



Debates

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Wednesday, 29 March 2023

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.

Mrs Mary Elizabeth Grant AM
Motion of condolence

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (10.01): I move:

That this Assembly expresses its deep regret at the death of Mrs Elizabeth Grant AM, Member of the former ACT House of Assembly from 1979 to 1982, and tenders its profound sympathy to her family, friends and colleagues in their bereavement.

On behalf of the Canberra Liberals, I pay tribute to Elizabeth Grant AM, who passed away on 7 February 2023 aged 92. First, our deepest sympathies to Sue and Richard and Allen and Joan; to Elizabeth's grandchildren Madeleine, Stephanie, Rebecca and Mark and to all her great-grandchildren, family and friends. It is lovely to have Sue, Richard, Madeleine and Stephanie here with us today. I know how close you all were and it is wonderful that you can join us this morning. I also would like to acknowledge the presence of some of Elizabeth's dear friends, including former President of the Senate Margaret Reid, Danielle Hyndes, Jean Higgie and Sandra Purser. Thank you for joining us as we pay tribute as an Assembly to Elizabeth.

As many would know, Elizabeth was an integral member of the Canberra Liberals over many, many years. She was a foundation member of the ACT Division of the Liberal Party of Australia and her contribution to the Liberal Party and the Canberra Liberals, in particular, was immense.

Elizabeth was Chair of the Federal Women's Committee of the Liberal Party from 1980 to 1985 and Convenor of the ACT Women's Committee from 1977 to 1984. She was a Liberal member of the ACT House of Assembly between 1979 and 1982 and a candidate for the Federal seat of Fraser at the 1983 election, which of course was the same electorate that I stood for as a house candidate in 2013.

Whilst no doubt Elizabeth had a distinguished political career, it was her professional career and her service to her community that is quite extraordinary. In writing this condolence motion speech, I was astounded by just how extensive her service was to her profession and to her community.

Elizabeth was a respected pharmacist who was a leading member in the pharmacy profession as both a manager and a proprietor. She was president of the ACT Division of Business and Professional Women, chair of the Canberra Festival Inc, chair of the ACT Health Authority and a member of the Parole Board. And if that was not enough, in addition she was chair of the ACT Hospital Services Board and chair of the National Health and Medical Research Council Animal Welfare Committee as well as a member of the ACT Women's Consultative Council between 1989 and 1998. Elizabeth was also a board member of the Council on the Ageing (COTA) ACT from 2000 until 2016, holding the position of chair from 2005 to 2011. She was also a director of COTA Australia for several years, and I acknowledge Catherine Adcock from COTA ACT here with us today.

Elizabeth had an extraordinary commitment to service across so many areas, which was recognised in 1987 when she was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia in recognition of her service to health administration and to the community. She was awarded the Centenary Medal in 2001 in recognition of her contribution to Australian society and government and was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws from Monash University in 2005.

Retirement was never on the cards for Elizabeth, even after her beloved husband, Howard, passed away. She continued to work with her daughter Sue and son-in-law Richard in their successful business here in Canberra, always taking a very hands-on role and never slowing down. I understand she remained a director of the company and continued to keep a sharp eye on the day-to-day activities of the business, even from her hospital bed, which I am sure will not surprise those who knew her so well.

Of course, along with all her professional accolades, she was, first and foremost, a beloved wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother and I know how deeply she will be missed by those who loved and knew her best.

Those who knew her would know that she never shied away from speaking her mind. Her sharp wit and intellect never diminished even in her older years. She was a strong advocate for women in the Liberal Party and politics generally, and I always personally valued her guidance and advice.

Elizabeth was particularly kind to me, warm and incredibly supportive. As a fresh-faced newcomer to politics over a decade ago who knew nothing about the world that I was embarking on, it is wiser women like Elizabeth who gave me the encouragement, the inspiration and the support that I needed to get to where I am today. Even up until the last few months, Elizabeth's incredible kindness was evident and she always had my back. Each time I saw Elizabeth, either at a party event or a community event, she would always ask, "How are you going?" tell me that I was doing a really good job and to keep it up. The vote of confidence and faith she had in me was so important as I went from newbie political aspirant to party leader, and I will always be grateful for her support, her mentorship and her kindness.

Madam Speaker, I conclude with a quote I found from one of her colleagues in response to Elizabeth's maiden speech to the ACT House of Assembly in 1979, the year that I was born:

I congratulate Mrs Grant on her maiden speech. I thought she acquitted herself extremely well and it augurs well for the future of us all.

Elizabeth certainly did acquit herself extremely well during her time in the Assembly and indeed throughout her entire life—a life, Madam Speaker, that was dedicated to family, a life that was dedicated to service to her community and a life that was dedicated to Canberra. Vale Elizabeth, you will be greatly missed.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (10.09): I join with the Leader of the Opposition, and on behalf of ACT Labor, in paying tribute to Mary Elizabeth Grant AM, better known to us as Elizabeth. I acknowledge her significant contribution to our city, particularly as a former member of the ACT House of Assembly from 1979 to 1982.

Elizabeth had a long lasting impact on our city and on the health sector particularly, both as a prominent pharmacist and through her long and distinguished contribution to public life in the territory as a member of numerous boards and committees during the 1980s and 1990s in particular. She was widely acknowledged for her work in seeking to raise the profile of women both in politics and within the health sector. She was a former president of the Australian Capital Territory Division of Business and Professional Women from 1986 to 1989. As we have heard from the Leader of the Opposition, she played a very prominent role within the ACT Liberal Party as convener of the Australian Capital Territory Division of Liberal Women's Committee, a member of the Federal Women's Committee of the Liberal Party from 1980 to 1985 and as a member of the Australian Capital Territory Women's Consultative Council from 1989 to 1998.

She was also prominent in health policy and research. Following her time as a member of the House of Assembly, she became chair of the ACT Health Services Council and the ACT Health Authority and a member of the Hospital Services Board. Elizabeth was also a member of the National Health and Medical Research Council. As chair of the ACT Health Human Research Ethics Committee—for a period, I understand, of approximately 20 years, from the late 80s until 2009—she oversaw the establishment of the Clinical Trials Subcommittee. But her contributions to our community were not limited to the health arena or the Liberal Party. At different times, Elizabeth was chair of the Australian Capital Territory Australia Day Sports Carnival, chair of the Canberra Festival and a member of the ACT Centenary of Federation committee.

We can conclude from all that we have heard from the Leader of the Opposition and all those who knew Elizabeth that she made a sizable contribution to our community. Our politics sometimes differed but we are richer for her work in our community, and this morning we extend our condolences to her family and her friends.

Visitor

MADAM SPEAKER: I, on behalf of all members, acknowledge Margaret Reid in the chamber as well.

Mrs Mary Elizabeth Grant AM **Motion of condolence**

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (10.12): On behalf of the ACT Greens, I join my Assembly colleagues in expressing my condolences at the death last month of Elizabeth Grant. There are some people who cannot run into a problem without feeling motivated to solve it, and Mrs Grant was by all accounts one of those people. It is astonishing how many different organisations she was involved with over many years. They were often health focused, as we have heard this morning—the Hospital Services Board, the Health Services Council, the ACT Health Authority, the Council on the Ageing. She also adapted her skills and experience to the field of business, serving for three years as president of the ACT Division of Business and Professional Women. Another role that she had, and one that I have a more modern connection with, was serving on the Parole Board during the 1980s.

Everything she did was dedicated to making Canberra a better place, a goal I think we in this place would all share with her, no matter where we sit on the political spectrum. As an active member of the Liberal Party, she was a member of the precursor body to this Assembly at the time when it was largely advisory but did play an important role in preparing the ACT for self-government. I understand Mrs Grant was considered to be on the progressive side of the Liberal Party, arguing that equality for women was not a done deal and that more concrete actions were needed. This brought her up against Babette Francis, the founder of an organisation that is now known as the Endeavour Forum but which began life in 1979 as Women Who Want to be Women. I understand Mrs Grant continued to make a valuable community contribution into her 90s and that has been further elaborated on in the discussion this morning. She was still providing advice to the National Health and Medical Research Council until shortly before her death.

Mother of two, grandmother of four and great-grandmother of eight, she has provided a strong role model as a smart, hardworking, professional and community minded woman for three generations of descendants, as well as for all the many people who encountered her over her years of service to our community. When someone has lived such a long and meaningful life their loss can be an opportunity for reflection and inspiration as much for grieving. I am glad we have had a chance today to be freshly motivated in our own work by focusing on Mrs Grant's outstanding commitment and legacy to this city and to the many people that she has known, supported and mentored. On behalf the ACT Greens, I offer my condolences to her family and her network of friends.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: I thank members. Thank you to family and friends in the gallery. My condolences.

Petition

Ministerial response

The following response to two petitions has been lodged:

Health—maternity services—petitions 42-22 and 1-23

Ms Stephen-Smith, Minister for Health, dated 28 March 2023, in response to two petitions lodged by **Ms Clay** on 7 February 2023, concerning a freestanding birth centre for the north side of Canberra.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter dated 7 February 2023 with a copy of the terms of Petition 042-22 and 001-23 lodged by Ms Jo Clay MLA, calling on the ACT Government to invest in building a freestanding birth centre in the north side of Canberra. This letter is my response to the petition in line with Standing Order 100.

The ACT Government is committed to delivering better care when and where people need it. Petition 042-22 and 001-23 complement the Government's commitment to enhance capacity within the ACT's Birth Centres as outlined in *Maternity in Focus: The ACT Public Maternity System Plan 2022-2032* and continue to improve maternity services to provide the right care, at the right time, and in the right place which meets the needs of the woman or pregnant person and their family.

The Assembly, on the same day as the petition was presented, passed a resolution on Maternity Services and Birthing Centres. This provides the Government with the opportunity to consider the early design and feasibility of establishing a co-designed free-standing birth centre, in the context of the current health service planning for a new northside hospital.

I acknowledge and thank the ACT community for its support for maternity services and for bringing forward this petition.

Motion to take note of petition

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

That the response so lodged be noted.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.16): I am really looking forward to reading this petition response. It was great to see the freestanding birth centre get such enthusiastic agreement, and we are really looking forward to seeing this coming along. It is going to be such a great result to keep healthy women and birthing people out of hospital when they want to use a birth centre that is not in the hospital. That is really good to see. It is great to hear the commitment that the government will be working with midwives to make sure we get midwife-lead design. It is just win, win, win.

Midwives want to work there, people who are pregnant want to give birth there and it will free up our hospitals for those who really need them. So I am very much looking forward to seeing the detailed government response to this petition.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Women—status of women and girls in the ACT Ministerial statement

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (10.17): Madam Speaker, as Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, I welcome the opportunity to acknowledge International Women’s Day, which occurred on 8 March, by providing a statement to the Assembly on the status of women and girls in the ACT. I am tabling a longer statement which provides a more substantial overview, but in this shorter statement I would like to reflect specifically on some of the challenges and achievements of 2022.

While all women experience disadvantage in our community, all women are different and experience disadvantage differently. For example, trans women, queer women and women with disability experience additional and varied types of discrimination. It is essential that we acknowledge the additional challenges faced by these groups and work together to overcome them. In line with this, I would like to acknowledge that throughout this statement when I refer to women and girls, I am using these terms inclusively, referring to everybody who describes themselves as a woman or girl.

In a few months, the ACT government will release the Third and final Action Plan under our current ACT Women’s Plan 2016 to 2026, following the completion of the Second Action Plan at the end of 2022. The past seven years have seen a lot of change and a lot of challenges, particularly due to the impacts of COVID-19 in more recent times. But we have also seen a lot of tireless work from women in our community and those who support women in our community. I have been encouraged and inspired to see so many working with passion and determination toward the common purpose of improving opportunities and outcomes for women and girls in the ACT. Whether it be in supporting health and wellbeing, improving safety at home and in public spaces, providing greater affordable housing options to reduce homelessness, creating opportunities in a wider range of jobs, encouraging professional development, providing valuable services and programs, or other vital work to gain greater equality—together, we are driving change every day.

In 2022 there were some international events which many women and girls in our community found deeply discouraging in our efforts to achieve greater equality. In June of last year the Supreme Court in the United States of America overturned *Roe v Wade*, opening the door for individual US states to ban abortion outright. This demonstrated just how easily the rights we take for granted today can be taken away. It is important that we respond to these events by demonstrating our own commitment to ensuring Canberrans have access to safe, accessible and affordable abortion services. In line with this, the 2022-23 ACT budget includes \$4.6 million over four

years to improve the accessibility and affordability of abortion services in the ACT. This will enable women and people who can become pregnant to make decisions about their health care based on what is best for them and their bodies, without being influenced by financial barriers.

The ACT government is committed to improving women's reproductive health across the board, releasing *Maternity in Focus: The ACT Public Maternity System Plan 2022-2032* in June of last year. This 10-year plan for public maternity services in the ACT provides a holistic approach to maternity system reform, underpinned by a focus on individualised care, equity and evidence. More than \$12 million in the 2022-23 ACT budget has been invested to improve maternity services.

The safety of women and girls, both at home and in public spaces, is also a priority for the ACT government. Safety is of even greater concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse women and LGBTIQ+ women, who often face additional discrimination and barriers to their participation. In October 2022, I jointly launched the next National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-32 with my fellow ministers who are responsible for women and women's safety. We will now continue engaging closely to develop the action plans which will implement our commitments under the national plan and develop targets and actions which are inclusive, meaningful and measurable.

In 2022 the ACT government also worked closely with the Domestic Violence Prevention Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group to respond to recommendations from the *We Don't Shoot Our Wounded...* report. This report is important in continuing to guide the ACT government in its efforts to prevent and respond to family violence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, men and children. The reference group identified recommendation 4 as a priority action for implementation, which calls for the establishment of a specific service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women where a range of legal, advocacy, practical and healing activities can be delivered.

In February 2023, the ACT government commenced an open grant process to identify a suitable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisation to deliver a specific service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who have experienced domestic and family violence. I am pleased to have reached this milestone in partnership with the reference group and I thank them for their guidance and leadership in this work. The ACT government will continue to be guided by the Domestic Violence Prevention Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group to progress further work in implementing recommendations from the *We Don't Shoot Our Wounded...* report.

As well as safety at home, we are working to improve women and girls' safety and perceptions of safety in our public spaces. As part of the Second Action Plan, the ACT government has developed Gender Sensitive Urban Design Guidelines, with extensive and varied consultation carried out in 2022. The guidelines will help planners, engineers, architects, landscape designers and approval bodies when designing urban spaces to make a practical difference to the lives of women and girls, gender diverse groups and vulnerable people in Canberra.

Providing affordable and accessible housing options, and reducing homelessness, is another key focus for the ACT government and a priority area of the ACT Women's Plan. Building on the success of the first Common Ground built in Gungahlin in 2015, the ACT government has constructed a second Common Ground in Dickson, which was officially opened on 7 October 2022. Common Ground Dickson provides long-term housing for people facing chronic homelessness, focusing on supporting older women, single parents, and families—growing cohorts in need of assistance. All 40 units are currently occupied and the cohort has remained stable since opening. The cohort currently houses over 20 women plus their children.

We are also encouraging women and girls to explore diverse careers, in particular those which have traditionally been male dominated. Women and girls are underrepresented in many Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) classes in schools and in the STEM workforce. The ACT government is implementing a range of initiatives in schools to drive change in this area, including contracting the Academy of Future Skills to work in classrooms to engage and inspire students in STEM educational programs. Through this program, students have had the benefit of consistently seeing and working with female role models who are very capable and skilled in STEM fields. In 2022 the ACT government also provided supported pathways for women to enter information technology and cyber security occupations. Launched on 30 June 2022, Supporting Women Transitioning to an ICT career is a project being delivered by the Canberra Branch of the Australian Computer Society.

Significant work is underway to support more young women into careers in the construction industry. The ACT government, along with the sector and industry partners, including a National Careers Institute Partnership Grant, has been implementing a pilot program in ACT schools called the Understanding Building and Construction Pilot Program. In 2022 this pilot program provided the opportunity for over 100 young female and gender diverse students in Years 9 and 10 to explore career opportunities and to ensure they know they are welcome and supported to participate in the construction industry. Fifty-five employer organisations were involved in providing work experience placements for these students. The Understanding Building and Construction Pilot Program was awarded the Outstanding Partnership of the Year Award at the ACT Public Education Awards in December 2022.

Alongside this success, we have also been working in partnership with industry and the community to support the Women in Construction Pathways Program. The pilot project created 39 subsidised Australian School-based Apprenticeships for young women wanting a career in the building and construction industry and is a collaboration between the ACT government, the Australian Training Company and the National Association of Women in Construction, NAWIC. An additional 30 young women have commenced in the Women in Construction Pathways Program, taking the total number of participants to 69 so far.

The ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS) and ACT State Emergency Service are removing barriers and working to support and develop women within the emergency services space. In 2022, following feedback from female members, the ACTRFS

Women's Network was established. The project aligns with the Women in Emergency Services Strategy and was a pilot program with a goal to develop and empower female members, strengthen their confidence and increase the capacity of female members across the ACTRFS.

Acknowledging the need for women with disability to be visible in our community, the ACT government has established a perpetual leadership fund for people with disability, with a specific focus on women, to honour the late Susan Salthouse. The fund is administered by Hands Across Canberra on behalf of the ACT government, who will seek to build the fund from its \$75,000 starting base by encouraging philanthropic support. This perpetual funding mechanism will enhance the representation and leadership capacity of women with a disability, ensuring women with disability are empowered to become leaders in our community.

The services that are available to women to support them and enable them to participate fully in our community have been another key focus of the Second Action Plan. One of the commitments under the Second Action Plan was to improve the consistency of sex, gender identity and sexual orientation data collection, discoverability and sharing, as well as use across the ACT government. By collecting, using and sharing this data better, we can support all women better through our services, especially women who identify as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQ+. Significant collaboration has taken place across the ACT government on this topic and a draft discussion paper has been developed to support targeted consultation with members of the ACT community.

During 2022, Libraries ACT developed training and program content for local Afghan women and girls by partnering with Afghan Women on the Move. The Afghan Women on the Move leadership course will enable participants to participate in social and educational activities over the course of 2023. The free of charge program for Afghan women residing in Canberra will target six major social and educational activities over the course of the year, until the end of 2023, to engage over 100 women and support them around living in Australia independently.

The ACT government has been working to improve programs available to women who are incarcerated in the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) in 2022. Based on feedback provided by detainees, Karralika Programs were engaged to pilot a gender responsive evidence-based, culturally appropriate alcohol and other drugs program to meet the specific needs of women in the AMC. The 10-week alcohol and other drugs recovery program focused on the impacts of drugs and alcohol, particularly on relationships and sense of self, as well as safety and relapse prevention and recovery planning. Trauma informed practices were adopted in the establishment and delivery, including building trust and safety, collaboration and choice. The pilot will continue into 2023 building on the feedback received in the first round. This will allow for more women in the AMC to build on skills for alcohol and other drugs recovery and to rehabilitate.

Madam Speaker, there have been many significant achievements in 2022 and I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the amazing work that so many people have done to support women and girls, both across the ACT government and the broader community. In many instances it is women who are providing essential services to

other women and children. I would like to particularly acknowledge the community sector and frontline workers for their ongoing support and assistance to women throughout the pandemic, especially in light of the lengthy duration and significant sector and workforce fatigue.

We are working hard to support woman and girls, but there is still a lot more to be done. We need to continue to listen to, and work with, women and the sector to make sure that appropriate supports continue to be available through the pandemic and into the longer-term recovery. The strength of our community lies in our determination to continue to support each other through times like these, and over the past three years we have seen truly inspirational examples of this.

Throughout 2022 the ACT government also undertook consultation for the Third Action Plan in 2023-2026 which will be the final action plan to be delivered under the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26. I look forward to continuing to work with you all in 2023 as we finalise, release and commence implementation on this plan and continue our support for women and girls in the ACT.

I present the following papers:

Women and girls in the ACT—Annual statement on the status—2023—
Ministerial statement, 29 March 2023.
Statement, dated March 2023.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.33): I want to say a few quick words as the Greens spokesperson for women. We are really pleased to see the statement come out. I am very much looking forward to reading that in detail, now that it is tabled. I am really, really pleased to hear the minister's inclusive language. In light of the protests last week, it is really important that we keep remembering that we have a huge range of people in our community and that it is so divisive if we do not remember to use that inclusive language.

I am also really pleased to hear about the emphasis on intersectional femininity. I think we have a really good understanding now that whilst some disadvantages are experienced by all woman and girls, certain people have layers of disadvantage. That is compounded by disability, sexuality, ethnicity, different language backgrounds and quite a lot of other factors, so it is good to hear that we have a really diverse program and that we are thinking all of that through. The Greens are very conscious that none of us are free until all of us are free. I look forward to working further in this portfolio space.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (10.34): I thank Minister Berry for that wonderful update on the progress that is being made towards a more inclusive and supportive community for women and girls in the ACT.

In addition to the work that was described in the health and wellbeing section of the report that was tabled, I want to highlight a few things that have not made it into the report. One of them is the Towards our Vision—Re-envisioning Older Persons Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT Strategy 2022-2026, which was launched in August 2022. It includes a number of measures for the first two years of the strategy that specifically look at older women’s social determinants of mental illness. This includes exploring the drivers of homelessness in older women and exploring the mental health impacts on older women of their experiences of family violence.

It also looks at some specific issues for the LGBTIQ+ community, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and for our multicultural community, which enables us to look at some of the intersectionality in the social determinants of older women’s mental ill health. That includes co-designing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elder Day program which will provide additional support for older First Nations women. It includes identifying and promoting mental health and wellbeing information for refugee and migrant older people. Having worked with older women who have a refugee and migrant background, I know that the experiences of those women really do contribute to their mental wellbeing as they get older. It also includes promoting targeted mental health resources for older LGBTIQ+ people.

I table a copy of that strategy:

Towards our Vision—Re-envisioning Older Persons Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT Strategy 2022-2026—Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing, dated July 2022.

I would also like to point out that we are continuing to work on mental health services in relation to eating disorders. The Eating Disorders Clinical Hub was launched in January of 2022. The early intervention service for eating disorders was launched in December of 2023, and we are continuing with the construction work for the eating disorders residential centre, which is due to open in this financial year, as was committed to the Commonwealth.

In November 2022 we also launched guidance to support gender-affirming care for mental health. This demonstrates our commitment to providing improved mental health care for everyone in the trans, intersex and gender non-binary community, including trans women and women with intersex characteristics.

I table a copy of the guidelines:

Guidance to support gender affirming care for mental health—Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing, dated October 2021.

We are also continuing to see better service delivery of youth mental health services. The MindMap portal is continuing to provide additional ways for people to connect to services that can support girls and young women at an earlier stage in their mental health journey, as well as the holding service that provides support and counselling from clinical youth navigators.

I also want to provide a very brief update on the Sue Salthouse Leadership Fund. It does have a larger funding base now, thanks to philanthropic contributions and

contributions from Sue's family. The first three leadership grant recipients were announced in December 2022. Julia Bocking is the recipient of a grant for online coaching and a community forum for people with disability who are doing a PhD. I am sure Sue would be so, so happy to see that work happening. Deb Shroot is working on free online financial literacy programs for neurodivergent young people. Lauren Reid is working on online resources for deaf children and their families. Lauren is also teaching me how to do an acknowledgement of country in Auslan so that I can do it in Ngunnawal and Auslan. I promise, Lauren, I am doing my homework and practising.

It is wonderful to see all of the work across the whole of the ACT government that is contributing to making this a better place for women and girls. I thank Minister Berry for her continued commitment.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Report 11—government response Ministerial statement

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (10.38): I am pleased to advise the Assembly about the government's response to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety's report on the inquiry into the Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 (No 2), which I am tabling today.

The government introduced the Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 (No 2) into the Assembly on 24 November 2022. The bill amends nine pieces of justice-related legislation and includes an important amendment to the Evidence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act relating to the evidence given by a witness in the courtroom during certain proceedings alleging sexual offending, violent offending or family violence offending.

On 28 November 2022 the standing committee resolved to undertake an inquiry into the bill but limited its inquiry to the amendments to the Evidence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act. The government welcomed this inquiry, as it provided an opportunity for public discussion about the amendments designed to protect victim-survivors from re-traumatisation in the territory's criminal justice system. The standing committee invited submissions on the amendments to the Evidence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act and published its report on 22 December 2022. The government thanks the standing committee for its report and has considered its three recommendations.

