



DEBATES
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DAILY HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

24 October 2023

This is an **EDITED PROOF TRANSCRIPT** of proceedings that is subject to further checking. Members' suggested corrections for the official *Weekly Hansard* should be lodged in writing with the Hansard office no later than **Wednesday, 8 November 2023**.

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Tuesday, 24 October 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.

Mr Victor Marillanca
Motion of condolence

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

That this Assembly expresses its deep regret at the death of Mr Victor Marillanca, a dedicated leader within the multicultural community and the longest serving volunteer presenting a Latin American program on Australian Community Radio, and tenders its profound sympathy to his family, friends and colleagues in their bereavement.

It is with deep sorrow that I rise this morning to mark the passing of Victor Marillanca, who, sadly, passed away on 26 September this year. I would particularly like to acknowledge the presence of Mr Marillanca's family here in the chamber, his wife Kayleen, children Victor and Alyce, and the extended family and friends who have joined us this morning.

Victor was a much-loved, respected and valued member not only of the Canberra community but of the Australian and international community, and he will be deeply missed. From the moment he arrived in Australia in 1975 as a political refugee fleeing the Pinochet regime in Chile, Victor dedicated himself to the service of others in the pursuit of safety and of political asylum.

Outside his work as an Australian public servant and his love of family, Victor's passion and dedication in supporting his community never wavered. His voluntary work for the Latin American community was focused on the fate of political prisoners in Chile, with Victor advocating and lobbying the Australian government for help in seeking their release and resettlement in Australia.

In 1976, he pioneered the first Spanish language radio program in the Australian Capital Territory, and 2023 marked 2XXFM's Latino program's 47th anniversary on air, making Victor the longest serving volunteer presenting a Latin American program

in Australian community radio history. Victor was recognised multiple times for his contribution to the multicultural community, receiving the ACT Centenary Multicultural Media Award in 2013 and the ACT Multicultural Media Award in 2017, and he served as an ACT honorary ambassador promoting multiculturalism in 2022.

My colleagues will speak at greater length about Victor's contributions to our community. This morning, on behalf of the ACT government, my thoughts and heartfelt condolences go to Mr Marillanca's wife, Kayleen, his children, Victor and Alyce, and his extended family and friends during this difficult time. He will be remembered for his unwavering support of, and dedication to, the multicultural community here in Canberra; for his international advocacy work for political refugees; and for a lifetime of dedication that celebrates the power of words, and the sharing of knowledge and information to empower others.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition): On behalf of the Canberra Liberals, I pay tribute to Victor Marillanca, who passed away on 26 September this year. Victor was a champion of Spanish-speaking people, not only in the ACT but throughout Australia.

Victor arrived in Australia as a political refugee in 1975, fleeing the political repression and human rights abuses occurring in his home country. His story of capture and torture as a young university student in Santiago is harrowing, but his resilience, hope and strength to survive are an inspiration to many. Having fled his home country, Victor arrived in Canberra with very little, worked hard in various jobs, including washing dishes at Parliament House, and made Canberra his home.

In 1976, Victor created the first Spanish language program, *Conneccion Latino Americana*, in Canberra, and this year he became the longest serving volunteer presenting a Latin American program in Australian community radio. The program was the first to be aired in a language other than English on Australian community radio, which has since gone on to serve a pivotal role in connecting multicultural communities.

In 1989, Victor was also involved in establishing Transact, which later went on to become Companion House, a place that provides care for survivors of torture and trauma who seek refuge in Australia. Victor served as president, vice-president and secretary of the National Ethnic Multicultural Broadcasters Council, president of the Community Ethnic Broadcasters Association of the ACT, and chair of the 2XXFM ethnic standing committee.

He was awarded the prestigious Ohtli Award by the Mexican government, an honour normally only given to citizens of Mexico, for his service and his ongoing support to Spanish-speaking countries and his efforts in deepening the ties between Mexico and Australia. Following his passing, the *Conneccion Latino Americana* program released a statement which said:

He has been a beacon of light throughout his life to many. We remain in constant awe of his achievements throughout his journey and his ability to connect with so many to selflessly better the life of his many communities.

What a wonderful reflection on an incredible Canberran. On behalf of the Canberra Liberals, I extend our sincerest condolences to his family, who are joining us today—his wife, Kayleen, and his children, Victor and Alyce—and so many of his extended family, friends and loved ones. The Canberra community will miss him dearly.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong): On behalf of the ACT Greens, I rise this morning to offer our support for this motion and state our profound sadness at the passing of Victor Marillanca. We extend our condolences to his family and his many friends, and acknowledge the sense of loss felt by many who knew him and were impacted by his commitment to our community.

Victor was born and grew up in Batuco, a small rural town outside the capital, Santiago, in Chile. He was the youngest of four children. His father, a former railway worker, had a small pension, while his mother ran the family home. In those days, it was unheard of for anyone from his village to go to university, but that changed under President Allende's socialist government. Victor was 17 when he received a government scholarship to study electro-mechanics at the state technical university in Santiago. He was ecstatic. His ambition was to be a teacher. The scholarship covered all of his costs. There were free textbooks and tuition, clothing allowance, travel expenses and food coupons.

During university vacations and at weekends, Victor returned home to his village to do voluntary service among the peasants. He taught the illiterate to read and write, he organised electricity to the homes of the farm workers, and he and his friends helped the people to work their land. He was, by all reports, leading a very happy time in his life. But that all ended on 11 September 1973, and Victor was on the university campus when the military attacked. Many students were killed. The survivors were sent to concentration camps. Almost all of the students were from working-class families.

After his arrest, Victor was taken to an army weapons depot in Santiago and told that he was to be shot. His hands were tied behind his back, and he was blindfolded and put against a wall. He heard the soldiers preparing their rifles and then the commands to aim and be ready, and suddenly someone shouting, "Stop it." This intervention came from the commander of the regiment. He wanted Victor for further questioning.

Back in Batuco, Victor was badly beaten, burned with cigarette butts and given electric shocks. He was constantly questioned about weapons supposedly hidden in the town and about the names of his friends. He maintained that his only crime was being a student and that he was being punished for helping the farm workers to read and write. After days of torture, he blacked out when he was kicked by a soldier. He regained consciousness while lying on a wire mattress, covered by a filthy blanket. There was an armed guard beside him and he could not move. He stayed there for 28 days before he was released. For the next 15 months, he remained in Batuco under constant surveillance. He had to report to the authorities morning and afternoon, and could not leave the town without permission. Like many other Chileans, he was not allowed to meet with more than two people at any one time. On 9 March 1975, Victor received permission from the army to go to Santiago on the pretext of visiting his mother in hospital. Instead he went to the airport and boarded a series of flights, ultimately arriving in Sydney.

This is, of course, an extraordinary story just up to this point, and one that perhaps many in this chamber are either not familiar with or would find hard to imagine. As we know, there was much more to Victor's life. I will leave my remarks there, having given that bit of history, as I know my colleague Mr Braddock wishes to reflect in detail on his life and contribution here in Australia.

I would like to conclude my remarks with a personal reflection. For me, it was a privilege to meet Victor on the occasions that I did. I most enjoyed his enthusiasm—his enthusiasm for life, for supporting the community, for community radio and for his fellow humans. It was infectious and a real antidote to some of the troubles of the modern world. This city was made better for him living here and, as we mourn his passing, let us also reflect on our gratitude for his contribution to the life and fabric of our city and our community.

MR PARTON (Brindabella): I would like to say a few words about the great Victor Hugo Marillanca. What a good man. We stand here remembering him because he was a great man and because he impacted so many lives in a positive way. I knew Victor for a decade. My wife, Luisa, knew him for much longer. My wife came to Canberra in the 90s with her father, Jaime, who had just been appointed as the Colombian Ambassador to Australia. It is probably no surprise to anyone in the gallery that the first media appointment that Jaime had was a radio interview with Victor. Of course, it was. He went on to do many of them, and my wife actually participated in some of them.

Long after Jaime returned to Colombia, and many years after those interviews, Jaime passed away in his home country. At the time that that occurred, Victor found the cassette recordings of the interviews with Luisa's father and delivered them to her. I think that is so special. One of the reasons I think it is special is that I worked in radio for not quite as long, but almost as long, as Victor. I worked in radio in the days before digital, when everything was analogue—and I know how many cassettes and quarter-inch reels I had lying around at my place. I cannot imagine how many tapes and cassettes there were. It must have been a monumental job for him to sift through those recordings and find them, but he did.

He was an exceptional human. He also happened to be a constituent of mine. I actually doorknocked his house in Kambah one day, which was a great surprise to both of us. I chatted to Victor on a number of occasions on his radio show and we spoke about local politics. I have to tell you, Madam Speaker, that people from within my party raised eyebrows when I said that I had been on with Victor talking politics, because they had this belief that we would have been arguing, and we never, ever did. Victor was always pragmatic enough to identify when his side of politics had got things wrong, or at least when they should be doing better. He also understood that often the best way to get a political outcome was to play one side off against the other, and he did that magnificently well.

I did get some grief from people on my side—not many, but from some on my side—for engaging with Victor. One time, this guy from the party said to me, “Why would you waste time talking to that bloke? He's a communist, or a hardcore socialist at best.” I remember responding in Victor's defence. I said to this guy, “Mate, if you'd been arrested by the conservatives and held against your will for a year and a half and

then pretty much scurried from your own country as a refugee, if you'd gone through the wringer like they put Victor through the wringer, I would be most disappointed if you too were not a hardcore socialist. I would be most disappointed."

I never saw Victor as a socialist; I saw him as a humanist, and I saw him as a man who was keen to find positive outcomes for as many people as he possibly could. It was a great privilege to be present at his funeral at Norwood Park because I learnt so much more. There is so much stuff that I just did not know about Victor.

Madam Speaker, I went from the funeral to a race day at Thoroughbred Park and there were a number of your friends there, a number of Labor stalwarts, who also attended the funeral. Among them was Jim and another guy whose name I cannot remember but whom I reckon was once Stanhope's chief of staff. They applauded me for attending Victor's funeral, but they applauded me in part because they thought it was brave of me to be there as a Liberal. I am not sure that it was. When he spoke at the funeral, the member for Bean, David Smith, said—and I am not sure whether these were his exact words—"Whatever politics you follow, we are all comrades here today." And he was right; we were. As we remembered Victor, I was more than happy to be his comrade on that specific day.

What an amazing mark of the greatness of this man that his funeral was attended by three ambassadors—Chile, Mexico and Cuba—as well as the Venezuelan Head of Mission, a federal member of parliament and two MLAs. There was a good roll-up of busy people who wanted to pay their respects.

Victor Marillanca era padre, esposo, abuelo, periodista, defensor y chileno orgulloso, pero más que eso, era mi amigo. He was a father, a husband, a grandfather, a journalist, an advocate and a proud Chilean, but he was my friend. It was a great privilege to know him, to feel his great warmth and his amazing energy. There will never be another Victor Hugo Marillanca, and all those in the gallery should be very proud.

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): It is with great sadness that I, too, rise today to mark the passing of Mr Victor Marillanca. I acknowledge the presence in the chamber of Victor's wife, Kayleen, his daughter, Alyce, and his friends and family who are here and those who are watching online.

Born in Batuco, a humble rural town just outside Santiago, Chile, in May 1954, Mr Marillanca arrived in Australia as a political refugee in March 1975, escaping the political repression and the human rights abuses happening in his home country. At the age of 17, Mr Marillanca, with aspirations of becoming a teacher, received a government scholarship to study electro-mechanics at the State Technical University in Santiago. He was an active member of the student socialist party, focusing on educating people and aiding the Mapuche community.

However, his life took a harrowing turn, as we have heard, when he was kidnapped by the military during a rally in Santiago following a coup in September 1973. He faced a terrifying ordeal when he was taken to a weapons depot in the capital, blindfolded

and prepared to be shot. Miraculously, the order to fire was halted by the Batuco regiment commander and, while he escaped immediate execution, he did endure physical and psychological torture, including beatings, burns and electric shocks during his 28-day detention.

After his release, Mr Marillanca was kept under strict surveillance for 15 months, with limited freedoms and interactions. His lifeline came in the form of Rory Allan, a New Zealand economist who assisted in his rescue. With Mr Allan's help, Mr Marillanca escaped to Australia and he arrived in Sydney.

On arriving, he dedicated himself to assisting others in their pursuit of safety and political asylum. In the spring of 1975, he stood in Garema Place and shared his story of exile, torture and injustice with a passer-by who translated it to a rally in English. This marked the beginning of Victor finding his voice and becoming an advocate for justice and human rights in his new homeland.

With only one American dollar in his pocket, a suitcase full of determination and a relentless passion to help others, Mr Marillanca's journey in Canberra had begun. Just two weeks later, he started working as a brick cutter in Fyshwick, relying on sign language to communicate with his workmates until he could grasp the English language.

Upon completing a 10-week English course, he took on the role of a dishwasher in the kitchen of Parliament House. It was here in 1975 that Victor, a 21-year-old Chilean refugee, got the opportunity to meet Labor stalwarts like the late Senator the Hon Susan Ryan, and he eventually joined the Australian Labor Party. His contributions and dedication were most recently celebrated at this year's ACT Labor conference, where Mr Marillanca was rightly recognised with a life membership award.

Returning to 1976, by this time he had begun working as a cleaner, storeman and house manager for the Joint House Department. By 1982 he had become an Australian public servant, serving with dedication at the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Throughout this period his passion for supporting his community remained steadfast and continually evolving.

In 1976 he pioneered the first Spanish language program in the ACT, titled *Coneccion Latino Americana*. 2023 marked the 2XXFM Latino program's 47th anniversary on air, making Victor the longest serving volunteer presenting a Latin American program in Australian community radio. For nearly five decades, the program has been a vital source of information for thousands of Spanish-speaking people, covering topics such as immigration, community assistance, refugee programs, local health services, public housing and current politics, providing invaluable support to many Spanish-speaking Canberrans. This incredible milestone was recognised in the Australian parliament by both federal member for Bean David Smith and federal member for Canberra Alicia Payne.

However, Victor's dedication extended beyond presenting on the radio waves. He served as ACT honorary ambassador and has held the positions of president, vice-president and secretary of the National Ethnic Multicultural Broadcasters Council. He also held the position of president of the Community Ethnic Broadcasters

Association of ACT. He contributed to his community and was a justice of the peace since 1980. He chaired the 2XXFM ethnic standing committee and was a registered and practising radio trainer.

Despite not being Mexican, his dedication to helping the Spanish-speaking community was rightly recognised. In 2021 the Mexican government recognised Victor with the Ohtli Award, one of the country's highest honours, normally only given to Mexican citizens. The award celebrates individuals who have aided, empowered or positively impacted the lives of Mexican nationals. Of course, Victor was rightly recognised.

He was also the recipient of the ACT Centenary Multicultural Media Award in 2013 and the ACT Multicultural Media Award in 2017. Just recently, he was awarded the National Ethnic Disability Alliance Medal for unwavering service to the CALD disability community, as well as an award of recognition from the Embassy of Cuba.

His funeral was attended by the ambassadors of Chile, Cuba, Mexico and Venezuela and parliamentarians, reflecting the reach and respect he had from so many. He was honoured at the recent La Fiesta Latin American Festival, with the event being dedicated to him.

Victor consistently served as a guiding light for numerous individuals throughout his lifetime. His many accomplishments and his remarkable capacity to connect with countless others from all walks of life, all for the selfless betterment of the communities he touched, have an indelible impact and will endure.

He leaves behind a legacy of unwavering advocacy and self-initiated support for multicultural communities. He will be missed so dearly by all of the people he reached, supported and helped throughout his extraordinary life. While the sorrow of his absence is keenly felt within the ACT, we recognise that his passing also reverberates on a global scale. We find solace in the knowledge that he will endure through the memories of those he aided, those he spoke to and those he spoke for, giving a voice to those who felt unheard.

The last time I spoke to Victor was in late July, when I sent him photos I had taken of him being awarded the ACT Labor life membership at the conference. Victor responded, thanking me, and one of his comments was, "Working together we can achieve many things," a philosophy that sums up Victor's extraordinary life and generosity, and a message for us all.

We all know how deeply Victor loved his family and his many friends. Our thoughts and condolences go out to Mr Marillanca's beloved wife, Kayleen, his children, Victor and Alyce, his extended family and his many, many friends during this very difficult time. Vale Victor.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi): It is with great sadness that I learned of Mr Victor Marillanca's passing. I do not simply wish to repeat the words that have gone before me; I wish to add a few tidbits regarding the man that we all knew so well. It speaks to the quality of the man, in terms of the number of us that are getting up today to talk.

As mentioned, Victor arrived in this country with \$US1 and, from my notes, with just a single change of underwear. From there, he has achieved great things for our Canberra. He had a huge desire to help his fellow countrymen and was able to overcome many barriers, including learning the language, settling into the country and becoming part of the community here. But it was his passion to help his fellow man that actually drove his volunteer work in establishing *Coneccion Latino Americana* as the first Spanish language program in the nation's capital. It was actually launched with the then Australian Commissioner for Community Relations and former immigration minister, the late Hon Al Grassby AM.

Victor continued his work for 47 years. That is an impressive length of time. A heart attack in 1990 did slow him down a little bit, when his doctor advised him that he was doing too much and he needed to lighten his load. Victor did cut back some of his volunteer work, but his passion for the community kept coming through.

Victor busied himself in the community to keep his mind occupied. He said, "Getting involved in helping others helped me in my personal experiences." He went on to say, "If I had not kept my mind occupied, I would have been in hospital, as there are cases right now because of the torture they went through." It is through helping the community that he was also able to help himself.

Victor was regularly in contact with me and my office, fiercely advocating for the multicultural community and for his beloved radio station. For me, a personal memory is when Victor upbraided me for a federal email, which was a whole-of-government response on the multicultural community, which unfortunately had the acronym "WOG" at the front of it. I can still remember the passion that he brought to that argument that day.

Victor's story is a truly inspiring one on which everyone should stop and reflect deeply—to survive such terror, such hardship, and to give so selflessly to do so much for others. If we all gave to the community just one-tenth of what Victor gave, Canberra would be an impressive place.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to know Victor, and I am so sorry that he was taken from us.

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): I, too, am very grateful for the chance to speak briefly about the great *compañero* of me and my family, Victor Hugo Marillanca. He was such a wonderful human, whose mere presence in a room would bring joy and passion—and a true wickedness, I would have to say, because there was always a plan, when he spent time with anyone in this place. He had a higher calling and a plan in his mind about what he wanted to achieve from his mere presence with you during that time, whether it was in a meeting or at the Multicultural Festival.

I know that Mr Parton's wife had a special relationship with Victor through the Latin-American community, so I was not surprised to see him there at the funeral with his wife, Luisa. It was a truly lovely event.

I want to reflect on one of the moments in my life involving Victor, who had been known to my family for many years. When I was appointed as Minister for Multicultural Affairs by the Chief Minister, Andrew Barr, Victor was there during the press conference. He completely ignored my very poor attempt at speaking Spanish with him. We had a conversation—or, at least, it felt like I was having a conversation—and he was very kind in introducing me to the multicultural portfolio.

