by addressing accessibility of services and addressing racism and discrimination.

The ACT government has many existing programs and policies to ensure the inclusion of all, but, together with our work to achieve advanced level accreditation as a Welcoming City, this legislation will ensure that multiculturalism is a critical part of our inclusion agenda. I see this bill as vital to ensuring that we as a territory benefit from diversity by welcoming and including new arrivals, removing any barriers to participation and making sure people of all backgrounds have equal opportunities to succeed and thrive.

By recognising, valuing and embracing the growing diversity of cultures and languages, we are continuing to make Canberra a more welcoming, inclusive and cohesive city. I think it is a great celebration that we have the Multicultural Festival coming up to celebrate the passing of this bill. I am pleased to commend this bill to the Assembly today. Thank you.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (5.25): I am walking from a car park to a cafe with my daughter. A man stops me and asks where the pharmacy is. “I’m sorry; I don’t live here. I’m not sure, but the main street is that way,” I say. He looks up and down, takes in my heavily pregnant belly and, with a smirk, he says, “Oh, I can see what you’ve been up to.” I am so shocked that I do not even know how to respond. As if that comment was not bad enough, he goes on to say, “As my Chinese friends would say, ‘Good ruck,’” in a mocking Asian accent and with a laugh.

This is an interaction that I had over the weekend. This is an interaction that I had in February 2023. In February 2023, Asian Australians are still facing comments like this. Whilst that interaction is bad enough, I do not think that the members opposite realise or fathom that what they do each and every sitting week is actually much, much worse. I have lost count of how many times Labor and Greens members have continuously accused me of being a puppet for middle-aged white men in my party.

Only this morning I called out the Chief Minister for his attempt to verbal me. The Minister for Multicultural Affairs rolled her eyes and said, “Oh, you’re going to use that card.” Yes, I am going to call it out. I am going to call it out because I have stayed silent for too many decades. But now I am confident that I have got a voice.

It is not me that I speak on behalf of but the countless thousands of silent, helpless Australians from the CALD community, particularly women of colour, who do not have the same platform.

I have seen the way the Minister for Multicultural Affairs conducts herself at many events. She is warm, she is engaging and she is very enthusiastic with the multicultural community. I cannot even imagine, I cannot fathom, that she would ever say that to anyone else from the CALD community—that they were using that card—if they expressed hurt and humiliation and called out being verballed or being called a puppet for middle-aged men.

I can only conclude that all the sympathy and empathy about the continued discrimination, micro-aggression and unconscious biases are for some within the CALD community and not all. I am incredibly disappointed that, despite the rhetoric, the well-prepared speeches, the Minister for Multicultural Affairs blatantly dismissed the hurt and humiliation that any woman of colour feels each and every time we are verballed or mansplained to about what we apparently said. It is incredibly hurtful and it is incredibly unhelpful in what I hope is now the joint pursuit of a more inclusive, tolerant and diverse society.

I acknowledge the presence of Shobha Varkey here, who is on the Multicultural Advisory Council, because of the work that she and other council members do to achieve that goal.

Many in this chamber will be familiar with my story: how as a young seven-year-old, I, along with my parents and younger sister, packed up our lives in Korea to move to Australia. My parents took a huge and courageous leap of faith in coming to Australia, searching for better opportunities for us, opportunities that they did not have, opportunities that they believed Australia could provide. In doing so, like so many migrant families, they sacrificed everything, leaving behind their home, their families and friends, to move to a foreign country where they did not know the language or the custom, where everyone looked different, to start again. My story is not unique. In fact, it is a story that is shared by so many who have chosen to make this wonderful country home.

An important component of this bill is the introduction of a charter for multiculturalism. The charter will articulate a commitment by government to multiculturalism and demonstrate the strong support we all have for our multicultural communities. I commend the intent and purpose of that goal, but I also strongly suggest that, whilst a symbolic gesture from government is all well and good, what is more important is that leaders in our community do not make harmful and insulting accusations of “using the race card” when we call out unacceptable behaviour levelled at us.

Australia is one of the most multicultural nations in the world. Whilst we are not perfect, I am very proud of the community where we celebrate our differences. In doing so, we do not want new Australians to abandon their cultural heritage. Rather, we embrace it, experience it and share it together. Of course, it is not all rainbows and unicorns. I have spoken up about my own experiences with racism before, and again today: how it can shatter your entire world when you are on the receiving end of

abuse, how it can bring into question your belief in humanity, and the hurt that it causes to feel that you are in some way so thoroughly rejected by your fellow humans.

Although talking about my experiences does not diminish the hurt and the injury that it causes, I know that I am one of the lucky ones. Being able to stand up and tell my own story about racism allows me to shine a light on the behaviours that I have seen and been subjected to. Despite attempts by many over the years to intimidate and bully me into staying silent, I cannot, because, as one of only a few Asian faces in Australian public leadership, I do have a role, I do have a duty, to ensure that the forgotten, the hurt and the humiliated voices are heard.

A few days after my interaction with the man who wished me “good ruck” I had the fortune of having dinner with some scholars visiting from Korea and Japan. They were excited that an Asian woman was the leader of a major party in Australia. One scholar commented to me, “Maybe you will be the first Asian female Prime Minister of Australia one day.” I have heard that comment before. Previously I would think, “Why not? Maybe, one day.” This time I had to pause and sadly reflect and say that perhaps Australia is not ready for that. But I do remain hopeful that perhaps by the time my daughters are entering the workforce Australia is ready.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (5.33), in reply: I am pleased to close the debate, and I thank members in the chamber for their contributions and support.

I start by sincerely apologising to Ms Lee and to all members of the chamber. I cannot recall exactly what I said this morning, but I know I did comment, and I accept that. By way of explanation, it was because Ms Lee had claimed she was being lectured because of her attributes rather than her argument, and I believed that not to be true. In my heart of hearts I believed that not to be what was occurring; I believed the Chief Minister was commenting on the merits of her argument, and there was no assertion or comments about any of her attributes in his doing so. With that explanation, Madam Speaker, I acknowledge that there was harm and I withdraw, and I sincerely apologise.