The government notes and welcomes the recommendation for the Assembly to pass the Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 (No 2). This recommendation is recognition by the standing committee of the ongoing need to reduce unnecessary re-traumatisation of victims. The government has agreed to the two other recommendations of the standing committee's report, which are:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government include the pre-condition of consent in the proposed new subsections 69(2A) and (2B) and examine an 'opt out' approach.

The Committee strongly recommends that the ACT Government work with stakeholders on the implementation of the Bill in relation to the concerns raised in the inquiry.

I want to note that some stakeholders raised concerns that there was limited time to provide comments or input during the development of these provisions. These concerns were echoed by some submissions to the inquiry. While there was a limited time frame during the development phase, it is also clear that this bill has gone through a normal process in the Assembly.

The inclusion of the provision in this bill was designed to ensure that there was a specific opportunity for public consideration of the provision. This included enabling the opportunity for the committee to conduct an inquiry into the bill, to take public submissions and provide a view to both the government and this Assembly. This approach could be compared to an alternative option where the provision was introduced as a government amendment later in the life of the bill. While a government amendment would have allowed more time for stakeholder consultation, it would not necessarily have afforded the same opportunity for the committee or the broader public to scrutinise the proposal.

Feedback, comments and input from stakeholders is always incredibly valuable to the law reform efforts of this government. It is imperative that there is an open dialogue between government, stakeholders and the wider community. Listening to the concerns raised by stakeholders and the community builds faith in our system, as well as trust in the government. Indeed, it was in the context of stakeholder comments on a systemic concern that the government urgently initiated this particular amendment. The amendment has the potential to significantly improve the experience of vulnerable witnesses in our justice system, an objective this government seeks to promote wherever possible.

As the Assembly may be aware, the *Listen. Take action to prevent, believe and heal* report, published in December 2021, outlined that many victims feel that the territory's criminal justice system has let them down. A common concern has been that the system continues to re-traumatise victims. It is well known that sexual and violent offending affects many domains of a victim's life, including health and wellbeing, relationships, and employment.

That is why, having considered the committee's recommendations, as outlined in the government response, the government will consider including further amendments to this provision in the Evidence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act later this year. That context and timing will allow the government to work closely with stakeholders, having regard to their practical experience of implementation and any issues that arise. As always, the impact of the amendments on human rights will also be carefully monitored and considered. This approach will ensure that our legislation is fit for purpose and is both protecting the community and upholding human rights.

In closing, I thank the standing committee for conducting the public inquiry into the Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 (No 2) and for providing an opportunity for an ongoing discussion about safeguards for vulnerable

victims in criminal proceedings. I would like to thank the stakeholders who contributed written submissions to the inquiry, as well as those who commented during the consultation on the amendments to the Evidence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act. This engagement and feedback provides valuable insight to government and helps to ensure that our legal framework remains fit for purpose.

I present the following papers:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 11—*Inquiry into the Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 (No 2)*—Government response—

Government response, dated March 2023.

Ministerial statement, 29 March 2023.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Jarramlee Nature Reserve—remediation project Ministerial statement

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10.44): It is my great pleasure to advise the Assembly today of a significant achievement at one of our important nature reserves in the north of Canberra, delivered by the Parks and Conservation Service team within the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. Jarramlee is 112 hectares in size and is located on the north-west boundary of the ACT, bordering rural grazing land within both the ACT and New South Wales. Jarramlee is less than 200 metres from the suburbs of Dunlop and west MacGregor, making it an easily accessible reserve for the local community.

The ACT government has set aside places like Jarramlee to buffer the impacts of urban development in west Belconnen and to provide protection for areas of high conservation significance. Jarramlee is particularly special, as it is home to a large population of the critically endangered golden sun moth. It also contains endangered natural temperate grassland and provides habitat for several other threatened species listed under the Nature Conservation Act. It is also part of an important wildlife corridor, providing habitat for migratory birds such as the rainbow bee-eater and the sacred kingfisher.

Gooromon Ponds Creek and Ginninderra Creek converge within Jarramlee and flow into the Murrumbidgee River. This catchment continues to be a vital part of Ngunnawal culture, serving as an important pathway for travel and a place of corroboree, meeting, hunting and celebration. This area served as agricultural land during the early years of European settlement and as a sewage treatment facility in the 1990s.

In 2014 parts of Jarramlee Nature Reserve were forced to close due to the detection of severe and ongoing ground subsidence issues. This was associated with poor backfilling practices during the decommissioning of the west Belconnen sewage treatment facility in the 1990s. Restoration works commenced in 2022 to remediate and restore the area using best practice native grassland rehabilitation methods. The first task was to remove the tonnes of debris and material that was left on the site, to prevent the subsidence issues and ensure that the material did not become an unwanted legacy for future generations.

A naturalised swale structure was created to seamlessly blend with the natural topography of the area and direct water flows down Ginninderra Creek. Then the disturbed three-hectare area was further restored with native species to enhance biodiversity values, including additional habitat for the golden sun moth. Over 25,000 native tube stock plants have also been established in the area and 130 kilos of native seed has been used to restore grassland for the golden sun moth.

In collaboration with Transport Canberra and City Services, a new public space was established as part of these works to showcase the rich ecological and cultural significance of the Jarramlee area, particularly the important connection for Ngunnawal people. I am pleased to advise that these restoration efforts have now been completed and are open for community access. Jarramlee will once again protect and conserve places that are significant to Ngunnawal people, as has been the traditional way for tens of thousands of years.

Being on the doorstep of the suburb of west MacGregor, Jarramlee is a perfect location to share Ngunnawal culture and tradition with the growing Canberra community. Ngunnawal culture and connection to country not only needs to be celebrated in iconic places like Namadgi National Park but should also be celebrated in the urban area. The restoration works at Jarramlee have provided opportunities for Ngunnawal people. The cultural importance of grassland habitat is expressed through a series of artwork designs which are incorporated into the landscape plan. These designs were produced by sisters Kristal and Jazz Matthews of Wilay Designs, a Ngunnawal business that creates original works inspired by their Ngunnawal culture and family.

As with any project of this nature, the completion of construction works is by no means the end of the project. The ACT government has a long-term commitment to continue monitoring and reporting on the environmental benefits of remediation of the contaminated site and the success of the habitat restoration actions.

Jarramlee is a fine example of what can be achieved through collaboration between government agencies, the private sector and the community. The final result is testament to the spirit of cooperation and willingness to go beyond business as usual that all those involved brought to the project. It provides many layers of benefits and meaning, from the habitat for endangered species, showcasing and interpretation of Ngunnawal culture, an opportunity for the community to connect with nature, improved management of our precious water resources and a showcase for what collaboration, considered planning and thoughtful and skilled implementation can achieve for our city and community.

I acknowledge the Parks and Conservation Service team, and all involved in delivering this project, for their efforts. I encourage west Belconnen residents and indeed all Canberra resident, to take the opportunity to visit Jarramlee and experience this special place.

I present the following paper:

Jarramlee Nature Reserve—Remediation Project Completion—Ministerial statement, 29 March 2023.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

ACT Health—Chief Health Officer report—update Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (10.50): I rise today to provide an update to the Assembly on the population health reporting delivered by the ACT Chief Health Officer, or CHO, under section 10 of the Public Health Act 1997. I tabled the most recent CHO population health report in April 2021. This reporting is important for informing government and the community on key population health indicators and trends.

Since that time, significant work has been done to update the format of the CHO reporting to increase access and usability and to ensure that the most up-to-date data is available. HealthStats ACT is now the go-to site for the most recent available data for a range of indicators and measures. Data is sourced from ACT and national databases, including administrative and surveillance data, cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys and data registries.

The new CHO reporting format complements the up-to-date population health statistics, indicators and short reports that are available through the HealthStats ACT online information portal. In modernising the CHO reporting required under section 10 of the act, the Chief Health Officer, Dr Kerryn Coleman, is now supplementing the data on HealthStats ACT with additional online narrative components on focused topics. This includes a snapshot of high level social and population health indicators for the ACT, which provides additional context for the data.

The new online reports, together with HealthStats ACT, will provide a comprehensive overview of the health status of the Canberra community, allowing for timely data and analysis as new information becomes available. This reporting provides insight about challenges to our public health and opportunities for improvement, enabling the ACT government to make informed decisions on public health matters. This data provides a wealth of information to inform government and the community about the state of our health by identifying health trends and emerging public health needs and issues.

The first two focused topics, the burden of disease and healthy weight, are now available on the ACT Health website. For those familiar with previous CHO reports, the focus topics will be similar to the previously developed “focus on” reports, but are web-based, allowing them to be updated as new data becomes available. The Chief Health Officer plans to release focus topics in an ongoing, rolling fashion and to continue to update the new topics online.

The data tells us that, overall, there is much to be proud of in our collaborative and sustained efforts to create a healthy Canberra. In 2021 more than half of ACT adult respondents to the ACT general health survey, almost 53 per cent, reported their health as excellent or very good, while 46.9 per cent of adult respondents reported their mental health as excellent or very good.

People in the ACT have the longest life expectancies at birth in Australia, and Australians have the third highest life expectancies in the world. In 2018 to 2020 life expectancy in the ACT was 85.9 years for females and 82.1 years for males. The ACT has the highest immunisation rates in Australia, protecting its children from a range of infectious diseases. This has contributed to the ACT having the longest life expectancies in Australia.

However, the burden of disease still affects many in our population, and the health-adjusted life expectancy indicates the average length of time a person can expect to live in full health without the impacts of disease and injury. In 2018 males born in the ACT could expect, on average, to live 71.9 of their 81.2 years in full health, while females could expect to live 74.2 of their 85.3 years in full health, indicating that the burden of disease has a significant impact on the population.

The ACT government’s efforts to prevent chronic disease aim to increase the length of time that people can live in full health without the impacts of disease or injury. Having healthy weight increases a person’s chances of living in good health. The 2021 ACT general health survey revealed that the rates of overweight and obesity in the ACT have remained stable, compared to previous years.

The ACT government has long been focused on preventing overweight and obesity in children through targeted action and support for the community. This is essential to ensuring that individuals have the best chance of living in good health and to reducing preventable chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and some cancers. The findings in these focus topics will provide evidence to inform relevant programs and initiatives, as outlined in the Healthy Canberra: ACT Preventive Health Plan 2020-2025.

The ACT government is committed to improving the health outcomes of all Canberrans. This means addressing social determinants of health and continuing to work together in partnership. To achieve this, a comprehensive and sustained approach is required which involves collaboration across the health sector, government, academics, industry, community organisations and individuals. The population health reporting on these focus topics will provide a valuable resource for those working in public health policy, health services planning and delivery, and population health research.

By bringing together knowledge, skills and resources, we can better understand the path to a healthier Canberra. I would like to thank Dr Coleman and her team for preparing this data. I commend this reporting to the Assembly.

I present the following paper:

ACT Chief Health Officer reporting update—Ministerial statement, 29 March 2023.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Water Resources Amendment Bill 2023

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

Title read by Clerk.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (10.57): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to present the Water Resources Amendment Bill 2023. The Water Resources Act 2007 is the governing legislation for managing water resources in the ACT. It defines resource management and monitoring responsibilities, access rights to surface and groundwater resources, environmental flow provisions, water licensing requirements, and sets penalties for water-related offences. The Water Resources Act instructs both water resource management policy and regulatory functions. These are administered by the Environment Protection Authority.

The bill makes no material change to function but amends part 7, section 64—Administration—of the Act to distribute administrative responsibilities. The authority remains responsible for regulatory functions. Water policy functions will become the responsibility of the Director-General of the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. Separating the functions enhances accountability by providing clarity on roles and responsibilities.

In response to amendments to part 7, section 64, the bill amends part 3, sections 13 to 15, which relate to environmental flow guidelines. These guidelines set out the policy around the quantity and timing of freshwater flows and levels necessary to sustain aquatic ecosystems which, in turn, support human cultures, economies, sustainable livelihoods and wellbeing. Responsibility for approval of the guidelines sits with me, but the preparation of the guidelines and associated consultation will now become the responsibility of the director-general and, ultimately, the Office of Water.

The bill also clarifies roles and responsibilities in relation to water resource assessment and investigations. The authority retains responsibility for regulatory water resources investigation. The director-general becomes responsible for water resource assessment. Water resource assessment relates predominantly to surface and groundwater baseline monitoring. Baseline monitoring provides the objective evidence necessary to make sound decisions on managing water quality and quantity today and in the future.

Amendments to part 7 will also make the director-general responsible for the policy work required to inform the water management areas, quantification of available water in areas and reasonable amounts of water disallowable instruments. This policy work will support the authority in administering water access entitlements and inform compliance.

The ACT and Region Catchment Coordination Group continues to make a valuable contribution by bringing together diverse stakeholders to provide expert advice. The bill makes no substantive change to the function of the group. It does, however, propose augmenting the function of the group to allow for the director-general to call on this group to inform, if required, matters being considered by government. This approach strengthens collaboration with the governance body being established in coming weeks to support the coordination function of the Office of Water while facilitating greater alignment between the matters considered by the group and those being considered by government.

It also adds a provision which allows the minister to direct the group to provide advice about a stated water catchment management matter. This enables the minister to call on the group, providing an adaptive approach to addressing evolving catchment management matters, outside the group's business-as-usual activities, which would be identified in the group's annual work plan.

It also removes specificity around membership, allowing for membership diversification and adaptability to reflect an evolving water catchment management agenda. Membership is currently being considered. However, in recognition of Indigenous knowledge, a First Nations member will be included.

The bill makes consequential amendments to the following pieces of legislation: the Water Resources Regulation 2007; the Utilities (Water Conservation) Regulation 2006; the Utilities Act 2000; and the Environment Protection Act 1997. These are minor in nature and are required to respond to the amendments to part 7, section 64 and to ensure that relevant agencies share information with both the authority and the director-general.

The ACT government is continuing delivery against its commitment in the parliamentary and governing agreement. Establishing the office and amendments to the Water Resources Act deliver on our commitment to "consider the best administrative arrangements to manage new water programs and provide a holistic and coordinated approach to water programs and policy".

The office will strengthen water management arrangements within the territory and support delivery of the water strategy vision—a community working together,

managing water wisely to support a vibrant, sustainable and thriving region. It will lead on water policy and planning and governance reforms to improve coordination, accountabilities and the capability of the ACT water sector. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Environment—World Wildlife Day

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (11.03): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that:
 - (a) 3 March was World Wildlife Day 2023, with the theme in 2023 being “partnerships for wildlife conservation”; and
 - (b) World Wildlife Day is an opportunity to celebrate the many beautiful and varied forms of wild fauna and flora and to raise awareness of the multitude of benefits that their conservation provides to people;
- (2) supports the ACT Government’s significant and extensive work in partnership to conserve our wildlife, including, but not limited to:
 - (a) establishing the “Understanding and conserving Gula on Ngunnawal Country” project in partnership with the Australian Government and the Ngunnawal community to identify culturally significant areas for Gula and employ locals to monitor for potential habitat and plan restoration;
 - (b) providing long-term funding and support for ACT Wildlife to undertake its vital activities within the Territory caring for sick and injured native wildlife;
 - (c) partnering with researchers and zoos to establish a successful breeding colony of Canberra Grassland Earless Dragons at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, with trial releases into predator-proof enclosures underway to help increase wild populations of this critically endangered reptile;
 - (d) partnering with the community through the ACT Government’s Environmental Grants Program to support numerous innovative community-led projects that support and bolster wildlife conservation. Notable examples include the Ginninderra Catchment Group’s innovative work with turtles and the National Parks Association’s long running Rosenberg Monitor’s monitoring program;
 - (e) improving habitat connectivity and biodiversity by restoring priority urban habitat sites as part of the Connecting Nature Connecting People initiative;
 - (f) collaborative work with citizen scientists to support wildlife populations. Some examples include volunteers assisting Superb Parrot research by analysing hundreds of thousands of camera images through the Australian Museum DigiVol platform, and community engagement in the innovative citizen science platform Canberra Nature Map.

Over the last year alone, over 700 new rare and threatened flora and fauna records were added to the platform;

- (g) working with volunteers and researchers to collaboratively monitor and treat wombat mange, helping support populations of a common but well-loved species in the ACT;
 - (h) partnering with the Australian National University Difficult Bird Research Group to better understand the genetic diversity and effective population size of Gang-gang Cockatoos to protect Canberra's beloved bird emblem;
 - (i) in partnership with CSIRO, leading the nation in integrating GonaCon fertility control into the ACT's macropod management program to ensure the ACT continues best practice in wildlife management; and
 - (j) partnering with the Australian Government's National Landcare Program to support the establishment of the new section of Mulligans Flat Wildlife Sanctuary at Goorooyaroo Nature Reserve. The funding has assisted with community engagement activities, removal of pests from the new sanctuary and the future release of Eastern Bettongs and Eastern Quoll; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) commit to and invest in strong partnerships for wildlife conservation in the ACT; and
 - (b) protect and enhance biodiversity and habitat across the ACT to ensure the ACT is a haven for both diverse and threatened wildlife, and that our beloved common species stay common.

I stand to move this executive motion regarding the importance of World Wildlife Day, celebrated three weeks ago, on 3 March. This year's theme was "partnerships for wildlife conservation" which, to me, speaks to the opportunities that go beyond the vital task of protecting wildlife—things like creating stronger communities and personal connections, and promoting human wellbeing within our ecosystems.

First Nations knowledge tells us: if we look after country, it will look after us. More and more evidence is building—scientifically, socially and economically—that, when we connect nature and people, both benefit.

Collaboration and cooperation to protect and restore our environment and the wildlife we love and depend on have become more important than ever before. No individual or organisation can accomplish everything alone, and that is particularly true of the collective effort it will take to ensure that we have a healthy planet.

World Wildlife Day serves as a reminder that it is our responsibility to protect wildlife and their habitats. As human beings, we need to realise that the natural world is not just a pretty backdrop to our lives. It is vital to our survival.

Wildlife plays an essential role in maintaining the delicate balance of ecosystems. Creatures of all kinds help to pollinate plants, control pests, clean our water, provide healthy soil and maintain biodiversity. Unfortunately, many species of wildlife are currently facing threats, such as habitat destruction and climate change, and that includes here in the ACT.

The just-released report from the IPCC is crystal clear that humanity is almost out of time when it comes to turning the tide on our emissions. If we do not turn that tide, humanity will suffer terribly, and so will all other life on this planet. It is important that we understand that part of our own suffering will be to grieve for the loss of wildlife that brings joy into our lives, the loss of wild places that give us beautiful places to play and rest, as well as facing severe disruptions to the building blocks of life that sustain us, and that nature provides.

World Wildlife Day gives us another important opportunity to celebrate the many beautiful and varied forms of wild animals and plants and raise awareness of the multitude of benefits that their conservation provides to people. As Minister for the Environment, I am determined to do all that I can to see the ACT protect and restore our endangered species, keep our common species from becoming rare or endangered and ensure that our ecosystems have the best chance to adapt as our climate changes.

When it comes to the opportunities for partnerships to protect our wildlife, the ACT is blessed with the presence of key national and internationally leading research institutions and experts that we can work with—and, indeed, we do. But it is particularly clear to me that this government's most important partner, when it comes to wildlife conservation, is our community. Canberra is blessed with an extraordinarily strong culture of environmental volunteerism and an incredible number of citizen scientists. One of the joys of my role is to regularly meet with this committed community that are engaged with volunteering and see the outcomes of this huge community effort.

I would like to share with you just a short selection of some of the initiatives that the ACT government has undertaken in partnership with various organisations to promote wildlife conservation in the ACT, many of them, most notably, with our community. I am pleased to report that it was challenging to narrow it down to a very short list. There is so much more.

We have established the Understanding and Conserving Gula on Ngunnawal Country project, in collaboration with the Australian government and the Ngunnawal community. The project aims to identify culturally significant areas for gula, which are koalas, and engage Ngunnawal people to monitor potential habitats and plan for restoration.

We have provided long-term funding and support to ACT Wildlife, a volunteer organisation that provides vital care for sick and injured native wildlife in our territory. That long-term funding is allowing ACT Wildlife and our directorates to develop closer working relations to achieve shared goals. One of the projects that highlights their collaboration is how our researchers are working with wildlife volunteers to monitor and treat wombat mange, helping to support populations of a common but well-loved species in the ACT.

We have increased our ability to partner with the community through the ACT government's Environmental Grants Program by significantly lifting the funding available for these grants. These grants allow us to support numerous community-led projects that bolster wildlife conservation. Notable examples include the Ginninderra

Catchment Group's innovative work with turtles and the National Parks Association's long-running monitoring program for the Rosenberg's monitor. I was lucky enough to go out with the research team and meet, quite briefly, Rex, one of the Rosenberg's monitors.

We are improving habitat connectivity and biodiversity by restoring priority urban habitat sites as part of the Connecting Nature, Connecting People initiative. Our environmental scientists will collaborate with the community to help to identify the best sites for this work, because we recognise that Canberra's citizens are deeply engaged with their local wildlife and often have data that improves government decisions.

We are also collaborating with our citizen scientists to support wildlife populations. Examples include volunteers assisting with superb parrot research by analysing hundreds of thousands of camera images through the Australian Museum's DigiVol platform, and community engagement in the innovative citizen science platform, the Canberra Nature Map. In recognition of how valuable that community assistance is, we have invested further in the Canberra Nature Map as part of the Connecting Nature, Connecting People initiative.

We are also really lucky with the vital collaborations that we have with research and expert organisations. We have partnered with researchers and zoos to establish a successful breeding colony of Canberra grassland earless dragons at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, with trial releases into predator-proof enclosures underway to help to increase wild populations of this critically endangered reptile. We are partnering with the ANU's Difficult Bird Research Group to better understand the genetic diversity and effective population size of gang-gang cockatoos, to protect Canberra's beloved bird emblem. We are leading the nation in integrating GonaCon fertility control into the ACT's macropod management program to ensure that the ACT continues best practice in wildlife management, a program born from a long-term collaboration with the CSIRO.

Finally, on this list of highlights, we partnered with the Australian government's National Landcare Program to support the establishment of a new section of Mulligans Flat wildlife sanctuary at Goorooyaroo Nature Reserve.

Our commitment is to invest in strong partnerships for wildlife conservation in the ACT, and protect and enhance biodiversity and habitat across the region. In doing so, we recognise that our community is our strongest partner, and I thank them for their passionate and invaluable contributions.

Our goal is to ensure the ACT is a haven for both diverse and threatened wildlife and that our beloved common species stay common. We believe that the work we are doing here will inspire and inform the work that others are doing elsewhere. This executive motion strengthens and highlights these commitments.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (11.13): I am pleased to speak in support of Minister Vassarotti's motion

acknowledging World Wildlife Day and to further highlight the wide range of cutting-edge conservation work undertaken by this government. I would like to take this opportunity to further highlight to the Assembly the often unsung work undertaken not only by our scientists, policymakers and community and academic partners, but also by our on-ground staff from the Parks and Conservation Service.

One of the tough but necessary jobs they do is managing threats to wildlife and, indeed, all forms of biodiversity. These threats take many forms, but amongst the most significant are feral animals. Horses, deer, pigs, rabbits and other invasive species require ongoing control efforts to ensure their populations and the negative impacts they have on the natural values are kept in check.

I am proud of the efforts and innovation being shown by the parks service to introduce new technology and approaches to this task. In the coming months we will see the third year of a thermally assisted aerial culling program in remote parts of the ACT. This program utilises thermal imaging technology, combined with highly skilled operators, to identify and humanely eradicate feral animals. The success of the program is demonstrated through scientific analysis of animal populations, with a clear declining trend emerging as repeated control efforts pay dividends. This technology also has the potential to be used closer to the urban areas to safely and humanely manage smaller but equally destructive pests like rabbits in a way that poses no risk to other species.

Invasive weeds are another critical threat to our biodiversity. An invasive plant control program has undertaken operations on approximately 8,500 hectares of land across the territory over the past 12 months. A variety of invasive plant species were targeted over the year and integrated pest management will be a key focus in the coming years. It takes a holistic approach and uses a coordinated variety of control methods, reducing reliance on individual control methods.

The invasive plant control program is further enhanced by having partnerships between government, community and volunteer groups in the protection of our local environment and providing greater opportunity for citizen science in tackling biosecurity issues as they arise.