He seemed to know everyone, but it was not just that he knew everyone; he knew everything about them and he cared deeply about everybody that he knew. He was a true champion of the multicultural community, not just the Latin-American community, and he introduced me to that community and every single person in it. That was the strength and the joy that I had from knowing him.

I had the chance to be with Victor's family and friends when we farewelled Victor. It was a day that I will not easily forget. It was an incredible experience to learn about Victor. From talking to Victor's wife, Kay, and children at the funeral, even they were learning things about Victor and what Victor did in his time away from them. I think we all learnt a little bit more about Victor on that day than we knew before. That was why, for me, it was such a joy to be a part of it, even though it was a sad farewell to Victor. He was never shy and he was never backward in coming forward. He was remarkable. He was a great friend to me and my family, and I will miss him terribly.

I want to pass on, again, my deepest and sincere sympathies to Kay, Victor's wife; Victor, his son, who is in Adelaide now; and Alyce and the family, Aladino, Jalianca, Carmen and Carlos. Adios, amigo.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra): It is an honour to pay tribute and have this opportunity to remember Victor Marillanca and to give my condolences to his beautiful family and loved ones.

As a 21-year-old young man, Victor arrived in Australia as a political refugee from Chile who had survived much hardship and violent persecution in his own country. I have many fond memories of Victor—his cheery smile, his warm personality, topped off with an iconic beret, fedora or his chupalla, which is the traditional Chilean straw hat, on his head when he was not wearing his headset inside the 2XX radio station studio.

As many of you know, Victor did not just literally wear many hats; metaphorically, he wore many more—the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters Council, the Community Ethnic Broadcasters Association of ACT, the 2XXFM board and ethnic standing committee, the establishment of Transact, now known as Companion House, the Australian-Chile Friendship Society, the Latin-American Refugee Association, the Chilean Club of Canberra, and the Latin American cultural alliance. Victor held

pivotal roles in all of these groups, and the list goes on. In addition, Victor served the ACT community tirelessly as a justice of the peace and for a long time was Canberra's only Spanish-speaking JP.

I fondly recall attending many community cultural events with Victor over the years and had the pleasure of being present when he was recognised as an honorary ambassador for the ACT in 2018. A photo was taken of us together on that memorable occasion and published alongside an article about Victor in a Spanish newspaper in Australia.

I also had the pleasure of visiting Victor in the 2XX studios. Earlier this year, in June, I was in contact with Victor, celebrating 47 years of *Coneccion Latino Americana* on 2XXFM community radio—the first Spanish radio program in the ACT, established by Victor. For many years, Victor has been the longest serving volunteer presenting a Spanish community radio program in Australia, a remarkable achievement that has only grown with each passing year. I sent Victor a photograph that I took of us together in the studio on one occasion when he interviewed me during his radio program.

I believe that Victor had so much passion and enthusiasm in him that it is likely that he has come through the veil and is present in this room. I feel him. That is how much passion he had for life, and I know that he is here in this room.

Just last Saturday night, my office joined in to support the 2XX annual radiothon, featuring local music artists performing to help raise much-needed funds for the community radio station. We remembered Victor that night. One of the highlight performances was by one of the many Latin community groups we have in Canberra, Raio de Sol, a community samba drumming band.

I want to publicly thank Victor for his friendship and for his lasting service throughout the decades that has benefited Canberra, particularly the Spanish-speaking community. As a migrant who moved to Australia in my youth and who spoke very little English, I have lived experience about how important it is to connect with others in your local community. I know that *Coneccion Latino Americana* has helped to unite Spanish-speaking individuals and families in Canberra and has contributed much to strengthening the community and making new migrants feel welcome in this city.

It is my hope that *Coneccion Latino Americana* will continue to thrive and that Victor's legacy will be remembered forever. I, for one, will remember to tell Victor's story and acknowledge his contributions to others in the community over the years.

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

At 10.39 am, the sitting was suspended until the ringing of the bells.

The bells having been rung, Madam Speaker resumed the chair at 10.42 am.

Legislative Assembly—unparliamentary language Ruling by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: During the debate on 21 September on the Electoral Amendment Bill 2021, Ms Davidson spoke. Having referred to student-led climate change protests, Ms Davidson went on to say:

... while politicians with an average age over 50 are accepting dodgy political donations from the fossil fuel industry, then voting to subsidise new coal and gas projects and are using taxpayer money that 16-year-olds are obligated to pay—pouring petrol on the fire, knowing they will be fine with their parliamentary pensions and their complete lack of ethics, all the while locking in a global catastrophe, unliveable cities and unimaginable suffering for the next generation before they even have a chance to exercise what should be their democratic right to vote out these climate-neglecting, fossil-fuel-captured, sociopathic politicians from both major parties.

Ms Davidson then continued, saying:

Imagine sitting in this place or on the hill deliberately rigging the property market for the advantage of developer and property speculator profits ...

I did say at the time that I would review that and come back. In subsequent speeches in that debate, other members expressed their concern about the words used by Ms Davidson, so, as I indicated on the day I would do, I have reviewed the proof transcript of the proceedings, together with the relevant provisions of Assembly standing orders.

Standing orders 54 and 55 state:

Offensive words

54. A Member may not use offensive words against the Assembly or any Member thereof or against any member of the judiciary.

Personal reflections

55. All imputations of improper motives and all personal reflections on Members shall be considered highly disorderly.

Standing order 56 also provides that, whenever the attention of the Speaker is drawn to words used, the Speaker shall determine whether they are offensive or disorderly.

In reaching my decision on this matter, I considered whether Ms Davidson's words were general enough that they could not be considered to be directed at members of this Assembly. However, I note the August 1996 ruling of Speaker Cornwell, as discussed in paragraph 11.89 of the *Companion to the Standing Orders*, who drew on *House of Representatives Practice* and called upon members to "cease using unparliamentary expressions against a group or all members which would be unparliamentary if used against an individual". Further, any suggestions that the words were directed solely at federal politicians can be discounted, given the member's use of the phrase "Imagine sitting in this place."

The use of “dodgy” as a descriptor is a personal reflection and I consider it unparliamentary language, as previous Speakers have also done on multiple occasions. I also consider the word “sociopathic” to be clearly unparliamentary. The references to a “complete lack of ethics”, “fossil-fuel captured” and “deliberately rigging the property market” are all imputations of improper motives and so are highly disorderly.

I did not find the reference to “politicians with an average age over 50” to be unparliamentary language, although the member may wish to reflect on the compatibility of broad age based generalisations, given the portfolios that she holds.

I ask that Ms Davidson withdraw her words.

Ms Davidson: I withdraw the statement.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms Davidson.

Petitions

The following petitions were lodged for presentation:

Gungahlin—roads—petition 15-23

By Ms Castley, from 86 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to the abysmal state of traffic flow in the Gungahlin town centre.

Gungahlin is one of the fastest growing areas in the ACT yet the roads are insufficient to safely and effectively manage the number of cars that travel in and out of this area.

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

- Conduct a study which looks at road safety and traffic flow within the Gungahlin town centre bounded by The Valley Avenue, Manning Clark Crescent, Horse Park Drive and Gundaroo Drive and recommend changes.
- Release the study in full to the Assembly once it is complete.
- Release any previous studies on roads and traffic flow issues in the same area.

Belconnen—public transport—petition 23-23

By Ms Cheyne, from 109 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly the following:

In 2011, the ACT Government commissioned and released the Belconnen to City Transitway Stage 1 option report, which analysed the bus priority options for the 'Belconnen to City transitway'.

The ACT Government subsequently delivered bus priority measures in the city and on College Street and Haydon Drive to support better public transport.

The Belconnen district and Belconnen Town Centre are continuing to grow, with the Town Centre being a hub of community services, employment, businesses and residents.

The Belconnen to City Transitway is one of the busiest public transport corridors in Canberra, with three popular rapid bus routes and an array of popular local bus routes.

The ACT Government has identified the Belconnen to City Transitway as a priority transit corridor, including as a planned stage 3 of the light rail network.

Public Transport along the Belconnen to City Transitway provides our community with access to key education, health, and community infrastructure along the corridor.

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

1. Design and construct improved bus priority measures between Belconnen and Canberra City, specifically along Haydon Drive and Belconnen Way, as an interim solution to improve public transport outcomes for Belconnen prior to the delivery of Light Rail Stage 3;
2. Implement separated cycleways as part of these works, such as delivering the future priorities along Haydon Drive and Belconnen Way, as shown in the ACT Government's draft proposed cycling network;
3. Preserve and plan for Light Rail Stage 3 as part of these works;
4. Investigate opportunities for improving connections between bus stops and key infrastructure and services, such as early education centres, North Canberra Hospital and the Belconnen Community Centre; and
5. Consider any other opportunities to enhance public transport and other transport modes between Belconnen and the City.

Asbestos—proposed board of inquiry—petition 18-23

By Mr Cocks, from 100 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to the history of contamination of a large number of Canberra houses with loose-fill asbestos “Mr Fluffy” and the subsequent programs in 2005 and 2014 to eradicate amosite asbestos.

There is some evidence and allegations that the Government and individuals in the Government had been aware of the presence of asbestos in homes for some time prior to action having been taken to remediate/buyback/demolish Mr Fluffy homes.

In 2005 the Government was warned of the “Mr Fluffy” (Amosite Asbestos) problem in Canberra homes and was advised to disclose to “Mr Fluffy” homeowners the presence of harmful and potentially life-threatening asbestos in their homes. Some contaminated homes were sold and resold on the open market. Many of these homes were renovated and extended.

In 2010 an independent review recommended the Territory strengthen warnings and provide updated information to existing “Fluffy” homeowners, tenants and tradespeople. In 2014 after securing a one-billion-dollar loan from the Federal Government, the ACT Government introduced the “Voluntary” Asbestos Eradication Buyback Scheme. The “voluntary” buyback scheme lacks transparency, accountability, fairness, flexibility and is not on just terms despite this being an expressed constitutional right as an Australian citizen. The buyback scheme was designed to exert maximum pressure on “Mr Fluffy” homeowners to surrender their properties and associated rights whilst maximizing large profits from “Mr Fluffy” land sales, negating their responsibility to “Mr Fluffy” homeowners and the general public.

It is almost a decade since this “voluntary” buyback scheme was implemented. Remaining “Mr Fluffy” homeowners are in the majority elderly citizens, and feel they are being treated as second class citizens and will go to their graves mentally and financially scarred through no fault of their own.

Given the importance of protecting these fundamental core principles our society relies upon accountability and transparency, the significant associated threats posed to these principles by the continued inaction on the part of the ACT legislature, this is a matter of significant public interest.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to establish as a matter of urgency a Board of Inquiry (BOI) into the “Voluntary” Loose-fill Asbestos Eradication Asbestos Buyback Scheme to:

- investigate why the ACT Government’s preferred way forward was chosen over compulsory acquisition?
- conduct a financial audit on the sale of “Mr Fluffy” blocks, cost of the scheme and where have the non-spent monies of the one-billion-dollar loan gone.
- Investigate the “Voluntary” Buyback Scheme it’s lack of transparency, fairness, and accountability from its inception in 2014.
- Investigate retrospective legislative changes.
- Investigate harassment of “Mr Fluffy” homeowners, those who have surrendered their properties and those who have refused to sign-up to the Buyback Scheme.

- Investigate the lack of flexibility and willingness to negotiate with individual “Mr Fluffy” homeowners who do not fit within the boundaries of the “Mr Fluffy” Loose-fill Asbestos Eradication Scheme developed and initiated by the ACT Labor-Greens Government.
- Investigate the handling and instructions given to the Taskforce including intimidation tactics used to coerce “Mr Fluffy” homeowners to join the scheme, in particular the elderly.
- Investigate the period 2003 to 2014 what the then ACT Industrial Relations Minister was informed about the degree of contamination and associated risk factors posed by “Mr Fluffy” including:

Why were “Mr Fluffy” property owners allowed to sell and resell their homes without penalty to unsuspecting buyers despite the associated risk and dangers associated to “Mr Fluffy” being known to the legislature and executive?

Why were Mr Fluffy homeowners not informed of the dangers when renovating homes, the moment the degree of contamination became known in 2005.

Why did the Planning Department allow “Mr Fluffy” homeowners to renovate and rebuild in these contaminated homes?

Why were those who surrendered their homes and were unable to afford to repurchase new homes in Canberra not offered the same conditions as homeowners staying in Canberra in relation to stamp duty, or stamp duty already paid on their Mr Fluffy homes returned to their former owners?

Why did the ACT Government take 10 years before action was taken in 2014 to attempt to eradicate “Mr Fluffy” from Canberra properties?

- Investigate why, since 2016, has the ACT Government continually refused to introduce compulsory acquisition to obtain the remaining “Mr Fluffy” homes?
- Determine when “Mr Fluffy” will be eradicated from Canberra homes as promised in 2014.
- investigate why the “Mr Fluffy” chapter in Canberra’s history been allowed to drag on far beyond the set timelines with no end in sight when it was stated in 2015 that “it will take five years to rid ACT of the “Mr Fluffy” legacy.
- determine what plans exist to capture the remaining “Mr Fluffy” homes not surrendered.
- investigate any potential future risks of exposure to Amosite Asbestos.

Motor vehicles—licence plates—petition 19-23

By Mr Davis, from 519 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly: Currently the ACT Government has on offer at registration, standard number plates, European style number plates, & slimline number plates. These number plate styles do not fit the number plate cavity on low volume import Japanese vehicles.

This necessitates the modification of either the number plate or the vehicle. As you may be aware, it is illegal in the ACT under the Road Transport (Vehicle Registration) Regulation 2000 to alter your number plate either by obscuring, defacing or otherwise making illegible. Many Japanese Domestic Market vehicle owners are unaware of this regulation and unknowingly will bend or alter their number plate in order to make the number plate fit the number plate cavity.

In order to comply with the regulation, this leaves the option of modifying the vehicle which many owners are loathe to do given the rarity of their vehicles, the cost & difficulty in modifying the vehicle, the impact to the value of the vehicle, and most importantly to the owner, their love of their vehicle as it is.

Japanese Domestic Market number plates have been introduced with great success in NSW, QLD, VIC & TAS, as have European style number plates in Australia. Owners in these states have the option to pay between \$295 and \$495 (depending on state) to have their plates made to fit the number plate cavity. Across the ACT there is a vibrant, enthusiastic, and extensive Japanese Domestic Market car community who would be more than happy to pay this premium to remain in line with current regulations and to keep their much-loved vehicles in showroom condition.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to introduce Japanese Domestic Market style number plates in the ACT.

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petition, having more than 500 signatories, was referred to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services.

The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petitions would be recorded in Hansard and referred to the appropriate ministers for response pursuant to standing order 100, the petitions were received.

Motion to take note of petitions

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

That the petitions and responses so lodged be noted.

Motor vehicles—licence plates—petition 19-23

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (10.48): When I was first elected to this place, I had a very clear idea of the things that I knew I wanted to work on: tackling the climate crisis, rooting out wealth and income inequality, housing affordability, making our city a more just and equal place, and being a really good local member. That last part of the job is actually often the most interesting because it exposes me to challenges, issues and problems in our community that, perhaps, I never would have thought about or prophesised prior to my election. What that part of the job also does is allow me to largely do things that have quick and rather tangible outcomes for people who care about those things. I do not know if you have noticed, but fixing the climate crisis and rooting out wealth and income inequality are going to take a little bit more than one term!

It was really interesting to me when one of my constituents, Rob Taylor, came to my electorate office—open every Friday morning at Jindebah Cafe from nine to 12—and raised with me an issue I had never thought was a problem: the problem with Japanese domestic market number plates.

There are two types of people who own Japanese domestic market cars in Canberra. They include car enthusiasts, who are not people you would think form a natural constituency for the Greens, but there are many of them in Brindabella and they are an increasing and growing constituency for the Greens, including the 590 people who signed this petition. They import the vehicles that they really love and care about, and they are currently driving those vehicles around illegally in the ACT with inappropriately fitted license plates, because the license plates that we make and allow them to purchase do not actually fit into the license plate spaces on their cars. Another group of people—and this hopefully speaks to the broader ambition of this government—own the growing number of used electric vehicles in the ACT that were imported from the Japanese domestic market.

It is often said that many people in our Canberran community, as one of the more affluent parts of the country, have the income to buy a brand new Tesla, a brand new Volvo or one of the more expensive luxury electric vehicles on the market, so it is really important that, if we are going to make sure that our energy transition is equitable and that more Canberrans are able to purchase an electric vehicle, we create the space for people to buy more affordable used vehicles that largely come from the Japanese domestic market. But, unfortunately, if those Canberrans were to do that right now, they would have to get a licence plate that is illegally fitted, making their registration void were they to mend it or mangle it in order to fit it into the space that is defined for the Japanese domestic market.

The “calls on” in this petition is rather simple: that, considering that the ACT government already allows people to get a standard number plate, a European-style number plate or a slimline number plate, and given that more than 590 Canberrans can see reason to expand that remit, the government simply bring in a Japanese domestic market number plate. It is good for those Canberrans who spend an awful lot of money to bring in their prized possession—in the case of Rob Taylor it is a particularly gorgeous looking yellow convertible which looks a bit like a bumblebee—but there are also the Canberrans who, over time, we hope to encourage into more sustainable vehicles, electric vehicles, and will actively seek out, in the global market, more affordable electric vehicles.

Many of the issues I mentioned at the beginning of my speech are structural. They are systemic. They will take a long time, and they will require all of us working together. To me, this appears to be a rather quick and easy fix that will satisfy at least one of my constituents, many of his friends and, I hope, the growing number of Canberrans who will seek to buy electric vehicles from the Japanese domestic market and be part of the city’s journey towards electrification. I commend the petition.

Gungahlin—roads—petition 15-23

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (10.52): I wish to rise briefly and chat about my petition. We would have loved a few more signatures on this one, but it is by far the hottest

topic at doors when I am doorknocking in the electorate and at mobile offices: intersection safety and traffic congestion in Gungahlin.

I hear from residents that they avoid the town centre and they shop elsewhere, which is a real shame for the businesses in and around the area. I do not know whether you have ever attempted to go to Bunnings on a Saturday morning or to grab some food from one of the takeaways in what they call takeaway lane in Gungahlin at 6 o'clock at night, but you would be waiting for a very long time to get in and out. I live, as the crow flies, just a couple of hundred metres from this area, but driving into Gungahlin will often take me 15 to 18 minutes. It is a real shame for the residents in our area.

That is why we got this petition going. Still, after the petition closed, people say, "Leanne, you have to do something about traffic in Gungahlin. What are you doing about that?" Although, as I say, this petition did not get as many signatures as we had hoped, I do commend it to the Assembly and hope that we get some action in looking at the bigger picture of the road between the servos, the massive pothole that you have to go through to get into Gungahlin and the mess that is that traffic area. I commend my petition to the Assembly.

Asbestos—proposed board of inquiry—petition 18-23

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (10.53): It is a privilege for me to rise today to speak to this petition, because no-one who was in Canberra nearly 10 years ago, when this last emerged, could have failed to miss the Mr Fluffy disaster that struck Canberra. When I was first elected to this place just last year, I was asked in a radio interview about what it was that got me involved in politics. The hosts of that program seemed very surprised that Mr Fluffy and the government's response to it was one of the things that really drove me to get involved and try to make a difference. The reason for that is that, when I saw what was going on all that time ago, it struck me as completely untenable that a government would treat its citizens—victims of a situation that was none of their fault—so poorly.