Could I too acknowledge the presence of Ms Shobha Varkey and Mr Mohammed Ali, who are both very proud members of the Multicultural Advisory Council. Shobha, in particular, has been waiting for, I think, going on seven hours now for this debate to conclude. It is a small but remarkable example that demonstrates the dedication and the commitment that the MAC, as it is known, is known for. I also want to acknowledge and record the apologies from Chair of the MAC, Mr John Kalokerinos, who I know would have loved to have been here and certainly was present for the introduction of the bill.

The ACT government is committed to a Canberra where everyone can belong, regardless of their cultural or linguistic background. To do this effectively and collaboratively, we need to ensure strategies are in place to reduce barriers to participation and connection. Canberra is an incredibly diverse community with a reputation for openness and acceptance. Equity and inclusion are cornerstones of the ACT government, and they reflect the values of Canberrans.

Multiculturalism acknowledges the benefits of cultural diversity and the importance of social harmony and acceptance. The most recent Scanlon Foundation report, *Mapping Social Cohesion*, indicates a vast majority of Australians believe multiculturalism has been good for Australia. Locally, the Living Well in the ACT Region Survey shows 85.5 per cent of Canberrans agree that Canberra, as a community, accepts people from different cultures, and 74.7 per cent feel a high sense of belonging to their local community.

However, whilst the ACT is a largely inclusive, socially cohesive and welcoming community, discrimination against people of different faith, race and nationalities does persist. During the COVID-19 pandemic there was an increase in reports of racial vilification and discrimination to the ACT Human Rights Commission.

This act is an important instrument for strengthening our commitment to diversity. The legislation aims to advance a harmonious, inclusive society; to promote understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity; and to recognise the importance and value it brings to our whole community. It includes three key elements. First, it introduces a charter for multiculturalism. The charter details principles and responsibilities necessary for an inclusive and welcoming Canberra such as the right of all Canberrans to participate fully and on equal terms in society; to freely and safely express their culture, language, religious and spiritual beliefs; and to be protected from racism and discrimination. The charter will guide the development and implementation of more inclusive government policies, programs and services.

Secondly, the bill formally establishes the Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism as an important source of advice and expertise on the evolving needs and concerns of our multicultural community. The council will consult broadly to support the exchange of information and ideas between the minister and members of the ACT community, and it will play a role in ensuring the principles in the charter are upheld. Consultation will commence soon to seek feedback on what the community thinks should be included in the council's terms of reference.

Thirdly, the bill includes reporting obligations. All ACT government directorates and the Minister for Multicultural Affairs will be required to report annually on their progress in promoting multiculturalism. The Minister for Multicultural Affairs will also deliver an annual multicultural policy statement on government priorities for promoting multiculturalism in the coming year. And I can assure Mr Cain that this is something that the ACT government does take incredibly seriously. We do look forward to progressing these values and providing a regular update, and we welcome that scrutiny.

There are many people to thank for ensuring that we reached this historic moment today. The Multicultural Advisory Council has been the driving force in championing this legislation and why it matters. I thank each of them, and past Chair, Kirk Zwangobani, for their efforts. It matters, as is evident today.

Thank you to the Office for Multicultural Affairs for such hard work in bringing the community together in a way which was genuine, open and iterative so we have an act

that does reflect our community's values and for ensuring there is strong ownership of it across the whole community.

Finally, to our wonderful multicultural community in Canberra: thank you for your work, encouragement, contribution and support. Ms Orr has provided many expressions of this today, and I am so grateful, as is this government, for your efforts in creating and shaping this bill and for what you do in living our values and enriching our community, often without a lot of fanfare. It is seen, and it is seen and valued by me and this government. It is a great honour to work with you.

This act is a vital part of the ACT government's broader work to ensure Canberra remains the most welcoming and inclusive city in Australia. I commend the bill to the chamber.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Electricity Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022

Debate resumed from 11 October 2022, on motion by **Ms Vassarotti**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (5.40): The Canberra Liberals will be supporting this bill. It is an unremarkable but much needed piece of legislation, which is absolutely uncontentious.

I want to thank the minister, her staff and staff from the directorate for their detailed briefing, which has put us in the picture on matters pertaining to this bill. I would have to say that many of these matters are matters that were never considered in any way, shape or form by me prior to the bill's tabling and, I dare say, had never been considered by the vast majority of Canberrans.

So what does this bill do? In short, it introduces a power for the minister to exempt a regulated utility service from the operation of the Electricity Safety Act of 1971. Why would you do that? It is important in the context of the works that are going on around the tram network. As we have moved forward with this project, we have come to understand that there is a genuine need to remove the existing duplication of regulation of the electrical work undertaken as part of that job.

I am not going to lie: this is the sort of regulatory change that you can sit down and walk some people through a dozen times, and they still will not get it. I recall my wife lying next to me early on a Sunday morning, in bed, at Theodore, saying: "If you bring up that electrical safety bill again, I am leaving. I will go and walk the kelpies on my own. You are not coming with me!"

It revolves around the mechanisms the government put in place to ensure the ongoing safety of those working on the project and the safety of the public. When the ACT government started with this project, they considered the framework set out by the Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act of 2014 would be sufficient for this big job. So, up until now the actual provision of electricity from the tram network falls under the umbrella of a regulated utility service, and to this day it is regulated by way of an operating certificate under the Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act. This is exciting!

Luckily, we live and learn, and what has been discovered during the construction of stage 1 is that we have a duplication of the regulation of electrical wiring work, so the Electricity Safety Act still applies despite the fact that this superior regulatory framework is in place. The thing about the Electrical Safety Act is that it was written around a major infrastructure project, so when it comes to residential and commercial electrical installations it is absolutely fit for purpose, but it just does not quite cut the mustard as a framework for electrical installation on a project of this size.