Of course, we cannot forget the threat of fire. Despite the destructive 2020 Orroral Valley fire, the Parks and Conservation Service has continued efforts to manage fire risk while promoting natural recovery and landscape repair, and that continues unabated. In the coming weeks we can expect to see an increasing level of prescribed burning taking place in the rural areas to the west and south of Canberra as our Parks and Conservation team implements the annual bushfire operational plan.

Minister Vassarotti has identified the importance of partners like the commonwealth government, the Ngunnawal community, catchment and friends groups and universities and how they support and enable the work that the government undertakes in the biodiversity conservation space. I would also like to highlight the role that ordinary Canberrans play in supporting our parks and reserves, our rangers and field staff, as they strive to maintain our precious natural assets.

Canberrans and visitors alike are returning to Tidbinbilla, Mulligans Flat and other popular native reserves in increasing numbers. We are very fortunate in Canberra to

have such easy access to local nature reserves within a short walk or a bike ride from most homes, as well as access to some of Australia's best wildlife experiences, at Mulligans Flat sanctuary and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. Fun, entertaining and educational experiences are available at both of these locations, and I encourage all Canberrans to get out and about and learn more about our natural environment.

Conserving our biodiversity requires a community contribution. Our scientists and rangers play an invaluable role and welcome community use and enjoyment of the natural places. As residents of the bush capital, we should all be proud of and continue to uphold our collective commitment to living in harmony with nature.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.18): I thank Minister Vassarotti for bringing forward this motion today. World Wildlife Day took place on 3 March. It is the UN international day to celebrate all of the world's animals and plants, and the contribution they make to our lives and to the planet. In Canberra, we are incredibly lucky to have such a wonderful array of wildlife on our doorstep, just a stone's throw away, for most of us, from our nature parks and reserves.

I believe everyone in this chamber cares deeply about protecting our local wildlife. Just one example of that was the tripartisan support for Dr Paterson's motion about snakes yesterday. We are so lucky in Canberra to have a community that truly cares about preserving our natural environment and ensuring that our local wildlife has suitable habitats to call home.

We also have some incredible wildlife rescue organisations, such as ACT Wildlife and Wombat Rescue, as well as the snake catching and relocation services that we spoke about yesterday. They work tirelessly to care for injured animals and release them back into the wild, when and if it is appropriate.

We also have organisations such as the Conservation Council. Just recently they launched their Bush Buds program, which many of my colleagues in the chamber participated in, to help raise awareness of threatened local species. Hopefully, for all of us, that work is ongoing, and we will continue to raise that awareness not only of our chosen bush bud but also of other local species.

We have a number of volunteer-run organisations that conduct important citizen science, such as our local catchment groups and the Canberra Ornithologists Group. Conserving our environment and protecting our unique wildlife are something that individuals, community groups and governments can and should all play a role in. The Canberra Liberals will continue to advocate for our local wildlife and work constructively with the government on this important issue.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.20): I want to add a few quick words to thank the minister for bringing forward this executive motion. We particularly love the theme of this year's World Wildlife Day, "partnerships for wildlife conservation".

I have had the real privilege in this role of getting to know and work with some of the people and groups who are so strongly committed to making this world a better place for our native wildlife, from grey-headed flying foxes to possums, snakes, wombats, joeys and more.

In the last couple of months I have managed to meet quite a lot of the animals in care, and it was a truly magical experience. It is remarkable, when you chat to the carers, to hear about how many long and dedicated hours they spend in looking after these little critters. It is a lot like having a baby and providing that level of care.

I want to give a shout-out to the ACT Conservation Council's Bush Buds program. Quite a few people in this room, I think, have chosen a bush bud. I have the golden sun moth. I was really sad that I missed the launch; I had COVID. It is great to see that initiative. It so educative and it is so powerful to be able to get people involved. You adopt a bush bud. You learn about the species. You have an opportunity to walk around and connect with nature and learn more about our wildlife, particularly endangered wildlife, right here in the ACT. I would encourage any MLA who has not participated in that program to jump in and get going.

I also want to thank ACT Wildlife for the patient, dedicated care that they and all of their volunteers provide to our injured wildlife, and for the advocacy that they do. It is really tiring work. I know that it is quite wearing and quite emotionally involving. They do a marvellous job.

We all have a role in wildlife conservation, from having animal-friendly netting in our gardens to reporting injured wildlife to ACT Wildlife and maintaining habitat in our backyards. We live in a really interconnected way here in Canberra. We are the bush capital. It means that we have to take responsibility for understanding and coexisting with the wildlife that we have here, and to seek to protect it, if we want to keep living in this beautiful bush capital.

Thank you, Minister Vassarotti, for committing to several initiatives that will conserve our wildlife in the ACT. Thank you for the long-term funding for ACT Wildlife, who do such great work in rehabilitating our sick and injured wildlife. It is great to see this motion come forward.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.23): I am really pleased to speak in support of Minister Vassarotti's motion today.

The 2021 federal *State of the environment* report revealed the stark reality of Australia's nature as poor and deteriorating. Despite being a biodiversity hotspot, Australia leads the extinction crisis. We are a world leader in the mammalian extinction and have one of the highest rates of species decline in the developing world. Over 100 Australian species are now listed as either extinct or extinct in the wild.

We are not immune to this crisis here in the ACT. I was very glad to hear Minister Vassarotti and Minister Gentleman's comments about all the work that is going on here in the ACT to protect our very valuable wildlife and environment.

To go further on Ms Lawder and Ms Clay's comments about the Conservation Council's Bush Buds program, I want to use this opportunity today to speak about the swift parrot, which I am the ambassador for. The swift parrot is a small streamlined, bright grass-green parrot about 250 millimetres in length. It has a dusky-red spike-shaped tail, a red forehead and throat bordered by yellow, and blue crown

and cheeks. The swift parrot is mainly an arboreal feeder, usually in the outer canopy of eucalyptus trees. Their main food is nectar but they also eat seeds and fruit.

The swift parrot mainly occurs in small flocks, appearing where eucalypts are in flower. The species breeds only in Tasmania, where it nests in hollows in mature eucalypts. It migrates north to mainland Australia over winter, following abundances of flowering eucalypts. Small numbers of this species are recorded in the ACT.

Swift parrots live in grassy blue gum forests in eastern Tasmania. But, on the mainland, the species inhabits mainly dry, open eucalypt forests and woodlands, usually box-ironbark communities and also yellow box gum woodland.

In the ACT, the species is likely to occur anywhere below 700 metres. ACT records of the species over the last 25 years are mainly from inner Canberra suburbs, Gungahlin and Hall.

Nationally, the range of the swift parrot has been reduced by half. The principal causes are loss of breeding and feeding habitats. This is particularly happening in Tasmania, due to clearing for agriculture, urban development and forestry operations. Clearing of box-ironbark and box-gum woodlands in mainland Australia, including here in the ACT, has also contributed to this. That is why it was great to be out at Mulligans Flat to see the protective woodlands out there as a habitat for our swift parrots.

I would like to thank the Conservation Council for their Bush Buds program. I am a very happy participant and ambassador for the swift parrot.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.26): As has been noted by Minister Vassarotti, the theme for this year's World Wildlife Day is "Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation." As a member for Murrumbidgee, I would like to reflect upon the efforts of ACT conservation groups in preserving our wildlife diversity through our nature reserves and note the need for ongoing conservation efforts in the ACT.

As many of you know, I had the pleasure of participating in the Conservation Council's Bush Bud program, where I adopted the small ant-blue butterfly. This tiny butterfly can only be found in a few known locations, both within the ACT, including within my electorate of Murrumbidgee, and nationally. Unlike many bird and butterfly species, the female small ant-blue butterfly is more colourful than the male.

I was incredibly saddened to learn that, due to numerous human activities associated with expanding urbanisation, the small ant-blue butterfly population is in steep decline. The ongoing clearing of their natural habitat, extensive grazing on the south-east coast and the increasing threat of extreme heat and fire events have put acute pressure on their already struggling populations. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of citizen scientists, in 2019 we were fortunate enough to locate several breeding colonies of small ant-blue butterflies within our nature reserves. This was a crucial achievement in ongoing conservation efforts.

One of the things I love about this butterfly is its symbiotic relationship with the coconut ant. The female butterfly is attracted to a scent produced by the coconut ant.

They actually smell like coconut oil. The ants look after the butterfly eggs and are a food source for the larvae and then the caterpillars produce food for the ants. All things are interconnected.

If we want to save the butterfly, we must also save the ant and, if we want to save the coconut ant, we must protect its habitat of eucalypt and acacia woodland and open grasslands, including fallen wood where coconut ants might build their nests. This is how biodiversity works: species of plants and animals and insects are all interconnected. Lose one, and we could lose many more; but protect one and we could protect many others that are dependent on it.

It is so important that we continue to ensure that there is a future for the small ant-blue butterfly, and other native flora and fauna species, some of which can only be found here in the bush capital. I commend the work of my fellow Greens colleague, Minister for the Environment, Rebecca Vassarotti, in committing to protecting the trees, grasslands and waterways which our unique and diverse wildlife call home.

I have deeply appreciated the opportunity offered by the Conservation Council to participate in the Bush Buds Woodland Walk and learn more about the small ant-blue butterfly. I strongly encourage all of my colleagues here at the Assembly to join in on this effort.

I am also extremely grateful for and wish to recognise the ongoing work of conservation groups in protecting our biodiversity and habitat across the ACT—in particular, the Southern ACT Catchment Group, Landcare ACT and the many small neighbourhood groups getting the work done to look after our nature reserves and green strips, including Friends of Hughes Grassy Woodland, who look after red gum-yellow box habitat for gang-gangs, and the Friends of Hughes and Garran Woodland. I admire the passion, dedication and knowledge that they bring to their efforts. I am very much in support of this motion today.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (11.30), in reply: I would like to thank members of this chamber who have spoken in support of the motion. I think it really demonstrates the fact that supporting our wildlife and celebrating this beautiful place that we get to call home—the bush capital, Ngunnawal country—is something that is truly beyond politics, and I really thank people for their contributions.

I think that the Conservation Council, in particular, will be really pleased about the impacts of their Bush Bud program. We have all been able to learn about some of our special species that have been sponsored by members in this Assembly. Again, we really encourage people who have not already got in the program to get involved.

My Bush Bud is the beautiful and very enthusiastic Canberra earless dragon. It is a little creature that has captured my heart. While it used to be very common in the ACT, it is a species that we are absolutely fighting for its survival.

Getting involved in the program is really exciting because it does mean that you get a special bond to one of our creatures. It something that is really significant in terms of

thinking about what we need to do to protect our Bud. I have to say that I am not sure anyone in this Assembly has gone quite as far as Minister Davidson, who has in fact got a tattoo of her Bush Bud. I am not sure if other members are prepared to go that far! But it does require us to really be champions for these species.

The other key thing that has become really evident through this discussion is the importance of this work as a partnership between government, the community, researchers and many other groups. It has been really fantastic to be able to highlight this partnership work and some of the specific initiatives. I particularly thank Minister Gentleman for highlighting some of those works. Thank you, everyone, for your contributions in supporting this motion.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Order of the day—postponement

Ordered that order of the day No 1, executive business, relating to Background Checking Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, be postponed until a later hour.

Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Amendment Bill 2022

Debate resumed from 22 November 2022, on motion by **Mr Gentleman**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (11.33): The Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Amendment Bill 2022 is a hit on Canberra's small businesses—the heart and soul of our local community—when they can least afford it. Largely unsuspecting beauty, electrolysis, make-up, nail care, skin care and tanning services, barbers, hotels and motels, holiday house and flat operations, serviced apartments and youth hostels, cafes, restaurants and takeaway food services, pubs, taverns, bars and clubs will all be hit by this new one to two per cent levy on small business payroll.

When interest rates and input costs are rising and economic growth contracting, this will cause job losses and business closures, all while many Canberran small businesses are still recovering from COVID. And, given the transient nature of employment in many of these industries, it is doubtful that many workers will ever see any benefit.

As well as the direct financial cost to these Canberra small businesses, there will be new red tape burden. Businesses will have to register with the ACT Long Service Leave Authority, register each new employee, calculate their quarterly earnings, multiply these by the contribution rate, remit this money to the same authority and then be subject to a stringent inspection and enforcement regime. Ai Group has estimated portable schemes impose four times the cost burden imposed by general long service leave laws in Australia. This bill will add to the jumble of long service leave regimes already faced by national and cross-border employers.

The government has not even established that involuntary labour mobility is a feature of the industries to which they wish to extend portability. As the Canberra Business Chamber has noted:

There is insufficient analysis or evidence to support expansion of the (portable LSL) scheme to the proposed industries. The expansion of the scheme to personal care services (hairdressing and beauty services) and accommodation and food services is based on the assumption that these industries have ‘highly mobile workforces’ (and that) both employers and employees would benefit from the PLSL. Yet the consultation paper does not provide any data or evidence to support this assumption.

Indeed, mobility in these industries is voluntary rather than associated with the nature of these industries, and employment in these industries is often transient.

The purported benefits to workers are questionable. The Canberra Business Chamber also notes that the government has provided ‘no empirical evidence-base to demonstrate a benefit to employers or the precise benefits to employees’. The Australian Hairdressing Council says this bill ‘will see salon owners close their businesses or employ less staff, especially apprentices’.

Some employers will be reluctant to hire workers with accumulated entitlements, as these employees would be more likely to request protracted leave close to their commencement date.

The Ai Group and COSBOA have noted the bill’s negative, disproportionate impact on female-owned small businesses in the hairdressing and beauty sector. In 2015 the Productivity Commission concluded that the costs and complexity of portable long service leave schemes outweigh any community benefit.

The government has not explained what will happen to the money invested from quarterly long service leave payments for the large number of employees who will not stay in these industries long enough to qualify for long service level LSL or who transfer to different occupations entirely, which happens often in these particular industries. This begs the question of whether the money the government will be squeezing out of small businesses will go to subsidising its tram.

This bill is bad in principle and conception and appalling in its timing. It will have a perverse impact on workers employed in those small businesses being targeted. The government has foreshadowed extending it in future to real estate, travel agency and retail industries. So, in time, this measure will impact a huge swathe of Canberra’s small business sector.

As I said, I have spoken to the Business Chamber, the AHA, the hairdressers association, COSBOA, local businesses in and around the city, in my electorate and everywhere I am able to chat to businesses in these industries. Their concern for their employees is great.

In essence, it is a case of this Barr-Rattenbury government inflicting its incoherent, ideological agenda on battling Canberra small businesses when they can least afford it. Without workers, businesses do struggle.

Mr Parton interjecting—

Mr Pettersson interjecting—

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (11.39): I am pleased to be able to support this legislation and the expansion of the portable long service leave scheme today.

Long service leave has been a core workplace right in many Australian workplaces and for millions of Australian employees over many decades. The fundamental principle is that, when an employee has worked for a particular enterprise or business for approximately 10 years, they are entitled to a long break.

This has multiple benefits for both the employer and the employee. The employee has the opportunity to take a break from work and focus on themselves and recharge, while still being paid, and the employer has rejuvenated staff and less staff turnover. A worker is less likely to decide to change employers or industries if they are beginning to approach a time when they can access this benefit.

While this entitlement has been a feature of work for many for decades, fewer and fewer employees are staying with one enterprise long enough to be eligible for long service leave. This has multiple impacts. Firstly, workers are losing out on the opportunity for a break from work after a decade and, secondly, workers are overall losing entitlements in their working lives. Finally, workers are less likely to stay in more fluid industries in which they are not likely to work for one employer for a full decade.

This fits with the broad move towards Australians needing to enter more and more insecure work just to get by. This has led to an erosion in conditions and entitlements overall; notably, for the purposes of this reform, the entitlement of long service leave.

These were some of the reasons that portable long service leave was introduced for the building and construction industry in 1981. At the time, this was one of the more fluid industries where, due to regular changes in employer, workers were rarely receiving all the entitlements for which they are eligible. As the years have gone by, workers in other industries have had the portable long service leave scheme expanded to include them—from security guards to aged-care workers. Multiple industries have adapted and prioritised in supporting their workers.

In 2009 the government articulated its vision to have portability of long service leave for all workers who are not employed in the public service. This bill today is another step on that road.

The Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Bill 2022 will expand the coverage and change the name of the Contract Cleaning Portable Long Service Leave Scheme. The scheme will expand to cover the hairdressing and beauty services industry and the accommodation and food services industry. As these additional industries are brought into the scheme, the name will change to the Services Industry Scheme.

The additional types of work covered under the hairdressing and beauty service industry include barbers, electrolysis services, hairdressing, makeup and nail and skin and care, just to name a few. The types of work covered under the accommodation and food services industry include caravan park operation, hotel, motel and resort operation, cafe work, restaurants, pubs, taverns and bars, to name some but not all.

The expansion of the Portable Long Service Leave Scheme to cover workers who do this will help to retain and attract workers to these industries. Everyone in this place would surely know that in the accommodation and food services industry, workers not only have insecure working arrangements and move between employers quite regularly, but we also know that these industries are crying out for more workers and that staff turnover is high. There is a similar set of circumstances within the hairdressing and beauty service industry; however, there is more movement within the industry between enterprises than into and out of the industry.

Casualised and insecure work inevitably provides worse outcomes for gender equity in this country, as women are more likely to be in insecure work and casualised industries such as hairdressing and beauty services, hospitality and retail, just to name a few.

The expansion of portable long service leave benefits all workers in the industry as a whole. Given the current nature of the expansion, there will be a high proportion of women who benefit from this particular expansion. This is similar to the case of the 2016 expansion for aged-care workers. This scheme is good for workers. This expansion is particularly good for women in the workforce.

I fully support the continued expansion of the ACTs portable long service leave scheme. Ensuring that workers in this territory have their entitlements paid and received is a good thing. I am hopeful that helping to make changes in these industries more worker-friendly will allow attraction and retention of workers to these industries, which are of vital importance to our community and our economy. All work is valuable and important, and all workers should be treated as such.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (11.43): The ACT Greens believe that there must be a fair and equitable industrial relation system for all workers to protect the interests of working people from the disproportionate power of employees. Portable long service leave schemes contribute towards this.

I note Ms Castley makes the observation that involuntarily labour mobility is not a feature of the accommodation, food and personal service industries. I disagree; in fact, I could not disagree more strongly. These service industries may not operate on short-term projects but they are notorious for the use of casual employees that can be dropped at a whim, structural retrenchments prior to entitlements falling due and toxic workplaces that leave workers feeling compelled to move on.

We have all heard the phrase, “If you cannot handle the heat get out of the kitchen.” There is a reason why the kitchen is the example. Anyone who has worked in one will tell you how hot-headed these workplaces can become, dominated by strong and stressful personalities. Staff get burned easily—and I also mean emotionally.

When staff feel compelled to move on, as they so often are, they deserve an incentive to remain within their industry and they should retain recognition of their time served in a profession. Far too many businesses in these service industries do not anticipate or otherwise account for the cost of long service leave amongst their employees.

This is itself an obvious symptom of the expectation that staff will not remain with them long enough for their tenure to mature into a long service leave entitlement. People working in these services industries generally expect to miss out on long service entitlements, reducing them to a lesser class of employee compared to those working in other industries.

Those who argue that business should not have to bear these costs are effectively arguing in favour of long service leave not being an entitlement at all for employees in these industries and that businesses should be able to operate on a business model that relies on not paying workers their fair entitlements. As things currently stand, how ironic is it that only businesses that pay out long service leave entitlements are the good and healthy workplaces that people wish to remain with.

Extending the ACT's Portable Long Service Leave Scheme to these industries helps to remediate these problems. By accruing levies and managing payments through the government, it functions very similarly to a defined benefits superannuation scheme as a well understood means of pooling risk to minimise costs and maximise benefits. It evens out the cashflow for businesses. The costs of rewarding people who remain in the services industry will be borne by all employers not just those who are the best places to work.

The scheme should be very straight forward for businesses to administer. The directorate will have a two-year transition period to implement the scheme. It is my hope that they will use that time to make sure the scheme will operate smoothly and in alignment with other recent innovations in the streamlining of business finance and payroll systems.

In a search online I found MYOB already has a guide on how to handle portable long service leave for Victoria within their bookkeeping software. These systems will only get more straight forward over time.

In the current inflationary context, employers will also have time during the transitional period to factor into the scheme cyclical pay offers in a way that will support workers without adding to inflationary pressures.

This is good economic management for a good social benefit, and the Greens are glad to support it.

Mr Parton interjecting—

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (11.47): I am pleased to rise today to speak in favour of this bill because this bill is what Labor governments do. Labor governments always stand up for working people. I would like to begin by thanking the minister for bringing this bill forward. I, along with my former colleague Bec Cody, have previously called on the government to expand portable long service leave. Ms Cody championed the inclusion of hairdressing and barbering at the tail end of the last Assembly, and at the start of this term I called for the inclusion of catering and hospitality workers in the scheme. It is good to see these calls hopefully becoming a reality today.

Unfortunately, the nature of employment in Australia is changing for the worse. Work in Australia is becoming increasingly insecure and unstable. Casualisation and short-term work are becoming the norm. Workers' longstanding rights are under threat, and corporate entities are coming up with increasingly creative ways to avoid their responsibilities to their workers.

I understand that these issues in our labour markets are complex and evolving, but what is not complex, nor should it be slow, is our commitment to working people getting a fair go. That is why it is important that we are constantly monitoring working conditions and responding to these emerging trends.

Research from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that job mobility is on the rise. In the year ending February 2022, 1.3 million Australians changed jobs—roughly 9.5 per cent of all employed people. This is the highest rate of job mobility since 2012—over a decade ago. During this time period, the ACT had the highest rate of job mobility across all Australian jurisdictions. These statistics paint a picture of a job market where workers are increasingly being pressured to switch jobs or employers but commonly remain in the same industry.

Traditional forms of employment, where one might remain with an employer for a sustained period of time or even one's entire working life, are no longer normal or common. As a consequence of this, many workers will never be able to access their well-deserved long service leave.

Before I entered this place, I worked for the construction workers union, the CFMEU, here in Canberra. I saw firsthand the benefits of workers being able to access their portable long service leave in an industry that traditionally had not been able to access long service leave. The construction industry suffers from boom-and-bust cycles in which employers can rapidly expand and then disappear overnight, as we have seen just recently. It is why it was one of the first industries prioritised for portable long service leave.

Being a construction worker exposes you to financial uncertainty at a macro level with this boom-and-bust cycle, but also at the micro level as it is a highly casualised industry. The overwhelming majority of construction workers are casual. They are paid for the hours of work they do on site. There is no remote work for a construction worker. It is physically demanding work as well. The work day commonly starts before the sun is up. Working on a Saturday, after already working Monday to Friday, is commonplace. That is a six-day working week. It is a gruelling way of life that takes its toll.

For many construction workers, long service leave is a bright light at the end of a long tunnel. It is essential in allowing them to rest and recharge after years of hard work. It allows them to live—a chance to take a break and enjoy time with their loved ones. I am showing my millennial side here, but I believe we should work to live, not live to work. Long service leave is something we should all look forward to. It is key to protecting work-life balance and it plays a role in making sure that workers' physical and mental health is not damaged by endless years of work with no reprieve. It gives people a chance to, dare I say it, live.

Today, by extending the portable long service leave scheme to industries such as hospitality, beauty, hairdressing, accommodation, and food service, we can ensure that even more workers have access to their precious long service leave. These industries are in many ways similar to the industries already covered. They are important industries. These workers make our lives better. Our city and our way of life would not be the same without them. These industries face high levels of insecure work. They are prone to businesses popping up and shutting down. It can be hard to get full-time hours at one employer and it might require working several part-time jobs in one industry.

If we want Canberrans to continue working in these industries, we need to make sure that they remain good industries to work in. There will be some who say this scheme is actually bad for workers, that it will cost jobs or something else ridiculous. We have already seen that before. They are wrong, as always. The scheme has already been rolled out here in the ACT for construction workers, security workers, contract cleaners and community service workers, and it has been a massive success. These industries are better to work in and, as a result, workers are more likely to stay in these industries.

I would like to pick up on a couple of the points that were made previously. I always find it amazing in this place seeing the Canberra Liberals showing their true colours. All too often in this place, the Canberra Liberals come into this chamber and berate this government from the left. They claim to care more about the workers and the vulnerable than we do. It is so frustrating because those are not genuine concerns. They are often cheap political points being made, and that is evidenced by what we have seen here today: the absolute callous disregard for working people, showing absolute volumes about the true intentions of the Canberra Liberals.