Then, shortly after that interview, I had the privilege of meeting Mrs Carvalho and her family at one of my mobile office catch-ups in Woden, along with Elizabeth Lee, and they shared their personal story. I was struck with how this thing that was supposedly dealt with so long ago still has not only reverberations but direct impact on Canberrans today—people who were treated badly by a government that was supposed to be there to have their backs.

I am very proud to support this petition which simply asks this government to take the step it should have taken long ago: hold a board of inquiry that would provide not only closure but a direction for the future of families that do not see one right now. I am not going to speak for hours on this, but I do want to share the words that Mrs Carvalho shared with me in an email last night. And I would like to acknowledge that she is in the chamber today. She said:

This government has put us through absolute torture and put us in financial hardship and stress beyond belief at our age. That amounts to elder abuse. What they are doing to us and others must stop. We have no illusions that we will get a BOI up tomorrow, but we must try.

It strikes me that this is the approach that the Carvalhos and others in their situation have had throughout this debacle. They keep on trying because they have to keep on trying. The impact of this has been deeply traumatic for too many families. I still find people—not just those taking this sort of action but people at their doors—who have been left worse off by this government’s program, and it is about time the government fronted up and took the action they should have taken long ago.

Belconnen—public transport—petition 23-23
Motor vehicles—licence plates—petition 19-23

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.57): I sponsored Mrs Prowse’s petition regarding the Belconnen transitway because I regularly take the bus from Belconnen town centre, where I live, to the city, where I work. I know the route intimately and I know it needs another look. I commend Mrs Prowse for bringing the petition forward.

While outside-of-peak-hour travel can be very quick, there are times when it takes much longer. There are issues of capacity on the route during peak hours and of capacity and regularity of some of the buses. There is no priority route on Haydon Drive, nor on the turn out of Haydon Drive onto Belconnen Way. There are some stops where a large number of people board, and the leg between the town centre and the Legislative Assembly has more than 10 stops. This combination can also add delays.

There are also issues of connectivity, not least of which is the integration of the future development on the Swanson Court site with the interchange, and how the route interacts with major centres like the Belconnen Community Centre on Swanson Court, the North Canberra Hospital and the education precincts, particularly CIT and the University of Canberra.

With more residents in Belconnen and the precinct opportunities that are present in Bruce, there is now a great opportunity for us to futureproof the network for Light Rail Stage 3 and to consider other infrastructure to support travel, including cycleways. Finally, there are broader issues in Belconnen than just this element of the rapid routes. While the rapids are very regular, the time they take overall, especially the further west or north you are in Belconnen, deserve another look.

I thank Mrs Prowse for the comprehensive terms of this petition which reflect the entirety of the realities of the Belconnen bus issues in that area, and I look forward to Minister Steel’s response. I also consider that the extent of the issues is worthy of committee inquiry, especially given all parties in this place have recognised some, if not all, of these issues. At the conclusion of this, I will seek to refer it to the relevant committee to determine whether an inquiry is warranted.

On the Japanese number plates, I can confirm to Mr Davis that this is already something in train. While it is not as simple as a click of the fingers, we are hopeful that we are able to get a resolution to this. Access Canberra is working with TCCS. There are a number of considerations, including the rego.act database, the fee

determination regulation and also the manufacturing of these plates, but I hope to have a resolution to this sooner than the time in which I need to respond to the petition.

Belconnen—public transport—petition 23-23

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.00): I want to speak briefly to the community petition sponsored by Minister Cheyne to improve public transport outcomes for Belconnen. I share the petitioners' interest, the community's interest and Minister Cheyne's interest in improving our public transport connections between Belconnen and the city. At our last sitting, I brought forward a motion to the Assembly on that. I asked the Assembly and the ACT government to commit to delivering these improvements and to set a time line for delivery of this much needed priority infrastructure.

This is not a new plan. It is a really mature plan from over a decade ago, and the ACT government has already delivered much of the work. We already have physical construction of some of the priority measures; we just need to finish some sections. As identified by this petition, in 2011 the ACT government commissioned and released the Belconnen to City Transitway Stage 1 options report. That report analysed the bus priority options for the Belconnen to City Transitway. The ACT government subsequently delivered bus priority measures in the city and on College Street and Haydon Drive to support better public transport along that route. The history of this project, the commitment to it so far, and the strong words of support and commitment we saw in the media, and in this petition from Labor, gave us Greens a lot of hope that the Labor Party might join with us and commit to delivering the rest of the project.

We saw some really promising ads from Minister Cheyne supporting the petition, with really positive endorsement. The words used were, "I reckon the time to invest in this improvement is now." So we were really disappointed that ACT Labor did not want to commit to a project time line and delivery and instead moved amendments to consider the project, which is something that they have been doing since 2011. Without the transport minister and our partners with government on board, we simply cannot progress this project.

I was a little confused about exactly where the Belco busway was up to at this point in time, with the petition and the motion that did not pass, so I lodged a question on notice to try to get some details. We have received a response from the acting minister for transport, Minister Cheyne, on that. I asked for details of the feasibility study that was promised, and unfortunately we could not get any details. We were told that any decisions would be up to the budget process. The answer did say that they would be putting forward a new feasibility study for federal funding. I am always supportive of applications for federal funding for active and public transport. We certainly need to look at that option whenever we can. It is always a great option.

I am not convinced that further applications for funding into feasibility are what we really need on this particular project when we have so much mature work on it, we have so much commitment and we already have partial delivery. It would be much better if we could see the work getting on to the stage of delivery, rather than seeing another feasibility study and further delays of probably years before we can deliver it.

I am little disappointed that the Assembly has rejected the calls in this petition. We will possibly get a different result from the petition than we had from the motion. The petition requests the Assembly to design and construct improved bus priority measures between Belconnen and Canberra City, specifically along Haydon Drive and Belconnen Way, as an interim solution to improve public transport outcomes for Belconnen prior to the delivery of Light Rail Stage 3. That was also in the motion that I put to the Assembly. It is clearly a project whose time has come. The Greens obviously support this call. We are sorry the Assembly was not in a position to do the same, and we hope we will get a different result soon.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.04): I find myself agreeing with Ms Clay way too much in this place. I am just uncomfortable with that as a concept! But it is difficult for me not to agree with many of the words that she has just spoken regarding the Belconnen busway improvements. I would also note, though, that Ms Clay and her party had a very clear pathway at the time that we discussed her motion to actually get the Assembly to sign up to those improvements.

I find it really interesting that we all stand up in this place and say very positive things about this project, but, when push comes to shove, and we have to actually sign our name on something or stand up and actually back something and lock it away, somehow we cannot do it. I cannot back away from the concept that the three parties in here cannot do that because they are worried that one of the other parties will take credit for something. I am dismayed by that.

I agree with what Ms Clay has had to say. I certainly agree with the principle and the core statements in the petition that Ms Cheyne has brought forward, and I wonder why we cannot just get it done.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee Reference

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

That e-petition 023-23 concerning improvement of public transport outcomes for Belconnen town centre that was tabled today be referred to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services.

Rental ombudsman—proposed establishment—update Ministerial statement

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (11.06): I rise today to provide a response to the Assembly in relation to a resolution moved by Mr Davis on 10 May this year which called on the ACT government to investigate the role that rental commissioners, ombudsmen or statutory bodies play in other Australian jurisdictions; consider options for developing a rental ombudsman or commissioner in the ACT; and report back to the Assembly by the final sitting day of this year.

Renters' rights have become an increasing area of concern for our community, particularly as rental affordability and other cost-of-living pressures rise. Given this, I would like to start by thanking Mr Davis for moving this timely and important motion. The ACT government is committed to improving renters' rights. Earlier this year we implemented nation-leading tenancy reforms which removed all forms of no-cause evictions and introduced the first minimum standard for ceiling insulation in the country. These reforms were the latest in a broader tenancy reform agenda which has seen the progressive improvement of renters' rights in the ACT in the last couple of years.

Before further explaining the existing protections in the ACT, I also note, for members' interest, that the ACT, through the national cabinet process, recently committed to implementing the reform package called A Better Deal For Renters. While I am pleased to advise that the ACT has already implemented a number of the reform proposals, the national cabinet deal contains areas where we can make improvements and advocate to strengthen renters' rights across the country. We are committed to making these improvements, and I look forward to working on these reforms with my ministerial colleagues around in Australia in the coming weeks and months.

There are a range of supports for renters that are already in place in the ACT. As Mr Davis's motion points out, the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, or ACAT, is able to resolve tenancy disputes. It can do this through conferences, which are a form of mediation, or it can hold hearings where an ACAT member will determine the outcome. In addition to ACAT, the ACT Human Rights Commission can conciliate disputes in relation to occupancy agreements and discrimination disputes in relation to a person's accommodation status.

Access Canberra plays a role in the licensing and regulation of real estate agents, including bringing occupational disciplinary proceedings in serious matters. The ACT Revenue Office holds rental bonds while tenancies are on foot and refers disputes in relation to bonds to ACAT. The Tenancy Advice Service is provided by Legal Aid ACT. This service is not means tested and is available to all renters. The Housing Law service provided by Canberra Community Law gives free legal information, advice and advocacy to renters in public and community housing.

The ACT Human Rights Act places obligations on public authorities, including Housing ACT and government-funded community housing providers, to act consistently with human rights when making decisions relating to the management of tenancies. Finally, the ACT Ombudsman handles complaints about ACT government agencies, which includes complaints about Housing ACT in relation to the public housing program.

I would like to commend the work of these services and thank them for the support they give to renters. Despite these existing services, it is important that we consider whether additional supports are warranted. As Mr Davis's motion points out, it is important not only that we have strong rental rights in the ACT but that those rights can be effectively relied upon in practice. The ACT government is open to considering what more can be done to support renters and landlords on this front.

Mr Davis's motion called on the government to investigate regulatory responses to tenancy matters in other jurisdictions. We have looked into the use of a rental commissioner or similar bodies in other Australian jurisdictions, as well as overseas. This has revealed that there is no one-size-fits-all response and that a wide variety of regulatory approaches have been adopted.

These include information and education services for both landlords and tenants, mediation and conciliation roles, renter advocacy roles, monitoring rental markets and collecting data to support evidence based responses to emerging issues. They also include a range of compliance functions, including issuing fines for breaches of legislation, inspecting rental properties to assess the condition of the property and to determine compliance with minimum standards, maintaining a register of non-compliant landlords and having landlord licensing schemes. What is clear is that there is a vast array of potential regulatory responses available and that each jurisdiction has developed a unique approach that responds to local community concerns.

We consulted with key ACT tenancy stakeholders, including tenant and landlord advocates, to understand the needs and concerns of our own community. In doing this, we asked stakeholders to identify what they see as the biggest gaps in the ACT tenancy landscape. A few key themes emerged out of this consultation process. In particular, stakeholders identified the need for improved information and education about tenancy laws, enhanced compliance mechanisms and improved data collection. I will speak to each of these in turn.

Almost all stakeholders we spoke to observed that our community's understanding of tenancy laws is often poor. They suggested that the community needs better access to information and education about tenancy laws. Stakeholders observed that landlords, tenants and agents alike could all benefit from improved guidance material, such as websites with fact sheets, videos, template letters, notices or forms, check lists or other guides which provide simple, plain English guidance on navigating tenancy issues. While some of these resources already exist, feedback indicated that they are not always easy to access or locate.

Some stakeholders called for an advice or information line for landlords or agents, suggesting that if landlords and agents had access to timely and accurate information about tenancy laws, this would improve compliance with the law, which would in turn improve the experience of renters. In relation to compliance mechanisms, tenant stakeholders expressed a strong desire for enhanced regulatory action. One stakeholder put it like this:

When it comes to restaurants, we require them to hold a licence. In addition to that, we have food safety inspectors who go out and conduct spot checks to ensure the correct food handling practices are observed. We don't just let people start serving food without any experience or training and we don't just say to restaurant goers—if you get sick, it's your responsibility to take the restaurant to court to get compensation or an order that the restaurant handle their food properly. Why do we do this? Because we know that unhygienic eateries constitute a public health risk.

Yet, when it comes to our rental homes—places that meet our most basic need for shelter and places that provide a foundation from which we can engage in our work, our education and in our communities—we provide almost no government oversight or protection, despite the potential health risks that may arise from a poor quality home. We simply say to landlords—go ahead and rent out your property. And we say to tenants—if you have a problem with your landlord, you need to be the one to sort it out.

Some of the suggestions from tenant advocates included introducing an infringement scheme so that fines could be issued for noncompliance with advertising laws or the requirement to lodge a bond; introducing a Victorian-style register of non-compliant landlords to alert tenants about landlords who have previously breached tenancy laws; and establishing tenancy inspectors who could attend rental properties to assess the condition of the property and whether it complies with minimum standards. These inspectors could also have the power to issue fines or order rent reductions if the property did not meet standards.

Another suggestion was to introduce a landlord licensing scheme so that landlords would need to demonstrate an understanding of tenancy laws before they could put their property on the rental market, with exemptions for landlords who rented their property via an agent. It was suggested that requiring landlords to be licensed would also create a communication channel for the government to inform them about relevant issues, including tenancy law changes. In a similar way to our existing driver licence demerit system, it could also be used to prevent those small number of landlords who have repeatedly or significantly breached tenancy laws from continuing as a landlord, through a licence cancellation power.

Several stakeholders commented that we lack data about tenancies here in the ACT. This significantly hampers our understanding of the tenancy landscape and our ability to monitor emerging tenancy market issues. Stakeholders urged us to consider better data collection, whether that be through a rental commissioner or through other existing rental services, such as the bond office.

The ACT government's investigation on this issue has provided a clear picture of tenancy laws and support services across Australia and internationally. It has also provided comprehensive stakeholder feedback. It is clear that there are additional services worth considering for the ACT, many of which we can already observe operating elsewhere. We know that other Australian jurisdictions have supported renters through a range of different regulatory bodies with different powers. There is no single preferred or one-size-fits-all model that the ACT could or should adopt. Rather, there is a wide variety of possible regulatory responses. But it is clear that laws need to be understood and enforced in practice.

With these findings in mind, I have asked my directorate to undertake further specific work on possible models for a rental ombudsman, including considering whether it should apply to commercial tenancies, and to detail the resourcing implications for further decision. I look forward to providing the Assembly with further updates on work in the rental tenancy space in the near future.

I present the following paper:

ACT rental ombudsman or commissioner—Proposed establishment—Assembly resolution of 10 May 2023—Government response—Ministerial statement, 24 October 2023.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (11.17): I rise to speak to the government's response to my motion of May this year, which called on the ACT government to investigate the establishment of a rental ombudsman or commissioner for the ACT, and the functions and supports that it could serve to the more than 30 per cent of Canberrans who rent their home.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge Minister Rattenbury's work to improve conditions and rights for those more than 30 per cent of Canberrans who rent. As Minister Rattenbury noted, just this year we have ended no-cause evictions, we have banned solicited rent bidding and we have introduced minimum energy efficiency standards, including the obligation to install ceiling insulation in rental properties.

We Greens have long championed the rights of people who are renting to feel at home in their rentals. We have secured reforms allowing tenants to keep their pets, make minor modifications and grow their own fruits and vegetables. We have established both the first and second rent relief funds, providing real financial support to people struggling to pay their rent who would find themselves in insecure tenancy if they were in financial hardship.

These reforms continue the long legacy of the Greens in this place, including my predecessor, Greens MLA Caroline Le Couteur, who first attempted to end no-cause evictions and waive the ACT's historic public housing debt back in 2019. Unfortunately, she was unable to secure the support of either Labor or the Liberal Party at that time.

But circumstances have changed, and we continue this work to improve the lot of renters in the ACT. We have a bill out for a consultation right now that would freeze rent price increases for at least two years, improving our existing rent controls and closing loopholes, which would deliver significant improvements and immediate cost benefits to the more than 31 per cent of Canberrans who rent their home.

Despite these great reforms, renters in our city and across this country continue to do it tough and there is a lot more work to be done. In addition to pursuing further reforms that strengthen renters' rights in our city, we must make sure that renters are actually experiencing the benefits of those rights that have been hard fought and hard won. As I said when my motion was debated in May of this year, having strong renters' rights will best help Canberrans only if they are effectively and consistently enforced, widely understood by renters, landlords and real estate agencies, and if there are as few barriers as possible to resolve breaches in rental law.

I fear that too many renters, landlords and real estate agents are simply not aware of their legal rights and obligations or the processes available to resolve disputes. Many renters in this city still struggle to enforce their tenancy rights when it comes to things like asking for simple repairs or refusing excessive and inordinate rent increases. Many landlords do not fully understand their obligations to their tenants under the Residential Tenancies Act. I can speak from personal experience when I say that many young real estate agents are not adequately supported by their licensee in charge to educate their landlords and their renters about tenancy laws.

We need to do a much better job of ensuring that everyone who is party to a residential tenancy agreement understands both their rights and their responsibilities in that agreement—to the property and to one another. That is why I called on the ACT government to investigate the roles that rental ombudsmen, commissioners and other statutory bodies play in other jurisdictions and to consider what the benefits of such a role might be for the ACT.

I am pleased to hear that Minister Rattenbury has support for the idea, following investigations into the needs and concerns of our community. I am not surprised to hear that people in our community want better and more timely information and education about tenancy laws, better compliance mechanisms and improved data collection. I strongly believe that filling these gaps will improve people's experiences of renting in our city. I am encouraged, from these investigations, that a rental ombudsman or commissioner appears to be part of the solution.

As noted in Minister Rattenbury's statement, renters do feel like the onus is in fact on them to make sure their landlord and their real estate agent—both of whom are profiting from the contractual arrangement, not the renter, I might add—abide by their obligations. In what other circumstance do we put the onus for fixing a problem on the person most impacted, who has the least agency?

A rental ombudsman or commissioner would help to balance the scales, with functions such as tenancy inspectors and a licensing scheme. Many other jurisdictions have ombudsmen or commissioners with a range of functions. In New South Wales Fair Trading can investigate and issue rectification orders where a landlord has breached their obligations or a renter has damaged the property. In Queensland the Residential Tenancies Authority can investigate and prosecute breaches in rental law, provide renters with information and support, and provide mediation and conciliation for disputes. In Victoria a recently established new rental dispute service helps to resolve simple tenancy disputes outside of an expensive and time-consuming tribunal process. New South Wales recently established a rental commissioner, who advocates fearlessly for renters' rights.

The functions that these services play could bring great benefit to the ACT, which continues to be one of the most expensive places in the country to rent your home. We need to help educate people about local rental laws, investigate rental market trends, advocate for tenants and make recommendations to government. I think the advocacy part is really important because having a non-partisan and impartial advocate might take some of the venom out of this debate—someone who can give it to us straight, all three parties and all 25 members in this place.

I look forward to engaging with the government on the next phase of developing a rental ombudsman or commissioner for the ACT. I will continue to advocate for a variety of solutions to our housing crisis, including but not limited to regulating the excessive increases in the short-term rental industry, which has seen a massive 66 per cent spike in listings in the ACT in just the last year. I will continue to prosecute the case for a vacancy tax on long-term empty properties, because it is unconscionable in a housing crisis that the government would allow people to keep residential dwellings vacant for an extended period of time with no good reason.