What that has translated to on the ground is that if we were to fully comply with the act—and, obviously, governments want to fully comply—licensed electricians would be needed to undertake every aspect of the electrical wiring work on light rail, and when I say, “every aspect”, I mean every aspect. I mean digging trenches; I mean laying conduit. That increases the cost of the project, and when it comes to the cost of the tram, do not get me started, because once I start, I will not stop!

I have spoken about the cost of the tram in here. I have spoken on mainstream media. I have spoken on social media—you have probably seen the TikToks. I have spoken on every street corner that I could find about the cost of the tram project to Woden. Although the transport minister and the Chief Minister look the other way and refuse to make comment about our cost estimate of just over \$3 billion for stage 2, you can take it from me: that is a conservative estimate. I think it is extremely fair that government should be doing whatever is in government’s power to bring that cost down. The changes brought in this amendment certainly will not get us under \$3 billion for the project—which, I might add, is not going to be completed until 2034!—but anything we can do to bring the cost down, without compromising safety or quality, we should be doing.

I will let the minister talk further on this, but, essentially, what this bill does is it stops the expensive double handling of ticking off on the electrical installation side of the tram network construction. The bill also includes a bit of futureproofing in that it anticipates the emergence of new technologies, including big batteries, and allows a framework to deal with them that will be much more fit for purpose than is currently the case.

The Canberra Liberals are in ecstatic support of this bill.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (5.44): I am pleased to support the Electricity Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022.

The bill introduces a power for the Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction to exempt a regulated utility service, such as the light rail network, from the operations of the Electricity Safety Act 1971. It will allow the minister for Sustainable Building and Construction to exempt a regulated utility from the operation of the act if that regulated utility is adequately regulated under another territory or commonwealth law, and it can be demonstrated that the exemption does not increase the risk to public safety.

Madam Speaker, light rail stage 1 has been a wonderful success story for Canberra, with the world-class investment in transport infrastructure a really transformational project—coming in under budget and not only promoting transport patronage but also a fantastic story in terms of urban renewal along the transit corridor. We want to extend the same benefits we have seen from stage 1 of light rail down to the south side; then, of course, to other parts of the city as part of our city-wide light rail network.

What we learnt during stage 1 of the construction of light rail is that it does involve the identification of onerous and costly duplication of the regulation of the electrical work undertaken, and we want to address that through this bill. Technically, the Electricity Safety Act still applied in addition to the regulatory framework set out by the Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act 2014. This did result in confusion and additional cost to navigate, as the Electricity Safety Act is not the best fit to regulate a major infrastructure project such as the light rail network. For example, compliance with regulation under the act would require licensed electricians to undertake every aspect of the electrical work, including digging trenches for laying conduit and other unskilled tasks. This process is impractical and cost prohibitive for a major infrastructure project and does not provide any safety benefits that are not achieved through other regulatory oversight, which is already in place.

Importantly, the proposed amendments will not adversely impact safety and regulatory oversight of the work. This bill will not decrease the safety of electrical work on the light rail project nor any future regulated utility. This bill proposes a logical exemption and power for large scale and non-standard electrical projects to be solely regulated under the well-established operating certificate regime, under the Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act.

This was the original intention of the territory executive. When the light rail project was initially proposed, the territory executive decided the regulatory framework set out by the Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act was appropriately robust and flexible. This meant that the provision of electricity from a light rail network became a regulated utility service and has been, and continues to be, regulated by way of an operating certificate. The amendments implement this original intention and ensure that this regulatory framework will continue to apply to light rail network for stage 2 and beyond.

Under the Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act, there are specific fit-for-purpose technical codes that impose significant safety requirements on a light rail regulated utility, including to engage licensed electricians to supervise all electrical work for the project, and to have all electrical work certified by an independent electrical certifier.

These amendments will bring the regulatory framework applicable to light rail in line with other utility entities, such as Evoenergy and Transgrid.

This framework has been further supplemented by additional guidance from the Utilities Technical Regulator, taking on board lessons learned from the light rail stage 1 project, which will assist as we continue to build out the light rail lines for Canberrans.

In summary, the amendments enhance the safety of electrical work associated with light rail, avoid the cost and confusion of duplication of different regulatory regimes, and ensure that the regulation applicable to the light rail regulated utility is a superior regulatory framework that addresses electrical safety and is fit for purpose.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (5.49), in reply: I am really happy to close the debate on the in-principle stage of the Electrical Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I almost feel like I do not need to, given the engagement of colleagues. I would like to particularly recognise Mr Parton's very detailed knowledge of it. You got it almost right; it is just that it is a light rail, rather than a tram.

With this bill, we are removing the regulatory duplication that currently exists for electrical work on the light rail network, and we are providing clarity for electricians and other tradespeople working on the light rail utility network. As I raised during the presentation of this bill, the light rail utility network was never intended to operate under two separate regulatory systems. However, during the construction of stage 1 it was found that the Electrical Safety Act still applied to the project, despite there already being a regulatory framework in place under the Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act. This bill seeks to remove the additional requirements under the Electrical Safety Act.

The regulatory framework established by the Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act is, and has always been, the most appropriate way to regulate the light rail utility network. Under this framework, utilities are issued with operating certificates which are flexible and allow for innovation in design, staggered construction and commissioning phases, and proper oversight at all stages. This approach to regulation is appropriate for the light rail utility network, which, in terms of complexity and operational considerations, has more in common with other large-scale utility networks like the electricity distribution network and solar farms than it does with residential and commercial electrical installations.

The bill establishes criteria for issuing an exemption for the light rail utility network from the Electricity Safety Act based on adequate alternative regulatory frameworks being in place and by demonstrating that the risk to public safety is not increased. Should the bill be passed, the exemption will be provided through a disallowable instrument.