I put it to them here today: if what Ms Castley has put about long service leave and its portability is as dire as she describes, does that mean you intend to abolish portable long service leave if you ever sit on this side of the chamber? It is a genuine question. If it is the job destroyer that you claim it is, surely you plan to abolish it. I hope someone asks them that question because I do not think they will respond to me on that point today in the chamber.

There are 12 points in Ms Castley's speech that I thought were quite one-sided. Ms Castley raised concerns: what about the worker that has already accrued so much portable long service leave that no-one would want to hire them, because they are likely to go on leave some time soon? I can understand the logic of that point, but surely you need to acknowledge the flipside: the worker that has worked in one place of employment for many years—half a decade—and, as the light at the end of the tunnel does get a little bit closer, they get a phone call or an email one day from their boss saying, "Thank you for your service, but we need to let you go"—no reason given. Everyone can see what is occurring, but they do not want to have to pay out that long service leave because they have not been budgeting for it. I think that is the flipside to that point that Ms Castley made.

There was another point that I thought was very revealing in which Ms Castley was concerned about the increased cost to business. That is a fair point. For some

businesses there might be an increased cost, and that is overwhelmingly due to the fact that they are probably not currently budgeting to pay out long service leave. They do not expect to ever pay out those entitlements because they may not plan to be around as a business when those entitlements come due; they may not plan to keep those employees around when those entitlements come due. There is a real and genuine reason that that increased cost is a good thing, because those entitlements should be paid. Those workers who go to work every single day should be getting paid those entitlements.

Mr Parton, in his contribution, was seemingly quite focused on Pialligo Estate and he seems to think that is an example that helps his point, but it could be nothing further from that. Pialligo Estate workers right now know that their long service leave entitlements have just gone up in flames. The frustrating thing is that the reason that business has gone out of business, as has been reported in the media, has got nothing to do with employee entitlements. I am sure that, if that were the case, they would be saying that, but they are not saying that. They are talking about once-in-a-generation events, extreme events, that have taken a much loved Canberra business to the brink.

For me, the tragedy that is playing out with that business is a very real one. For many and often young Canberrans who are planning the most joyous day of their life—their wedding commonly—and now have to deal with this uncertainty, it is a very stressful time. It is also a stressful time for the workers. They need to find another job because they have bills to pay, but the consideration of long service leave has gone up in smoke. That would not be the case if portable long service leave were in place for their industry already.

Today's bill is a logical and sensible next step in the expansion of this scheme. It will make even more industries better to work in here in the ACT. Canberra should be a city that offers a friendly and positive work-life balance for everyone. Workers in this city, in no matter what industry, should be able to access long service leave. As job mobility, unstable working arrangements and casualisations continue to increase, we must move to protect long service leave as a workplace right. It is absolutely the right thing to do.

I thank the government for bringing this bill forward and I look forward to witnessing the rollout of the expansion.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (11.58): I rise to support this bill. I thank Minister Gentleman and the directorate for their work on this and their engagement with business.

As Ms Orr rightly noted, this government articulated our vision for portable long service leave some time ago, and this has been re-emphasised regularly, including through a motion in 2020 and in the consultation since. Again I sincerely thank the businesses who have engaged with the government and provided submissions during consultation and in response to the inquiry. I also want to underline Ms Orr's comments about the benefits that portable long service leave provides, and Mr Pettersson has certainly touched on these today as well.

All Canberrans, have a right to just and favourable working conditions. I would encourage those opposite to consider the human rights considerations of this bill and how they are enlivened and promoted through it, especially at a time when workforce attraction and retention is a key issue for businesses and employers, and particularly in the industries covered by this bill. These are measures that will attract prospective employees and retain existing ones. These are measures which encourage workers to remain within the industry rather than exiting the industry entirely, as many do.

I also want to emphasise that this is not a scheme that begins tomorrow. The ACT government will be working closely with the ACT Long Service Leave Authority to support stakeholders—including our hardworking business community—over a two-year transition period and inform businesses of the assistance that the authority can provide to them. I commend the bill to the chamber.

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) (12.01): I am pleased to support this excellent bill today.

The further expansion of portable long service leave for workers in the ACT is something that is personally very important to me. Members will know that I spent a large chunk of my working life, before being elected to this place, working with cleaners and very low-paid, often migrant and exploited workers to help improve their employment conditions and give them a fair go. The expansion of the portable long service leave to the contract cleaning industry was a really big step in ensuring that these workers actually received the entitlements that they were entitled to and that they deserve.

The bill that we are debating today, which expands the scheme to workers including hairdressers, beauticians, accommodation and food service workers, will similarly have a highly positive impact on the working lives of low-paid migrant workers, often women and young people, with many of whom being unaware of their work and pay entitlements.

I would also like to note my support for this bill in my capacity as Minister for Women and minister for youth. Difficulty in accessing workplace entitlements or having entitlements withheld is something that is often experienced more by women, young people and migrant workers than men.

Unsurprisingly, the Canberra Liberals are opposing this legislation today, just as they did every other time, and just as they did for contract cleaners when they won portable long service leave. Back then, I was an organiser with the United Workers Union, helping these contract cleaners to push these reforms and improve their working conditions more generally.

In fact, on that day I was sitting in the gallery with the cleaners, looking on as they were celebrating this important day. The then leader of the opposition, Kate Carnell, left the chamber and turned her back, literally, on low-paid and migrant women workers. Let me tell you, those cleaners—who were members of my union, the United

Workers Union—who were in the chamber with me that day never forgot that insulting gesture from the Canberra Liberals.

Similarly, the workers who will benefit from this expansion of portable long service leave will not forget that those opposite voted again against their interests and against the interests of low-paid workers, migrant workers and young workers, and yet again they have done it today. I support the bill and I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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) (12.03), in reply: I thank everybody for their contribution today during this debate. The government, of course, will always seek to protect and extend the rights and entitlements of workers in our city.

The Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Amendment Bill 2022 makes amendments to the Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Act 2009, and it also makes minor amendments to other legislation within my portfolio. The bill before the Assembly represents another important step in the government's program for supporting fair and equitable working conditions for all workers.

I want to thank the Standing Committee for Economy and Gender and Economic Equality for their inquiry and report into this important bill, and I want to take this opportunity to thank the Scrutiny Committee for their close and careful consideration of the bill.

In response to comments made by that committee, I table:

A revised explanatory statement to the bill.

The statement now includes a more detailed explanation of the purpose of transitional regulation-making powers that have been included in the bill in the event that there is cause to address any unforeseen transitional matters that arise during the period before the expansion commences.

I would also like to thank all members for their contributions. We are faced with the current employment situation where more and more people are employed casually or on an insecure basis, and we need to ensure that our workforce and our workplace laws keep pace with these modern circumstances. That is why, after the last election, we committed as a government to review these laws and extend portable long service leave to more workers. Today, we are delivering on this commitment.

It is increasingly difficult for people to attain long service leave. Many people do not stay with the same employer for seven years in the way that we used to, and in certain industries this is especially bad. In food and accommodation services and hair and beauty services, many employees end up moving between employers more frequently than they would like.

I would like the chamber to listen to this next paragraph. As at last year, the ACT had the highest job mobility rate in the country, at 12.8 per cent. This demonstrates how

critical it is that we are continuing to update our legislation to ensure that it better reflects the way that our job market is operating today.

The heart of this bill is providing fair and equitable access to long service leave entitlements to more workers, who would otherwise most likely not be able to access long service leave under the traditional arrangements. In addition to business and economic considerations, it seeks to address broader social- and gender-equality considerations.

The bill will expand the portable schemes to two new sectors—namely, the hairdressing and beauty services sector and the accommodation and food services sector. In doing so, it takes advantage of the existing portable scheme design for the contract cleaning industry scheme. The expanded services industry scheme will, from commencement, cover the two new industry sectors in addition to the existing contract cleaning industry workers and employees.

This government recognises that, more often than not, it is women who struggle to access their workplace entitlements to the same extent as men, whether this is superannuation, traditional leave arrangements or fair remuneration. These changes also mean that, if you take up to four years of time outside the industry and then return to it, your previous service will count towards your long service leave accrual. This is extremely advantageous for women and people who choose to take time off work for child-raising responsibilities. Expanding the scheme to traditionally feminised industries, such as beauty and hair services and food and accommodation services, will help to address some of this historic and institutionalised bias against women.

The expanded scheme will adopt the existing structure within the contract cleaning scheme for the accumulation of service, the registration of workers and employers, and the provisions that support workers taking leave administered by the authority. In this way, the amendment does not make any substantial changes to the way in which the portable schemes work and have worked successfully for many years. In addition, this approach allows the costs of moving to coverage under the portable schemes to be kept to a minimum, spreading fixed scheme costs over a larger pool of registered employers.

The 2021-22 annual report of the Long Service Leave Authority reports that the contract cleaning industry scheme has the highest funding ratio of all portable schemes—a position that is well placed to support the proposed expansion and keep employer levy rates to a minimum.

The authority also regularly analyses the workforce profile of the various industry schemes. This analysis will be able to provide additional data to the ACT on the workforce in the covered industries over time, including characteristics such as the number of workers, industry growth, demographics and, of course, wages.

The current levy for the cleaning scheme is set at 1.07 per cent of the gross ordinary wages of workers. Levy contribution rates are regularly reviewed and adjusted to ensure that only the required amount of the funds is collected. In the lead-up to commencement, these will be reviewed and levy rates for the new services industry

will be determined. This process is assisted by expert actuarial review and gives consideration to the rate at which workers in the covered industry are expected to reach an entitlement milestone.

I am aware that some of the hairdressing salon owners that made submissions to the EGEE committee sought information and transparency on fund management and workforce analysis. It is already a practice of the authority to publish this information for covered industries on its website, including within its annual reports and workforce analysis reviews. This practice, of course, will continue for the expanded services industry scheme.

I would like to take this opportunity to refer to the public consultation process itself. While there has been some typical criticism of the process from those that have not supported the selected industries for expansion, consultation was nevertheless undertaken. It was open public consultation over a six-week period. In fact, submissions were accepted even after the closing date.

Local stakeholders were alerted to the public consultation process, and local and nationally based stakeholders were identified with a particular interest in the industries identified in the consultation expansion proposal. They were invited to stakeholder information sessions in addition to being provided a link to the public consultation website.

On consideration of all the submissions received to date, including submissions made to the committee inquiry into the bill, I am confident that we have heard the views of stakeholders, accurately reflected these views in the published summary of the consultation process, and considered those views in the design of the proposed expansion.

Concern with the expansion of portable long service leave from industry has, generally speaking, focused on perceived costs to businesses, also raising administrative concerns and preferring the operation of traditional long service leave entitlements described in the Long Service Leave Act 1976. I reiterate here for the benefit of members that long service leave is a national workplace entitlement. In some industries, however, access is limited by the nature of the industry, not by the choice of workers.

Under the 1976 act, a chef working with the same employer for seven years will be entitled to long service leave of about six weeks; however, under the 1976 act, this chef may not have had the opportunities for professional development, advancement and creative inspiration that comes with opportunities at new businesses and new ventures in their chosen profession. Furthermore, where long service leave might be taken in these industries under the 1976 act, an employer has to fully fund their leave entitlement when the leave is granted, undoubtedly impacting the business costs and operational overheads.

The amendment bill will allow workers in the new industries to develop their skills and experience without being faced with the prospect of leaving the industry to seek better working conditions. It fosters professional creative opportunities within the covered industry that benefit both the individual and the businesses that engage in the industry.

The amendment bill will also support businesses in “banking” the funds that are needed to cover the periods of long service leave—similar to pay as you go withholding. Businesses that identify the challenge of attracting and keeping talented team members may find the expansion helps with workforce growth and attraction at the industry level. In 2014, the Fair Work Commission identified a positive connection between increased opportunities for productivity improvements and employment flexibility and improved conditions.

We are conscious of the work businesses will need to do to get ready for entering the portable scheme. Under the bill, businesses will have two years to prepare. During this time, the authority will be engaging with affected employers and peak bodies to fully implement the required administrative and support mechanisms for businesses and workers so that on commencement everyone is ready. To make it easier, the new industries are defined using a well-established industry classification system already used in workers compensation schemes.

I can confirm that the Long Service Leave Authority and directorate officials are planning the education and awareness campaign to support the transition period prior to commencement. In its first stages, the directorate will be publishing factsheets about the changes in this bill. A detailed implementation campaign, of course, will follow. This implementation work will support employers and employees in the newly covered industries in understanding how the portable schemes work and what their responsibilities are.

This government will always stand up for working people and we will do everything we can to ensure that ACT workplaces are safe. This bill furthers the government’s vision that all working Canberrans should be able to accrue and access long service leave and have equal opportunity to rest and recharge after that long service period.

I would like to thank the United Workers Union for their hard work and persistence in ensuring that we have delivered on this important reform. I would also like to thank Mr Pettersson and Ms Cody, the former member for Murrumbidgee, for their advocacy on this issue too. I am confident that this amendment bill will make a positive contribution to the working lives of Canberrans. I commend it to the Assembly.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (12.16): I seek leave under standing order 47 to get a clarification of words from Minister Berry.

Leave granted.

MS CASTLEY: I believe the minister mentioned in her speech that today the Canberra Liberals have voted against the bill. There has not been a vote yet, so I just ask her to clarify whether that is in fact the case. There has not been a vote yet, so she cannot say that we voted against it.

Ms Berry: That is good news, then. I can correct the record if it is the case that they do not oppose it. I was assuming that they will be opposing it. If they are not opposing it, that is wonderful. I withdraw the suggestion that they are opposing it, if they do not oppose it.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 12.17 to 2.00 pm

Questions without notice Canberra Health Services—data security

MR HANSON: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, I refer to an article in the *City News* today regarding a patient who posted on Facebook after receiving someone else's clinical notes and being told by Canberra Health Services that it was a misprint, despite their doctor also receiving another person's clinical notes. Canberra Health Services called this patient and told her to remove her Facebook post and that they "were going to investigate," and, "It wasn't a big deal. It was a mishap with the software." Minister, I also note that other posts to the Canberra Notice Board on Facebook about the Canberra Hospital have been removed of late. Minister, why is Canberra Health Services contacting patients who post their valid concerns on Facebook and asking them to remove posts? Is this common practice at Canberra Health Services?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. I will take it on notice in relation to whether Canberra Health Services has been asking people to remove posts. I understand they may have asked people to remove the names of other people in posts. I am aware of one post on a noticeboard that provided the name of another individual, presumably without that individual's consent or knowledge. It may be that Canberra Health Services had asked that person to remove the post because it named a third party. Other than that, I will need to take the question on notice and follow up with the Canberra Health Services about what interactions they may have had in relation to Facebook or other noticeboards.

MR HANSON: Minister, since the digital health records have been rolled out, how many cases have there been where someone has inadvertently received someone else's clinical records?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am not entirely sure this can be put down to the digital health record. As I indicated in responding to a question yesterday from the opposition, there has been one case recently that I am aware of. This relates to someone who did post on Facebook publicly that they had received a page of hardcopy patient records which were attached to their own mailout. I understand that CHS contacted the consumer immediately and asked that the other consumer's records be destroyed. My understanding of that circumstance was that it was a hardcopy. I actually said that yesterday—it is an example of where human error is involved. Someone has picked up two pieces of paper together, folded them

together and sent them off together. That is pure human error. Those things do occur from time to time and the standard practice is to ensure the person who has received the incorrect information is contacted and is asked—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the minister's information, but on relevance, what I am asking for is how many times has this occurred. If she does not have that number, if she could take it on notice?

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Stephen-Smith are you able to go to that area?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I think I very clearly at the beginning of my answer rejected the premise of Mr Hanson's question. His question was specifically in relation to the digital health record. I am happy to take on notice to provide as much information as I can in relation to where there is an indication that the digital health record has contributed to patients receiving another patient's information.

Mr Hanson: On the point of order: my question was how many times has this occurred since the digital health record has rolled out. It is not saying that it is because of the digital health record.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, the time for answering the question has expired.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, why when the complaints page on the website states you can expect a turnaround response in 35 days, did this person in the *City News* receive four phone calls in 24 hours to remove the post?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I cannot verify that information at this point in time. I have just talked about one particular matter in relation to this person. I understand that there is also a second complaint from the same person. Following initial review of that complaint, it appears to have been an unfortunate administrative error during the discharge process. I have not seen the post. I have been made aware of it, but I have not seen it myself. It may be related to the identification of a third party. Again, I am happy to take that question on notice and follow up with CHS and come back to the chamber with some information.

Canberra Health Services—data security

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, in response to my question last week, on Thursday, you did not answer whether you would ask CHS to investigate privacy breaches before the Digital Health Record was implemented. You said instead:

There is absolutely no indication, and no reason to believe ... that there are wider implications of this issue.

Yesterday, after question time, you said that there have been identified by CHS a further eight breaches of personal health information which have proceeded to termination, misconduct investigation or referral to an external body, in addition to the senior nurse that was recently stood down. Was the recipient of the other eight data breaches a union and, if so, which union?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I need to be clear that CHS have gone back through all of their records. This is not necessarily recent. As I said yesterday, they have also indicated that they do not have a single system that holds all of this information. They have been clear, and I was clear yesterday, that they cannot say that this is everything, but they have identified this. I will have to take on notice whether or not any of those breaches are related. I would say to Ms Castley's point—again, really misrepresenting the way that I understood the question and the context of my response to it—in responding to that question from Ms Castley I was very clear about what it was that I was referring to when I responded to her in that response the other day. Again, this is the opposition drawing a bow from a response that I gave, taking a small part of it out of context and placing it in a different context.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, when did the data breaches involving a senior nurse and the eight other serious cases occur?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: The matter involving the senior nurse was quite recent, I understand. I will take on notice the time lines on the other matters.

MR COCKS: Minister, will you now commit to a full, open and transparent investigation of the extent and nature of privacy breaches from before the DHR was implemented, given that there is now reason to believe that there are wider implications of this issue?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Again, Mr Cocks is taking out of context my comment about the wider implications. In that response I was very clear that I was talking about the very specific matter in relation to the three staff that action had been taken against and the way that they had released information. I will again say—because the Canberra Liberals are continuing to draw the implication that this is a widespread practice in Canberra Health Services and continuing to scare the Canberra community around it—that there is no evidence. They have no evidence that this type of activity is more widespread. If they do, they should share it.

I will take on notice Mr Cocks's question because I am confident that Canberra Health Services take the privacy of patient information very seriously. The fact that they have previously taken action against staff, as appropriate under the enterprise agreement, when these issues have been identified, and the fact that they have taken action against these staff, indicates how seriously they take this issue.

So I will take on notice the question from Mr Cocks around whether there are any grounds to believe that a wider investigation of this matter is warranted.

Schools—Meals in Schools pilot program

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the ACT government's Meals in Schools pilot project?

MS BERRY: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. In 2020, ACT Labor promised to trial free school meals, and now we are delivering on that promise. Students at five

local schools will get free breakfast and lunch on three days a week, under a \$1.5 million pilot.

The pilot will be delivered in collaboration with school communities, which will include the P&Cs. Teachers, students, parents and carers will have a chance over the next few months to help to design delivery of the pilot in their school to ensure that it meets the needs of their community. Rollout of the Meals in Schools will begin in term 3 of 2023, with the pilot running for 18 months.

Members will remember that this was ridiculed by the Canberra Liberals when we announced it. However, instead, we are doing the hard and important work of making sure that every kid gets a fair crack at happiness through an equal chance at a great education.

DR PATERSON: Minister, which ACT public schools are participating in the Meals in Schools pilot?

MS BERRY: Thank you for that supplementary. Students at Gilmore Primary School, Richardson Primary School, Narrabundah Early Childhood School, Gold Creek School's high school campus, and Melba Copland Secondary School's senior campus will take part in the pilot. The five schools were selected based on a range of factors to capture a broad representation of ACT public schools. Across the five schools, the pilot will reach ACT students from preschool all the way through to year 12. All students in the participating schools will be able to access the free meals, because no child should feel stigmatised for accessing a free meal.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what difference will free meals in schools make to ACT young people and their families?

MS BERRY: Thank you for that supplementary. This will make a huge difference. Everybody knows you cannot learn to the best of your potential on an empty stomach. This initiative is backed by national and international research that clearly shows the benefits to students from access to healthy and nutritious food at school.

The ACT government understands that when a young person has a full stomach, their education will improve. For parents, free breakfast at school might help to streamline the hectic morning routine. For school communities, free breakfast and lunch will provide the opportunity to enhance a student's sense of community belonging at a school, and bring students, teachers and others together around the table.

On Monday, I was out at Gilmore Primary School to announce the five schools that are participating in the pilot, and it was a really great chance to pause and chat with some of the students over Weetbix, honey and Milo. The students all agreed that, when they are hungry, having food available is a great idea. The pilot will be independently evaluated to track student uptake, impact on student satisfaction with the school and effectiveness of the school delivery models. We expect we will see improved student wellbeing and learning outcomes through the equity of access to nutritious food.

Margaret Hendry School—staff

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, I refer to reports released under FOI that show the majority of staff at one of Canberra's newest schools say they feel unsupported and almost half are not convinced students are getting a good education five years after the school gates opened. Minister, why do almost half of all teachers at this school feel that students are not receiving a good education?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Hanson for his question and acknowledge that there is ongoing work in schools across the ACT with regard to those kinds of reviews to ensure that there are opportunities for the school to improve on previous reports or reviews.

What has happened at this particular school is that, overall, the review has shown a positive improvement. The school is keen to make sure that they continue to work on that with their school community.

MR HANSON: Minister, why do a majority of staff at Margaret Hendry feel unsupported?

MS BERRY: As I said, I refer to my previous answer that these reviews are an opportunity to understand how the school is feeling, to check the temperature of their staff, and then work with their school community, including their staff and others, to ensure that they are making improvements to the health and safety of everybody concerned.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. We understand the purpose of these reviews; the question is: why do the staff at that school feel unsupported? Does the minister know why this has occurred?

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, in response?

MS BERRY: Sorry; I had sat down and completed my answer. Thank you.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, how do these results compare with other schools?

MS BERRY: These reviews are not designed to make comparisons between a school and another school. Every school has their own diversity, their own culture, and their own community and issues that might need particular attention. These reviews are there for that particular school that is undertaking a review to understand what is going on within their school community and to seek ways to work with their community to improve.

Housing ACT—asset stock

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, I commend and congratulate you on last Monday's announcement that the government has completed and released 21 new public housing properties in Dickson. I noted, watching the *WIN News* coverage, a senior public servant indicated these

properties cost \$500,000 each, but a quick online search will show 163 properties currently available in the private market for \$500,000 or less. Can I get a better understanding of the ACT government's strategy to purchase already built properties from the private property market to add to our property stock?

MS BERRY: Housing ACT regularly buys properties off the private market to make sure that we meet the needs of public housing tenants, wherever they want to live in the ACT. There are a range of circumstances which will be involved in the selection of housing—its appropriateness, its sustainability and whether it meets the needs of individual tenants and their families. That is why, through the growth and renewal program, we are investing in both building but also purchasing new homes off the market. Under the growth and renewal program we will be acquiring approximately 280 properties from the private market. We have already purchased 103 properties off the market, so there will be another 130 in the pipeline.

MR DAVIS: Minister, exactly how many properties have been purchased from the private market so far this financial year, and how does the government find them and assess them?

MS BERRY: As I said, Housing ACT regularly buy properties off the market. They have a team which is specifically dedicated to the sale and acquisition of properties across the ACT for our growth and renewal program. For any acquisition, we use independent market valuations and certified practising valuers. The Territory Valuation Services Scheme informs what is the market value and an acceptable range for negotiation, along with, as I said, the needs being for each individual tenant and their families.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, can you provide information on how the purchase of private properties contributes towards the public housing target in terms of numbers?

MS BERRY: Because we need to meet the needs of each existing individual tenant within our public housing and also new people coming in, we need to make sure we have diversity within our public housing stock, and that includes new homes, but it also includes purchasing homes on the private market. One of the things with purchasing homes on the private market is that it is very difficult to identify where that public housing will exist in the ACT, because they are just like any other home, which is what we attempt to do when we are building new public housing—that it is not easily identifiable. Public housing tenants can live where they like, just like the rest of us across the ACT. In fact, under the housing growth and renewal program, I have often had people write to my office asking me why there is not any public housing on a particular street in a suburb, and I have to write back and correct them—that, in fact, there is public housing; they just cannot identify it.