I will continue to promote progressive planning reforms that deliver more housing of a high quality where people want to live, because, as I have said in this place before, if we accept that we are in a housing crisis, we must do everything and we must do it all at once. It is not enough for individual members and different political parties to bring their own fighters to this fight that suit a political objective. We have said on multiple occasions in this place that we are in a housing crisis. In a crisis, you have to pull every lever. You have to do everything. One or two things just will not cut it.

The response to my motion brings us just one step closer to a rental ombudsman or commissioner that will be designed and resourced for the particular needs here in the ACT. I would like to thank Minister Rattenbury for his response to my motion and his continued support for every renter in the ACT.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Transport Canberra—bus fleet Ministerial statement

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (11.24): The ACT government has been a leader in transitioning to zero emissions vehicles in Australia. The Zero-Emission Transition Plan for Transport Canberra, one of the first holistic plans in place in Australia, outlines the ACT's pathway to reducing public transport bus emissions, achieving a 100 per cent net zero emissions bus fleet by 2040 or earlier.

The ACT government continues to take nation-leading action to transition our city's bus fleet to zero emissions, including delivering the infrastructure, investment and skills needed to make the transition operationally successful. A key element to achieving this is our commitment to only purchasing zero emission buses from 2022, with an exception for short-term leasing of buses to meet peak operational requirements.

In early 2022 the ACT government entered into a contract for a short-term lease of 26 low emission diesel buses, which were scheduled to arrive by the end of last year. The leasing of these buses was a short-term solution to replace our old non-Disability Discrimination Act compliant buses while we gradually transition to an entirely zero emissions fleet.

Today I will provide an update to the Assembly on the delivery of these low emission diesel buses and four additional Custom Denning battery electric buses, including the

impact on the replacement of old buses. I will also outline the actions Transport Canberra is undertaking to manage the impacts in the interim.

On previous occasions I have advised the Assembly that Transport Canberra and City Services had approached the market to procure short-term lease vehicles to replace 34 Renault diesel buses which were due to be retired by 31 December 2022. These are being replaced through the supply of 26 low-floor diesel buses under a contract with Scania Australia, and the supply of 12 low-floor battery electric buses under a contract with Vehicle Dealers International, or VDI. All 12 electric buses have now been delivered and are in operation.

Since my last update to the Assembly, international supply chain issues for the supply of raw materials and parts continue to greatly impact the delivery of the further 26 low emission diesel buses. In March 2022 the ACT government entered into the contract with Scania Australia for the supply of those 26 diesel buses, which were scheduled to be delivered before the end of 2022, thus meeting our Disability Discrimination Act requirements. This would have provided Transport Canberra with a fully accessible bus fleet within the time frame required under the act. The chassis was to be imported from Sweden and bodies manufactured by BusTech at their Adelaide plant in South Australia.

In July 2022 Transport Canberra was notified by Scania Australia that impacts to the supply chain experienced between the submission of tenders and contract execution had considerably increased the cost of manufacturing the bus bodies in Adelaide. They also advised Transport Canberra that there would be likely delays in delivery of the buses, due to global pressures on supply chains. After careful consideration and negotiation, the contract was varied to reflect the expected delays. All 26 buses were expected to be delivered by February 2023 under the amended schedule variation.

Since then, and as part of a robust contract management process, Transport Canberra has been closely monitoring the bus production progress at the BusTech manufacturing facility, with prime contractors Scania Australia providing support where possible. The impact of supply chain disruption on the provision of raw materials has continued to be significant, with impacts to the supply of steel and components such as air-conditioning units, as well as shortages of fibreglass components. This has resulted in further delays in the delivery schedule. The government is aware that global supply chain disruptions have impacted the entire bus manufacturing sector in Australia. Shortages of the components and materials needed to manufacture buses have resulted in delays to the delivery of buses by Australian body builders across the country.

In undertaking due diligence in its management of the contract with Scania Australia, Transport Canberra came to the realisation that changing suppliers at this stage would not result in the delivery of buses in a shorter time frame. Although the delays are unfortunate, they were not deemed unreasonable, under the circumstances being experienced by the sector. In addition to the supply chain challenges, the industry is now also experiencing a nationwide skills shortage, which could result in further delays. Transport Canberra has now undertaken possession of nine of the 26 Scania

BusTech diesel buses, with all nine buses in service. Transport Canberra expects a further nine vehicles to arrive before the end of 2023 and the remaining eight to arrive early in 2024.

To further support the retirement of non-DVA compliant vehicles with zero emissions replacements, the ACT government entered into a contract with Custom Denning for a further four battery electric buses. These buses will be based at the Belconnen bus depot, where charging equipment is being installed. I am pleased to advise the Assembly that the first of these four additional Australian-made Custom Denning buses has now arrived in Canberra and has begun the commissioning process. The remaining three Custom Denning buses will be progressively delivered and commissioned over the coming weeks. This will increase the total fleet of battery electric buses to 16.

Today more than half of the old Renault PR100.2 series buses have now been replaced by the 12 battery electric buses and nine low emission diesel buses which have been delivered. The remaining Renault PR2 buses, which are currently part of Transport Canberra's permanent fleet, will be progressively decommissioned as new low emissions diesel buses and the new Custom Denning electric buses are delivered. We are expecting that all of the Renault PR2 series buses will be retired by early 2024.

The government is committed to providing all Canberrans with reliable bus services, continuing to delay the retirement of the old fleet while limiting their usage until new replacement buses arrive to ensure that Transport Canberra can continue to maintain service reliability.

The ACT government is committed to transitioning our fleet to clean, quiet and comfortable, accessible buses integrated with light rail and running on 100 per cent renewable energy. We will continue to build the supporting electrical infrastructure and ensure that we have got the energy supply required to support the successful transition to net zero emissions.

We will also develop the skills and training required to support our workforce through this transition, which will protect local jobs and grow the economy. I am confident that the actions we are taking will support improved public transport services for Canberrans. I look forward to updating the Assembly further as we deliver on our Zero-Emission Transmission Plan for Transport Canberra.

I present the following paper:

Update on Transport Canberra Bus Fleet Update—Ministerial statement,
24 October 2023.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Legislative Assembly

Sitting pattern 2024

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) (11.32): I move:

That the Assembly shall meet as follows for 2024 unless an absolute majority of Members request, in writing, that the Speaker, or in the absence of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, or in the absence of both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, the Clerk, fix an alternative day or hour of meeting or the Assembly otherwise orders:

February	6	7	8
March	19	20	21
April	9	10	11
May	14	15	16
June	4	5	6
	25	26	27
August	27	28	29
September	3	4	5

This election year sitting calendar has been put together in consultation with all three parties in this place. The number of sitting days will be adequate to provide enough time to manage the business of the Assembly. All feedback received from the opposition on the draft version has been applied to the version presented this morning.

To note a couple of the features quickly, it is intended that the final budget for the term of government will be presented on Tuesday, 25 June 2024 and debated during the double sitting between 27 August and 5 September 2024. A standard estimates timeframe has been included after the July school holidays. There are eight sitting weeks and 24 sitting days, with the caretaker period commencing on 13 September. I commend the motion to adopt this sitting calendar to the Assembly.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.33): I want to highlight a couple of the recommendations that were made on this year's estimates committee. I was a member of that committee; I am speaking in my capacity as a personal MLA, but I am speaking informed by that experience.

The very first recommendation from that estimates committee report was:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government in future allow four weeks between the close of hearing dates for Estimates and the date that the Estimates Committee report is due to enable sufficient time for responses to QTONs and QONs to be taken into account.

This was very similar to the very first recommendation made by last year's committee, the 2022 estimates committee, which was:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review timelines for the presentation of the ACT Budget, with consideration to the time required for committees to conduct a budget estimates process and write a report.

These recommendations were made because the timeframes have been too short. There were 21 business days from the final day of hearings to the day when the budget debate commenced, and it is just not enough time. The committees have up to five business days after the last hearing to submit questions on notice. The government then have five business days to respond to questions on notice. The secretariat needs at least seven to 10 business days to write up the report and the committee needs time to meet, discuss and agree to those recommendations. This is where that recommendation for four weeks comes from.

It is what several committees have recommended now. It is what the committees who have done that work think is required to produce a thoughtful report that has a genuine ability to provide good scrutiny based on evidence in hearings and based on responses to questions on notice. This year's questions on notice were not back in time for the committee report and for the recommendations to be written. That is noted in the report. It is concerning.

I am also concerned about the impacts this has on staff who work in this building. We pride ourselves here on having a different culture from the culture up on the hill. We pride ourselves that we usually do not sit past dinner and we do not sit in school holidays. We like to think we are family friendly. We heard yesterday in estimates up on the hill that some of the parliamentary librarians had slept at their desks to meet deadlines. I am really quite worried that we might be heading into that kind of pattern here. I really hope that our staff who work in this building never feel they have to do that, but I am concerned if we keep making recommendations for longer timelines and we do not get those, then that might be where we are heading.

I think government needs time to read a report in order to respond to it. It must place incredible pressure on our directorates to have five days to respond to 150 recommendations. I cannot imagine what that must be like. I have worked in government. Those timelines are really, really punishing. This year—acknowledging the incredible effort that our secretariat staff did to get that report done in the timeframe—government had less than a week to respond to 150 recommendations.

Now we have had two committees make a recommendation for a different timeline. There is a way that it could be met. There are probably many ways that it could be met. I do not need to be involved in the perfect solution. We are seeing a gradual reduction—we have dropped from 21 days this year to 16 days next year, so it is going to be even harder for the staff who are involved in that.

One way to get around that problem would be to return to the pre-COVID budget timeline. Our budgets in the ACT are now being handed down much later. Before COVID we used to hand them down at the start of June, and now they are coming

later and later in June. That would be one way to make sure there is a more realistic time frame. The years 2017, 2018 and 2019 all had budget estimates in June because the budget came out a bit earlier. There are ways to make this work and to make it work without the human costs we have seen. I felt it was important to note what this timeframe is like, where to look for next year and for the people who are involved in it.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 35

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (11.37): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 35, dated 17 October 2023, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR CAIN: Scrutiny report No 35 contains the committee's comments on eight bills, two pieces of subordinate legislation and three government responses. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I would like to thank my committee colleagues Dr Paterson and Mr Braddock for working with me on this report. I also particularly thank the legal advisors, Mr Daniel Stewart and Mr Stephen Argument, and our professional secretariat for their assistance. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity—Standing Committee Report 9

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.38): I present report 9 of the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity entitled *Inquiry into ACT's heritage arrangements*, including a dissenting report, together with a copy of extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity—Standing Committee—Report 9—*Inquiry into ACT's heritage arrangements*, dated 20 October 2023, including a dissenting report (Mr Cocks), together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

Today I rise to present the report by the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity on the *Inquiry into ACT's heritage arrangements*.

This is the ninth report by the committee. The committee announced this inquiry on 5 December 2022.

The committee received 65 submissions and 19 exhibits. The committee held a public hearing on 16 May 2023. It heard from individuals; community councils; residents associations; organisations representing heritage, environmental, architectural, historical and planning sectors; and the Minister for Heritage and directorate officials.

The committee's report made 37 recommendations in total, addressing matters such as: the structure of governance for ACT's heritage arrangements; increasing support for the community heritage sector; increasing funding and resourcing for the ACT heritage unit; and amending the ACT Heritage Act 2004 to include a definition of Aboriginal cultural heritage that recognises both tangible and intangible heritage.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank everyone who participated in this inquiry. I would also like to thank the other members of the committee, Ms Clay and Mr Cocks, for their collaborative work on this and I would also like to thank the committee secretariat, especially Miona and Adam, for their ongoing and very thorough work on this inquiry. I commend the report to the Assembly.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (11.40): I rise to speak to my dissenting report briefly because, while the main report has merit and is very useful, I think it is important the government correct course on heritage and fully contend with the strategic underlying issues and tensions that are present in the heritage system.

The main report, in my opinion, does not go far enough in a number of areas. It is based on largely a notion that tinkering around the edges will be enough to repair an outdated system which became deeply dysfunctional and resulted in the unprecedented steps taken against those working in the system. There is a risk that without strong direction and a willingness to take clear decisions, the government will continue largely as it has since 2016. It is not tenable that the last seven years of strategic indecision and neglect be allowed to stretch to a decade or more.

There is also a risk, particularly in the context of the current planning reforms and the impending review of the heritage system undertaken by the same directorate, that the main report could be seen as endorsing unfettered development over heritage considerations. As one person put it:

I have seen, in my long career in heritage, dozens of reviews of heritage, and they are almost always viewed with great concern by the heritage community, because governments are often more about unravelling heritage in some way, or easing the path for other activities, rather than a kind of full-throated genuine embrace of heritage issues.

Despite the weight given to what could be termed the "development at all costs" perspective which was presented by groups like Greater Canberra within the main report, the preponderance of evidence and opinion that I heard throughout this inquiry suggests that an effective heritage system ought to be focused, first and foremost, on the preservation of heritage and its inherent value. This cannot be achieved by injecting an increasing number of competing non-heritage considerations into that system.

I considered it important to dissent from this report because, throughout the conduct of this inquiry, it became very clear that the heritage system in Canberra is not operating as it ought, and has not been for some time. There have been clear failings and weaknesses at both strategic and operational levels. As a system, it seems to be neither adequately protecting the territory's heritage nor enabling reasonable development of and improvements to properties where heritage is a consideration.

Just briefly, I would like to touch on the factors that led us to this point and led us to the inquiry, because the committee made a very clear decision in undertaking this inquiry that it was not the intent to examine the minister's handling within the ACT heritage system. We did, from the outset, intend to take a productive and forward-looking approach to improving the ACT heritage system and to contribute to a reform process that would prevent such deep dysfunction and poor relationships emerging in the future.

However, the minister's statement and advice to the committee were central to the decision to undertake the inquiry, and I think it is important to understand the extent of the minister's engagement with the committee before the inquiry's announcement. Despite the minister's initial statement to the Assembly that she was consulting with the Assembly Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity about her potential decision in response to the review, the minister's engagement was limited to briefing the committee on her intended approach.

At no time was there any indication to the committee that the minister was considering any course of action other than the dismissal of the Heritage Council. The dismissal of the Heritage Council was the minister's decision, and it had been made, as far as I could tell, prior to discussions with the committee. That is why, within my dissenting report, I have made it clear I believe the report that informed that decision ought to be released in full, with redactions only where absolutely necessary to protect individuals. The committee did not have an unredacted report to rely upon so we could not examine those issues in the full depth that I would have expected to be able to.

Now, to the strategic directions and legislative framework, because this is an important issue within heritage. In 2016, the government released under a previous minister a consultation paper around the strategic directions for heritage. It seems to be that the release of that paper triggered expectations that perhaps the government was going to follow through and undertake some degree of reform, or at least set a clear direction for heritage in Canberra. It also seems to me that the evidence presented to the committee showed that those expectations had not been fulfilled, and the lack of a heritage strategy over that time contributed to deep confusion and disagreement around what each element of the heritage system's role and objective was.

Many witnesses also expressed concerns during hearings that heritage was being placed in a subservient position to development, and that the government's planning legislation increased that risk. Witnesses pointed out the risk was further exacerbated by the inclusion of government officials in charge of the government's development and infill agenda as a member of the council. I am pleased that as a committee we

have come to a position where we could recommend against that deep conflict of interest continuing to be entrenched.

Ultimately, the tension between heritage and other policy areas is a question of strategic positioning and strategic direction for the ACT government, and it is essential that everyone involved in the heritage system has a clear understanding of the objectives and operation of that system. That is best addressed through a formal strategy, which I believe should be delivered before any subsequent change to the ACT legislative framework for heritage. Furthermore, I believe strongly that the evidence presented to the committee around the strengths and weaknesses of that legislative framework indicated a full repeal and replace approach to the Heritage Act needs to be undertaken. I would ask that the government, at the very least, consider that approach, because the deeper we dove into the issues throughout the legislation and throughout the operation of that legislation, the clearer it became to me that this 20-year-old legislative framework needs to be fundamentally re-thought and based on new strategic directions.

Finally, I would like to add my thanks to the committee secretariat and to all of the witnesses that came forward. I would like to thank all of the officials who came and spoke with us and provided us with a far better understanding of an area that I came into this inquiry knowing very little about. I would also like to add my thanks to those who did not have a voice necessarily throughout this process and that is those who work within the Heritage Unit. Having been a public servant previously, I can say, it is incredibly difficult to have the parliament looking over your work. I am convinced many of the people there are deeply dedicated, probably all of them, are deeply dedicated to the work they do in an incredibly difficult context.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee Report 19

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (11.50): I present the following report:

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 19—*Inquiry into responses to Auditor-General recommendations for reports 5/2017, 7/2019 and 6/2020*, dated 18 October 2023, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

This is the 19th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for the 10th Assembly. The public accounts committee examined the responses to the following audit reports: No 5/2017, *Maintenance of selected road infrastructure assets*; No 7/2019, *Referral processes for the support of vulnerable children*; and No 6/2020, *Transfer of workers' compensation arrangements from Comcare*.

The committee has made five recommendations as part of its inquiry. On behalf of the committee, I thank everyone who contributed to this inquiry as well as the other members of the committee, Mr Pettersson and Mr Braddock. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Report 20

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (11.51): I present the following report:

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 20—*Inquiry into Auditor-General's Performance Audit Reports July—December 2022*, dated 18 October 2023, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

This is the 20th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for the 10th Assembly. All Auditor-General's reports stand referred to the committee. At its meeting on 15 February 2023, the committee resolved to undertake further inquiry into all Auditor-General's reports published between 1 July and 31 December 2022. The committee received two submissions and held two public hearings. Witnesses took four questions on notice. The seven recommendations address government procurement and childhood healthy eating and active living programs.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to recognise the work of the Auditor-General and his staff, government ministers and officials of the Butterfly Foundation and the Obesity Collective for their assistance to the committee. The committee looks forward to the implementation of its recommendations. I thank my colleagues on the committee, Michael Pettersson and Andrew Braddock. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Sitting suspended from 11.52 am to 2 pm.

Questions without notice

Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022

MS LEE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, I refer to your government's drug decriminalisation laws which commence on Saturday. Recent media reporting in the *Canberra Times* about Portugal, where they have similar laws, said:

While decriminalisation may have been good for drug users, it has not been so good for other members of the public ... It has brought the use of drugs out of the shadows into public spaces.

The article went on to say:

“It makes you feel unsafe. And it’s next to schools. It’s not one or two cases ... There’s a lot more addicts out in the open where people can see them.”

Chief Minister, what action will your government take to ensure that schoolchildren do not become desensitised to the use of hard drugs if they see it occurring in the open and in public places?

MR BARR: The question is hypothetical.

Mr Hanson: Is it?

MR BARR: The question is hypothetical; and, should such an incident occur, the government would respond appropriately, using all legal methods.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, it is question 1. There are already interjections and sidelines. You have the call for your supplementary, Ms Lee.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, what do you say to Canberra parents who are concerned that these drug laws may result in increased drug use around schools, similar to what is happening in Portugal?