The decision to amend the Electrical Safety Act in this way was supported by the fact that the alternative regulatory framework has been in place since 2016. This is when

the light rail network became a regulated utility service requiring an operating certificate under the Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act. Since then, a suite of technical codes has been developed under the act which establishes rigorous technical and safety requirements for all electrical work related to the light rail network. These technical codes were developed in consultation with Major Projects Canberra, the light rail operation branch in Transport Canberra and City Services, the electrical trades union and all relevant regulated utilities. These technical codes increase safety specifically around electrical work without adding unnecessary cost and a resourcing burden, such as requiring licensed electricians to carry out work that does not require specialist training—for example, excavating trenches.

Under the codes, a light rail regulated utility must engage licensed electricians to supervise all electrical wiring for the light rail. In addition, all electrical components will need to be certified by an independent electrical certifier, establishing a clear process for noncompliance to be rectified. The Utilities Technical Regulator has oversight over the codes, including reviewing progress reports attested to by the certifier and undertaking orders.

I understand the bill may be perceived to impact upon light rail safety by removing regulatory requirements. However, I would like to reiterate that this is not the case. In fact, the detailed consultative process undertaken to develop the technical codes which were in place before seeking a pathway for exempting light rail from the Electrical Safety Act, has resulted in a robust regulatory framework specifically tailored to the unique nature of the light rail network. The codes have been purpose built and include provisions for resolving electrical safety issues that might arise in the network.

By introducing a power for the minister to exempt a regulated utility service from the operation of the Electricity Safety Act, the bill is also pre-empting other advances in electrical technology that may be on the horizon, such as big batteries and associated systems that may not necessarily be suited to the framework under the Electricity Safety Act. I believe it is important to get ahead of these emerging technologies so that future innovation is not hampered by regulation that is not fit for purpose. This bill provides an option for a utility to be exempted from the Electricity Safety Act if it can be proven that it is adequately regulated under another territory or commonwealth law and the exemption does not increase the risk to public safety.

The bill also makes necessary amendments to the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act to provide exemptions from the requirement for electrical wiring work on the light rail electrical network to be undertaken by a licensed electrician. These exemptions are limited to electrical wiring services by or on behalf of a regulated utility that has been exempted from the Electricity Safety Act.

In closing, I would like again to reiterate that this bill will not decrease the safety of electrical work on the light rail project or other future regulated utility. The bill proposes a logical exemption power for large-scale or non-standard electrical projects to be solely regulated under the well-established operating certificate regime under the Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act. Madam Speaker, I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Yerrabi electorate—community engagement and events

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.56): Madam Speaker, I am not sure if you will be as delighted as some of the other members here but I would like to describe my journeys through my electorate so far this year. I know that excites many in this place but since coming back after two weeks out of Canberra, which is the longest I have been out of Canberra for several years, I must admit—

Mr Parton: You were missed!

MR CAIN: I was missed. Thank you, Mr Parton. I have got right back into it with a real focus on doorknocking, letterboxing, mobile offices and constituent catch-ups in Ginninderra. One of the fruits of such activity—I am sorry Minister Steel is not here, as I mentioned this to him earlier this week, but I think by the end of Tuesday my office had sent him seven letters. I would like to say they were seven letters of congratulations, but they were actually quite the opposite. That is some of the fruit of engaging with the community—you find out what is of interest to them and what they think should be done better. Sadly the more and more I get out there, the more I hear what should be done better. I will certainly be keen to remind the relevant ministers of their jobs and how they should be producing better outcomes.

I note a few particular activities and engagements. I was out at the Umbagog Park stepping stones last week. I recommend anyone to go out to the Umbagog Park. It is a lovely green space. Unfortunately, the first one of the stepping stones across the creek is missing, which makes it quite a hazard. That is something that could be quite perilous to the more elderly and those who just perhaps do not notice as well as others. So, there are things to fix at most places I get out and about to. Actually, the reason the Friends of West Belconnen and the Ginninderra Catchment Group called me out was the stepping stones and other issues to do with the creek flow and enhancements to the area.

It was wonderful to get out to the UC Open Day last week as well and to engage with the students there. Many of them are from overseas coming to Canberra to study. Hopefully doing the best I can do and through the Canberra Liberals as well, to make sure they find Canberra a lovely place to be and a lovely place to study. In particular, it was lovely to be with the Nepalese community. There are three Nepalese-owned

businesses emerging in Belconnen. It was a delight to be there, to cut the ribbon and to open their offices in Northpoint Plaza just opposite the Belconnen Mall. There is much to see in my electorate.

I hope I am able to continue to dedicate myself to my electorate. I plan to do so, engaging with them at their door fronts, at the shops, at various constituent catch-ups and at organisational catch-ups. I hope also to keep reminding the government how this community can be better served.

Health—stillbirth

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (6.00): I rise this evening to speak about an issue which is often reluctantly, if at all, discussed in our society. At the end of last year I had the pleasure of meeting my constituent Dimity. Dimity reached out to me at one of my come-and-chats in Yerrabi to talk about her experience of stillbirth in the ACT of February of last year. I would like to acknowledge that Dimity and her husband Michael are here today with us in the gallery.

After experiencing significant bleeding during the night in her 35th week of pregnancy, Dimity and her husband Michael raced to Calvary Hospital where they were told a heartbeat could not be found. Dimity had suffered a placental abruption, which is when the placenta partially or completely separates from the uterus before birth. Not long after, Dimity was rushed into surgery and baby Finley was born minutes later. One hour and four minutes after birth, Finley was declared dead at 1.24 am on 22 February 2022. This is a devastating outcome for any parent to experience. However, the various difficulties and impacts do not stop with the birth nor when one goes home.

During the surgery and recovery for Dimity, Michael was left alone in a room for over two hours with minimal updates, information or support. There appeared to be a significant lack of protocol when it came to supporting waiting partners or their families. After the birth and recovering from the general anaesthetic, Dimity was taken to a maternity ward where she could hear other women dealing with labour and sounds of new babies crying.