Light rail—stage 2 construction costs

MR PARTON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, at the recent State of the Territory speech you suggested that there were some challenges in the ACT government's infrastructure program—that it had found itself under pressure.

You went on to say that the extension of the light rail to Woden would rely on deals with the commonwealth. You said, and I quote: “We will need the federal government

to step up.” Just how much do you need them to step up? And if they do not step up, are you saying that the project will not proceed?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Parton for the question. The project, in all of its stages—first and 2A—has had commonwealth funding. They have been partners in both the delivery of the project, and of course, importantly, commonwealth agencies have largely had the planning approval processes within their purview.

We have received support from coalition federal governments for the project, and we look forward to receiving further support for further stages of light rail from the current commonwealth government and, over time, from future commonwealth governments. It is not unusual for there to be federal, state and territory partnerships on large-scale infrastructure.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, how much will it cost to get the tram to Woden from where it is now? Can you give us a ballpark figure, please?

MR BARR: The pre-election budget update, prior to the 2020 election, put forward the indicative costings. Clearly, we have already, through stage 2A, progressed the project beyond that point. There has been some cost escalation in the infrastructure market—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: Madam Speaker?

MADAM SPEAKER: Members!

MR BARR: The market evolves from year to year. The timing of approaching the market for a procurement and the type of procurement and procurement methodology will clearly impact upon the final cost. We have had a period of quite extensive inflation.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members!

MR BARR: We have also had a period of very strong revenue growth.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, will you re-direct even more millions of dollars from roads, housing and health to fund the tram project?

MR BARR: The government’s infrastructure program will deliver across all asset classes. That is what good governments have to do. You can do more than one thing, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: Can you?

MR BARR: You’re not capable of that.

Mr Hanson: You can't do it well though, can you?

MR BARR: You're clearly not capable of that!

Mr Hanson: How's your health system going?

MR BARR: The one thing you are capable of is interjecting in question time. That is probably your best skill.

Mr Hanson: Thank you! It's like you taxing people—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Do not encourage each other.

MR BARR: It normally indeed takes an interjection from the Speaker's chair to silence the chief interjector of this place.

Let me be clear, Mr Hanson: the government will deliver infrastructure across all the areas that the territory government has responsibility for and in many of those areas we deliver infrastructure in partnership with the commonwealth government. That is normal. That is exactly how this territory has built its asset base since self-government, and we will continue to do it that way.

We will focus on infrastructure needs and emerging infrastructure needs for the fastest growing city in Australia in health, education, public transport, community services and emergency services across the areas of responsibility that we have. You have got to be able to do more than one thing at once!

Arts—Canberra Museum and Gallery

MR PETTERSSON: My question is for the Minister for the Arts. Minister, can you outline some of the recent work undertaken by the Cultural Facilities Corporation to engage and attract audiences to the Canberra Museum and Gallery, or CMAG?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. The Cultural Facilities Corporation has been making a concerted effort to engage and attract new and returning audiences to enjoy CMAG's veritable treasure trove of artworks and artefacts. CMAG's mission is to celebrate our region's social history and visual arts. Two new exhibitions have recently opened which beautifully demonstrate this goal. On Canberra Day, the Chief Minister launched CMAG's new permanent exhibition 'Canberra/Kamberri, Place & People', which explores the stories, people and events that have shaped Canberra's history and identity. This exhibition showcases the rich and diverse social and cultural ecology of Canberra through its carefully chosen 220 objects. It is a great reflection of our evolving, progressive and vibrant city. Colleagues in the Assembly will have also seen that the CFC has transformed the former Mr Wei's restaurant and recently finished converting it into a new gallery and exhibition space for CMAG with a focus on digital and interactive experiences. The inaugural exhibition 'Light, Colour, Humanity', curated by industrial designer Ian Wong as part of his Alastair Swain Foundation grant, officially opens next week.

These two new exhibitions like the rest of CMAG, including its nationally significant Nolan Collection and the broader Cultural Facilities Corporation have so much to

offer. I encourage members and the community to visit CMAG, Canberra's own museum and gallery right here in Civic Square.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how has the Cultural Facilities Corporation been activating Civic Square?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary. In addition to these new exhibitions the CFC has been enlivening Civic Square through a range of collaborations and partnerships. The CFC has been activating the former Elections ACT office frontage on Civic Square in collaboration with the City Renewal Authority, Craft ACT and the ANU. This pilot phase has demonstrated the potential of this otherwise disused office for pop-up retail, community craft workshops, artists workshops and exhibitions. I look forward to this work continuing in 2023.

CMAG has also been contributing to enlivening Civic Square through partnership programs with the Canberra Art Biennial, the DESIGN Canberra Festival and Enlighten. The CFC was a key partner in Enlighten in the city which saw hundreds of families flock to CMAG to encounter amazing, life-sized dinosaur puppets. Thousands of people enjoyed outdoor cocktails at the theatre Terrace Bar overlooking the pre-historic creatures in the Square. Outside of those events, CMAG has also been running successful CMAG 'After Dark' event series. It most recently featured cocktail evenings with The Martini Whisperer as part of wider programming connected to 'Light, Colour, Humanity', the exhibition I just spoke about. This follows on from the success of last year's in-gallery concert co-developed with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra in response to CMAG's exhibition 'Sidney Nolan: Search for Paradise'.

For anyone wanting some calm during the sitting week, you can participate in free yoga on Wednesday mornings among the art works in the striking 'Settled / Unsettled' exhibition in galleries two and three.

MS ORR: Minister, can you provide an update about recent or ongoing activities at Lanyon Homestead?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary. The CFC is working to enhance the experience at its facilities in our city's south, too, in addition to the extensive conservation works underway.

Lanyon Homestead recently held its second ever Harvest Day Out Festival on 4 March and celebrated the theme 'grow-preserve-sustain'. A record number of 2,500 people came through the gates to enjoy tours, plant and produce stalls, entertainment and a variety of food vendors as well as a range of activities, talks and workshops. Some of the highlights included cultural weaving, botanical drawing, Indigenous plant use, making preserves, flower and vegetable growing, seed-saving and walks on Country. Last year I had the pleasure of launching the inaugural ACT Historic Places Art Prize in the idyllic grounds of Lanyon Homestead. Entries are currently open for this new prize, with a total prize pool of over \$20,000. The prize will support Canberra and regional artists to exhibit their works and encourages a deeper appreciation of Canberra's cultural and natural heritage through artistic engagements with our cultural places. Of course the CFCs Historic Places will be taking part in the Canberra and Region Heritage Festival next month by hosting Stories Beyond the

Farm Gate tours and photography workshops at Lanyon. I encourage everyone to experience this stunning part of the ACT during this festival.

Planning—ACT Planning System Review and Reform Project

MR CAIN: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, how much has the government spent on consultants as part of the planning system review and reform, to date?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Cain for the question. I will have to take the detail of the question on notice. We have engaged some consultants to roll out the consultation process for the new planning reform and review project. The engagement with the community has been quite phenomenal. I gave an update to the Assembly just the other day about the amount of consultation that has occurred and the work with the Canberra community, and their responses. There have been somewhere near 80,000 interactions with our webpage, and downloads. I am very pleased with that work. I will come back to the chamber with the details on the consultants.

MR CAIN: Minister, how much has the government spent on the planning system review and reform as a whole, to date?

MR GENTLEMAN: I refer Mr Cain to the budget papers that outline the costs there.

MR COCKS: Minister, why is your government ignoring the critical governance issues that were so clearly evident in the review process?

MR GENTLEMAN: I do not agree with the premise of Mr Cocks's question. We do not ignore those particular points put forward. We take them on board. The Planning Process Review and Reform Project did give consideration to changing the Territory Plan and the associated work around that, with the district strategies going out at the moment. It was not to do with the governance arrangements that are in place.

Sport and recreation—Throsby Home of Football

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the minister for sport. I am concerned about the ongoing delays with the planned development of the Home of Football in Throsby. I recollect discussions with Capital Football some time ago about the new facilities being a showcase venue for the upcoming FIFA Women's World Cup. Obviously, that will not happen. There are now growing doubts about the project actually being completed. Can you provide a firm date for when construction will commence?

MS BERRY: I do not know where Mr Milligan is hearing doubts from, because there is a commitment to build this facility, and that commitment remains. I do not have a firm date for the delivery. We are still working with Capital Football on the design of that facility. As soon as I have more information, I will provide that.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, have the cost rises from delays and hydrology issues resulted in a shortfall that cannot be effectively met from available sources? What are the prospects of securing a project-saving financial contribution from the federal government?

MS BERRY: Thanks for that supplementary. I understand that Capital Football, during the last federal election, did put in an application for funding to add to the Home of Football funding that the ACT government has committed to. I understand that they were not successful in that bid. Of course, the ACT government—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Just ignore the interjections, Ms Berry—or try to.

MS BERRY: I am just sighing out loud, Madam Speaker. I understand that there are always aspirations for sporting communities and clubs to have the best possible facilities. That is why we are continuing to work with Capital Football and the football community more generally about the aspirations for not only the Home of Football in Throsby but football more generally across the territory.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, do you plan to conduct extra consultation with other local sporting communities about construction progress; and, if so, when?

MS BERRY: That consultation is continuous and has been occurring, particularly with the football community, through Capital Football, as well as through Sport and Recreation, all the way through this project.

Waste—management

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, a number of residents have contacted me about how we are tracking in reducing our waste and what this will actually look like on the ground. Several have also raised the northside waste feasibility study which was released late last year. Belconnen residents are concerned that this study indicates that the government might consider relocating the waste, recycling and transfer station services currently operating at Mitchell out to Belconnen. Does that feasibility study mean that the Mitchell transfer station might be relocated to Belconnen?

MR STEEL: No, the ACT government is not planning on moving the Mitchell Resource Management Centre.

MS CLAY: When will the government publish its recent waste and recycling audits?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. We have not received them yet. We will need to consider those once they are received and then consider whether those can be released. I assume that they will be. I am sure that the community has an interest in seeing those and how we can use those as a baseline to then improve resource recovery rates.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, what level of waste reduction is predicted for the ACT from the national product stewardship arrangements?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. I think there is a lot more work to do to increase the number of mandated product stewardship schemes—not just voluntary schemes—across a wider range of products.

There is a substantial opportunity to grow the number of products that are involved in product stewardship schemes right across the economy. I am quite concerned that things are not moving fast enough in relation to federal regulation of these schemes nationally. We do operate in a national market for many of these products, and it is important that a national approach is taken. For example, on batteries and solar PV systems, I am very concerned about the length of time that it has taken for those schemes to come on line. I am also very concerned that there are too many free riders in product stewardship schemes across the country—that is, companies that either make or sell these products but are not paying onto the schemes—and, therefore, we are not getting the full benefit of the product stewardship schemes and other extended producer responsibility schemes in Australia.

So I will continue to advocate, as I am sure our representative at the Environment Ministers Meeting, Rebecca Vassarotti, will continue to advocate, for greater expansion of these schemes.

Of course, as part of the circular economy strategy—the draft strategy that we have released for consultation—we have been having conversations about what role the ACT government can play to complement the schemes that are in place and hopefully encourage even more companies to participate in the existing scheme and, indeed, for new entrants to come into the market.

Sport and recreation—swimming pools

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Sport. We have the regrettable situation where two pool managers out of five public pools in the ACT have broadcast their intention not to seek applications for continuance of contracts for four out of the five pools after June this year. Now the Stromlo contract has been advertised as well. Minister, why did this situation arise?

MS BERRY: This is called a contract change. When contracts change, the contract is put out for tender to seek expressions of interest for operators of public facilities, like our pools. At the same time, some of those pool contractors have decided that they want to finish their contracts earlier than expected. Now we have put out the expression of interest to seek out a tender for the operation of those public pools.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, to what extent did a significant rise in utility costs contribute to these decisions? And what other reasons were there?

MS BERRY: As I said, this was a contract change and we have put out an expression of interest to check on the availability of somebody who is interested in operating our pools in the ACT. In the meantime, those pools will continue to operate under the existing contractor.

Mr Parton: On a point of order, on relevance, the question was very specifically about the reasons that operators decided to cut out of their contracts early, and I am just not sure that the minister is being relevant to that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, if you have information towards that area of the question, please—

MS BERRY: Well, I do not, and that is really a question for the contractors.

MR DAVIS: Minister, has the ACT government considered managing its own pools, like other local governments across the country?

MS BERRY: At the moment, we have put out an expression of interest to see about the availability of a new contractor to manage our public pools, and that is the process that we are in right now. Once we have finished that process and if they meet the needs of the government and our broader community to ensure that those pools continue to operate in the same way that they have for many years under the previous managers—that is the process that we are looking into right now.

Municipal services—streetlighting

MR BRADDOCK: My question is for the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, the lowering of the temperature of lighting in our suburbs can improve the amenity of the areas and perceptions of safety, whilst also reducing the impacts of lighting on private residents and fauna. Can you please provide detail as to whether the government recognises the benefit to the community of the use of lights of a warmer temperature?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Braddock for his question. The ACT government understands the importance of lighting both for safety and for improving amenity for Canberrans, particularly at night.

I do not pretend to moonlight as a scientist, but I can inform the Assembly that light colour is described using the temperature unit measure kelvin, and the temperature measure represents the temperature of a body that emits a given colour of light. Hotter bodies emit higher energy light, which is the blue-violet end of the visible light spectrum, with lower temperature bodies, as Mr Braddock has alluded to, emitting lower energy, or red or orange light.

When we select light colour, it is based on a number of balancing factors. People generally tend to find lower temperature light more relaxing and comfortable than very high temperature light. Though red light is more comfortable, violet light provides more visibility and brightness and is therefore safer, particularly when it is used in the context of lighting roads and footpaths for pedestrians. Violet light is also more energy efficient than red or orange light, despite being at a lower temperature.

In collaboration with industry experts, TCCS has previously settled on 4000 kelvin for street and path lighting in the ACT, which is most similar to moonlight. Four thousand kelvin was assessed as the best balance in the competing objectives of colour rendering, safety, in terms of increased capacity to see what is intended to be lit, energy efficiency and visual comfort.

MR BRADDOCK: A number of lighting professionals have approached me saying that 4,000 is too harsh on the eye and recommending that lower temperature is required to suit humans and the urban environment. Do you have anything to say to that?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Braddock for his question. Whilst 4,000 kelvin is the current standard in the ACT, we will of course consider what is happening around the world in other cities. I know Mr Braddock has recently commented on the city of Salisbury, I believe, in the Adelaide region and what they are doing around warmer lights. We are interested in what case-by-case circumstances there are at particular locations where warmer lighting might be applied, such as 3,000 kelvin temperature. We are also interested in continuing to review how standards might be updated, so we are very interested to hear about any conversations Mr Braddock may be having with stakeholders that are interested in this and what may be considered best practice. But at this point in time, based on previous advice from experts, TCCS is sticking with 4,000 kelvin to make sure we balance the safety and amenity for Canberrans going forward.

MR CAIN: Minister, what is the expected cost of implementing this change, and what savings are you expecting in the longer term?

MR STEEL: We are not planning to implement a change, but of course we are interested in what might be changing in other cities. We are interested in learning more about the science that Mr Braddock has alluded to. We are not planning on any change, but we are certainly interested in reviewing standards on an ongoing basis. That is part of a continuous improvement practice that Transport Canberra and City Services has.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Can we listen to the minister answering!

MR STEEL: Of course, we will always need to balance the safety and amenity for citizens as well as taking into account other factors when determining the temperature of our luminaires.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Steel—against a chorus of noise.

Seniors—ACT Seniors Card

MS LAWDER: My question is to Minister for Veterans and Seniors. Minister, in July 2022 you wrote to me saying there was a planned upcoming review of the ACT Seniors Card program. In annual report hearings of 4 November 2022 we spoke about the review of the Seniors Card program. In answer to my question about the review, you indicated the review may be completed by March 2023. You said you were working with COTA ACT on the review. Minister, has the review been completed? If so, what are the next steps?

MS DAVIDSON: I thank Ms Lawder for the question and for her ongoing interest in making sure we are looking after older people in our community. Yes, we have been conducting an external review of the ACT Seniors Card program. That review is due to be delivered to the ACT government in March of this year. The ACT government will then consider the report in future planning for the Senior's Card program. Once the review report is received there will then be a process for the ACT government to consider what our next steps for future planning for that program.

The ACT Seniors Card program is part of an Australia-wide scheme which recognises the contribution of older people to society and supports them to stay active in the community. It provides our older Canberrans with access to savings on a whole range of goods and services provided by government and participating businesses. The Council on the Ageing ACT administers this program on behalf of the ACT government. I want to thank them for their ongoing work to support seniors and to continue to administer that program.

The program also allows for older Canberrans to access some reciprocal discounts in other states and territories. So a government response to any potential changes to the Seniors Card program needs to take all of these things into consideration.

As of 1 July 2020, the eligibility age for the ACT Seniors Card was lowered from 62 years of age to 60 years, which means more Canberrans have become eligible. There are approximately 77,000 Canberrans who hold an ACT Seniors Card at the moment. This is why it is so important that a review of this is carefully considered. There are 378 businesses who participate in the program. I will provide a further update to the Assembly on this review as soon as I can.

MS LAWDER: Is the review on track to be completed in the next day or two? As I said in my question, it was due to be completed by March and as you in your answer said, it was due to be completed by March. Will it be completed in March 2023?

MS DAVIDSON: I think actually the really important element of what happens with the review is what the ACT government does next with considering that report or making—

Ms Lawder: A point of order, Madam Speaker, as to relevance. I asked about next steps in my original question, which the minister did not answer. I also asked in my original question about the March 2023 date. My second question was: will it be completed by March 2023? That is the single question.

MADAM SPEAKER: Can you respond to that element of the question, Ms Davidson?

MS DAVIDSON: I will take on notice what date the review is completed by. But I think it is really important to know that the ACT government will also need to then discuss and consider what we do next with the review report once it becomes available.

MR HANSON: Given that you have commissioned the report, why do you not know what you are going to do with it?

MS DAVIDSON: As I was saying in my earlier answer, the ACT Seniors Card provides older Canberrans with access to savings on a whole range of goods and services that are provided by government and participating businesses. This is part of being an age-friendly city. That is, that we take a whole-of-government approach to how we can best support seniors. This means, if we are going to make major changes to any kind of program, we take the opportunity to discuss this across government and make sure we are all working together to do the best that we can—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Davis: Point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder if there may be one occasion in this double sitting period that Minister Davidson can get on her feet and not be interrupted by the opposition. One!

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Davidson, you can continue, if you would like.

MS DAVIDSON: I think I had actually completed my answer to Mr Hanson's question in answer to Ms Lawder's first question, so I might leave it at that.

Carers—Carers Recognition Act implementation

MS ORR: My question is to the Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services. Minister, the Carers Recognition Act 2021 requires care and carer support agencies to report each year on their compliance with their obligations under section 10 of the act. What work has been undertaken to make sure agencies are aware of and able to meet their reporting obligations?

MS DAVIDSON: I thank Ms Orr for the question. Carers play an incredibly important role in our community and they do it for the one reason that really matters, which is love. But they often go unnoticed and unrecognised, so I thank Ms Orr for bringing in the Carers Recognition Bill and I thank all members of this Assembly who unanimously passed it in December last year. The Carers Recognition Act is not an end in itself. It is really important that the policy intent of that act is being delivered. I am really committed to ensuring that the policy intent and principles of the act are translated into meaningful action so that the 50,000 carers in our community are recognised and supported in what they do.

In terms of making sure that agencies are working on how they can implement the Carers Recognition Act, the ACT government has developed an information sheet to support carer support agencies, both government and non-government organisations, to meet their obligations under the Carers Recognition Act. On 16 May last year I wrote to more than 700 representatives from the ACT community sector, informing them of the passing of the act. In my letter, I provided an information sheet outlining the purpose of the legislation and the obligations for care and carer support agencies. That information sheet is publicly available. The government is also considering what additional supports could be made available.

In terms of ACT government directorates implementing the Carers Recognition Act, on 4 April 2021 the Director-General of the Community Services Directorate wrote to other ACT government directors-general to inform them of the passing of the Carers Recognition Act. That correspondence also attached the information sheet. On 10 June the acting director-general of CSD sent correspondence, with further advice about the legislation, to other directors-general, including guidance material about the act and— *(Time expired.)*

MS ORR: Minister, can you confirm which government agencies are considered care and carer support agencies and therefore have reporting obligations under the act?

MS DAVIDSON: I can take on notice which of the other directors-general that letter went to—whether it was all of them or a select group of them. I would have to say that, given that we have 50,000 carers in our community, and given the range of work that the ACT government does, it is really important that the whole of the ACT government is thinking about how we can best support carers. Thank you for the question. I will take on notice which directorates were sent the letter.

DR PATERSON: Minister, which agencies are considered a funded support agency and therefore have reporting obligations under the act or are among the 700 that have been written to?

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you for that question. Given that I wrote to more than 700 ACT community sector representatives to inform them of the obligations under the act, and given the wide range of organisations that receive funding from the ACT government, it might be quite a long list of agencies that you are looking for there. A better perspective on how we think about carers and our obligations to support them is to assume that we all have responsibilities in this area. The Carers Recognition Act is an important step forward for our whole community in recognising the work of unpaid carers, who provide care to older people, people with disability and out of home care for children who cannot live at home.

Mr Barr: Further questions can be placed on the notice paper, thank you, Madam Speaker.

Supplementary answers to questions without notice Canberra Health Services—data security

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: In relation to the conversations earlier about Canberra Health Services' identification of privacy breaches, I want to clarify, in relation to the eight matters that I referred to, I had previously identified that those were matters that proceeded to summary termination, misconduct investigation or referral to an external body. Those were additional to two other matters in this brief, so I needed to clarify that.

There was an article in the *Canberra Times*, published on Thursday, 23 March, identifying a previous consumer who had had her health records accessed without consent. That is an additional matter to the eight, and action was taken in relation to that matter. I am also aware of, and CHS has identified, a consumer who complained in 2014 that their privacy had been breached by advising their employer of their engagement with alcohol and drug services. That matter was not pursued by the consumer, so that did not reach a conclusion.

Just to be very clear and transparent, as is the way that I operate, and have consistently over the 6½ years that I have been in this place—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, that is inappropriate.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I want also to provide some further information in relation to how breaches are identified. Canberra Health Services has advised that disclosure processes and personal health information breaches are reported through the RiskMan system when they are identified. An investigation of reports is undertaken by the relevant division within Canberra Health Services, in conjunction with the insurance and legal liaison unit and people in culture division, where those are relevant. Breaches that reach the threshold are then reported to the senior executive responsible for business integrity and risk.

I provide that further information, Madam Speaker, in the context of the questions that have been asked—that some matters are likely to be dealt with at the divisional level and therefore it may not be possible for Canberra Health Services, at an organisational level, to go back and historically identify those things.

In response to the question that I took on notice from Mr Cocks, I will ask Canberra Health Services to consider what it can identify. As I have said previously and as I said yesterday in providing this information, the information that I have been able to provide to date is what Canberra Health Services has been able to identify in the short time frame between these matters becoming a matter of public discussion and the request to do some further work on this.

If there is further information that is able to be provided, I will bring it back to the Assembly in the next sitting period.

Mental health—Mental Health Advisory Council

MS DAVIDSON: I took a question on notice yesterday about the timing of letters sent regarding appointments to the Mental Health Advisory Council. I have followed that up with the ACT Health Directorate and can confirm that all applicants for that council will receive notification of the outcome of their applications, and the letters have been sent. I can confirm that all appointees will receive the notification of their successful appointment with a minimum of one month's notice ahead of the next Mental Health Advisory Council meeting, which is currently scheduled for 4 May 2023.