MR BARR: There is no evidence to support that in an Australian context.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please.

MR BARR: My advice would be don’t listen to the scaremongers.

DR PATERSON: Chief Minister, how important is an evidence based policy in this space?

MR BARR: Very.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, we have two sitting weeks ahead. I hope this is not the start of a long two weeks.

Blood donation—regulations

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, in May this year the Australian medical regulator approved a plasma donation pathway for LGBTIQ+ people, including gay and bisexual men, trans women and trans men who have sex with men, removing sexual activity rules. Unfortunately, these cohorts are still unable

to donate blood unless they abstain from sex for at least three months, which we and queer rights advocacy groups like Let Us Give believe entrenches a second-class status for these cohorts. Minister, could you please report back on my request to you earlier this year that this issue be raised at the Health Ministers' Meeting?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Davis for the question. Just to be clear in relation to the Health Ministers' Meeting, health ministers have, as a group, determined that Health Ministers' Meetings will be focused very squarely on the priorities that have been established. It is very difficult to get matters like this, on which pretty much everybody agrees, on the agenda for the sake of having it on the agenda and being able to say, "I've had it on the agenda." However, I have taken the appropriate action of writing again to Lifeblood, and that is the third letter that has been written in relation to this matter. I think Mr Davis and I are on a unity ticket in relation to moving away from a discriminatory blood donation approach and towards an evidence based approach and advocating for individual risk assessment.

I would, however, say also that I have recently met with the Chief Executive Officer of Australian Red Cross Lifeblood, Adjunct Professor Stephen Cornelissen AM. It was a very useful conversation highlighting the benefits of the "plasma pathway". I think it is important to recognise that, in fact, at least as many lives are saved through the donation of plasma and there is more of a shortage of plasma than there is a shortage of whole blood at the moment. The "plasma pathway", which I understand is a globally leading pathway for donation, is also a welcome development, and I understand that is likely to come into place early next year.

MR DAVIS: Thank you, Minister. May I confirm that the ACT government supports and will continue to publicly advocate for the use of individual risk assessments as an appropriate screening tool for all people who wish to donate blood?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Yes.

Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

Minister, in the ACT Policing annual report, a case study about a visit to the United States states the following:

Discussions were consistently dominated by the irreversible damage and challenges posed to health and law enforcement services by the endemic fentanyl and opioid abuse. The delegation witnessed firsthand the negative effects on communities where drugs were prevalent throughout the community.

Minister, why are you recklessly pursuing a policy when, in their annual report, your own police force talk about the "irreversible damage" that can be done?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Hanson for the question and his reference to the trip to Canada and North America. I can reflect on that trip personally, as I attended with the Chief of Police; and on the very explicit instances we saw there of lack of health support for those particular people.

I do support ACT Policing as they continue to adopt a harm minimisation and diversionary approach to illicit drugs in the ACT. ACT Policing has worked with ACT Health and other government partners on an implementation plan. A better practice guide is being developed for ACT Policing officers, and they will be ready to police the new legislation when it comes into effect on 28 October 2023. ACT Policing continues to advocate for health supports to be available to respond to community needs, noting that the diversionary programs continue to be focused on providing interventions and education for people who use drugs.

MR HANSON: Minister, what impact will witnessing this “irreversible damage”—and that is the quote from the report—have on the workforce of ACT police, and what support are you providing officers as they deal with this issue?

MR GENTLEMAN: What we will be doing is providing support for ACT police. They already prosecute a harm reduction policy in relation to drug use and personal possession, and will continue, when appropriate, to refer personal drug possession offending to ACT Health for drug diversion services.

I mentioned the better practice guide on the simple drug offence notice program. That will be finalised and disseminated to ACT Policing members prior to 28 October. Internal training in relation to the new legislation and ACT Policing’s preferred policy for operationalisation of the legislation will be provided to members at routine training days in the leadup to the commencement of these changes.

MR CAIN: Minister, what level of damage must be done before this reckless policy is reversed?

MR GENTLEMAN: The level of damage is happening now right in our community. We have tried several ways to criminalise this health issue, with no forward progression. The drug issue remains the same as it has in the ACT and other jurisdictions across Australia because people have not changed the way of addressing it. This government has made that change. It comes into effect at the end of October. I believe a health response is the appropriate way forward, and as ACT Policing has indicated as well.

Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, in recent reports the Chief Police Officer has been quoted as saying it would be “naive not to think people won’t come down, even for a weekend, to get on the coke and not worry about the cops ... it’s a reality we can’t ignore”.

From the same report, Mr Gaughan agrees the new legislation by the Labor-Greens government could lead to conflict between bikie gangs, increased drug use, a high road toll and long-term mental health issues. Minister, what have you done to prevent the “reality we can’t ignore”, in the words of the Chief Police Officer, that people will come to Canberra to “get on the coke and not worry about the cops?”

Member interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please allow the minister to answer.

MR GENTLEMAN: I refer to the training we are providing for ACT police in dealing with criminality in relation to drug use. That is incredibly important as we move into the future in looking at small amounts of drug use as a health issue and not a criminal issue.

Mr Parton interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Parton, you have had your go. Keep quiet now.

MR HANSON: Minister, what are you doing to address the Chief Police Officer's warning of increased conflict with bikie gangs as a result of these laws?

MR GENTLEMAN: In reference to supporting police in looking at criminal activities across the ACT, the ACT government has, year on year, invested more funding into ACT Policing so they can combat criminality across the ACT and the opposition vote against it at every single budget. Last time it was the largest amount we have provided for ACT police to deal with criminal matters across the ACT. It is working because crime rates are dropping across the territory and that is because of the work of this government and the work of ACT police.

MR COCKS: Minister, what is being done to address the emergence of long term mental health issues as a result of these new laws?

MR GENTLEMAN: It is hypothetical.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: No, no, members. Members! Can you repeat the question, please?

MR COCKS: Minister, what is being done to address the emergence of long-term mental health issues as a result of these new laws?

MADAM SPEAKER: I am ruling it in order. Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: On behalf of the government, I say we have a whole of government response to the changes of this legislation and the changes it will bring to the ACT. There is a health response wrap-around for drug use in the ACT and I am very supportive of it. So is ACT Policing.

Health—nurse-led walk-in centres

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, what will the more than \$7 million in commonwealth investment in the ACT's nurse-led walk-in centres to become part of the Medicare urgent care centre network mean for Canberrans?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for the question. The ACT government has worked very closely with the commonwealth on this investment in the ACT's excellent and very well-supported nurse-led walk-in centres. I want to be clear that this is not about rebranding the walk-in centres, which are well known to Canberrans but about them joining a network of urgent care centres that are being launched across the country by the Albanese Labor government.

The \$7 million from the commonwealth recognises the important role of our nurse-led walk-in centres in the ACT's health system and the expertise of the highly-trained nurses and nurse practitioners to provide immediate care to the community. The funding supports further enhancements in the service by increasing the number of nurse practitioners and advanced practice nurses working across all five of our walk-in centres across the extended hours of operation. Nurse practitioners in the walk-in centres provide invaluable access to assessments and diagnosis in their area of speciality and can order appropriate examinations and write prescriptions.

The investment also provides additional allied health for the Weston Creek walk-in centre, including more radiographer and sonographer time to support after-hours medical imaging and advanced scope physiotherapist services. There is more equipment for the staff across the walk-in centre network, such as hand-held ultrasound for wounds, equipment to conduct eye procedures and hand-held devices to detect blood flow issues or blood clots.

All of these enhancements will further support care in the community closer to where people live and work and take pressure off the emergency departments. With a redirection of just six per cent to eight per cent to an emergency department from a walk-in centre, it is clear that the ACT's nurse-led walk-in centres are already providing a nation-leading service in the community. These enhancements will help us to keep bringing down the redirection rates as much as possible.

Labor governments, of course, are working together to continue to strengthen our nurse-led, highly commended services to provide free accessible health care to the ACT community.

MS ORR: Minister, what consultation was undertaken to enhance services through the nurse-led walk-in centres and how is the government continuing to listen to the Canberra community to deliver more services through this excellent nurse-led service?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. Throughout 2023, Canberra Health Services and the ACT Health Directorate worked with the commonwealth to engage with local stakeholders to discuss the impact that this funding will have on the ACT. This included industrial and professional stakeholders from across health professions, including the Australian Medical Association ACT, the Royal Australian College of General Practice and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation ACT.

It was heard from some stakeholders and from individual nurse practitioners, advanced practice nurses and general practitioners that nurse practitioners are indeed

very capable of providing an accessible and best service for free after-hours walk-in health services. The AMA ACT and RACGP provided a submission in April this year, with the following endorsement:

We acknowledge that the current Walk in Centres (WiC) provides a valuable Canberra community service. Expansion of the range of services at WiC such as the addition of physiotherapy services and enhanced medical imaging access, will no doubt provide additional benefits.

We also recognise that GPs and their representatives will have some different views about how some of this money could have been spent. The ACT government will continue to listen to and to value the important roles of GPs as essential providers of treatment and care for Canberrans. Indeed, the ACT government, in partnership with the commonwealth, will be holding a webinar at the beginning of November with the broader GP network in the ACT and other interested health professionals. We are also partnering with the commonwealth in relation to a primary care pilot, and we have invited expressions of interest from local general practices to participate in that to build a more integrated healthcare system.

We have consistently listened to the Canberra community about what they need from the walk-in centres. This investment will grow those centres in a way that Canberrans will continue to support.

DR PATERSON: Minister, how are the nurse-led walk-in centres supporting Canberrans to access care closer to home and taking pressure off the ACT's emergency departments?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: The ACT's walk-in centres were of course first introduced in 2010 to alleviate pressure on our emergency departments. For 13 years, they have been a critical part of our health system and have continued to grow. Just between January and September this year, they saw more than 80,000 presentations.

Consistently, we hear great stories from community members who access walk-in centres, such as this one that I received in August: "I had my first encounter with a walk-in centre last Saturday and I was impressed, starting from the receptionist that was friendly and professional. Waiting time was minimal. I was attended to by a senior practitioner who was extremely knowledgeable and dressed my wounds well. I have to mention that the centre was well equipped."

Skilled staff at the walk-in centres can treat a wide variety of urgent conditions, including asthma, injuries and wound care. They are connected to the digital health record, so they can both add to and understand a patient's journey through the ACT public health system.

Contrary to some misunderstandings among the Canberra Liberals—who have never really supported the concept of nurse-led walk-in centres—walk-in centres actually often work very closely with local GPs and provide referrals back to a patient's regular GP or care provider. This means that patients are assured of continuity of care to the greatest extent possible when they are accessing acute care services and really recognises the importance of GPs in the provision of lifelong care.

Over time, this funding will enable enhancement of the scope of conditions treated at walk-in centres—for example, treatment of shoulder injuries and fractures, male urinary tract infections, treatment of minor injury and illness in pregnancy and screening for sexually transmitted infections, which are not currently offered but will be in the future. Of course, that builds on our previous expansions of service, including expanding availability from two-year-olds down to one-year-olds just recently, driven by our fantastic nurses.

Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, the 2022-23 ACT budget provided funding for more alcohol and drug services due to be complete by June 2024. However, no money was spent in the last financial year, and the project has been pushed back to June 2025. Similarly, projects such as the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, Watson Health Precinct, and alcohol and other residential rehabilitation expansion and modernisation have been delayed until after your decriminalisation laws take effect. Minister, why did rush through legislation to treat drug addiction as a health issue and then fail to deliver the community and hospital facilities to support patients?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Ms Castley is just wrong in her question in making assertions on two matters. These matters were not rushed through. The legislation was introduced. It was circulated as an exposure draft in December 2020, was introduced into this place in February 2021, and passed in October 2022—more than 18 months later—following significant consideration by this Assembly of those laws. These are not rushed. These are well considered, with many government amendments.

That was point one. Point two is that we have increased funding to alcohol and other drug services by more than 30 per cent since 2018-19, and we will continue to grow and expand alcohol and other drug services. Ms Castley is talking about funding from previous budgets, which continues to grow over time. We have expanded services year on year, and we will continue to do that.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, do you believe that the ACT's current facilities are sufficient to service the expected increase in patients that are likely to need these services following the commencement of the new drugs of dependence laws?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I think the Canberra Liberals are now trying to have it all ways. On the one hand our laws are going to work in destigmatising the use of drugs and encouraging people to seek health care, and this is going to result in a flood of new people who have never tried to seek healthcare before for their drug use! On the other hand, it is not going to be treating drug use as a health issue; it is going to do all kinds of different things, and, according to Mr Hanson, the sky is going to fall in!

This is an incremental change. Going to some of the points that Mr Hanson was making earlier, it is important that people who use drugs understand the incremental nature of this change—that people understand that this is not legalisation. If police identify somebody who is in possession of a small amount of one of the listed illicit drugs, they will confiscate those drugs. The police will take those away for

testing and weighing and they may issue a simple drugs offence notice, and people will be referred.

But, as Mr Hanson has previously said, many people are already diverted by police—largely not people who use methamphetamine and heroine. That is why we have included those drugs in this list, and continue that measure—because these are some of the most dependent drug users, for whom de-stigmatisation will encourage them to seek help. The first set of health they will probably see is peer support and support in reducing the harm associated with their drug use. I think that is a good thing.

MS LAWDER: Minister, have you undertaken any forecasting on how increased presentations will impact on the already strained hospital system?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Madam Speaker, you may not want to rule that a hypothetical, but it is absolutely hypothetical on Ms Lawder's part to indicate that these changes will result in an increase in presentations. Madam Speaker, I can give you one piece of evidence to support the fact that that is absolutely hypothetical scaremongering. That is that—

MADAM SPEAKER: You can call it scaremongering, but please do not usurp my decision-making on it.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Pardon me, Madam Speaker. I withdraw that. This is scaremongering, and there is evidence from the changes in cannabis laws. When those laws changed in 2019 Mr Hanson said that the sky was going to fall in. Mr Hanson said that all of these impacts were going to occur, and we have not seen an increase in hospital presentations as a result of cannabis use with the changes in those laws. And there is no reason to believe that we will.

What we will see is that young people whose friend has taken MDMA and something has gone wrong will not be scared to call an ambulance or get help because they are worried about getting a criminal record. We will see that people who see someone overdosing on heroine—people who are using with their friends—not be scared to call an ambulance and get help because they are worried about getting a criminal record. This is harm reduction for a problem of drug use that we know already exists in our community. That is what it is about.

Mr Hanson: What about the bikies?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I have come to you a number of times. Enough is enough.

Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, your government's drugs of dependence laws commence in four days time. What training has the government provided to community and primary-care businesses to equip them with the necessary skills needed to deal with issues that will arise from the new laws?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: We have a community education program that is being rolled out, and that is targeted at different groups of people. There is a specific communications strategy for people who use drugs, so that they understand what the laws actually mean, that they understand this is not about legalisation, that their drugs can still be confiscated and that—particularly importantly—they understand that the supply of drugs of any kind, whether they are paid for or whether they are given to another person, continues to remain a criminal offence, and police will continue to pursue people for the supply and dealing of drugs. There are broader community-based communication programs and there are programs particularly targeted at young people, to understand the impact of these laws. ACT Health has been working very closely with ACT Policing—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, enough.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, you are warned.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: and with other stakeholders—

Mr Rattenbury interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Rattenbury, enough. Mr Hanson, you are warned. The exchange just encourages bad behaviour.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: ACT Health has been working very closely with ACT Policing and other stakeholders to ensure that all groups in our community have the information they need when these laws come into effect. Again I emphasise that this is incremental change in the way that we support people who use drugs.

MS CASTLEY: Just for clarification, we asked about businesses, not the community.

Minister, did anyone in your government consult with GPs, businesses and pharmacists on how their businesses will be affected by these new laws?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: There has been wide consultation with a range of organisations—businesses, stakeholders and community members—about the impact. If Ms Castley would like a briefing on any of this, she is always welcome to ask for one. If she would like to indicate what she thinks the impact would be that she is talking about, she is also welcome to expand further, and maybe I will be able to provide her with a bit more information.

MR COCKS: Minister, are you aware of any potential increased costs to these businesses resulting from these new laws?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Madam Speaker, with your indulgence, could Mr Cocks specify what businesses he is talking about?

MR COCKS: I am referring to the range of businesses referred to in Ms Castley's original question around primary care and community health—community pharmacies.

MADAM SPEAKER: That would be the pharmacists and other community providers that you spoke about.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Primary care and pharmacy?

MR COCKS: Yes.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I do not see why there would be additional costs associated with either general practice primary care or pharmacy—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I am not reminding you again. You will be out.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: as a result of these changes. The scaremongering around it may have resulted in some pharmacists thinking there would be additional costs, but I cannot see why there would be.

Mr Parton interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Parton, you are finding your way to the list as well.

Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, I refer to a GP who called ABC radio and said:

... at the coalface, we have absolutely no chance of getting these people into programs, even if they are very motivated to have support for their drug or alcohol problems. So that is where the system will let these people down. They may not end up with a criminal record, but they also will not have a system in the ACT that supports their treatment for this.

Minister, with all the preparation that should have been done, why are GPs saying that there is “absolutely no chance of getting these people into programs?”

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I did hear that comment on the radio. With all due respect to the person who commented, I do want to make clear to the Assembly that the ACT government invests, per capita, just about the most, if not the most, in Australia. We have the best or second-best access to alcohol and other drugs services of any jurisdiction in Australia. In fact, I would point Ms Castley to an interview on ABC Radio Canberra yesterday with Bill Bush, from Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform, who actually confirmed that. Indeed, he gave credit to the Canberra Liberals—which must have really annoyed Mr Davis!—for pushing us to continue to increase our investment in alcohol and other drug services. What I said this morning in response to that was that I think we have a tripartisan position in this place that we need to continue to increase investment in alcohol and other drug services, but the

reality is that we already had a 30 per cent increase in funding since 2018-19. We invest \$26 million in alcohol and other drug services, and we have the best access to alcohol and other drug services, or amongst the best—depending on which section you look at—in the country.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, why are these laws being introduced when “they will not have a system in the ACT that supports their treatment?”

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I respectfully disagree with that. We have a comprehensive alcohol and other drug treatment system in the ACT. I recognise that there are waiting times for some elements of that system, and we will continue to work with alcohol and other drug service providers, with Canberra Health Services, with the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy, with Family and Friends for Drug Law Reform, and with Family Drug Support services to ensure that we continue to expand access to services here in the ACT. But all of this just highlights that we already have a challenge with people who use illicit drugs here in the ACT, and our policy is about reducing the harm associated with drug use that we know already exists while also upholding the other pillars of harm minimisation: supply reduction and demand reduction.

MR HANSON: Why is it that GPs who express these issues at the coalface are saying, in their words, that “the system will let these people down”?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: People have all kinds of experiences in the health system. Some people make comments that are based on their experience recently and some people make comments that are based on their experience of the system as it was five, 10 and even more years ago. We continue to invest in alcohol and other drug services and we do so in partnership with the sector, guided by the Drug Strategy Action Plan, which is co-designed with alcohol and other drug treatment services and our stakeholder partners like the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy and the primary care services, particularly primary care services like Directions ACT, which works with some of the most vulnerable people and marginalised people in our community, so that we can prioritise our investment while continuing to grow that investment at significant rates—a 30 per cent increase in investment since 2018-19.