Michael, Dimity and other family and friends were able to have four days with baby Finley before Dimity and Michael returned home without him. Not long after Finley's birth, Michael and Dimity reached out to the Red Nose Foundation Canberra branch and not only receiving counselling and support but discovered a network of other parents who had been through similar experiences.

Red Nose operates a Hospital to Home service which supports parents who have experienced stillbirth in their transitions back to home, work and other aspects of their life. At the time Dimity lost Finley this service was not available in the ACT. After a lot of organising, lobbying and other work, the Hospital to Home support program will be up and running with a full-time employee in the ACT this year, after applications for the position closed just last Friday. I would like to congratulate and thank Michael and Dimity and the Red Nose ACT families who have advocated for Hospital to Home for their hard work in getting this outcome to benefit future parents in the ACT who need it.

Since meeting Dimity last year, I have been looking into what ACT Health is doing to further improve stillbirth management in the ACT health system. I would like to acknowledge and offer my support for the *ACT's Maternity in Focus: First Action Plan 2022-2025*, which has recognised that there are opportunities to enhance how stillbirth is managed in the health services and in the community. I note one of the goals in the action plan is to acknowledge and support bereavement with actions that look at how services provide a supportive environment and to communicate about perinatal loss.

I am encouraged the ACT government is taking action to support parents because as a society there is a lot of work we can do to improve people's ability to deal with, better support and comfortably talk about stillbirths with people around us. When returning to work in the ACT government after Finley's birth there were not clear provisions to support Dimity. Michael also faced issues in his workplace where they handled the situation poorly. The cultural propensity we have to not talk about stillbirths can have these impacts in the workplace.

Dimity and Michael's experience at Calvary left a lot to be desired. While the midwives, nurses and doctors did a great job, the systems for managing stillbirth just were not adequate. Dimity and Michael have been lobbying the hospital to introduce better protocols for stillbirth support and will be meeting with management at the hospital this month.

I would like to again congratulate Dimity and Michael on their work. I hope to hear positive outcomes following this meeting. I would also like to acknowledge the hospital in taking their feedback. I would like to thank Dimity, Michael, Molly and Finley for allowing me to share their story and for approaching me to express their pain, frustrations and aspirations for the future. It is a story we need to hear because we need to do better.

Waste—proposed waste to energy incinerator site

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (6.04): This week I wanted to check in on a government response tabled to a petition. We saw the government response to the petition about the industrial waste incinerator in Tarago. 919 people signed that petition, which shows that there is a lot of concern here in Canberra. The proposed waste incinerator would burn 380,000 tonnes of waste each year, including plastics, municipal and industrial waste, and it would operate 24 hours a day for 25 years.

The petitioners note that the New South Wales government plan says the facilities will be unsafe for Sydney, reporting common air pollutants for which there is no safe threshold. Emissions modelling is also showing that pollutants would spread throughout the ACT and the surrounding region. The petitioners requested that the ACT government ban ACT waste from being used as a feedstock, liaise with the New South Wales government to oppose the waste incinerator and conduct an awareness campaign for Canberra.

This issue is a real concern for Canberrans. Our food growers, our winemakers and our residents are worried. A waste incinerator is also not part of our circular economy. It is part of the make-sell-chuck linear economy and we need to move away from that.

New South Wales Major Projects have been conducting a submissions process on this. They received 627 submissions on this proposal; 619 of those were objections. That means 99 per cent of the submissions lodged were objections. I lodged an objection from the ACT Greens, and there was also an objection from the New South Wales Greens. I am really pleased to say that the ACT government also put in a submission on that process.

The ACT government response to the petition reiterates the local ACT waste ban on incineration. We would not allow this type of facility to be built here. The ACT government say they are concerned about initial reports of potential wind flow from the incinerator over residential areas of north Canberra. The ACT government say they will continue to liaise with the New South Wales government, and they are considering the EIS released on the project to see what impacts this might have on our residents and on our natural environment.

I would encourage open conversations with our local community on that because many, many people are sharing those concerns. The ACT government also say they will consider running an awareness campaign on this. It is really good news. I am pleased to see that response. We should raise awareness about this issue. We really should be listening to our growers, who are very, very worried. Lark Hill winemaker Chris Carpenter has said this:

Placing a waste incinerator in a grape-growing area is akin to allowing a smoking area in a restaurant—out of sight does not mean there is nobody harmed.

I am really encouraged by the ACT government's engagement on this, but I am a little bit disappointed about our passive approach to waste management. The response tells us that it is not currently feasible or appropriate to impose a ban in relation to the transport of non-government waste to this facility. I understand this is a really tricky area to regulate and it is a really hard area to change behaviour in.

I have worked in that industry. I have worked in government in the recycling area, and I have set up and run a recycling company. I have gone through the process of creating a product, tracking where it comes from, tracking the entire transport chain, tracking where it goes to and how it is recycled, and it is a really, really difficult process to go through.

We do have a lot of businesses that are now engaging in that. I am hearing that more and more in Canberra are engaging in that, and it is the approach that our consumers and our people are insisting that we start to go through. For the sake of the planet, it really is the way we need to move. We do need to move a bit more quickly to a circular economy than we have been, but I thank Minister Steel and the ACT government for that considered response to the petition. I will pass it on to the petitioners, who I think will be pleased at this first step.

Racing industry—Canberra Racing Club HelpingACT

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (6.08): I stand briefly today to applaud the Canberra Racing Club at Thoroughbred Park for continuing to display innovation and take some risks in the interest of growing their reach in this city. I would say that they do so against a tide of progressive government meddling in what they do, and some of that meddling is designed to stop this sport from occurring here in the ACT at all.

I think they are doing a great job. Under the leadership of new chief executive Darren Pearce, the club have been preparing for their big month of March, featuring the Black Opal and the Canberra Cup. I have to say, as shadow minister for racing, I have been so impressed with the way that the club has gone about reinvigorating this wonderful race, and what is now a two-day carnival.