Canberra Hospital—Maternal and Fetal Medicine Unit

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (2.57): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) Canberra Hospital's accreditation as a training site for staff in the Maternal and Fetal Medicine Unit has been suspended since 31 August;
- (b) Canberra Health Services (CHS) has been advertising for this position since June 2022 and have still failed to recruit a Maternal Fetal Medicine staff specialist;
- (c) loss of accreditation by the College of Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) has meant that Canberra Hospital is not able to provide accredited training for junior doctors; and

- (d) the Minister confirmed in answer to an overdue question on notice, dated 12 January 2023, that since the suspension of accreditation, five staff were on leave/reduced hours and mitigation strategies had to be employed to enable the continuation of the service;
- (2) further notes:
- (a) culture problems have been rife in the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children;
 - (b) Women, Youth and Children recorded the lowest response rate since 2005 to the recent December Pulse survey;
 - (c) of 276 respondents to the proposition, “On balance CHS is a truly great place to work”, 57.2 percent disagreed, placing Women, Youth and Children in the “very low” percentile compared to similar services at other hospitals; and
 - (d) of 283 respondents, 40.6 percent disagreed with the statement that “things are getting better all the time”; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) table the report by the RANZCOG into the suspension of accreditation as a training site in the Maternal and Fetal Medicine Unit by the end of the sitting week;
 - (b) table out of sitting, details on how many applicants have applied for the subspecialist role in the (i) June to December 2022 period and (ii) December 2022 to present;
 - (c) provide an update on how many staff have left, reduced their hours or gone on leave since 31 August 2022 to present; and
 - (d) update the Assembly on what national and international recruitment strategies CHS have pursued to restore accreditation for the Maternal and Fetal Medicine Unit.

The Fetal Medicine Unit caters for people with identified risk factors in their pregnancy. Those who have had complications in a previous pregnancy will also be referred to this service. This unit operates in the Canberra Hospital, as it is the tertiary hospital for the southern New South Wales health district. If a patient is at risk of having a complex pregnancy, then they will be referred to the Canberra Hospital to receive care.

As the Canberra Hospital is the only tertiary hospital to provide this service, it is also the only place that doctors who wish to train in this field can do so. I will get to trainee doctors later in the speech, but if you have read the *Canberra Times* over the last few months, you would be aware that the ACT should be looking to do everything it can to incentivise them to stay. The hospital is losing junior doctors and losing specialists in other important fields of medicine and surgery. The government still fails to ensure that doctors who wish to train and work in the Canberra Hospital are retained.

On 3 August I asked the health minister about the status of accreditation for training at the fetal and maternal medicine unit in the Canberra Hospital. The minister took the question on notice and came back at the end of question time, saying:

... I can advise that the Fetal Medicine Unit is currently accredited for training until 31 August 2022 ... Training accreditation will then be suspended until recruitment is finalised for a second maternal and fetal medicine staff specialist ... Canberra Health Services is actively recruiting for a second maternal fetal medicine subspecialist.

However, a new subspecialist, we know, has still not been recruited almost eight months later. The question I asked myself is: why would it take eight months to recruit a new subspecialist? The minister, of course, has stated that it is an extremely rare subspecialty, and I am sure that this forms part of the explanation. However, eight months seems to me, and to other stakeholders that I have spoken to about the issue, an excessive amount of time. The *Canberra Times* hit the nail on the head in an article on 12 March 2023, saying:

Cultural problems within the hospital's maternity department have been rife for years and this has affected staff retention and recruitment.

The data I have available to me is limited to two Pulse surveys, with one being statistically invalid. However, if the minister seems confident to quote from the December 2022 survey, I am sure she will have no problem with me using the data.

The June 2021 Pulse survey calculated a "net promoter score". This is calculated by taking the percentage of people who are promoters—staff who are extremely likely to recommend CHS—and subtracting the percentage of detractors—those who are not at all likely to recommend CHS. In 2021 Women, Youth and Children received a net promoter score of minus 22.5. This was comprised of 24 per cent promoters compared to 46.5 per cent detractors. It is also worth noting that, for the 13 questions asked of staff, 11 of the answers rated below the average of similar services in other hospitals.

For the December 2022 survey, CHS decided to do away with the net promoter score. I am not sure why they did this, but I will note that the third and final culture review did say that there was a lack of consistent and comparable data to measure the impacts of initiatives on workplace culture. This is not news to me or to other stakeholders, who are not surprised that the government has made it as difficult as possible to follow cultural changes over time, given how scathing some of the reports have been.

Going back to the survey, the measure that CHS used for this survey was whether, "On balance, CHS is a truly great place to work". Mr Assistant Speaker, it does not matter what metric you use, the result is just as embarrassing for the minister! In Women, Youth and Children 57.2 per cent disagreed with the proposition that CHS is a "truly great place to work". This question rated in the lowest percentile compared to answers from other women's, maternity and newborn services.

For some other questions on this survey, such as, "There is high trust in the executive management team of CHS," only 25 per cent of staff agreed. For the question, "There is a strong sense of success and achievement, things are getting better all the time," only 28 per cent of staff agreed. In addition, for the now 12 questions that were asked in this Pulse survey, 10 of them ranked below average compared to similar women's, maternity and newborn services at other hospitals.

Culture problems are indeed rife in the maternity department. CHS has been advertising for this position since June 2022—coming up to 10 months since they started advertising, and eight months since things became desperate in the unit.

Those statistics do not paint a good picture for our Women, Youth and Children Division. I am constantly told by stakeholders that being a medical specialist is like being in a small world. Many specialists know each other and talk about their hospitals. What do you think that our subspecialists in Women, Youth and Children would be saying to other specialists who have been offered a job at CHS?

That is why we are calling on the government to table, out of sitting, details of how many applicants have applied for the subspecialist role. If there have been a few, have they withdrawn or why were they not selected? If there have been none then it will be clear that the reputation of the health system in the ACT is having an impact.

This motion is about transparency. When I looked through what was said in *Hansard* about the Fetal Medicine Unit, I realised that the minister took eight out of the 12 questions on notice. Yes, she has come back and provided answers to most of the questions, but the public are not any clearer nor have any further idea about what is happening in this unit than what we know from August 2022.

Updates from a CHS spokesman have not made the situation any clearer. We heard them say, “Accreditation as a training unit has been suspended due to the current shortage of subspecialist staff in the department, which impacts their ability to provide accredited training in addition to their regular duties. This does not affect the quality and safety of the unit.” “There is a significant skills shortage in tertiary fetal medicine.” That is something the ACT are obviously not helping to solve after losing their training accreditation.

Finally, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists said they “have committed to reinstate CHS training accreditation once the staffing situation improves”. This does not tell us anything new.

One thing that the government could do is table the full report from RANZCOG into the suspension of training accreditation so that the public can read exactly when CHS were made aware that they would lose their training accreditation, and other issues that the college may have raised.

The minister and CHS spokespeople have all reassured Canberra that the service is still a quality and safe service. However, during question time last week the minister revealed that there are ongoing conversations with the remaining specialist about the extent to which they want to continue working in the unit as a CHS employee. That is maybe one of the most elliptical explanations I have ever heard—basically to say that the final staff specialist wants to leave the unit. There was no update by the minister about what would happen if the final specialist left the unit. The minister should explain the impacts that this would have on the unit and what contingency planning is in place.

We have been asking about the training accreditation of this unit for some time. We heard on 12 January that five staff have gone on leave or reduced their hours. We also found out last Thursday that another staff member has left, and one subspecialist reduced their hours to 0.6 FTE. The minister did say she will come back with any further updates, so we will see whether she has anything further to add in her speech.

I want to be clear: I am not suggesting that the service is not safe. I am perplexed about how there has been no change in the service. Staff are reducing their hours, they are going on leave and leaving the unit. At the same time, CHS is employing mitigation strategies so that they can maintain the service. The *Canberra Times* reported that hundreds of ultrasounds were unread, which the spokesman did refute, although they did concede that they are not being formally reported on in a timely manner, and that is because the staff are so strained. They are working so hard, and I want to thank the doctors and nurses in this unit that are working in a very cracked situation. It would be incredibly hard.

It appears that cracks in the unit are there, and I believe the public and the Assembly would appreciate the minister being up-front about the challenges that this unit are facing. I understand locums have been hired to assist with this issue, and I would be interested to understand the additional cost that this has.

There is, of course, the other problem where trainee doctors who wish to be trained in fetal medicine are now no longer able to do this at the Canberra Hospital. The minister confirmed in question time that the affected doctor had to move and be trained in another hospital, and wants to return to the ACT in due course.

It is extremely disappointing that CHS were aware that they were going to lose accreditation in this unit and have not been able to recruit a subspecialist. One of the trainee doctors has had to move hospitals, to a different health district, because they have not been able to hire a subspecialist in almost 10 months.

As I have pointed out before, there has been no update on the recruitment of the subspecialist, and that is why this motion asks for some simple information—to tell the Assembly how many applicants have applied for the subspecialist role since June and what strategies CHS have pursued nationally and internationally to attract staff to this position.

The Fetal Medicine Unit is a critical service for women who are at risk of having a complex pregnancy in the southern health district. Training has been suspended for almost eight months and the position has been advertised for almost 10 months, yet the Fetal Medicine Unit still has no additional staff specialist or training accreditation. In fact, the unit is now losing staff, reducing their hours and getting locums. The situation looks dire for the Division of Women, Youth and Children and the Fetal Medicine Unit, and the minister has again passed the buck to CHS spokespeople.

Here is her chance to provide the documents and let the public know exactly what is going on in the important Fetal Medicine Unit. I call on her to do so.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (3.09): I move:

Omit all text after “notes” in paragraph (1), substitute:

- “(a) the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) notified Canberra Health Services that the training accreditation for the Fetal Medicine Unit would be suspended from 8 August 2022 and the situation would be reviewed at a Maternal Fetal Medicine (MFM) Subspecialty Committee in November 2023;
 - (b) since this time Canberra Health Services has supported a sub-specialty trainee in a Maternal Fetal Medicine unit in another jurisdiction to ensure they could gain the qualifications needed to transition to a fully-qualified MFM sub-specialist at Canberra Health Services at the completion of their training;
 - (c) as reported on 12 January 2023 through an answer to a Question Taken on Notice, the Maternal Fetal Medicine subspecialist position has been advertised on multiple occasions since June 2022 and the position is highly specialised requiring the successful applicant to hold a subspecialty qualification in Maternal Fetal Medicine with RANZCOG;
 - (d) there is a significant skills shortage in tertiary fetal medicine, leading to challenges recruiting these sub-specialty qualifications, however recruitment continued nationally and internationally to identify suitable applicants; and
 - (e) arrangements have been made to support the continued delivery of clinical services that ensure quality fetal medicine services for the women of the ACT and surrounding areas; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) table the letter from RANZCOG regarding the suspension of accreditation as a training site in the Maternal and Fetal Medicine Unit; and
 - (b) provide an update to the Assembly by the final sitting day of 2023 about the training accreditation for the Maternal Fetal Medicine Unit at Centenary Hospital for Women and Children.”.

I will take this opportunity straight away to table, for Ms Castley’s information, a letter from RANZCOG, dated 26 July 2022, to Associate Professor Boon Lim. This is the only document. There is no review, as Ms Castley has referred to. It does not exist. It never existed. The suspension was in fact initiated by Canberra Health Services, to my understanding, in relation to their understanding that they would not have sufficient staff members who wanted to undertake this training role and were comfortable in doing so in the circumstances. The letter explains that circumstance. I table that letter:

Notification of suspension of accreditation of the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children ACT as a Maternal Fetal Medicine Training Unit—Copy of letter from the RANZCOG Subspecialties Committee Chair to the Clinical Director of Canberra Hospital Obstetrics and Gynaecology, dated 26 July 2022.

Obviously, the opposition have some convenient lines that they want to keep running in relation to transparency. That is all fine, but I am quite confused about Ms Castley running that line in relation to this. Every time she has asked a question, I have answered it. Every time she has wanted to know information, we have provided that information.

As far as I am aware, Ms Castley has not ever sought a briefing. If she has multiple questions, if she wants to get detailed information, if she wants to really dig into the issue and understand what is going on in response to culture issues in the Women, Youth and Children division, she knows that she can contact my office and seek a briefing. As far as I am aware, she has never sought a briefing on this issue, despite asking numerous questions and having those questions answered.

As Ms Castley has said, the Fetal Medicine Unit at Canberra Hospital provides care for people and families with complex or high risk pregnancies who need specialised care for either themselves or their baby, in Canberra and the surrounding region. The FMU comprises a multidisciplinary team of experienced maternal fetal medicine subspecialists, obstetricians, midwives, sonographers, neonatologists, clinical geneticists and genetic counsellors, providing expert service and specialising in maternal and fetal medicine.

The FMU provides continuity of care during pregnancy and works with midwives and doctors in the birthing suite during labour and birth. There may also be times when, after an initial appointment, it is deemed safe for people to have a normal pregnancy or the FMU may support ultrasounds as part of pregnancy care in another part of the hospital.

The FMU has been under significant pressure in the last 12 months, resulting in workforce shortages, as Ms Castley has outlined and as I have been quite up-front about in response to her previous questions. Ongoing efforts have been undertaken to attract and retain capabilities to ensure that the team has the capacity to continue delivering a safe service in the ACT and for the surrounding New South Wales region. Due to national skills shortages within a highly competitive market, considerations are underway to build in existing resources through visiting medical officer arrangements.

I can confirm that Canberra Hospital remains an accredited training unit for fellowship of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, or RANZCOG, more generally. I make that point because multiple media reports have indicated that Centenary Hospital has completely lost its accreditation as a training site, as a result of the way Ms Castley has promoted this issue.

This means that, as part of an integrated training program with Calvary and Wagga Wagga, the Canberra Hospital provides basic training and advanced training in obstetrics and gynaecology specialisation. RANZCOG further accredits training units offering subspeciality training. The Centenary Hospital for Women and Children was approved for provisional maternal fetal medicine training accreditation for two years, from 1 September 2021 to 31 October 2023.

In July 2022, the Fetal Medicine Unit subspecialty program director changed. A program director is approved by the subspecialty committee of RANZCOG and ultimately is accountable to RANZCOG. The newly appointed program director indicated to RANZCOG that he felt unable to support a trainee at that point in time, until he found his feet. I am assured that Canberra Hospital did not lose accreditation for training, and the Maternal Fetal Medicine Unit training accreditation has been not lost but suspended temporarily while Canberra Health Services puts strategies in place to support staff. This is an important difference. Canberra Health Services is working hard to rebuild the unit and support an effective training environment in the FMU.

I think, when Ms Castley has an opportunity to look at the letter, she will see that it is also clear from the letter from RANZCOG that they were not expecting that this situation would be resolved overnight. RANZCOG indicate that they will reconsider this issue in November 2023. They clearly had an anticipation that this issue would take some time to resolve. Again, if Ms Castley had sought information in relation to that, she would be aware of that issue.

I have continued to be briefed on the situation, as I have in relation to the Women, Youth and Children division more broadly. I am really happy to advise that they successfully recently recruited a number of paediatricians and, I understand, have also had a successful recruitment round for obstetricians and gynaecologists more broadly. Reflecting on Ms Castley's broader comments about the capacity to recruit, this is a highly specialised area that we are talking about here.

I have also been assured, and I have assured the Assembly previously, that the suspension of training accreditation in the Fetal Medicine Unit does not affect the clinical service provided to consumers and that Canberra Health Services remains committed to the ongoing provision of quality fetal medicine services for the women of the ACT and surrounding areas. I am advised that the suspension is due to the current shortage of subspecialist staff in the department, which impacts the Fetal Medicine Unit's ability to provide accredited training in addition to their regular duties. I understand that this impact to subspecialty training is not impacting registrars, who are still being trained for their fellowship with RANZCOG.

The maternal fetal medicine subspecialist position is highly specialised and requires applicants to hold subspecialty qualification in maternal fetal medicine with RANZCOG already. This means they must already hold specialist qualifications and be competent in obstetrics, medical and surgical complications of pregnancy and the effects of these complications. The subspecialty qualification is an additional minimum three years of training on top of their specialty training.

There is a significant skill shortage in tertiary fetal medicine. Being such a specialised area of medicine, this does lead to challenges for all jurisdictions. As of February this year there were just 80 fully qualified subspecialists in Australia identified by RANZCOG. This points to why it is so important that Canberra Health Services has supported their trainee in place at Centenary to go and complete their training elsewhere. That is something that has been supported by Canberra Health Services, to ensure that that person can complete their subspecialty training which is so important for the ACT and for Australia.

Canberra Health Services is working hard to recruit additional subspecialists. RANZCOG has committed to reinstate maternal fetal medicine training accreditation once the staffing situation improves. As I said, if Ms Castley reads the letter she will see proof that they indicated at the time that they would expect this reconsideration to occur in November this year.

In relation to the specific questions that Ms Castley has asked, I encourage her to continue to use the questions on notice process, but I can advise that the maternal fetal medicine subspecialist position has been advertised on several occasions across multiple national and international platforms since August 2022, with the most recent advertisement closing on 16 March. In addition and alongside that, Canberra Health Services talent acquisition team has been actively attempting to identify suitable candidates, both nationally and internationally.

International efforts have focused on countries with clinical comparability, noting that even if an international medical graduate with subspecialty qualifications in maternal fetal medicine is identified, the candidate will still need to be assessed by RANZCOG through the subspecialist pathway, which may include additional training or examinations for subspecialty recognition. We know that recruiting international subspecialists at this point in time is a challenge in terms of their visa and registration, and it is something we have been talking about with the commonwealth.

These talent acquisition efforts have continued, even when the role has not been actively advertised. Through the questions on notice process I have provided details of how many staff left the unit previously. Again, Ms Castley is trying to indicate that these questions have not been answered when they have in fact been answered. I understand that two staff members have left. One staff member is on long service leave, one staff member is on leave without pay, and one staff member has reduced their hours through a supported flexible work arrangement.

Again, I note Ms Castley's disparaging comments in relation to an answer I gave previously. I do not like having to stand in this place to talk about the employment conditions of individual staff members in Canberra Health Services who could be easily identified. It is not what this place, and the questions in this place, should be for. To clarify my answer for Ms Castley, given her comments, the conversation has been in part around whether the person in question wanted to remain full time or work part time or sustain their employment at all. That has been an ongoing conversation. I do not think it is very helpful to have that conversation in this place, but I also do want to be clear about the context of it.

Going back to staffing, a maternal fetal medicine subspecialist has commenced, as part of an interim arrangement between Canberra Health Services and Westmead, while recruitment processes are underway to employ a maternal fetal medicine subspecialist permanently. This will further support the current provision of tertiary level services for women who have complex pregnancies.

Arrangements with the visiting medical officer also extend to support phone calls for escalation of fetal welfare concerns. Further strategies in place in the FMU include plans for appropriate and effective triaging, dedicated time for each consultant to

complete reporting, support for sonographers and escalation pathways for any concerns for fetal wellbeing, and regular ultrasound teaching to be able to continue. These are all important safety considerations for the unit and matters that Canberra Health Services has prioritised to ensure a safe standard of care and delivered by the FMU.

I can advise that, in relation to a specific question in Ms Castley's motion about the recruitment rounds that have been taken to date, no suitable applicants with the subspeciality qualification have been identified. There has been only one applicant to the position overall, but obviously not with the required qualifications.

I will go very briefly to the question of culture. I am not going to go into all of the detail. Ms Castley has outlined that in relation to the Women, Youth and Children division. We know that there are challenges in the Women, Youth and Children division. We have known that for some time. We have not shied away from it. It is part of the reason that we are putting so much effort into work to improve the culture and to continue to embed the system-wide reforms as a priority, which I talked about in my ministerial statement last week.

I am glad that Ms Castley is using the Pulse survey from December. It received close to 3,000 responses, out of approximately 8,000 CHS staff members, which is in fact considered representative for an organisation as large as CHS. That has been confirmed by the independent organisation that runs the survey. I also note, in response to Ms Castley's comments, that Canberra Health Services has consistently employed the same organisation, BPA, to undertake the survey, with the same kinds of questions, precisely so that it can be comparable over time. That is why, on the "at a glance" page, you can see what type of culture and how many per cent engaged. It runs through all of the surveys, going right back to 2005, with consistent information so that we can compare over time. That is exactly what Canberra Health Services has been doing.

We know that there is more work to do in the Women, Youth and Children division. We have acknowledged that. But I want to congratulate the team for the work that they are doing and for their successful recruitment strategies across the Women, Youth and Children division in obstetrics and gynaecology, and in paediatrics. I am optimistic, and staff are clearly optimistic, that there are things coming to improve the service. (*Time expired.*)

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (3.25): I thank Ms Castley for her motion. When I saw the motion on the notice paper, and the subsequent *Canberra Times* reporting, I sought a briefing from the minister's office. Based on that briefing and information provided to my office, we will support Minister Stephen-Smith's amendments. The minister's amendments provide additional clarity around the current and recent circumstances at the Fetal Medicine Unit at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, which sits within the Canberra Hospital.

The Fetal Medicine Unit provides care in the case of complex or high risk pregnancies. It is important that Canberra is able to deliver these services and facilitate the training of subspecialists to support ongoing service delivery. The service provided by the unit is absolutely essential to ensure that women and people who can get pregnant giving birth in the ACT have access to the best quality services in the event that complexities arise.

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, or RANZCOG, informed Canberra Health Services in July 2022 that the accreditation for the Fetal Medicine Unit as a training facility would be suspended from 8 August 2022, with the situation to be reviewed by RANZCOG in November of 2023. The accreditation was originally granted in October 2021, for two years, but was suspended because the unit lacked sufficient staff to support a trainee.

I acknowledge the history of culture problems at the hospital and the risk that this has contributed to staff leaving. Reputationally, it continues to provide a risk to the government's ongoing commitment to recruit and retain a quality healthcare workforce. Ms Castley's motion details a concerning culture in the hospital and asserts that this is what has led to the suspension of the unit's training accreditation. The motion references the December 2022 Pulse survey as portraying the deep dissatisfaction of staff working in the Women, Youth and Children division of Canberra Health Services. While this is concerning, the minister has assured me that low ratings of workplace satisfaction are taken extremely seriously and that efforts to address culture issues within the hospital are ongoing.

It is worth noting that we have discussed ongoing issues with staff culture at Canberra Health Services in relation to other substantive motions that Ms Castley has brought to this place in this sitting period. Ms Castley and the opposition appeared almost critical of the decisive action the government is taking to address workplace health and safety concerns and culture. But, on this occasion, it would appear, when there is a point to be made, we can turn the other way.

The minister has informed me that the government is supporting Canberra Health Services, with the goal of restoring training to the unit. Canberrans must be assured of that. I have been assured of that. I have sought assurances from the minister of that. It is the commitment of the government and Canberra Health Services to restore training at this unit.

To achieve this, recruitment has been undertaken but has so far been unsuccessful. That is due to the highly specialised nature of the positions needing to be filled. Canberrans would be disappointed if the government hired the wrong person for a specialist healthcare position. I trust that Canberrans want the government to wait to get the right person, whose employment can be sustained, so that the provision of healthcare services can be sustained.

I understand that there are only 80 accredited subspecialists in the country, which has created a particular challenge for Canberra Health Services to recruit this position. But, as stated in the minister's amendment to this motion, there are significant skills shortages in the tertiary medicine field more broadly. This underlines the importance of the ACT government's ongoing commitment to maintain the facility as a training facility so that the ACT can not only recruit and retain its own long-term workforce but can contribute to alleviating the national workforce shortage in this healthcare speciality. The minister has informed me that Canberra Health Services has supported a maternal fetal medicine trainee in another jurisdiction during this time. It is expected that this trainee will return to work at Canberra Health Services once their training is completed. I believe that is a good outcome.

I cannot stress enough—bold print and underlined!—the value of seeking briefings on these complex and substantive issues. I encourage other members, particularly in the opposition, to do the same. The minister has assured me, through my briefings—as the amendment notes—that suspending the accreditation of the training unit does not mean that services will no longer be provided to the community. If people get nothing else out of my contribution here today, I think that assurance is really, really valuable.

I would like to take this opportunity to stress the importance of excellent maternal health services in the broad. My ACT Greens colleague Ms Clay is championing the importance of giving people the very best care and more choice about where they give birth. A freestanding birth centre creates space where women and people who can get pregnant can give birth outside of the hospital, with low risk, freeing up limited specialist resources for those people who require a specialist unit such as that referred to in Ms Castley’s motion.

People who give birth outside of a hospital setting are much less likely to experience the cascade of interventions that leads to unnecessary C-sections, for example. It also provides the ability to, frankly, save Canberra Health Services money. It is a much more affordable way for women and people who can get pregnant to give birth, and that allows the government to redirect vital funds into other specialist services. I was very glad to see the health minister, and the government more broadly, commit to the early design of a freestanding birth centre alongside the north-side hospital. I commend my colleague Ms Clay for her sustained advocacy on this issue.