Roads—Monaro Highway

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, could you please update the Assembly on progress on the Monaro Highway upgrade?

MR STEEL: I thank Dr Paterson for her question about the Monaro Highway upgrade program. I was excited recently to announce that a safer and more efficient Monaro Highway is one step closer, with the awarding of a \$70 million contract issued to local ACT company Woden Contractors for the construction of part of the Lanyon Drive interchange, and particularly the flyover over Lanyon Drive on the Monaro as part of the Monaro Highway program.

The Australian and ACT Labor governments are working together to deliver the Monaro Highway upgrade program, and some works have already been completed

as part of the program, including safety improvements and new overtaking lanes on the Monaro in the southern section of the ACT near Old Cooma Road and Williamsdale Road.

Extensive utility works have also been undertaken in preparation for the Lanyon Drive flyover. In January 2022, these were completed with the relocation and protection of major water mains and telecommunications infrastructure. In the coming months, we are going to see the relocation of gas infrastructure in preparation for the main construction works getting underway on the Lanyon interchange.

DR PATERSON: Minister, what benefits will the new interchange at Lanyon Drive deliver for Canberrans?

MR STEEL: The \$70 million investment to make the Monaro Highway safer will also improve travel times and support the efficient movement of people and freight in this growing part of Canberra, and the ACT and New South Wales contract will deliver a new southbound flow on the Monaro Highway over Lanyon Drive. It will see the upgrading of highway road pavement from David Warren Road through to Sheppard Street in Hume, and also the construction of a new widened bridge on the Monaro northbound carriageway over Dog Trap Creek, just north of Lanyon Drive.

The Lanyon Drive flyover is part of a program of works to improve safety on the Monaro by removing dangerous at-grade intersections and separating traffic turning across the highway in and out of the Hume industrial precinct and New South Wales.

The project is also a major economic stimulus for the Canberra region. It will support hundreds of jobs over the entire program, through both the detail design stage, which has been underway for some time, and also the construction phases. Projects like this are important to keep the growing Canberra region connected, supporting local jobs and businesses, and providing the community with improved infrastructure and safer roads long into the future.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what are the next steps as the government continues its delivery of the Monaro Highway Upgrade?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. With a construction contract awarded for the Lanyon flyover, detailed design will now be finalised, and major construction works on the interchange are expected to start in 2024 and take around three years to complete. It is a major infrastructure project. It will take some time.

Another major package of works for the interchange is planned for 2024, subject to environmental and other approvals. This will include the removal of traffic lights at the Alexander Maconochie Centre, and the extension of David Warren Road, which will be a new southbound slip lane down to Lanyon Drive and down to Sheppard Street in Hume and will include a new roundabout and signalised intersection connecting with the new Monaro Highway off-ramp and Sheppard Street.

Detailed design is also continuing on the future stages of the Monaro Highway upgrade, including future improvements around the Hume industrial precinct and

Isabella Drive, and these potential future interchanges will be futureproofed for potential future connections into New South Wales, including the future planned Dunns Creek Road through to Googong and Old Cooma Road.

Given the national significance and cross-border criticality of the Monaro Highway upgrade, I intend to host a roundtable of relevant ministers and officials from the ACT, New South Wales and federal governments, as well as the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council, to discuss and coordinate future cross-border transport investments over the coming months, and the ACT government is committed to working with our partners in the region to invest and build the infrastructure that our growing region needs to ensure that our part of the world in southeastern New South Wales and the ACT remains one of the most liveable places in the world.

Waste—product stewardship

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, in June this year, the environment ministers agreed to mandate obligations for packaging design as part of a new packaging regulatory scheme. Will the new national standards be mandatory for all imported and locally manufactured packaging?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I understand that at the Environment Ministers Meeting, at which Minister Vassarotti represents the ACT government, there was a real commitment, which has followed significant advocacy from the ACT government, to undertake mandatory requirements in relation to packaging. We have seen industry not meeting their targets and that is a concern. It is necessary to now seek to regulate to make sure the packaging industry does the right thing, by making sure they design out problematic packaging in the first place and make sure the packaging they do produce is recyclable and can go on to be re-used time and time again under a circular economy principle. I understand that work is underway. There is another meeting of the environment ministers and I understand an update will necessarily be provided at that meeting.

MS CLAY: Minister, do you know if the scheme will cover soft plastics?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Clay for her question. We know soft plastics are an issue, certainly with the failure of the REDcycle scheme and the stockpiling of large amounts of soft plastics around the country. The commonwealth has been acting in that space. We are certainly encouraging them to continue to act on product stewardship schemes in particular. I know Ms Clay wrote to me earlier this month about establishing a national product stewardship scheme for packaging, especially soft plastics. I had prepared an answer earlier to Mr Braddock who was asking me about these broader issues on product stewardships. I provided him and the Assembly with the information that this is on the priority list and does include the priority of problematic and unnecessary single use plastics—of course, soft plastics being part of that single use plastic mix. So they are acting on that. Indeed, Minister Plibersek has announced further funding for better recycling infrastructure and technology to recycle hard to recycle plastics, including soft plastics.

We will continue to work with the commonwealth on their role in a national market. We welcome their announcement as well of a pathway to resume soft plastics collections at the major supermarkets, with the major retailers taking responsibility for the stockpiles associated with the REDcycle scheme as well.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, will the scheme be enforced by an independent regulator?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. At this stage the design of those regulations is not known, but we will be working with the commonwealth and further seeking to understand what they are proposing in terms of national regulation, which is of course a commonwealth responsibility.

Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, earlier this year the ambulance union passed a motion of no confidence in its leadership because of long work hours and increased workloads. With the passing of the Drugs of Dependence Act, which will commence in just four days, what additional resources have been put in place to manage a further potential increase in the workload as a result of these new laws?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Milligan for the question. It is important that we look after our frontline responders as best we can. There have been increasing pressures on those responders across the ACT. Of course, we have been supporting them through our budget program, with more paramedics. And we are, of course, going through a new opportunity to change the rostering system for ACTAS as we go forward. A new roster should be in place early next year that will alleviate some of the pressures that paramedics are facing due to those extra pressures in their workplace. Those extra pressures are not necessarily associated with illicit drug use in the ACT but we need to support them should they need that as we go forward.

We will be providing health wraparound services for those people who ask for support. That will take the place of similar opportunities that we have provided in the past, like PACER. For those people who are suffering mental health issues, we have instituted a new program that has a clinical person on board as well as police and paramedics to look after those people, rather than them having to enter into the criminal justice system.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what additional training has been given to ambulance officers to prepare them for a possible increase in violence that could result from the start of these new laws?

MR GENTLEMAN: That is a little bit hypothetical. We have not seen that that is the case. But, of course, we have ongoing training of ACT paramedics. It is important that that takes place, ensuring that we can support them should there be a need going forward. We are seeing more aspects of, I suppose, difficulty in dealing with patients across the ACT through ACTAS, and we are putting training and support in place for them.

MR COCKS: Minister, what additional training has been provided to ambulance officers to deal with the very real possible increase in the severity of mental health issues associated with the start of these new laws?

MR GENTLEMAN: The training is ongoing. It does not stop; it happens all year round, from when they first come out of college right through their career. Those training opportunities deal with all aspects of their work with the ACT community both in the mental health space and of course in the physical health space.

Multiculturalism—anti-racism

MR BRADDOCK: My question is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Minister, the federal government has started to expedite the development of a national anti-racism strategy following the community tensions that have arisen from the conflict in Gaza. What steps are the ACT government taking to actively address racism in the ACT community?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Braddock for the question. I begin by acknowledging what a dark and difficult few weeks it has been for so many in our community. Certainly, our concerns are with many community members who are feeling hurt and worried at this time. Canberra is a proud multicultural city, and we are officially a welcoming city. We have a long-standing commitment to building a community where everyone feels safe and included.

Mr Braddock will be aware that, with the federal government announcing its national anti-racism framework, which has been in development since 2021, the ACT government has also said that we will consider an ACT anti-racism strategy, dependent on the developments subject to the national anti-racism framework. We are looking forward to getting an update from Minister Giles on that at the ministerial forum for multicultural affairs.

However, that is not to say that there is not an extraordinary amount of work underway all the time about addressing racism in the ACT. This includes, obviously, the Discrimination Act, which protects individuals from unlawful discrimination, including on the basis of race, immigration status and religious conviction. And anyone who experiences racism or racial vilification should contact the Human Rights Commission on 6205 2222, or through various other means.

Earlier this year, we also introduced reforms which expand the Discrimination Act, including a positive duty aimed at reducing discrimination before it occurs. Our Multiculturalism Act enshrines our commitment to diversity. In particular, one of the tenets of the legislated multicultural charter reads that we have a shared— (*Time expired.*)

MR BRADDOCK: Are there any particular steps that the ACT government is taking for the Palestinian and Jewish communities in Canberra at the moment?

MS CHEYNE: Certainly I acknowledge that we have been in direct contact with Minister Giles, his office and relevant officials, already. We will be continuing those

conversations at the ministerial forum on multicultural affairs in the coming weeks. I certainly look forward to representing the Canberra community, and sharing the ACT's perspective on issues relating to anti-racism and conflicts which are occurring throughout the world.

I also acknowledge and echo the words of our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Penny Wong, that civilians on all sides are suffering, and that, regardless of religion or ethnicity, we mourn each innocent life lost. They are certainly words that we, as a government, echo. One of the updates that Minister Giles was recently able to give us is that numerous organisations have been awarded funding under the Securing Faith-based Places grant program. This includes the ACT Jewish community, and also an Islamic community organisation in Canberra, together with two more. So we are very pleased to see that, of the large grant pool that was associated, the ACT received a share.

Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022

MR COCKS: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. Minister, with the commencement of the new drug decriminalisation laws in four days time, are facilities like Dhulwa and the Adult Mental Health Unit experiencing any increase in patient demand?

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you for the question. Actually, the levels of demand that we experience for our inpatient mental health services are very highly variable from week to week. Quite often they are quite unpredictable as well.

When we are talking about what kind of mental health supports might be needed in relation to this harm-minimisation approach that we are taking to drug use in the ACT, one of the really important things is how our drug and alcohol sector and our mental health sector work together to address people with complex needs. There was increased funding in this year's budget to support that sector in being able to better integrate their services and work together. There was funding to increase the skills of workers in both sectors to build stronger connections between community and hospital-based mental health and drug and alcohol services, as well as doing an in-depth review of the supports that are needed for people with complex mental health and alcohol and other drug support needs.

This is not necessarily about a change in what we might see in coming months; it is about addressing needs that we have known about for some time. I want to thank the people in the community who have been advocating for these kinds of improvements for years. Quite often, they are the families and friends of people who have experienced the negative impacts of drug and alcohol use and complex mental health presentations, and they have been able to talk to us about what kinds of supports would be needed. One of the key things is making sure that our alcohol and drug sector and our mental health sector are able to work well together in the community.

MR COCKS: Minister, what have you done to increase the capacity—in particular, the number of spaces—across the ACT's mental health facilities prior to the introduction of these new drug laws?

MS DAVIDSON: Thank you for the question. One of the really key things about reducing the stigma and reducing the barriers to people being able to say, “I would like some help around the use of this drug,” is making sure that we have more drug and alcohol support services available to them. We have absolutely made increases in the budget in those services. We have also made quite significant increases in a range of mental health services in this year’s budget.

When we are talking about a harm minimisation approach to drug and alcohol use, it is critically important to make sure that, when we are removing barriers for people to say, “I’ve been using this drug and I would like to access some support,” there are more AOD services in the community for people to access. I would like to thank the Minister for Health for the work that she has done to make sure that we have increased services.

I would also like to thank the people in the community who have been advocating so strongly for this for such a long time. I can think about situations we have seen in this community over decades, involving people who have experienced the negative health impacts of drug use and have felt that there has been a barrier to being able to ask for help. I can think about Bindi Calder, who, when I first came to Canberra—

Ms Lee: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Lee?

Ms Lee: The minister has almost completed her time, and the question was pretty straightforward. It was: what have you done to increase the capacity? I ask that she be relevant to the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: You have 20-odd seconds left, Ms Davidson.

MS DAVIDSON: The increase in the capacity of drug and alcohol services that I was talking about earlier is very relevant, as are the things I was talking about earlier regarding how we better integrate mental health and AOD services in the community. The important reason why we are doing this is to make sure that when people— *(Time expired.)*

MS CASTLEY: Minister, is now the time to add extra pressure to a mental health system that is already failing so many Canberrans?

MS DAVIDSON: First of all, a wide range of mental health services that are available in our community are working incredibly hard to address people’s needs, and we are doing an increasing amount of work to make sure that we are able to provide more services to people at an earlier stage in their mental health journey, and closer to home. We are increasing things like lived experience workers in our peer mental health workforce, and making sure that we are integrating those services with AOD services in the community for people who are experiencing issues in both of those areas of their lives.

It is very important that, when we are talking about where people might need mental health services, we do not make the assumption that everything is solved by going to

hospital. People who are experiencing a mental health crisis quite often can find that the things that help them are not necessarily addressed just in one way. They might find that having a call-out from PACER is helpful, that going to a Safe Haven or a Head to Health hub is helpful for them, and that seeing a service that can address both their AOD issues and their mental health issues is helpful for them.

I do not think it would be safe to make the assumption that there is only one area of mental health that is in need of investment. That is why we have been making investment across a huge diversity of services.

Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022

MR COCKS: My question is to the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. Minister, with the commencement of the new drug decriminalisation laws in four days time, what extra training provisions or requirements have been put in place for workers who are likely to come in contact with people under the influence of drugs?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Cocks for the question. I believe he is referring to comments about drug-taking that may occur in licensed venues. I can confirm that nothing changes at the licensed venues. The amendments which reduce penalties for personal possession of small amounts of some commonly used illicit drugs do not affect the rights and responsibilities of licensees and their employees. These changes do not affect how clubs and venues manage their patrons. It is still illegal to take any drugs in a public club or venue and anyone can be instructed to leave by management.

MR COCKS: Minister, have there been no additional supports or changes to security training, responsible service of alcohol or responsible service of gambling requirements in line with these new drug laws?

MS CHEYNE: As I stressed, this is already training that is provided. Nothing changes. Police can still intervene if a person is under the influence of drugs and is behaving in a dangerous or threatening manner. Police can also prosecute people for other offences at the same time as a drug possession offence. The responsible service of alcohol continues. Under the Liquor Act, a person is considered intoxicated if their speech, balance, coordination or behaviour is noticeably affected and it is reasonable in the circumstances to believe it is the result of the consumption of liquor or drugs or a combination of both, and the *Liquor (Intoxication) Guidelines* provide practical guidance to licensees and their employees already about the signs of intoxication, ways to reduce incidents of intoxication and what to do if someone demonstrates the signs of intoxication. I can confirm that this advice, with plenty more, has been sent to licensed venues.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, without proper training in the effects of hard drugs, how can frontline staff in security and hospitality feel safe after the start of these new laws?

MS CHEYNE: I believe I have answered that. The responsible service of alcohol already requires the person to understand, as I have just explained following Mr Cocks's question, how to respond if someone is intoxicated. I will say it again for the benefit of Ms Castley that the *Liquor (Intoxication) Guidelines 2017 (No 1)*,

which I am happy to share with her, provides practical guidance to licensees and their employees about the signs of intoxication, ways to reduce incidents of intoxication and what to do if someone demonstrates the signs of intoxication. Nothing changes.

Education—National Skills Agreement

MR PETTERSSON: Chief Minister, last week the National Cabinet met to decide on a new national skills agreement, the first in over a decade. Can you update the assembly on what this agreement will mean for Canberrans who want to increase their work skills, and local employers?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. Yes, I was pleased to join the Prime Minister and the Minister for Skills and Training at CIT Fyshwick last week at the announcement of the new national skills agreement. This is the first agreement of its kind between the commonwealth and the states and territories in over a decade, Madam Speaker. The agreement focusses on lifting the national skill level and attracting more skilled workers into critical and emerging industries.

In the ACT, this agreement, along with the continuation of fee-free TAFE, will help Canberrans to get the skills they need to lead into jobs that are already readily available in our economy. In particular, it will expand opportunities for people to study in the care economy and cyber, defence, and national security related areas. These are critical areas of employment growth within the ACT economy, and indeed across the broader Canberra region. Our support for fee-free TAFE has already seen more than 2,500 Canberrans gain new skills and retrain for free, Madam Speaker.

MR PETTERSSON: Chief Minister, why was it so important for the Albanese Labor government to work with state and territory governments to come up with bespoke agreement components for each jurisdiction?

MR BARR: The willingness to engage in a bespoke response for each state and territory reflects a federal government that wants to work with the states and territories in partnership, and I particularly thank Minister O'Connor at the federal level for his work closely with Minister Steel locally to deliver a tailormade package for the ACT.

This means we have an opportunity to be a national leader in electrification in the transition to a net zero economy through a matched ACT and commonwealth funding program for TAFE centres of excellence, with a focus on the ACT's move to net zero. Specific ACT funding includes \$6.5 million in matched funding for closing the gap initiatives, \$14 million in matched funding to improve vet and apprentice completion rates, about \$13 million in matched funding to assist with collaboration between the CIT and other public training providers, and close to \$1.5 million to improve access to foundation skills and learning.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, how does the agreement support the ACT government's ambitious goal to grow our post-COVID workforce to 300,000 jobs by 2030?

MR BARR: Thank you, Ms Orr, for the supplementary. In the midst of the pandemic, we set a goal to recover all of the lost jobs and then to grow our labour market to

achieve a total of 250,000 jobs in the territory economy by 2025. Now, three years on and a year early, we hit that goal. We are now experiencing over 266,000 people in work across the ACT, and we have the highest participation rate in the labour market in Australia.

Building on this success, the skills agreement means improved access to education and training, with the support needed to obtain secure employment being made available to those who need it most. Through the agreement, the ACT and the commonwealth will provide more opportunities for women in male-dominated areas, opportunities opening up access for First Nations Canberrans and people with disabilities, and investment in foundation skills to support those who currently cannot access the labour market. All aspects will combine to help to grow Canberra's workforce to achieve our new jobs target of 300,000 jobs in the territory economy by 2030.

Madam Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Supplementary answer to a question without notice Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: In relation to some of the questions asked by the opposition of both myself and Minister Cheyne, I want to clarify and confirm that ACT Health has been working with Access Canberra specifically to provide information to Canberra businesses and venues in advance of the changes that come into effect on 28 October and that ACT Health will continue to engage with stakeholders to ensure that service providers, ACT Policing and venues continue to receive relevant information and advice. But I would agree with Ms Cheyne that venues in the ACT already have to work with people who are consuming illicit drugs. That is part of life in the ACT, and anybody who has been paying any attention to media around this, including in other jurisdictions, would be well aware of that fact.

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 15—Annual Reports—2022-2023—

ACT Auditor-General, Report No 7/2023, dated 9 October 2023.

ACT Electoral Commission, dated 4 October 2023.

ACT Integrity Commission, dated September 2023.

ACT Ombudsman, dated 6 October 2023.

Inspector of the ACT Integrity Commission, dated 6 October 2023.

Office of the Legislative Assembly, dated October 2023.