It is the 50th anniversary of the Black Opal this year, with John McGrath Auto behind them still, and it is going to be a cracker of a weekend. The Black Opal will be raced on the Sunday of our March long weekend, with the family day Canberra Cup on the Monday of that long weekend.

Back in the day, Black Opal was extremely groundbreaking in that it became one of the first major race days on a Sunday. They shifted it to a Sunday when Australian racetracks just did not race on Sundays, and it was groundbreaking. I know that they copped some criticism from some quarters, all those years ago, for moving in that direction, but they did set the trend on this path and the rest of Australia eventually followed.

We are seeing a similar pattern on Good Friday. Last year the Canberra Racing Club made the bold move to host a race meeting on Good Friday. As soon as that announcement was made, Victoria followed suit, which was most important because it meant that Canberra was not out on its own. Last year's Good Friday meeting was a rip-roaring success. It was exceptionally well attended. It certainly started something, so much so that this year the club is bouncing back with a special meeting on Good Friday which—you will not believe this, Madam Speaker—will feature the first ever running of the Tuggeranong Cup. I kid you not—the Tuggeranong Cup, first ever running, 7 April, Good Friday, at Thoroughbred Park.

The club wants this race day to be something that all those on the south side embrace and are genuinely proud of. The race itself is a \$30,000 benchmark, 65 over 1,600 metres. The Canberra Southern Cross Club are on board as major sponsors and they will provide shuttle buses from Tuggeranong and Woden. I look forward to being a part of that day on 7 April.

Just briefly on to other matters, I must say well done to Mohammed Ali and HelpingACT, who hosted us at their Australia Day lunch last month and who continue

to make a difference in the lives of so many. So many of those people who have been impacted were there at the lunch. I know Ms Cheyne was also there, and Mr Braddock, among others. I just want to applaud him. I do not know where he gets all his volunteers from, because they are everywhere, but well done to Mohammed Ali.

On that note, a big happy birthday to Dara for earlier in the week. Talk about making a difference in the lives of many; Dara has certainly got that wrapped up.

Ms Tess Horwitz

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (6.11): I rise this evening to pay tribute to the late Tess Horwitz and to extend my sincere condolences to her family, friends and loved ones, following her passing on 14 January. I acknowledge those who are listening and watching and here today.

Tess was an artist who saw the creation of art as a social act. Many artists carry rich memories and approaches to their practice from conversations or collaborations with Tess. She has left an indelible legacy on the arts and across the ACT community.

Tess began her career in Sydney. She studied visual arts at East Sydney Technical College and the City Art Institute. She completed a Master of Art in Sculpture at the ANU School of Art. While in Sydney, she helped found the Art Bulletin and First Draft Gallery. Her contribution to First Draft helped to ensure that many emerging artists had an early and receptive platform for their work, and many of those artists now lead contemporary art in Australia.

In 1990 Tess came to Canberra. Over the course of 33 years she enriched the arts ecosystem of our region. Canberrans who did not know Tess personally certainly knew her artworks, displayed in the National Gallery of Australia and in beloved public spaces. The Watson, Jamison and Mawson local shopping centres and the Kippax Library each feature her public artworks. She completed many of these larger scale projects in collaboration with her husband, artist Tony Steel.

Perhaps Tess's most significant contribution to our public art is the ACT bushfire memorial at Mount Stromlo, acknowledging the horrific impact of the 2003 bushfires, the recovery process and the significant contribution of those who played crucial roles in the firefighting efforts. Tess and Tony, along with Martyn Jolly, were commissioned to create a memorial to mark this tragic event in our city's history.

The memorial was a deeply emotional project that required great sensitivity and compassion. The artists produced a significant space for reflection and remembrance and set a new standard for community consultation and engagement. They invited contributions from the community and received more than 500 images from 80 families. More than 160 people provided inscriptions to be used on bricks for the curved entry.

Tess remained involved with the ACT bushfire memorial, often reporting on its condition and highlighting where improvements were needed. Just recently, Tess used her original design drawing as a reference to provide advice on new plantings for the memorial in preparation for the 20-year anniversary. Tony was able to participate in those plantings. Tess wanted the memorial to remain a place of comfort and peace, while seeing it grow and evolve over time. That developing sense of solace was palpable at the recent anniversary event.

Tess's contribution to the arts extends well beyond public art commissions. She was also a highly regarded arts educator at tertiary institutions in Sydney and Canberra. Tess was a longstanding artist educator for the National Gallery of Australia and made an enormous contribution to the learning team. In particular, she was instrumental in the development of its access programs, collaborating closely with art and dementia participants. Tess is remembered as having an extraordinarily caring nature and an ability to connect with the community, and she was a fierce climate activist.

Tess's work honoured relationships and recognised that it is in the connections between people and the shared experiences of living, making and unmaking, that art is best practised. Again, I wish to send my heartfelt condolences to Tess's husband, Tony Steel, their family and their many loved ones. Vale, Tess Horwitz. We will continue to carry the richness of her contributions in our hearts, minds and places. Thank you.

Murrumbidgee electorate—sport and recreational facilities

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee) (6.16): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin this year as I mean to go on, by taking a moment of your time to talk about the importance of sport and recreation facilities in my electorate of Murrumbidgee.

Sports and recreation facilities play a vital role in our communities. Not only do they promote physical health and wellbeing; they also bring people together and foster a sense of community. This is clear from the community response to the Phillip Pool having changed owners and still not being open this summer, and from the ongoing need for multi-use indoor sports courts in Woden for everyone who has to travel to Tuggeranong or Belconnen or further to book a court and find a place to play.

Participating in sports and recreation activities helps to develop important life skills and keeps us active and engaged, and I do not just mean team sports. Multi-use indoor sports courts where we can also engage in dance, yoga, tai chi, fitness classes and cultural performance can maintain social connection. Public swimming pools are as important for the local swim squad as they are for people who just want to swim laps or friends who want to have somewhere to meet up on a hot afternoon or for a children's birthday party.