I thank Ms Castley for her motion. I thank Minister Stephen-Smith for briefings and assurances that services and training at the Fetal Medicine Unit are being prioritised, that they will be maintained into the long term and that the government takes very seriously its responsibility to Canberrans to recruit and retain a high quality, capable medical specialist who can sustain the services into the long term. A return to the unit’s training accreditation is important but must be done diligently and with the right people to ensure the unit’s ongoing, sustainable provision of services to Canberrans.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (3.32): Again we see another amendment that seeks to remove the body of everything that I wanted to say. It is an incredibly important issue. What we have here is a unit that is in trouble. It has had its training accreditation suspended, and CHS have known about this for a long time. This is a really serious issue. We know that other staff members are leaving; they are going on leave without pay and long service leave. There is a lot going on here and it is important for the minister to understand why so many people in this unit are leaving.

Junior doctors also can no longer do their training in Canberra until this accreditation is reinstated. Pregnant Canberra mums and those in the southern district deserve to know what is happening here. That is why my motion calls on—I do not need to go through them—the government to do four really detailed things. I thank the minister; she has tabled the letter and answered a number of our questions today. However, the Canberra Liberals will not be supporting the amendment.

As I said, with the “notes”, there is a great deal of supporting detail, and it is critical in helping us to understand the issues at hand. But the “calls ons” in the motion have

been changed. Yes, the letter has been tabled; that is great, and I appreciate that, thank you. but I feel that the provision of an update to the Assembly by the final sitting day of 2023 is quite a disrespectful response. By the time that happens, it will have been 16 months since accreditation has been suspended. Why should it take so long? I feel it is also an indication of the low priority from the minister on the Canberra Hospital maternal and fetal medicine unit. We will not be agreeing to the amendment.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

ACT Policing—sexual assault reporting

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (3.39): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) in January 2023, the NSW Police introduced a new online sexual assault reporting option for victim survivors of sexual assault;
- (b) the database allows victim survivors to report their experiences to police, either anonymously or they can elect to be identified and request that the matter is investigated further;
- (c) the streamlined and accessible online database allows victim survivors to lodge reports in a safe place and does not require them to undertake a formal police interview to pass on the relevant information; and
- (d) since its introduction, NSW Police have seen a dramatic increase in the reporting of sexual assaults, with many of these being historical accounts that victim survivors have felt forced to keep private;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) in the ACT, sexual assault can be reported in person by visiting a police station or over the phone;

- (b) the ACT does have an online option for reporting historical sexual assault, however, it is not as accessible as the NSW version, nor does it allow for current day reporting; and
 - (c) by introducing an online sexual assault reporting option, victim survivors in the ACT will have another way to share their experiences and ACT Policing will be given further insight into sexual assault matters; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) introduce a streamlined, accessible online sexual assault reporting option available in various languages for victim survivors by 1 July 2023; and
 - (b) provide an update and any relevant documentation to the Assembly by 1 July 2023.

I am pleased to speak on this motion, which is listed on the notice paper in my name today. This motion calls on the ACT government to introduce a streamlined, accessible online sexual assault reporting option, to be made available in various languages, for victim survivors. This motion follows the successful implementation of a new online sexual assault reporting option for victim survivors in New South Wales, which started earlier this year. That database allows victim survivors to report their experiences to police, either anonymously or they can elect to be identified and request that the matter is investigated further.

The streamlined and accessible online database allows victim survivors to lodge reports in a safe place and does not require them to undertake a formal police interview to pass on the relevant information. The uptake of this online option in New South Wales was immense and immediate. It was reported that more than 300 reports were made via the online portal within just the first fortnight—nearly a third of the total reports made in New South Wales in 2022.

We know that sexual assault is a widely under-reported crime. Advocacy organisation Full Stop Australia tells us that only 20 per cent of sexual assault crimes are reported to police. The under-reporting of sexual assault is due to a variety of reasons. Victim survivors may fear being re-traumatised; or, if the perpetrator is someone close to them, they may also fear repercussions from this person. Police attitudes is another often-stated obstacle, with victim survivors fearing being judged or disrespected by officers, albeit often unintentionally so.

People from the LGBTIQ+ community have a complexity of reasons for not wanting to report sexual assaults to police. They may fear a lack of understanding that sexual violence can occur to people that are not heterosexual—fears that are only heightened given the historical, low levels of trust between LGBTIQ+ people and the state.

Sexual assault is an incredibly complex societal issue. Preventing sexual assault, improving responses to victim survivors, reducing barriers in the judicial system and providing better support to victim survivors to heal are all areas that require significant improvement.

In this place, government, with tripartisan support, has started a lot of that work. We are talking about systemic reform to ensure that victim survivors are believed, and to reduce and ideally eliminate sexual violence. I recognise the work that has been done by the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Steering Committee; and, in particular, their *Listen: take action to prevent, believe and heal* report. As I said, this committee received tripartisan support from all parties here in our Assembly. I appreciate the genuine care that members here have when it comes to preventing and reducing sexual violence in the Canberra community.

The motion today does not seek to stop or interfere with work that is already underway in that regard by the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Steering Committee; rather, this motion, I hope, will provide one more avenue—an easy-to-use, user-friendly avenue—for victim survivors to be able to share their experiences, use their own voice and take back their power.

It also aims to address the issue of under-reporting in our community. I acknowledge that its impact will be difficult to measure. However, it may well provide police with a clearer picture of the prevalence of sexual assault in Canberra and assist them in improving how they work with victim survivors, so that reporting does not necessarily mean getting re-traumatised.

There is so much we can do to improve things in this space. This is just one small step to help victim survivors to share their experience and be heard. It complements other work already taking place and it is not intended to stop it or interfere with it in any way. It is simply one more measure to support and empower victim survivors. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

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) (3.45): While the government will be moving an amendment to Ms Lawder’s motion today, I would like to thank her for bringing this important matter before the Assembly.

The government is committed to improving the laws and response to sexual violence, including the experience of victim survivors. Sexual violence is an unacceptable and prevalent issue affecting many people in our community. It is a sad and a rather unfortunate fact that these are primarily women and children.

The ACT government and ACT Policing recognise that reporting a sexual assault can be a daunting and traumatic experience. Online reporting allows victims to report on their own terms. We acknowledge the bravery and courage of victim survivors reporting matters of sexual violence and are committed to working with ACT police to support victim-survivors who wish to report their experiences in a way that minimises the re-traumatisation to the greatest extent possible.

ACT Policing is committed to investigating all offences, holding offenders to account, and providing victim survivors with holistic and meaningful support, while working

closely with them to ensure that their voices are heard and respected. ACT Policing takes all sexual assault matters seriously and has specialist investigators in the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Team who investigate matters and guide victim survivors through each step of the process. It is the team's priority to ensure the emotional wellbeing and physical safety of a victim survivor of sexual assault.

Further, ACT Policing also work closely with victim support groups, such as the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, the Intermediary Program within the ACT Human Rights Commission, and Victim Support ACT, to deliver a high level of support and care to victim survivors.

The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Steering Committee report entitled *Listen. Take action to prevent, believe and heal* was commissioned by the ACT government in acknowledgement of the seriousness and prevalence of sexual violence. The report notes that there is often a significant time lag between when an incident occurs and when it is reported.

The ACT government is committed to addressing the under-reporting of sexual assaults and barriers to accessing justice and our re-investigation team. Operation Foster was established in February 2023 in response to the report. The team will take responsibility for investigations with victim survivors who have agreed to re-engage with police, as well as an independent researcher who has been engaged to help inform this important work.

The ACT police review team is currently reviewing sexual assault cases that were reported to police but did not progress to a charge for the period of 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2021. This review, amongst other things, will give an insight to better understand the low number of reports proceeding to charge as well as opportunities to strengthen systems and reforms. As noted in the government response to the report, ACT Policing continues to be committed to reviewing and improving its operations in responding to sexual violence, where care of the victim survivor is the core consideration.

ACT Policing is constantly evolving to respond to the needs of the community it serves, and the introduction of a holistic online sexual assault reporting as a mechanism is just one example of how it can achieve this.

Ms Lawder's motion calls on the government to introduce a streamlined accessible online sexual assault reporting option available in various languages for victim survivors by 1 July 2023 and to provide an update and any relevant document to the Assembly by 1 July 2023.

Since introducing an online reporting mechanism for sexual assaults, New South Wales Police have observed that the majority of reports made have so far been historical accounts. ACT Policing regularly discusses initiatives taken by its interstate colleagues. The ability to report more recent sexual assaults online in New South Wales will no doubt be raised between agencies in coming months.

In the ACT, sexual assault can be reported in person at a police station or over the phone. In mid-2020 ACT Policing introduced an online reporting option for victim

survivors to report historic sexual assault at a time and location they choose. A historic sexual assault is defined as having occurred at least six months prior to a report being made.

Similar to the New South Wales Police reporting option, the ACT Policing online reporting system allows victim survivors to express in their own words what has happened and provides links to support services for victim survivors. The option complements existing reporting avenues and enables victim survivors to make informed decisions about their options. The report outlines what level of information is required for such proceedings and gives victim survivors the choice of whether to proceed with a criminal investigation.

The decision to implement a mechanism for reporting historic sexual assault online was a deliberate step by ACT Policing. In matters where a sexual assault occurred six months or more prior to reporting, it is likely that forensic evidence no longer exists, making it more appropriate to provide an option for online reporting.

ACT police will always urge any victims of sexual assault to report the incident to police, regardless of whether the matter is determined to be recent or historic. It is widely recognised by law enforcement agencies on a global scale that in-person reporting of sexual assaults is best practice due to the sensitive and often traumatic nature of the matter.

It is the victim survivor's choice as to how an assault investigation proceeds. They may elect whether their matters would be investigated further, their alleged assailants be approached or court proceedings occur. Unfortunately, these proceedings are often lengthy and may further traumatise victim survivors. As such, the human element of reporting in person is a critical component to assisting the victim survivor to process the emotional and physical traumas associated with these crimes.

The government welcomes the opportunity to discuss measures, including expanding our online sexual assault reporting option that might offer an additional way victim survivors can share their experiences of sexual assault and give ACT Policing further insight into sexual assault matters.

ACT Policing is currently considering a range of upgrades to its online sexual assault reporting mechanism and is in the scoping phase of this exercise. They have been closely engaged with the New South Wales Police Force and the Queensland Police Service on developments in this space, emerging best practices, and opportunities in technology.

It is therefore timely that Ms Lawder has brought the important matter before the Assembly. However, before implementing reforms in this area it is important that we ensure that this is the best way that can support victim survivors. So, the government will be moving an amendment to Ms Lawder's motion to instead investigate further streamline reporting options and to provide an update to the Assembly on this work by the last sitting day of the year. The government considers that this is a better approach as it helps to ensure that any system that is put in place has mechanisms that allow for appropriate assistance to be provided for those who had recently been subjected to a sexual assault.

I move:

Omit paragraphs (3)(a) and (3)(b), substitute:

“investigate further streamlined accessible online sexual assault reporting options available in various languages for victim survivors and provide an update on this work to the Assembly by the last sitting day in 2023”.

I commend the amendment to the chamber.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.53): I would like to thank Ms Lawder for bringing this motion to the Assembly. I am deeply committed to supporting survivors and victims of sexual assault in the ACT and ensuring that there are pathways to justice for victim survivors that are not traumatising or disempowering. Sexual assault is an incredibly difficult issue. It is an issue that requires a trauma-informed, multi-layered response from the individual level through to the systemic level.

This morning the Attorney-General made his ministerial statement in response to the JACS inquiry into the government-introduced Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 (No 2) that was introduced into the Assembly in November 2022. I would like to remind members of the urgency about passing this legislation that was conveyed to the parliament by the Attorney because it was recognised that there was a serious loophole in the Evidence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act relating to the evidence given by a witness in a courtroom.

The loophole in the legislation meant that, in the case of a retrial, the power to rely on the recorded evidence was limited to where a relevant witness had not elected to give evidence in the courtroom. This has led, and would lead, to more cases of retraumatising of vulnerable witnesses of sexual assault and domestic violence cases who, in the event of a retrial, were required to give evidence all over again. The purpose of the amendment that was introduced by the attorney was to allow the evidence given by witnesses in a courtroom to be recorded and used in subsequent proceedings with the consent of the witness.

I would like to remind members of a major sexual assault case that was receiving national attention and facing a retrial. The key witness, Brittany Higgins, was facing giving her evidence all over again purely because she had made the brave decision in the first place to give her evidence in the courtroom.

Once the Attorney-General had introduced this bill to address this loophole, the Canberra Liberals leader, Ms Lee, moved a motion from the floor directing the JACS committee to inquire into this bill, usurping the JACS committee’s power to make its own decisions on inquiry, and all within a time frame that they knew would be way outside the Lehrmann retrial. I would point out that the time frame that the Canberra Liberals suggested was way outside the usual two-month turnaround for bill inquiries.

The Canberra Liberals’ moves in the Assembly were specifically designed to delay the passing of this legislation, therefore ensuring that witnesses like Brittany Higgins would, in the case of a retrial, have to give their evidence all over again. Of course, we know that the retrial was dropped. The DPP commented in the media that there

would be significant potential harm to the witness if required to re-enter the witness box during the retrial. He stated that, on the balance of compelling independent medical opinion and all other factors, he made the decision that to pursue a retrial was no longer in the public interest as it would be a significant risk to the complainant's life.

When the Canberra Liberals come in here only a few months later, saying that they care about supporting victim survivors of sexual violence, I do not believe it for one second. I would also like the Assembly to consider Mr Hanson's opposition and criticism just over a month ago to my motion calling for an online reporting mechanism for minor crimes—minor property crimes, not crimes against a person. He described it as “bizarre”. He said, “This is not good news”—online reporting—“for vulnerable people and older Canberrans.” He described online reporting as “stop-gap measures”.

It seems somewhat surprising and hypocritical, little more than a month after my motion for which Mr Hanson criticised me heavily, that the Canberra Liberals are now suggesting that we do the same thing for very serious crime. In the space of five months, they have actively, politically undermined parliamentary processes of a committee to ensure our legislative process was slowed down, at a significant cost to complainants of sexual assault, and they have heavily criticised online reporting.

The Canberra Liberals need to be called out for their hypocrisy. I am quite disgusted that they just pick and choose their advocacy for victim survivors for whatever they see as suiting their own political advantage.

As members know, I do see value in online reporting, as it can create a more accessible environment than having to attend a police station. For victim survivors of sexual assault, this is especially relevant due to the often gendered nature of sexual assault, and having to report something so deeply personal is very confronting.

It is also important to acknowledge the gendered nature of sexual assault, as it gives nuance to this nature of reporting. The most recent data shows that 87 per cent of sexual assault victims in the ACT were women. Further to this, ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with a disability, culturally and linguistically diverse women, and transgender women experience sexual assault at disproportionate rates to the rest of the community. The perpetrators are predominantly men, and these perpetrators attack the most vulnerable people in our community when they are most vulnerable, in the most violating way.

I would also like to note the most recent statistics for sexual offences in the ACT. In the ACT, from 2020-21 to 2021-22 we saw a decrease in the reporting of sexual offences, down by 12.5 per cent. However, even though there was a decrease, there were still over 500 sexual offences in the last financial year. Again, it needs to be said that the ABS statistics show that 87 per cent of victims never actually make a report. If we consider that, in the last financial year, 500 reports were made, this means we are potentially looking at a figure of around 3½ thousand sexual assaults in the ACT. Not only does this mean there are 3,000 or so victims; it also means there are at least a few hundred—dare I say, a thousand—perpetrators of sexual violence in this community that experience no repercussions for the crime they commit.

Let us go back to the DPP's annual report: 114 sexual offence matters commenced in our courts. Of those matters commenced, only 39 matters were proven. This means that, from reporting, there was a successful finalisation rate of seven per cent. While this is up from the previous year—almost double, so that is good—it is still concerning that these rates are so low.

I asked ACT police in annual report hearings about this very positive increase in reported matters proceeding to court over the last 12 months. The Chief Police Officer responded that a change in structure leading to more senior oversight of such investigations had been helpful and that successful recruitment meant that more experienced officers was now available to take key roles in these cases.

The JACS committee recommended that the ACT government ensure oversight by senior investigators and personnel in sexual assault investigations, to continue to provide better outcomes for victim survivors. I look forward to seeing the ACT government's response to this recommendation, and commend ACT police for prioritising this issue and allocating the resources to see an increase in criminal proceedings against sexual offenders.

We have a long way to go in reducing sexual assault in our community. I believe it is the job of all of us to put a stop to this behaviour. We must start by educating children and young people. We must also take a stand when we see this behaviour, to work as a community, a network, a friendship group and a family.

Next month, I will be continuing this work in Murrumbidgee and hosting active bystander training with Sue Webeck, the CEO of the Domestic Violence Crisis Service. For me, this work must begin from the community level right through to legislation. We need everyone on board if change is going to happen.

I hope that my consent legislation that passed in the Assembly nearly a year ago will start to have an impact. We need to instil that consent to a sexual act is free and voluntary; consent is not presumed. Every person has a right to choose not to participate in a sexual act. A consensual act involves ongoing mutual communication and decision-making by the people participating. This is not complicated. In every other part of our lives, ongoing and mutual communication and decision-making are basic in how we function as a society. That is why it is critically important that our justice system—that our law—convicts people who actively perpetrate such deep violence and such trauma on victims.

I have to acknowledge that a criminal justice response is not what every victim survivor wants. My desire is to see a system that allows for survivors to make informed choices, to be supported and to be believed. If they do decide to take legal action, we should have a system and a law that will provide fair and just outcomes. This pervasive silence needs to end. Today I support Minister Gentleman's amendment to Ms Lawder's motion.

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) (4.03): I thank Ms Lawder for bringing this motion to the Assembly today to talk in this place about sexual assault. It is something that we need to continue to have a conversation about and to act on appropriately and sensitively—responding to sexual assaults, informed as always, by the experiences of victim survivors. As Ms Lawder’s motion reflects, there is tripartisan commitment to preventing and responding to sexual assault in the ACT. I believe we are the only parliament in the country that has been able to join together on this issue to improve the experiences of victim survivors and stop sexual assaults from happening in the first place.

As Ms Lawder noted, the ACT government was provided with the *Listen. Take action to prevent, believe and heal* report from the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Reform Steering Committee in December 2021. This report was a really difficult read. Again, I want to thank the victim survivors who generously gave their time and shared their experiences to support us to consider opportunities for systemic change. In giving input to the SAPR report, victim survivors reflected on their experiences reporting sexual assaults to police. Victim survivors reported a lack of clarity around police processes, identifying the need for more publicly accessible information about how to make a report to police and what happens after the report is made.

One area where the ACT government is further exploring ways to improve the experiences of victim survivors at the point of reporting to police is through the sexual assault police review. The sexual assault police review was funded by the ACT government in 2019-20 and involves a review of sexual assault cases that were reported to police but did not progress to charge between 1 July 2020 and 31 December 2021. The review will assist us to better understand the reasons for the low number of reports proceeding to the point of charge.

There is the potential that insights about the process of reporting to police and opportunities to reform this process may come from this stage of the process review and the final report of the sexual assault police review oversight committee. The sexual assault police review oversight committee is due to report back to the ACT government in late 2023. As Ms Lawder has noted, victim survivors can already make reports of historic sexual assaults which occur more than six months before the reporting date through an online form on ACT Policing’s website.

Implementing reforms to the reporting system, however, takes time and will need to be managed carefully to ensure that victim survivors can be appropriately and safely supported through their journey through the criminal justice system. Prior to the Assembly requiring any reforms to the reporting system for sexual assault, it will be necessary for the current historical sexual assault online reporting system that is being operated by ACT Policing to be evaluated, to confirm that it meets the needs of victim survivors appropriately. Subject to the outcome of any evaluation, a consideration of an expansion of the online reporting tool for historical sexual assaults could be considered further, particularly through the translation of the historic reporting form into multiple languages. This offers the potential to further increase access to justice for victim survivors.

Until such time as the recommendations from the sexual assault police review are provided, I believe it is pre-emptive to require reforms to the reporting system for

sexual assault. I encourage further exploration by the Assembly of ways to increase access to justice for victim survivors, adopting best and emerging practice, which is why I support Minister Gentleman's amendment to Ms Lawder's motion. I again thank Ms Lawder for bringing this motion to the Assembly.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (4.08): I rise to support this important motion. Thank you, Ms Lawder, for bringing this very important motion forward. It is very timely.

In my time in the electorate while door-knocking and shop-fronting recently, I have noticed an obvious uptick in people sharing traumatic sexual assault experiences with me and expressing general feelings of being unsafe in our community. Just last week while speaking to people about local issues and the upgrades to the shops, a woman requested that improved lighting be added to the design, as she feels unsafe going to the shops in the evening. Charnwood shops has at least three areas that could be called alleyways. These are relatively narrow passages between buildings that are dimly lit. To improve safety here and to help people feel more comfortable, the lighting in these areas should be improved as part of the upgrade or as a separate project.

Just as much as we work towards preventing sexual assault from happening, it is equally important that all victims of sexual assault are given a chance to report the crime and have perpetrators held accountable by the law. Sexual assault is a traumatic experience that can have a long-lasting physical, emotional and psychological effect on people. These effects can include anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and difficulty forming and maintaining relationships. Protecting people who have experienced a sexual assault can help to prevent these negative outcomes. Sexual assault is a violation of a person's right and can undermine their sense of safety and autonomy.

Protecting a person who has experienced sexual assault, and offering an option of reporting sexual assault online, sends a message that their experiences matter and that they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Sometimes it is hard to report a sexual assault, but through an online report system it can break the silence surrounding sexual assault and empower victims to take action and seek justice. It is a vital tool in the fight against sexual violence and a critical step towards creating a safer, more supportive society for all. Online reporting can provide a crucial lifeline for victims of sexual assault, allowing them to access support, document their experiences and seek justice on their own terms. It is important that we continue to improve and expand online reporting services to ensure that it will work.

In conclusion, I would like to address Dr Paterson's remarks on how Mr Hanson talked about the online reporting that the ACT government has shifted to in terms of property crimes. I think she is completely out of loop there, because what we were referring to—online reporting for property crimes—is expanded. When your house is robbed, you do not have an option of reporting it online or the police officers coming to your house.

Dr Paterson: Yes you do! You have both options.

MRS KIKKERT: You do not. You simply do not. That will become a thing of the past—when police officers can come to your house when your house has been robbed. That is the difference here. What we are asking for in Ms Lawder's motion is not to

do away with the current reporting factors when sexual violence is committed. We are simply asking for another option. As Ms Lawder said in her motion, if Dr Paterson had read it correctly, at (2)(c):

... by introducing an online sexual assault reporting option, victim survivors in the ACT will have another way to share their experiences and ACT Policing will be given further insight into sexual assault matters ...

With this, I commend Ms Lawder for bringing forward this motion.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (4.13): The ACT Greens agree that it is important that our criminal justice system respects the human rights of victims. We recognise the trauma associated with sexual assault and have long been champions of reforming our system so that the act of reporting an assault is not doubly traumatising.

We understand the hesitancy of victims in reporting their experiences to the police. In 2018, former Greens MLA, Caroline Le Couteur, while serving in this place famously opened up about her experiences of being raped. She specifically spoke to her expectations that the police would blame her, the victim, if she came forward to report it. Her story is far from unique.

We have heard many stories about how intimidating it can be to walk into a police station. We know it is even harder for people with an intersection of vulnerabilities, whether they be women, people of disability, people of colour, people with mental health issues, First Nations people, trans people or sex workers. You do not know what kind of police officer will be at the desk or on a phone. You do not know if you will be noticed by a perpetrator. You do not know if your courage will fail you. Maybe you do not make the journey at all and just keep it to yourself.

As Ms Lawder correctly points out, the online reporting tool for sexual assault in the ACT is currently limited to the reporting of historic assaults—that is, acts that occurred over six months prior to reporting. I do not know for certain why these limitations exist, but it makes sense that we should look into improvements in this area. We should certainly make them more accessible and in a broader array of languages that match our community. But let us not for a moment assume that easier reporting to police will solve all of our problems. Let us not forget the intersection of domestic violence issues, the importance of crisis accommodation and access to public housing options that allow people to escape, the provision of mental health services for those scarred by assaults, and access to workplace leave entitlements to handle medical appointments and personal affairs.