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to subsection 17(5)—Auditor-General's Report No 8/2023—2022-23 Performance Audit Report—Supports for students with disability in ACT public schools, dated 23 October 2023.

Bills, referred to Committees, pursuant to resolution of the Assembly of 2 December 2020, as amended—Correspondence—

Bills—Not inquired into—

ACT Teacher Quality Institute Amendment Bill 2023, Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, dated 10 October 2023.

Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill 2023, Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, dated 11 October 2023.

Building and Construction Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services, dated 3 October 2023.

Human Rights (Complaints) Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, dated 11 October 2023.

Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, dated 11 October 2023.

Mental Health Amendment Bill 2023, Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing, dated 10 October 2023.

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act, pursuant to subsection 19(4)—ACT Climate Change Council Annual Report 2022-23, dated September 2023, together with a statement from the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction responding to the advice given and recommendations made in the report.

Electoral Act, pursuant to section 54—Electoral Boundaries Redistribution 2023—Redistribution report—Augmented ACT Electoral Commission, dated 27 September 2023.

Freedom of Information Act, pursuant to section 67—A report on the operation of the *Freedom of Information Act 2016* for 2022-23, dated October 2023.

Standing order 191—Amendments to the Planning (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2023, dated 25 and 26 September 2023.

Water Resources Act, pursuant to subsection 67D(3)—ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group—Annual report 2022-23, dated September 2023, together with a statement.

Mr Gentleman presented the following papers:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 13—Annual Reports—2022-2023—

ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority, dated 1 September 2023.

ACT Gambling and Racing Commission, dated 29 September 2023.

ACT Health Directorate, dated 3 October 2023.

ACT Human Rights Commission, dated 30 September 2023.

ACT Inspector of Correctional Services, dated October 2023.

ACT Insurance Authority, dated 20 September 2023.

ACT Long Service Leave Authority, dated 22 September 2023.

ACT Policing, dated 16 August 2023, in accordance with the Policing Arrangement between the Commonwealth and Australian Capital Territory Governments.

ACT Policing Special Purposes, dated 25 September 2023.

ACT Public Service—State of the Service Report, dated 22 September 2023.

Canberra Health Services, dated 28 September 2023.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (Volumes 1, 2.1 and 2.2), dated 19 September 2023.

City Renewal Authority, dated 3 October 2023.

Community Services Directorate, dated 3 October 2023.

Cultural Facilities Corporation, dated 28 September 2023, together with a corrigendum.

Director of Public Prosecutions, dated 6 October 2023.

Education Directorate, dated 22 September 2023.

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, dated 29 September 2023.

Icon Water Limited, dated 5 October 2023.

Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission, dated 4 October 2023.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate, dated 29 September 2023.

Legal Aid Commission (ACT), dated 25 September 2023.

Major Projects Canberra, dated 27 September 2023.

Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, dated 6 September 2023.

Office of the Work Health and Safety Commissioner, dated 12 September 2023.

Public Trustee and Guardian, dated 28 September 2023.

Suburban Land Agency, dated 26 September 2023.

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, dated 3 October 2023.

Freedom of Information Act, pursuant to section 39—Copy of notice provided to the Ombudsman—Freedom of Information request—Decision not made in time—Education Directorate, dated 19 October 2023.

Judicial Commissions Act, pursuant to section 61A—ACT Judicial Council—Annual Report 2022-23, dated 22 September 2023.

Official Visitor Act, pursuant to section 23DA—Official Visitors Scheme—Annual report 2022-23, undated.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 18—*Inquiry into Modern Slavery Legislation Amendment Bill 2023*—Government response, undated.

Remuneration Tribunal Act, pursuant to section 10—Determination 10 of 2023—Full-time Statutory Office Holder – Chair, Therapeutic Support Panel—Part-time Public Office Holder – Deputy Chair and Members, Therapeutic Support Panel, dated 5 October 2023, together with an accompanying statement.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Associations Incorporation Act—

Associations Incorporation Amendment Regulation 2023 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2023-24 (LR, 29 September 2023).

Associations Incorporation Regulation 2023—Subordinate Law SL2023-25 (LR, 29 September 2023).

Building (General) Regulation 2008—Building (General) (Alternative requirements for unaltered parts) Determination 2023 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2023-237 (LR, 28 September 2023).

Building Act—

Building (ACT Appendix to the Building Code) Determination 2023 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2023-236 (LR, 28 September 2023).

Building and Construction Legislation Amendment Regulation 2023 (No 2)—Subordinate Law SL2023-23 (LR, 29 September 2023).

Health Act—Health (Interest Charge) Determination 2023 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2023-231 (LR, 25 September 2023).

Magistrates Court Act—Magistrates Court (Planning Infringement Notices) Regulation 2023—Subordinate Law SL2023-22 (LR, 18 September 2023).

Motor Accident Injuries Act—Motor Accident Injuries (Premiums) Guidelines 2023 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2023-232 (LR, 28 September 2023).

Nature Conservation Act—Nature Conservation (Loss of mature native trees key threatening process) Action Plan 2023—Disallowable Instrument DI2023-230 (LR, 18 September 2023).

Official Visitor Act—Official Visitor (Chair) Appointment 2023—Disallowable Instrument DI2023-224 (LR, 21 September 2023).

Territory Records Act—

Territory Records (Advisory Council) Appointment 2023 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2023-225 (LR, 14 September 2023).

Territory Records (Advisory Council) Appointment 2023 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2023-226 (LR, 14 September 2023).

Territory Records (Advisory Council) Appointment 2023 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2023-227 (LR, 14 September 2023).

Territory Records (Advisory Council) Appointment 2023 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2023-228 (LR, 14 September 2023).

Territory Records (Advisory Council) Appointment 2023 (No 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2023-229 (LR, 14 September 2023).

Tree Protection Act—

Tree Protection (Advisory Panel) Appointment 2023 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2023-233 (LR, 28 September 2023).

Tree Protection (Advisory Panel) Appointment 2023 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2023-234 (LR, 28 September 2023).

Tree Protection (Advisory Panel) Appointment 2023 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2023-235 (LR, 28 September 2023).

Standing orders—suspension

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

That so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent Private Members Business Notice No. 5 being called and debated cognately with Private Members business Notice No. 1.

Australian Institute of Sport—location

[Cognate debate: Private Member's Business Notice No 5—motion by Mr Pettersson]

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (3.07): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) since its establishment in Canberra in 1981, the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) has elevated Australia to a world-leading position in international sporting competitions, and has been the training facility for some of the most successful athletes in our history;
- (b) the AIS continues to make a major contribution to Australia's sporting success on the world stage;
- (c) the AIS is an important national institution and a source of local Canberra pride; and
- (d) the AIS benefits our national capital through facilities, employment and elite sports pathways for Canberrans;

(2) further notes:

- (a) the Albanese Government recently announced a review of the AIS which is aimed at considering the viability of relocating the AIS to Queensland;
 - (b) documents released under freedom of information show that relocating the AIS would cost in excess of \$1 billion, take more than four years, and pose substantial risks to the organisation, and athlete preparation for the 2026 Commonwealth Games, and the 2028 and 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games; and
 - (c) as an institution of national significance, the AIS should be located in our national capital; and
- (3) condemns the Albanese Government for creating uncertainty for Canberrans and athletes by considering moving the AIS out of Canberra; and
 - (4) calls on all Members to affirm that the Assembly remains steadfast in its commitment that the AIS remain in Canberra.

Canberra is the rightful home of the Australian Institute of Sport. We are the nation's capital, and an institution of national significance like the AIS belongs right here.

The AIS Bruce campus was opened in 1981 and, since then, has produced some of Australia's finest athletes—household names like Anna Meares, Cadel Evans, Lauren Jackson, Petria Thomas, Michael Klim, Liz Ellis and Canberra's own Patty Mills, to name just a few. The AIS is currently host to elite sports centres of excellence for basketball, netball, volleyball, rowing and swimming. Canberra is where many of Australia's highest performing athletes train to reach the pinnacle of their elite sports careers.

Last week, when the Albanese Labor government announced that they had commissioned a review into the AIS, including the option to relocate it from Canberra to southern Queensland, I and many Canberrans were outraged and dismayed—even more so given that, only a few years ago, a review was undertaken and the possibility of a relocation rejected outright by the Australian Sports Commission. That review confirmed that the only viable option for the future of the AIS is to invest in the existing campus in Canberra.

The costs and risks involved in relocating the AIS far outweigh any possible potential benefit from its relocation. The cost alone to relocate the AIS to south-east Queensland is estimated to be in excess of \$1 billion. It would also take a minimum of four years and cause uncertainty and unacceptable disruption for the athletes currently preparing for upcoming Commonwealth, Olympic and Paralympic games.

In addition to the massive career change impacts that a relocation would have on elite athletes, there are major impacts to our city, to our capital. The AIS is an important part of Canberra. It brings employment and career advancement opportunities in various industries and sectors. It is an important institution for tourism and events and, through its accessible elite players and coaches, it provides enormous benefits to grassroots community sport for our children growing up here in Canberra.

What are the benefits of a relocation to south-east Queensland? It is hard to see this move by the Albanese Labor government as anything other than playing pure politics to appease some twitchy Queensland MPs. With all three federal seats locked away here in the ACT on his own team, and a senator who is also the Minister for Finance, Prime Minister Albanese has decided that he does not need to care about Canberra. It is hard to see this move by the Albanese Labor government as anything other than getting a report to support what is perhaps a foregone conclusion that has already been reached by the Albanese cabinet. It is hard to see this move by the Albanese Labor government as anything other than pure pork-barrelling, plain and simple.

It is no coincidence that federal sports minister Anika Wells is the member for the federal electorate of Lilley in suburban Brisbane, a city where federal Labor have lost a lot of ground in recent years—and we know that the Queensland Labor government, the state Queensland Labor government, is facing an uphill battle to be re-elected in next year's state election.

Pointing to the Olympics and Paralympic games in Brisbane in 2032 as a reason to consider moving the AIS is just poor form. The Australian Sports Commission have

said that the minimum four years it would take for the relocation would have an enormously detrimental impact on the very precise and careful preparation of elite athletes as they prepare for these games. In any event, regardless of future Olympic and Paralympic games venues, the home of Australia's elite sports development, the home of a national institution as significant as the AIS, is and should always remain here in Canberra.

The Albanese government's poorly thought-out actions also throw up more uncertainty in our community. What is next? What national institution will the federal Labor government attempt to move to a more politically advantageous electorate? Is it the War Memorial? Is it the National Gallery of Australia, or maybe even the Australian National University? Australia's national institutions belong in our nation's capital. This should never be in dispute. This should not even be considered to be up for discussion. It makes a mockery of the review that the Albanese Labor government has commissioned and the way that some Labor circles have tried to spin it as a positive. What a joke!

Today I ask every member of the ACT Labor and ACT Greens parties to join the Canberra Liberals in being unequivocal and unanimous in standing together to condemn this political move by the Albanese Labor government and standing up for Canberra to make sure that the AIS remains here in the nation's capital. The ball is now in the court of each member from ACT Labor and the ACT Greens. However each of them chooses to vote on my motion today, I say to all Canberrans and to our AIS athletes: I promise that the Canberra Liberals will do everything in our power to keep the AIS in Canberra. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (3.14): I look forward to moving my motion at the conclusion of the vote on Ms Lee's motion. I rise today to speak about an issue that so many in our community and this place are concerned about, and that is keeping the AIS here in Canberra.

Since 1981 the AIS has supported local and national talents to become elite athletes at the 65-hectare multipurpose precinct with sporting, administration, commercial and residential functions. The AIS campus has got it all: a track and field centre, an aquatic centre, a basketball and netball centre, volleyball courts, tennis courts, and on and on it goes, not to mention that the AIS is a recognised Olympic training centre and centre for Paralympic excellence—meaning that it plays a critical role in supporting the development and preparation of Australian Olympic and Paralympic team members.

My first brush with the AIS came all the way back in year 3, when Olympic champion Nick A'Hern came to visit my school, right here in Canberra. The reason for this visit was that my class, for that year, had bestowed upon him the tremendous honour of naming our class after him. In fact, our whole school had chosen to name their classes after elite Canberra athletes, many of whom, of course, were training at the AIS.

Nick was a true Canberra sports legend, having made Australia's Olympic team during the 1992, 1996 and 2000 Olympic Games for his talent in the 20-kilometre walk. He also secured back-to-back gold medals at the Commonwealth Games in 1994 and 1998. On that very fateful day when he decided to pop into my school and,

for the very first time, I got to meet a real Olympian, I was chosen to challenge him to a race in front of a local television crew. It was very kind of him to maintain an official walking pace and technique while I sped ahead, running. I still have fond memories of that moment, and I can only hope that, now that I have shared it, local TV crews can find that footage somewhere in the archives.

I think it is important to point out that athletes like Mr A'Hern became Olympic heroes that I and so many young Canberrans look up to because they got their training at the AIS and they were Canberrans. There are so many positive consequences of having these facilities here in Canberra, so much so that these facilities have melded into the landscape of our city. I am sure all members in this place can speak to the amazing experience that all Canberrans know that these elite athletes are just that: everyday Canberrans. We find them everywhere in this city. They are our neighbours and our friends. The AIS is their home and their workplace. Quite literally, the AIS has become a part of the ACT's furniture. So, if it were all suddenly packed up and moved elsewhere, along with all the people who call it home, Canberrans would notice its absence and feel it deeply.

The reason that I will be moving a motion, and the reason Ms Lee has brought a near identical motion, is that the federal government has recently announced a review of the AIS, which includes an assessment of its current and future location options. It is clear to me that the AIS is of immense value to the ACT—and I have no doubt that a review will find that this is the case. Judging from the Commonwealth's 2018 master plan, it is also abundantly clear to me that moving the AIS away from Canberra would be an extremely expensive exercise, costing taxpayers more than a billion dollars. It is a jaw-dropping figure—a billion dollars. Alternatively, upgrading the existing AIS campus right here in Canberra would only cost the federal government \$200 million. It is clear to me, and all Canberrans, that enhancing the existing campus in Bruce makes the most sense.

I also want to highlight that, in principle, I do not support the decentralisation of the public service. Canberra is home to so many of our national institutions. It just does not make sense to me to relocate the beating heart of Australian sport away from the beating heart of the Australian public service—not to mention that the prospect of decentralising the AIS has caused such immense stress and uncertainty for the many Canberrans who work, train and coach at the campus. These professionals have planted deep and lasting roots in our community that cannot be replicated elsewhere.

It is for all of these reasons that I will move a motion today to create an opportunity for all of us in this place to band together and call on the ACT government to positively engage with the federal government's review of the AIS, to ensure a clear understanding of the benefits to Australian sport and also to the ACT community of the facility remaining here in the ACT.

I think the key here is positive engagement. My view is that, if we want to keep the AIS here in Canberra, we here in the Assembly should be constructive and encourage the ACT government to work with the federal government in good faith. We should not be condemning them and we should not throw petty barbs. I do not see how being divisive will get us anywhere on this issue. If the federal government wants to hear about the many, many reasons why the AIS should stay in Canberra, the ACT

government, on behalf of Canberrans, can tell them. I strongly believe that the AIS is an invaluable community asset. It is a part of this city, and I really hope that it continues to be all of this and much, much more in the years to come.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (3.21): I thank Ms Lee and Mr Pettersson for their motions. The AIS is a national institution that provides leadership and training for high-performance elite sport. The AIS was opened in 1981 and, for many decades, has been instrumental in lifting Australia as an international sporting competitor and supporting the success of numerous Australian athletes, bringing pride to Australians around the country and particularly inspiring athletes here in our own community.

It supports a diversity of sports, including athletics, badminton, football, swimming, golf, gymnastics and judo—and I could go on. The centre provides health, wellbeing and performance support for athletes, high-performance camps, research and innovation and is a centre for sporting conferences, forums and events. Unfortunately, a considerable lack of investment in the AIS precinct by the previous coalition federal government resulted in the degradation and the ultimate closure of parts of the AIS precinct, including the AIS arena and the AIS health and fitness centre.

The federal Albanese Labor government recently announced an independent review into the future of the AIS, including its investment needs and its location. It is extremely concerning that the federal government is even considering the relocation of the AIS. The ACT Greens strongly oppose any suggestion of the AIS being moved from Canberra. It is my hope and my expectation that the review will identify, as previous investigations have, that Canberra is the right place for the AIS and that investments should be made, and indeed are well overdue to be made, to restore the institute to its full glory.

On economics alone, the AIS should stay in Canberra. The proposition to move the AIS to Queensland due to upcoming Olympic and Paralympic games would cost, at a minimum, an eye-watering \$600 million but could end up costing closer to \$1 billion. By contrast, the necessary renovations and upgrades to the facilities in their current location have been estimated to cost \$200 million—an awful lot of money for the ACT government but something you would find down the back of the couch in the federal government.

I can see that every party in this Assembly is in agreement. Money and party politics aside, we all strongly believe that the AIS, as a national institution, belongs to the nation's capital and to the people of Canberra. That has been made clear by both Ms Lee and Mr Barr, as well as all federal parliamentarians who represent Canberra, with the distinct exception of Senator Gallagher. Five thousand athletes and staff from 31 sports will use the AIS campus this year. In future years, as we get closer to the international sporting events I mentioned, I hope that even more athletes and sports will benefit from the AIS as a hub of sporting excellence, inspiring every young athlete.

While we use the precious time we have in this place to debate something that the federal parliament has control over, what I think we should really be turning our mind to is how to fix the state of our community sporting infrastructure so that every young person in our city who aspires to be an athlete worthy of training and practising their

sport at the AIS can afford to play community sport and can access great facilities, training and inspiration in their community sporting clubs. Kids need something to strive for. As the Greens spokesperson for sports and recreation, I want every kid in this city to see a pathway for themselves to become an incredible elite athlete, if they so aspire, and perhaps even to represent their country. I want every aspiring athlete in the ACT to know that their beloved national sporting institute, just around the corner from where they live, is training the best athletes in the country today and that one day they might train there too.

Given that we are all in furious agreement that the AIS should stay in Canberra, I would like to turn our attention to some of the real local sporting challenges that we are facing, things that everyone in this Assembly can actually work to improve. I have been a strong advocate for community sport throughout my term in this Assembly, and I will continue to champion grassroots community sports in every corner of this city.

We know that Canberra's young people are incredibly active. We know that sports bring communities together, promote healthy lifestyles and bring a huge sense of joy and purpose to people's lives. In fact, we are the most active jurisdiction in the country, with 68 per cent of ACT residents participating in community sports at least three times per week. We must foster this enthusiasm for sport in our community. Funding appropriate facilities for grassroots community sport is where this Assembly can ensure that that rubber hits the road.

The ACT Greens took a number of commitments on sports and recreation to the last election, including a commitment to build a brand-new multi-use indoor sports facility in the Woden town centre and a detailed and comprehensive community sport facilities management plans. Indeed, these commitments were embedded in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement, and I have been working hard to shift the dial on these commitments throughout this term.