When different groups cross paths in sports and recreation spaces, it strengthens how much we value the diversity of ways in which we live our lives and share our common resources. That is why I strongly believe that it is important to invest in these

facilities and ensure that they are available to everyone in our community and that this conversation is part of the discussion about our district plan.

What we build in 2023 will still be in use for decades to come. It is my hope that the ACT government will be able to support the development of multi-use indoor sports courts in Woden, as well as an accessible public swimming pool, and that we should do this by engaging the community in understanding what kinds of facilities we need for the Canberra of 2050, not just maintaining what was built in decades past.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.19 pm until Tuesday, 21 March 2023 at 10.00 am.

Questions without notice taken on notice

Hospitals—emergency department waiting times

Ms Stephen-Smith (*in reply to a question by Ms Lee on Wednesday, 23 November 2022*):

There has been no expenditure for a review specifically in relation to Canberra Health Services' Emergency Department (ED) since I became Minister for Health. However, there has been a number of benchmarked and internal reviews including:

- Timely Care and Bed Basing Review at a cost of \$234,247.30;
- Use of Health Roundtable data and improvement studies;
- Participation in NSW Agency for Clinical Improvement Roundtable;
- Pilot study through Australian College of Emergency Medicine on ED targets; and
- Internal working groups on an ED Operating Model.

Information in relation to reviews of Calvary Public Hospital Bruce's (CPHB) ED is not able to be provided within the required timeframes due to service and operational requirements at CPHB.

COVID-19 pandemic—hospital patient transmission

Ms Stephen-Smith (*in reply to a question and a supplementary question by Ms Castley on Wednesday, 23 November 2022*):

- 1) The goal of all infection prevention and control measures implemented by health services is to minimise exposure of infectious individuals to non-infected people in line with the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) *'Infection Prevention and Control'* standard. COVID-19 positive patients are cared for under the required transmission-based precautions.

In line with the current Clinical Health Emergency Coordination Centre (CHECC) advice, all patients with a predicted stay longer than 24 hours, or admitted through the Emergency Department (ED), undergo surveillance testing to help keep staff and patients safe, and inform appropriate clinical placement of patients. In the event a test comes back positive, the COVID-19 positive patient will be moved out of the shared room into a single or cohorted room as soon as possible.

When there are more COVID-19 positive patients than the number of available single rooms (which also may be needed for end-of-life care, immunosuppressed patients or those with higher needs) a risk assessment is undertaken to determine the appropriate infection prevention and control arrangements. COVID-19 positive patients may be placed together in the same room (either two or four beds), this is known as 'cohorting'.

- 2) All Canberra Health Services (CHS) facilities follow the latest CHECC and Chief Health Officer advice to determine the staff, patient and visitor exposure risk and

actions. Following an identified COVID-19 positive patient, the immediate response is focussed on the safety of staff and patients by managing any potential exposures. The ward is required to:

- Notify the COVID-19 E-team.
- Identify the extent of the exposure, including staff, patients, and visitors.
- Determine the risk of transmission to others by considering.
 - compliance with PPE requirements,
 - vaccination status,
 - infectious period, and
 - variation from infection prevention and control best practices and guidelines.
- Notify impacted staff, patients, and families, and provide ongoing communication as required.

The COVID-19 E-team works with the unit managers to ensure consistent implementation, coordination, and timely responses, and manages the reporting processes and provides advice as required.

If an outbreak is identified (an outbreak being 3-5 unlinked cases identified in one area) the COVID-19 E-team is responsible for establishing and leading an Investigation Management Team (IMT). The role of the IMT is to lead and coordinate the investigation, risk assessment, risk containment and ongoing management of high risk, complex exposures.

Calvary Public Hospital Bruce (CPHB) processes have changed since implementation of the Digital Health Record (DHR). Prior to DHR going live, the Infection Control Unit (Infection Control) was notified of patients who tested positive to COVID-19 through a copy of laboratory results received or via phone call. Infection Control would then check the location of the patient on the ACT Health Patient Administration System and inform the respective department to ensure staff are aware and that appropriate transmission-based isolation precaution is applied. This consists of combined contact, droplet and airborne precautions, in a single room with own bathroom if a negative pressure room is unavailable.

Further details are obtained about the patient to conduct contact tracing properly and inform both the ward and patient via SMS platform if discharged. Patients who have a known active COVID-19 infection at presentation are directly allocated to a single room, multipurpose room if in the ED, or to the negative pressure room in the Intensive Care Unit (if available) with the above-mentioned transmission-based precautions.

With DHR in place, Infection Control monitors COVID-19 positive patients through a dashboard, including those who were tested for suspected COVID-19. Infection Control checks if the patient is on appropriate isolation precaution which is now available on the storyboard. Infection Control continues to ensure the ward is aware of patient status by contacting the ward or following up during daily rounds.

On occasion, the ward swabs their patient(s) who either developed COVID-19 symptoms or receive a notification by visitors who tested positive to COVID-19. Staff contact Infection Control to provide appropriate advice, particularly for patients who shared rooms with the COVID-19 positive patient or close contact patients. Infection Control has a surveillance tracking tool list that includes COVID-19 positive patients and their close contacts for monitoring purposes.

When these patients are being discharged prior to being de-isolated as an inpatient, they are advised to follow the advice on the ACT Health COVID-19 website for management as a COVID-19 positive person out in the community.

- 3) In Canberra Hospital from 1 November – 27 November 2022, there have been nine COVID-19 hospital transmissions. Please note, hospital acquired means the patient was infected while an inpatient and CHS is unable to confirm whether the patient caught COVID-19 prior to admission, from staff, visitors, other patients, or in the community whilst on day leave.