Preventative approaches also matter immensely. These include antiracism programs to pick apart the mentalities which let people think they can abuse minorities. It includes helping people, particularly young men, to understand the principles of consent and respect. It was former Greens MLA Caroline Le Couteur who first unpacked the debate in this place for laws requiring positive and communicated consent for sexual intercourse. I too would like to thank Dr Paterson for the work that she did to see these laws pass earlier this term. That work was supported by Greens minister Emma Davidson, who, whilst as deputy CEO of the Women's Centre for Health at the time, also supported Ms Le Couteur in her efforts. The Greens are incredibly proud of what

we achieved in this space and ultimately secured in the 10th Assembly's parliamentary agreement.

The ACT is heading in the right direction on these things. There remains plenty of work to be done, and today's proposal of Ms Lawder's should be considered as one useful element of that work. We will be supporting the government's amendments which give effect to the concerns regarding the time frame of delivery and keeping options open as to how best deliver this. We do not believe these impact the substance of Ms Lawder's motion. Finally, I would like to thank Ms Lawder for bringing this proposal to this chamber.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.17): in reply: I rise to close the debate and to speak to Mr Gentleman's amendment. Thank you, Mr Gentleman, for your amendment. We will be happy to support your amendment today because what we really want to see here is the best possible result for victim survivors of sexual assault here in the ACT.

I would like to thank most members for the respectful way that they have conducted the debate this afternoon. We do not always agree on everything, but that does not mean that we should not assess the merits of an individual motion on its own, without conflating it with other debates we have had in the past.

Just as a courtesy to the fact that Dr Paterson has not been here that long, I decided not to rise on a point of order under standing order 52—a reflection upon votes—when Dr Paterson talked about the referral of a bill to committee. That was a decision of the Assembly, and Dr Paterson has reflected adversely upon that vote of the Assembly, which is quite unfortunate. I hope that perhaps she will think more carefully about that in the future as she becomes a more experienced member in this place.

As I said earlier, the online reporting option is not intended to replace a police report. It is meant to be one more avenue for a victim survivor to be able to pursue in their healing journey, to take back their power and have their voice heard, and we should do whatever we can to enable them to do that.

This is an issue that is generally in this place above politics, despite some people bringing that in. I would remind those present that we on this side have a strong record in this regard as well. Ms Lee introduced nation-leading stealthing legislation into the Assembly. Mr Hanson, when he was the shadow Attorney-General, introduced image-based abuse legislation into this Assembly. This is an issue that should be above politics, and something that we should all be pursuing for the best possible result.

I would also like to acknowledge the supports that are available for victim survivors, including the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and a number of other organisations who we all rely on so heavily to provide support for victim survivors.

Finally, I would just like to once again reiterate the tripartisan support for the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Steering Committee report and the actions and recommendations of it, the multi-pronged approach—legislative approaches, first responders' approaches, community and education responses. These are all vitally important.

What this motion today seeks to do is to have one more little piece of the puzzle put into place for people to be able to use for a gentle introduction to telling their story—not to replace other measures that may be available.

I am looking forward to the minister updating the Assembly on the last sitting day of 2023 on the work for a further streamlined accessible online sexual assault reporting option. I am genuinely hopeful that it is one more piece of the puzzle that we can put into place to assist those very vulnerable members of our community who need our support, not a politicisation of the issue. Thank you.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Background Checking Legislation Amendment Bill 2022

Debate resumed from 20 October 2022, on motion by **Ms Stephen-Smith**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (4.21): I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to the Background Checking Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 which I, along with the rest of my Canberra Liberal colleagues, will be supporting today.

This bill amends the Children and Young People Act and the Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act in the following ways. Firstly, it extends the application of the working with children checks and the NDIS worker screening checks so that disqualifying offences correspond with equivalent interstate offences and historic offences. Secondly, it removes access to the external merits review provision for applicants with class A disqualifying offences. Thirdly, it provides the director-general with the ability to defer the Working with Vulnerable People registration requirement for approved carers in exceptional circumstances. Lastly, the bill addresses a number of other technical and operational issues so that procedures are consistent, effective and an efficient use of public resources.

Building on the Background Checking Legislation Amendment Bill 2020, several of the amendments proposed in this bill are a delayed response to recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Although the final report of the royal commission's five-year inquiry was published in December 2017, final recommendations made by the royal commission on working with children checks were released almost eight years ago, in August 2015.

Other amendments made to resolve technical and operational issues of the Working with Vulnerable People Scheme will certainly help to clarify processes and improve procedural efficiencies in running the scheme; for example, by removing access to external merits review for applicants with class A disqualifying offences, the administration and efforts spent on allowing for the reviewing and processing of such an application will be spared, as there is no merits review available when an applicant is not eligible for registration to the scheme in the first place.

I sought a ministerial briefing on this bill late last year. I was advised that, in practice, this issue has indeed occurred before. An applicant who had committed a class A disqualifying offence had applied to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal for a merits review of their rejected application to the Working with Vulnerable People Scheme. I also inquired about the extra powers provided to the director-general to defer the Working with Vulnerable People registration requirement for approved carers in exceptional circumstances. I was interested in the kind of criteria that guide these types of decisions. I was advised that, in practice, registration requirements are deferred in cases where a carer who is otherwise suitable is unable to provide the necessary identity documents to be registered.

Making sure that our background checking procedures are unified across the country, up to date and in line with the royal commission recommendations is critical in the effective operation of our Working with Vulnerable People Scheme, so that our children and young people, as well as other at-risk members of the ACT community, are supported by people who promote and prioritise their safety. Currently, as the legislation stands, there are operational issues that unnecessarily exhaust public resources, and it is about time that they were addressed.

I look forward to seeing the improved operation of the scheme following the implementation of the legislative improvements being proposed today. I am pleased to commend this bill to the Assembly.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (4.26): The Working with Vulnerable People Scheme is an important part of the ACT system for keeping children and vulnerable people safe. The scheme aims to reduce the risk of harm or neglect of vulnerable people in the ACT, and it requires those who work or volunteer with vulnerable people, including children, to have a background check and be registered.

The Greens welcome this bill, which provides additional clarity on Working with Vulnerable People assessment processes, supporting the territory's alignment with national standards and obligations, and allowing consideration of the unique circumstances of carers in the out-of-home care context. This bill will allow children to be placed in the care of people who have a familiar relationship with them, using the Children and Young People Act, rather than the working with vulnerable people act, subject to meeting the reasonable criteria that are set out.

The suitability assessment process focuses on the principles of screening practice that are culturally responsive, relationship based and trauma informed. Focusing on these principles ensures that the best interests of the child are the paramount consideration in the decision-making to provide approval to carers.

I am confident that this bill strikes the right balance between protecting children from unacceptable risk and ensuring that appropriate screening arrangements are applied to ensure our children and young people are able to maintain connection to family, culture and community.

The bill will allow the recognition of First Nations traditional kinship where white law might historically deny it. It ensures that traditional kinship is no longer excluded

from the definition of close relatives. Kinship carers have an important role in supporting children and young people in their lives to maintain connection to family, culture and community, and are particularly important in the context of First Nations people involved in the system.

The bill also allows people to be disqualified from having a Working with Vulnerable People card due to offences recorded interstate. These amendments will strengthen protections of vulnerable people in the ACT and will enhance our capacity to implement restrictions on people who pose an unacceptable risk to children and vulnerable people.

Lastly, I want to observe that the bill facilitates easy access to court interpreters. This is an inherently good thing. The more we break down the barriers to communication, the more equitably our justice system can operate.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (4.28), in reply: I thank those who have spoken on the Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Amendment Bill 2022.

As I described in introducing the bill, it enables important amendments to the Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011. The changes will improve decision-making in the assessment of applicants who wish to engage in a regulated activity.

The bill contains amendments to the Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011 and the Children and Young People Act 2008. The amendments ensure the best interests of vulnerable people are paramount, maintaining our focus on better outcomes for all vulnerable people—in particular in this case children and young people.

The bill also supports Access Canberra staff and the agencies responsible for assessing applicants and monitoring registered people who wish to engage or are already engaged in a regulated activity involving children and vulnerable people. The amendments cover three areas: interstate and historic offences, culturally sensitive appropriate and proportionate assessment, and administration.

The bill provides a clear legislative basis for decision-making in the assessment of applications involving interstate and historic offences. This is to ensure a consistent risk assessment process is applied where applicants have committed an offence outside the ACT and for those offences within the ACT that have been renamed or retitled.

Clarifying the applicability of disqualifying offences to offences committed interstate will affect only a small group of people in the ACT and will not prevent them from seeking employment in other sectors. Importantly, it will ensure that vulnerable people are protected from people who present an unacceptable risk of harm.

I will be moving minor and technical government amendments to correct an initial oversight in the bill, to ensure that commonwealth and foreign offences are also captured in addition to offences committed in another state or the Northern Territory.

This aligns with the original proposed policy intent of the bill to ensure the minister can declare that a provision of a law in any other jurisdiction to be a corresponding provision for the purposes of that section.

The government amendments also include consequential amendments that should have been included in the original bill. A supplementary explanatory statement has been circulated to members and will be tabled to provide further detail. I will table that in the detail stage.

Importantly, the bill's amendments refine how the scheme applies to individuals seeking to work with children in the out-of-home care system, as both Mrs Kikkert and Mr Braddock have talked about. Carers are a vital part of this system, providing a safe, supportive and nurturing environment for children and young people in out-of-home care arrangements.

Kinship carers have an especially important role in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to maintain critical connections to family, culture and community. The bill's amendments ensure the most appropriate and suitable approach is used to assess the unique circumstances of carers and of children and young people by using the most suitable background-screening and assessment processes.

This bill continues to deliver the government's commitments to provide effective safeguards in our community. It remains clear that the best interests of vulnerable people are the paramount consideration in any decisions under the scheme and that all decisions must consider the safety, welfare and protection of vulnerable people. These amendments take a balanced, culturally appropriate approach to safeguarding carer approval without compromising the important task of effectively identifying individuals who pose a risk to children and vulnerable people.

The bill makes administrative amendments to better support a more streamlined administration of the Working with Vulnerable People Scheme. These amendments revise the current disqualifying offences list to only include relevant offences, extend the length of appointment of working with vulnerable people independent advisers from three years to five years, and clarify that court interpreters do not require Working with Vulnerable People registrations, as Mr Braddock has noted.

I would like to assure the Assembly of the primacy of the rights of vulnerable people in the ACT. The provisions in this amendment bill will uphold and indeed strengthen the safety and wellbeing of all vulnerable people in the ACT. This bill supports the protection of children from unacceptable risk while ensuring appropriate screening arrangements are applied in a sensitive way to ensure children and young people are supported to maintain connection to family, culture and community.

In closing, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety for its thoughtful consideration of the bill, through its legislative scrutiny role outlined through report No. 23 of 15 November 2022.

The amendments demonstrate continued collaboration between the government and community to reduce the likelihood of harm to children and vulnerable people in the ACT. I am pleased to commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (4.34), by leave: I move amendments Nos 1 to 3 circulated in my name together and table a supplementary explanatory statement to the government amendments [*see schedule 1 at page 904*].

Amendments agreed to.

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

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Mr Gentleman**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Sport and recreation—Belco Bowl Jam 2023

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) (4.35): On Saturday, 11 March, I was totally stoked to drop into the 2023 Belco Bowl Jam at the Belconnen Skate Park.

The Belco Bowl Jam is a grassroots gender inclusive event that has been running for over 22 years and has become one of the biggest skateboarding events of its kind in the world. There were thousands of spectators, many of whom came from interstate and overseas to watch and participate in this iconic event.

This year's Bowl Jam saw many Olympic athletes attend and compete in the event. There were plenty of grinds, airs, and inverts and, overall, some pretty gnarly moves—all MCed by Olympic commentator, Mitch Tomlinson. I am not going to lie; I did not quite get all of the calls. But how cool to have Olympians just jamming with locals in Belco.

We had Kieran Woolley, from Kiama, on the south coast; Steven Pineiro from Puerto Rico, who apparently comes every year—gets on a plane and flies over every year just to be part of the Belco Bowl Jam; Poppy Olsen, from Newcastle in New South Wales; and Zion Wright, from the United States.

This year was the first year that they held a female bowl jam as well. So I want to acknowledge the CBR Skate Crew for putting that on as well.

I had a great time, as always, admiring the incredible skill and nerve of it all. While I know skateboarding is fun, and everybody who jammed at the bowl made it look easy, I also know that it takes a lot of time and training, and, surely, bravery and a fair amount of grit to move that quickly on the ramps, drop from big heights and get those incredible aerials.

A massive congratulations to the Canberra Skateboarding Association for organising and running another successful jam. I want to give a special shoutout to the group of truly rad volunteers who gave the bowl surface a fresh coat of paint as well as doing surface maintenance each year before the Belco Bowl Jam. I also want to thank and acknowledge our Sport and Recreation Facilities and City Services team, who supplied bleachers for the first time to the event as well as additional waste services.

A lot of work goes into organising an event like the Jam. It involves the tireless effort of many people who I would also like to acknowledge for their efforts: Vice President of the Canberra Skateboarding Association, Brenden Wood; Jim Fowley, who is a Belconnen local; Matthew Chamberlain; Tony Caruana, from the Canberra Skateboarding Association; Scott Brown, who is also a Belco local; Andrew Considine, who not only is another Belco local but also did a fantastic job painting the bowl for the event; and the many other members of the Canberra skateboarding community who helped with managing this sometimes quite chaotic event.

Next year, 2024, could be an even bigger year at the Belco Skate Bowl. In 2024, Belco Skate Park will have an additional feature, with a new half pipe to be delivered and completed this year. A third ramp will be competition standard. So, who knows—Belconnen might be the place to go to, in the world, along with the bowl jam. I cannot wait to see the 2024 bowl jam and see everything that it brings to our community.

Again, congratulations to everybody who worked so hard volunteering to put the event together and everybody who came to our great city and enjoyed our Belconnen skate park.

The Hon Mr John Kerin AO

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (4.39): It is with great sadness that I rise to speak this afternoon on the passing of John Kerin AO, former federal minister and Garran local—or, as John preferred to call himself, a chook farmer from Yerrinbool.

Born in the Southern Highlands in 1937, he worked on the family farm as a poultry farmer before he became an economist, studying at our own ANU. He worked at the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, ABARE, before being elected to the commonwealth parliament for the Australian Labor Party as the member for Macarthur in 1972.

He lost his seat in the Labor defeat of 1975 and returned to ABARE before being re-elected as a member for Werriwa in 1978, replacing Gough Whitlam in his seat. Elected to Bob Hawke's ministry in 1983, John held the primary industry portfolio, in which he was highly regarded for his work until 1991. He subsequently served as Treasurer of the commonwealth and Minister for Transport and Communications in 1991 and Minister for Trade and Overseas Development from 1991-93 in the Keating government before retiring from politics.

In 2001, Mr Kerin was appointed as a member of the Order of Australia for service to the Australian parliament and was also awarded in the same year a Centenary Medal for service to Australian society in technological science and engineering.

Whilst John was the federal member in Western Sydney, he moved to Canberra and, in his later years, he was actively engaged on public policy, particularly around agriculture policy and research, where he also held board appointments to the Crawford Fund.

He released his memoir of his experiences as the primary industries and energy minister between 1983 and 1991, which became essential reading for any new public service graduate to the agriculture department or, indeed, for any aspiring agriculture minister.

I know John as a member of the Woden branch of the Australian Labor Party in the ACT, which he joined in 2012 following a merger which I had instigated. It was a reminder to new members of the Labor Party in the ACT that you better look around you because you never know who might be sitting next to you. It could be a federal Treasurer! John was esteemed company in the branch and a regular contributor in person and in writing, with a focus on national and international issues.

Following treatment for cancer in 2015, which prevented him from attending meetings regularly, he regularly researched contemporary issues and circulated through the branch regular informative contributions on matters which ranged from the rise of the far right overseas to tax reform. These were always well read and well received.

In one of John's often long but cogent contributions, showing his enduring commitment to Labor values, he said, "For me, the starting point for policy development has always been to be contemporarily relevant and work to give our population a quality of opportunity"—a good starting point for tax reform, in the context in which he was writing, but also a good starting point, indeed, for any policy development.

I, the Labor Party and the nation will miss his contributions. I am very grateful for his support over many years. I know that my constituents will miss seeing him down at the Garran Shops at the bakery. John Kerin's warmth and intellect lasted to the end—a true gentleman with a big heart. My condolences go to his wife June and his family. Goodbye, Mr Kerin.

Mr Ian Morrison

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (4.42): I rise to take a moment to acknowledge the sad passing of one of my constituents, Mr Ian Morrison, and to celebrate his important contributions to the Canberra community.

Originally from Western Australia, Ian and his wife, Patricia, moved to Lyneham in 1959 to raise their young children and, like so many people who come to Canberra, for work in the public service. An engineer and town planner, Ian spent 15 years working in the National Capital Development Commission. In this role, Ian was instrumental in planning for the growth of the city we all love. Ian was a designer at heart and, in his work, sought to combine efficiency and practicality with beauty and aesthetics.

His task was to consider how Canberra could grow in a way that promoted urban flow and avoid any congestion that plagues other cities, whilst preserving the natural beauty of our hills and valleys. His expertise is evident in the design of Parkes Way, between Black Mountain and Lake Burley Griffin, which melds with a particularly difficult topographical area. I think it is fair to say that Ian and his colleagues did an excellent job.

Ian was also deeply passionate about his local community. He and Patricia moved to the suburb of Barton in 1969. The couple fell in love with the beauty and historic charm of the suburb and they became an integral part of the Barton community. Ian and Patricia played a leading role in the community campaign to save the historic Barton housing precinct from demolition, which continues to co-exist in harmony with the surrounding multistorey residential and office buildings, preserving the essential character of the suburb.

The couple went on to lead the then, in Ian's words, community revolt in 1978 and 1979 against the all-night operation of Canberra's first casino, Pine Lodge. This community action resulted in the establishment of the Barton Residents Association, of which Ian was an active member.

Ian engaged in several campaigns as part of the Barton Residents Association throughout the 1980s and 90s, working along with his fellow Barton community members to protect the historic character of his beloved suburb. Ian was instrumental in securing the recognition of the Barton housing precinct as a heritage area.

The family went through a difficult period in the late 1970s and early 1980s due to mental illness. This experience demonstrated to Ian the need for a forum for families with similar experience to come together to support one another. With this in mind, Ian established the Canberra Schizophrenia Fellowship, a flagship group that continues today.

In 2011, Ian became a founding member of the Kingston and Barton Residents Group. Ian organised the first ACT Heritage Week walks around Barton and Kingston, and the materials he prepared for these walks are still being used today. He also conducted

surveys of the street furniture in Barton and Kingston, writing the residents group's conservation report, *Conserving and managing our streetscapes*. This report was acknowledged by the National Trust ACT as a significant contribution to heritage conservation, and it was critical to Kingston and Barton Residents Group securing an ACT heritage grant to restore the iconic concrete pillar signposts in Barton. In recognition of his contributions to the community, Ian was awarded the first life membership of the Kingston and Barton Residents Group in 2016.

I want to acknowledge Ian's substantial legacy in the preservation of our city's history and heritage. But, beyond all of his achievements, community activism and talents, Ian was first and foremost a man who loved his family, loved his friends and loved his community. Those close to him describe Ian as a true gentleman. They say he was thoughtful, compassionate and a humble man, gentle and earnest.

Ian cared deeply about people and his sense of community spirit shone brightly, enriching the lives of the people around him. Ian will be greatly missed. I extend my sincere condolences to his family and friends.

In the few seconds I have left, I also want to join with my colleague Mr Steel in recognising the passing of John Kerin, a true giant of the Labor Party and a true gentleman.

Gungahlin—multicultural event venue

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.47): I rise this evening to speak about another broken promise from this Labor-Greens government. As members will be aware, in 2019 a multicultural facility was committed to after a motion by the Labor members, supported by the Canberra Liberals. A feasibility study was committed to be investigated by August 2020, it was made an election commitment in 2020, and the Canberra community was promised that construction would start within the term.

Three years ago, this Labor-Greens government clearly misled the community. Three years ago, the Chief Minister said the project would be fully operational by the end of 2023-24, and we are a year and a half out from the end of this term and not a single shovel has hit the earth. There is still no information on the costs associated with hiring the facility and communities are being left in the dark.

Funding was available, I have been told, and last I checked there was a tender awarded for initial exploratory and planning documents. Given this Labor-Greens government's track record of promising and not delivering, I am not surprised this election commitment is slipping away.

What also makes me very frustrated as shadow minister for this portfolio is that I know the community want this facility. They have been very clear in their expectations and still there is little progress. The community is keen for this facility to be developed and delivered, and there is a significant need for it. I have spoken to many members of our multicultural community who want this facility for so many reasons but have not been really consulted at all by this government on how much it will cost to hire, how it will operate and what it will look like.

It is unfortunate that we have to almost expect this from a government who are so badly in debt that they cannot do anything unless it aligns with the tram, the planning around the tram or their expected windfall from development along the tram line. A government relying on windfall to pay for infrastructure is not good governance, and it is not surprising that that is why its planning scope is so limited. Imagine, an ACT that was not burdened by such a great debt that it impacted the community outcomes regularly. The community might actually be able to trust election commitments, the community might actually feel heard, and we might actually have a multicultural centre.

I call upon this Labor-Greens government to get on with the job, get on with the thing that they promised and consult genuinely with the multicultural community to bring this promised facility into being.

Mr John Evans OAM

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) (4.50): I rise this evening to congratulate John Evans OAM on his latest efforts. John Evans should be known to all of us. If not, then I would encourage people to make him known to themselves, because he is an incredible legend in the field of bushwalking and in his contribution to the ACT.

Those latest efforts were to enjoy all 39 of Canberra's nature reserves. You would know yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker, just how spectacular they are, but what is all the more remarkable is that John Evans has been doing this for 18 years. He has now clocked over 1,400 bushwalks, which he has documented, not just noting he has done them but with extensive track notes and GPS data—often searching for a geocache as part of the bushwalk.

The most remarkable thing of all is that this latest accomplishment has been while Mr Evans has been recovering from multiple myeloma. It is amazing to see a gentleman in his 70s with such passion and commitment to the broader Canberra community—showing off exactly what there is to enjoy throughout Canberra and encouraging that for everyone, no matter what their age is.

He is a particularly special friend of mine, and I was very grateful to be invited to the last two bushwalks he completed over the Canberra Day long weekend, which had a huge turnout. We were able to go through the beautiful Dunlop grasslands. It is full of treasures, if you have not been there before, and on this beautiful, foggy morning we stumbled across many of these treasures, including paddocks of kangaroos and sheep side by side, and the ACT and the New South Wales border markers. I would note that Mr Evans has visited every single border marker on the ACT-New South Wales border.

Of course, we also saw the Osage orange trees. If you have not seen these before, they do have fruit on them, and the fruit is particularly interesting because it looks like a brain. It has a very curious pattern on it, and it is a treat to see them. They are a mark

of some of the early people who moved to the ACT from overseas and planted them. While you cannot eat the fruit, those trees, introduced as they are, are a very good and cheap source of wood.

John was awarded his Medal of the Order of Australia in 2021 for his services to bushwalking, and you simply will not find a more knowledgeable or generous person. His passion is encouraging people to get fresh air into their lungs. I think that is simple, but it is incredibly effective, and John has done so much to enable that for people.

It was a great way to start the weekend, and his extensive blog remains available. Every year, I believe, iterations of it are included in Trove. You can search those thousands of bushwalks he has completed so you can be inspired to complete them yourself. It was a fantastic reminder about what a remarkable contribution he has made to our city and to our records in encouraging people to embrace our nature reserves.

I would also like to take these final few moments to acknowledge the passing of Mr Kerin. As my colleagues have said this evening, he was simply a giant, but what made John very special was his ability to relate to people as well. He was always incredibly friendly and kind to me, and I was always in shock that he even knew who I was. Thank you.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.56 pm.

Schedule of amendments

Schedule 1

Background Checking Amendment Bill 2022

Amendments moved by the Minister for Families and Community Services

1

Clause 5

Proposed new section 11B (2) (a) (i)

Page 6, line 4—

omit

another State

substitute

the Commonwealth, another State or a foreign country

2

Proposed new clause 16A

Page 10, line 22—

insert

16A Schedule 3, part 3.2, new item 67A

insert

67A	Crimes Act, s 62 (3)	incest (16 years or older)	offence against vulnerable person
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3

Clause 18

Page 11, line 1—

omit clause 18, substitute

18 Schedule 3, part 3.3, item 66

omit