In CPHB from 1 November – 27 November 2022, there have been a total of 10 in-hospital transmissions of COVID-19, of which 2 cases who contracted COVID-19 or started the transmission to other patients (based on the sequence of the tests) had visitors who tested positive to COVID-19 and notified staff prompting tests on these patients.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—Independent review

Mr Gentleman (*in reply to a question and a supplementary question by Mrs Kikkert on Tuesday, 29 November 2022*):

In July 2022, ACT Corrective Services (ACTCS) released the updated *Detainee Classification Policy 2022*, including two new classification tools. The development of these new classification tools, and subsequent operating procedures were reviewed against approaches to detainee security classification across Australia and Canada. The analysis of the classification approaches both nationally and internationally influenced the development of the new classification tools. Information was drawn from six different tools and information on the Canadian classification process was not the primary contributor.

The review also sought Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander feedback and endorsement. Feedback indicated that the previous tools had two sections which had a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees, these being the way age and juvenile criminal history were considered. The new tools have reduced the impact that previous juvenile history has on classification.

Furthermore, the updated policy and new classification process recognise that culture is an important Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) factor for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. SEWB includes a strong sense of self and cultural identity, which can provide meaning and resilience in times of adversity. Engagement with cultural activities may contribute to developing strength and resilience in cultural identity. This is considered a protective factor and can reduce the score that helps determine a detainee's classification level.

In developing the policy and the tools, wide consultation occurred which included the Human Rights Commission (HRC) as an independent external body. On advice from the HRC, the policy and tools were adapted to require a decision maker to be responsible for considering all relevant information, so the tool is not the sole determinant of classification outcomes. Former and serving indigenous staff were engaged to review the policy and tools, leading to valuable feedback and changes to the process. This included the inclusion of a member of the Cultural Services team in the classification of all indigenous detainees.

Additional efforts were made to seek further independent input into detainee classification policy and tools.

Several internal and external stakeholders were approached for suggestions on who might perform such an independent review however this did not result in the identification of a suitable specialist. Information from other jurisdictions was sought and responses indicated no review of this kind had been undertaken and, as such, no specialists were identified. Further, the Australian Institute of Criminology was approached however they also did not have any Indigenous specialists in the area of classifications to assist with the independent review.

Transport Canberra—buses

Mr Steel (*in reply to a question by Mr Parton on Wednesday, 30 November 2022*):

The old Renault Diesel Buses will be progressively retired and sent for disposal as the new vehicles are commissioned and entered into service. The number of buses in the fleet will not change (456 operational fleet vehicles).

Supply chain issues experienced by the manufacturer has disrupted the delivery of the 26 leased low emission diesel buses. These impacts resulted in manufacturers needing to seek new suppliers and develop new logistics arrangements to source and receive required materials. As a result, the timing of the 26 leased low emission diesel buses entering service has been delayed.

Of the 34 replacement buses, 12 leased battery electric buses are expected to be in operation in early 2023 and the 26 leased lower emission diesel buses are now expected to be in operation in the 22-23 FY.

Health—endoscopies and colonoscopies

Ms Stephen-Smith (*in reply to a question and a supplementary question by Ms Castley and Ms Lee on Wednesday, 8 February 2022*):

- 1) With the implementation of the Digital Health Record (DHR) in early November 2022, Canberra Health Services (CHS) data is currently not available for reporting purposes. The below table indicates the number of patients waiting for a colonoscopy and endoscopy and the number of patients overdue as of 31 October 2022.

	Awaiting procedure booking	Overdue for procedure
Urgent	8	6
Category 1	3,126	2,833
Category 2	1,658	1,442
Category 3	2,583	1,740
Total	7,373	6,021

2) Average waiting time as of 31 October 2022 is as follows:

Urgent	47
Category 1	283
Category 2	471
Category 3	449
Total	399

3) CHS are unable to identify any patient that developed a cancer during their wait time for a procedure. The Gastroenterology and Hepatology Unit (GEHU) unit follow the Cancer Council Australia Guidelines regarding the triage of referrals and treatment, to ensure timely treatment and surveillance of cancers. Demand for the GEHU service is higher than capacity, and this is being addressed through a number of initiatives to ensure that access to colonoscopies and endoscopies can be provided within recommended timeframes.

Transport Canberra—bus timetables

Mr Steel (*in reply to a question by Mr Milligan on Thursday, 9 February 2022*):

School Route 1003 was not cancelled. The Route continues to operate from Anthony Rolfe Avenue to St John Paul II College via Nullarbor Avenue, as shown in Attachment A.

Extensive information and communications including school packs were provided on the Transport Canberra website before Christmas to enable parents to prepare for the Term 1 Network, with additional communication through the Education Directorate and the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Association and the media.

The timetable of route 1003 has changed by 3 minutes outbound from Anthony Rolf/Rosanna (8:08am to 8:05am) and by four minutes (8:16am to 8:20am) at Nullarbor-Flemington and has changed inbound by 17 minutes (3:56pm to 4:13pm) at Nullarbor-Flemington and by 16 minutes at Anthony Rolf/Rosanna (4:13pm to 4:29pm). The route also no longer travels through Palmerston. A separate service has been designed through Palmerston for John Paul College.

The timetable for the 1003 route caters for the arrival/departure time at St John Paul II College and may not suit students of Harrison School. For this reason, Harrison School did not receive specific communication regarding the Route 1003 service, as this route is not intentionally designed to provide a service to Harrison School, and

Transport Canberra was unaware that any students from Harrison School were using the service to access the school.

Harrison School is serviced by School Route 1015 which travels through Bonner, Forde, Gungahlin, Throsby and Harrison, as shown in Attachment B.

Harrison School students also have access to light rail services, with the Nullarbor Avenue Stop located approximately 170m from the school grounds with services to and from Gungahlin Place and stops including Manning Clarke North close to Anthony Rolfe Avenue.

(Copies of the attachments are available at the Chamber Support Office.)