Earlier on in this Assembly term, in April of 2021, I put a motion to this Assembly calling for a range of investments and initiatives to improve grassroots community sport in this city, including the recognition of a peak sports and rec body, a long-term strategic plan for sports and recreation—I emphasise “long-term”—and a comprehensive and detailed facilities management plan, including the range of facilities managed by a whole range of different government departments. I called on the ACT government to prioritise addressing the climate change impacts on these government-owned sporting facilities. Importantly, I really wanted to see the barriers to sporting participation for low income households examined. Unfortunately, we know that this has only been exacerbated through the cost-of-living and inequality crises.

The outcome from this motion, it is fair to say, was mixed. We got the facilities management plan that detailed the ACT government's planned investments to 2024, but the plan lacked the detail and vision of the root-and-branch review that we had called for. Indeed, there were more pictures than text.

We know that there are not enough facilities in this city to cater for the diversity of sports that Canberrans of all ages want to play. Community sporting organisations should not have to compete against one another, like they do currently, to access

facilities in order to meet the demands of their community. Every single sport in this city should be able to access high-quality facilities. No player should be turned away and no competition should be constrained or not go ahead because of a lack of appropriate facilities. We Greens will continue to prosecute the case for a comprehensive and detailed facilities management plan that truly addresses the facility shortages and identifies a plan to meet the needs of the sporting sector.

The strategic plan, CBR Next Move, is great on values and great on vision but it does not really say how we are going to get there. It does not identify the support the community sporting sector actually needs, let alone commit to meeting those needs. Two petitions have called for investment in a multi-use indoor sports facility in Woden. These petitions, sponsored by my colleague Minister Davidson, had a combined total of 1,965 signatures. But, unfortunately, the government's response to these petitions merely noted that the ACT government does not own any multipurpose indoor sports facilities, which is well known. It relies on the private sector and government schools to meet the facilities needs of community sports. I do not think that is good enough. I think we can do better.

We need a clear, long-term pipeline of funding so that these sporting organisations can plan for the future and build sustainable business models that accommodate for government funding, or lack of funding. Competitive funding from government means that volunteers spend precious time and resources lobbying the minister and other government members for money so that they can maintain, upgrade or expand their facilities to meet the needs of their communities. People in community sports should be supported to stay in the business of running these organisations, not lobbying government. A recent report identified that two in three sporting clubs across Australia have experienced increased running costs in recent years and 23 per cent of clubs surveyed said that improving facilities and venues was the single most important funding priority for the next decade.

Last night, Mr Assistant Speaker Cain, with you and many members of your team, I attended the annual ClubsACT Clubs and Community Awards presentation at the Ainslie Football Club, and I heard about and met with many people working in our local clubs who are engaged deeply in grassroots community sport. There were numerous awards that included the fostering of community diversity and community development and wellbeing. The Ainslie Group won an award for their work fostering female participation in sport by introducing gender pay parity for athletes, seeing a huge increase in the remuneration and benefits for female athletes, which resulted, unsurprisingly, in a huge increase in women interested in playing football at their club.

As we see worrying trends in young people across Australia and around the world becoming increasingly isolated, lonely and less active, community sports and the community clubs that enable them have a critical role to play to bring people together. I will continue to prosecute the case in this place every time I have the opportunity to advocate for grassroots community sport. I do not believe that anybody should have to choose between putting food on the table or letting their kids play sport.

Indeed, I made this case through the Select Committee on Cost of Living Pressures in the ACT, which recommended that the ACT government evaluate community sport

voucher programs in other jurisdictions to inform such a program for the ACT. The committee heard evidence that the cost of playing sport can be prohibitive for some families in the ACT—an increasing number of families—but that that does not diminish the value that sport can bring to young people's lives.

The ACT is, sadly, the most expensive region in the country to play sport and the only jurisdiction without a sport voucher program. I was incredibly disappointed to see Minister Berry publicly reject that committee recommendation before the official government response was even considered by cabinet and tabled in the Assembly. There is little point in us fighting to keep our national elite sporting institutions here in Canberra if we cannot demonstrate to the rest of the country that we are the place where everyone can play sport at any level and that we make that accessible and that Canberrans take pride in their own facilities, invest in their own community and meet the demands of Canberrans at every level who wish to play sport.

The AIS is indeed critical to delivering on so many of the ACT government's future priorities, like that mentioned in the most recent annual reports: to support ACT athletes within, or vying for selection in, the Australian teams competing in the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic games. The annual reports also mention important future investments in local sporting facilities, which I wholeheartedly welcome, including the Throsby Home of Football, the Phillip District Oval and the Amaroo Tennis Centre. These investments were listed in the 2022 two-page facilities management plan. I want to know how we figure out who else gets future investments beyond the next financial year.

It is my hope and, indeed, my expectation that everyone in this chamber prosecutes the case for the AIS staying in Canberra to every federal parliamentarian they can possibly get the ear of; that we all make a concerted effort to support our community sporting organisations; and that we ask our ACT government to make sure that every person in this city has a place to participate in the local sporting club of their choice. The way that this government demonstrates that it is worth keeping the AIS in the ACT is by investing in the programs and facilities that give every single Canberra kid the hope that one day they can play at that AIS as well.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (3.33): I thank Ms Lee for moving this motion here today. This is certainly an issue that has been brought to my attention by many sports bodies and interested users and stakeholders of the AIS. What we have here is that the federal government has ordered an independent review, though I question how independent it really is, considering that a member of the Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic organising committee is one of the two reviewers.

It is disappointing to see the uncertainty around the AIS yet again raising its weary head. With the ageing infrastructure, the lack of ongoing financial commitment and the lack of access to the facilities, it is perhaps not entirely surprising. The 45-year-old AIS is certainly a grandmother in terms of sports. Once, it held pride of place in the sports business, preparing our top athletes and sportspeople for participation at home and abroad. The significant neglect of the fabric of the place, however, has meant that it is now almost derelict, to the point where it no longer meets modern standards of fire safety and access.

The main arena, once the ACT's premier indoor sporting and entertainment facility, has been closed since 2019, significantly impacting women's elite sport in the ACT, as the Canberra Capitals have not been able to play or train in that facility. The last few years have seen several promises for upgrades and improvements, but very little action has been taken. Kieren Perkins, now head of the Sports Commission, has called the progress on the upgrades "glacial" and has suggested that the arena will not open again till 2024.

Yet, the AIS hub continues to be useful, despite its ageing infrastructure. As an institution it represents more than 100 sports, 39 at Olympic level. I also note that the ACT AIS hub, in 2023, will have hosted 5,000 athletes, with staff from 31 different sports using the campus on a regular basis. It just needs to have substantial money invested in it to make it fully fit for purpose—and not just the \$15 million currently being funded by the federal government. That will barely meet the existing repair bill or open the arena for public use.

It is real money that is needed, and not just for the arena. Money needs to be spent on the combat centre, the basketball and netball hall, the volleyball hall, the FIFA synthetic field, to bring it up to international match standards, as well as the athletics track. The main problem is the total amount of that real money that is required. An internal review and business case conducted by the Australian Sports Commission, which runs the AIS, showed that about \$200 million needed to be spent on the AIS here in the ACT to fully meet international and national expectations to run sporting events. It also looked at moving the institute.

The internal AIS review showed that it would take four to eight years and \$1 billion to move the AIS to Queensland, which the review found would be detrimental to sports in Australia, let alone in the ACT. It would seem a no-brainer, really, to continue to have the AIS situated in Canberra. Instead of spending \$1 billion on moving the AIS to Queensland, let's spend a small fraction of that money, \$200 million, on upgrading the ACT facilities. They should also reduce the cost of access to our local community.

In the past couple of years I have met with many sports associations and clubs, some of whom use the AIS. But many of them choose not to use it or have access to those facilities. This is simply due to the cost of hiring the facilities at the AIS, which includes additional costs for using car parks. It has become more unaffordable. It is challenging to host events or participate in sports at the AIS. The cost of attending, the cost of hiring the facilities and the lack of upkeep make it difficult to use for clubs in the community.

I repeat: why not ask the federal government to invest \$200 million in upgrading the facilities here at the AIS, instead of spending potentially up to \$1 billion to relocate it to Queensland? Let's stop playing football—pardon the pun—with the sporting and events needs of Canberrans. Creating uncertainty around the AIS does not serve the community very well. I support Ms Lee'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) (3.38): I am very pleased to speak today on both Ms Lee's and Mr Pettersson's motions. I thank them for bringing this important conversation to the Assembly today.

A decision to move the AIS from Canberra to another jurisdiction would put in jeopardy the hard work that the institute does. The instability would have a real impact on our Olympic and Paralympic teams for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, the 2030 Winter Olympics and the 2032 Brisbane Olympics. It would also be detrimental to our access to sporting facilities and to our economy in the ACT. I think this is a tripartisan view in this place, which I welcome.

The AIS has been an important part of Canberra for 42 years. The institute now provides support and training for high-performance athletes in dozens of sports, from squash to rowing. This includes support for para athletes and an equally large number of other sports. Additionally, the AIS provides workforce development for the sports sector, athlete personal development, injury rehabilitation, research, scholarships and publicly accessible facilities.

In 2023 alone, the AIS has seen more than 5,000 athletes and coaches train on site, with 185 camps being delivered across 32 different sports, including 33 dedicated para athlete training camps. Having this facility available to Australian athletes is of crucial importance for their careers and our performance as a nation on the international stage, both at the Olympics and at other international events.

Additionally, the AIS often works in partnership with the ACT Academy of Sport, or ACTAS. ACTAS is an ACT government institution within my portfolio which provides support and training for local elite athletes. This support includes sports medicine, psychology, nutrition, strength and conditioning, sports science, physiotherapy and soft tissue therapy. ACTAS has been co-located at the AIS since 2016.

The ACT government, via ACTAS, currently supports high-performance programs for athletes in hockey, rowing, swimming and cycling. ACTAS also supports a number of athletes on individual scholarships in sports such as paratriathlon, football, skateboarding, cross-country skiing, wheelchair basketball, lawn bowls, boxing, archery, alpine skiing, netball and snowboarding. It is a great facility, with great programs, great staff and great trainers. It is an institution I am very proud of. Having ACTAS co-located with the AIS provides regular opportunities for collaboration, to the benefit of both ACT and interstate athletes.

As noted in both of these motions, the commonwealth government, however, has announced a review into the ACT's—let's call it the ACT's—AIS, including a further consideration of its location. I think it is important to note that not just elite-level athletes use these facilities and not just community sports in the ACT; regular mums and dads and others have use of these facilities throughout the year, and if the AIS and its facilities were moved elsewhere they would be well missed. I am hopeful that the review will consider the impact on the ACT, not just on the important role that the AIS plays as a sports venue but also its important value for the ACT community as an events venue.

The AIS has received funding from the federal Labor government to the tune of around \$15 million to upgrade the arena, which was left in disrepair by the former federal coalition government, despite requests too numerous to mention, at every single opportunity, to provide funding for the AIS and to get assurance that the AIS would not be moved elsewhere and that the facilities would be available for Canberrans to use now and into the future.

Many events have occurred at the AIS arena. Mr Hanson, I know you are a Van Halen fan. They were there in 1998. Aerosmith were there in 1990. I went and saw Lady Gaga in 2010. John Farnham was there in 2010.

Mr Hanson: I'm not a fan of his anymore.

MS BERRY: You're not a fan?

Mr Hanson: Of Farnham? No.

MS BERRY: I am sure he will have hurt feelings about that. The last concert at the AIS arena, in 2019, was Rob Thomas. We want to see more events like that in the ACT that we can go and enjoy. If it is moved elsewhere then those opportunities will be lost to the ACT.

I note that the master plan, in 2018, said that it would be very expensive to move the campus interstate and that it would be in the order of \$200 million to refurbish the current campus. I think we all agree that the campus needs refurbishment. In the near decade that the former coalition were in power, they systemically underfunded the AIS, so it was with great hope for the future of that facility that we saw the federal Labor government come to power and commit to at least provide the funding to ensure that the AIS arena would have its maintenance and safety concerns addressed.

The consultation, or the lack thereof, with the federal coalition government has lasted the entire time that I have been the minister for sport. Now, with the review coming up, this is a matter of concern for the ACT. It is something that I will continue to advocate for with the federal government, to ensure that the AIS is not moved from the ACT. I will not be supporting Ms Lee's motion today. We will not be agreeing to a motion in this place that condemns the commonwealth government for something—

Ms Lee interjecting—

MS BERRY: they have not done. In the past, when government members of this place brought in motions condemning the former coalition or motions which were about the federal government's policy, the opposition cried that this was a waste of time and that there were more important issues to tackle.

Ms Lee interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Cain): Ms Lee!

MS BERRY: This is an important issue. I am pleased to see that we are all in agreement that we all want to see the AIS stay here in the ACT, but condemning the

federal Labor government will not get us to a point where we see a positive outcome for the ACT community.

Mr Hanson: We are just mimicking what you lot did for a decade.

MS BERRY: I hear you. It is obvious that is what you are doing. It is our duty to work positively to make sure that the federal government understands how important it is that the AIS remain in the nation's capital, as a national sporting institution but also as an institution that provides opportunities beyond sport in the ACT.

I believe that, as I said, we have tripartisan intent in this place to keep the AIS in Canberra, and why shouldn't we? We have just come up with different approaches to make that happen. I support Mr Pettersson's motion, and I ask that the Assembly support Mr Pettersson's motion. The ACT government will continue to work in a positive way with the federal Labor government to ensure that the AIS stays in the ACT.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health, Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (3.47): I want to thank Ms Lee and Mr Pettersson for moving their motions on the AIS today. Usually, it is not much fun for me when the ALP and the Liberals are thinking along the same lines, but today I actually agree with them that the commonwealth government should do the right thing and keep the AIS in Canberra.

But, as is so often the case with the Greens, I want to go further and support Mr Davis in asking the ACT government to deliver a long-term plan for indoor community sports facilities. If, for instance, Minister Berry was thinking about multi-use indoor sports courts in Woden, I know that there are at least six MLAs in this Assembly, three of them in cabinet, who would be very happy to support that.

It is great to see elite sports at our AIS. Anyone who has walked into my office knows that I am up for supporting our top teams, especially in high-speed, full-contact sports. I am learning about the other football code, but it is community sports that have my heart and soul because that is where ordinary people discover the extraordinary in themselves.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Cain): Members!

MS DAVIDSON: I want to share with you my very favourite sporting moment at the AIS. It was during the Canberra Roller Derby League grand final in 2011, between the Red Bellied Black Hearts and the Black 'n' Blue Belles. It was an incredibly close game. The Black Hearts won by just four points. It was very high tension.

I was sitting right on the edge of the track, as close as it is legally possible for a spectator to get, on the corner that gets the most falls and therefore has the most chance of a skater landing in your lap. I was sitting on this corner, and about five blockers had crashed down right in front of me. It was a big pile-up of black, red and

blue, and not just the uniforms. This is a sport that bruises and scrapes skin and breaks bones on the reg. Roller derby skaters typically skate anywhere from 15 to 65 kilometres an hour. They train to smash through walls constructed from human bodies. They also need extreme agility, balance and endurance.

Coming up fast towards the blocker mash-up on the floor in front of me was Black 'n' Blue Belles star jammer, ShortStop. I have trained with Shorty and, let me tell you, she makes an Energizer Bunny look downright lazy. She is fast. She was coming up to this pile-up at speed, and she was not slowing down, so there was no way she was going to stop before she hit them, and there was no room to get around them on the track. I was pretty sure I was about to see a very painful, grown-up version of stacks on, with skates on, right in front of me.

And then she jumped over the skaters. That jump was the most amazing thing I have ever seen in sports. A skater who is the same height as me—which, as you can see, is half of nothing—had just jumped a pile of human bodies on top of each other, lying across the track, at high speed, with 3½ kilos of rolling wheels on her feet. Seeing the impossible become reality that night was the very embodiment of Paul Kelly's line in *Bradman*: "And in the hour of greatest slaughter, the great avenger is being born."

That is the scene that I replay in my head every time I head out to the skate park to practise smashing my face on the concrete, or to see if I really can fly while I cruise down the bike path in Deakin. I would note that I cannot, and I would like to thank the walk-in centre nurse who helped me pick the gravel out of my elbow. Let me be very clear about the most important thing about roller derby: it is by the skaters, for the skaters. It is an amateur, community-organised sport, run by volunteers, with no budget. It is body positive, it is sex positive, it is gender affirming and it is a community sport.

When it comes to indoor community sports, I gave my soul to roller derby a long time ago, but they are not the only athletes who have my heart. I want to tell you about my favourite moment from the 2000 Sydney Paralympics. I was there in the stadium, with 10,000 other screaming fans, to see Australia play the USA in the gold medal showdown in the first ever Paralympics where wheelchair rugby was an official sport and not just a demonstration. The US beat us 32-31, but we had a smashing good time anyway. This sport is known as murder ball for a reason. I have never seen athletes take hits like that. The number of times that players landed face first on the floor but got the ball back and scored more points was truly phenomenal.

Just like the other amazing athletes that I saw that day, we have community wheelchair rugby players right here in Canberra. There is the Canberra Region Rugby League competition, which is adaptive and enables everyone to play. There is also an Invictus Australia wheelchair rugby team. I have been down to Tuggeranong to see where they train. This team is an opportunity for veterans with injuries or health conditions to participate in an adaptable sport where the diversity of how our bodies function can be celebrated. Invictus means "undefeated". Truly, when you see them in action you know what "unconquerable" means. Every training session, every game, is a celebration of breaking the boundaries of what we think we can achieve.

The one thing that stops us from having more wheelchair rugby, more roller derby, more basketball and badminton and archery and gymnastics and fencing and table tennis and Futsal and all of the other amazing indoor sports that we want to play in this city is more places to play. We need indoor community sports facilities for everybody in every district—multi-use indoor sports courts in Woden, for example. Community sports are pretty comfortable with sharing facilities and working collectively, if government is willing to work with them. So, Mr Assistant Speaker Cain, what I am asking is: let's make a long-term plan, just as Mr Davis has been asking for. Let's tell the community what facilities are going to be constructed or upgraded and when, and just get on with it, because we all want to play.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (3.52): I thoroughly enjoyed that commentary from Minister Davidson. Thank you very much for bringing us into a roller derby game.

I want to make a few comments in my capacity as a local member. The AIS provides really important elite sporting facilities, but it is also a really important community facility for us in Belconnen. I am afraid to say that we are losing some of the community facility aspects of the AIS. It has a great swimming pool, for anyone who enjoys lap swimming out there. It used to offer a lot more fitness classes and aqua classes.

Back in September 2021 I wrote to the federal Liberals sports minister, asking that they not close the AIS fitness centre in Bruce. I wrote that letter because so many of my constituents had contacted me, in particular about the aqua classes. Those classes catered to a lot of people who could not otherwise access fitness. They were really well loved. The people delivering that community sporting service were really well trained and really adored by the people taking the classes.

Unfortunately, the federal Liberal government did not choose to intervene. They did not reverse that. They decided to continue to cut the Australian public service; they continued to cut funding. That service has now gone from Belconnen and we do not have it back. I was really, really disappointed to get that response, to hear that that facility would stay shut. We had the facility, but our federal government chose not to put enough funding into it to keep it open and to keep it useful for locals.

I am pleased to see that we are debating the future of the AIS here in the Assembly. We certainly are committed, across the board, to keeping the AIS here. It would be fantastic to see more of those community programs open up at the AIS, to see that facility being once again useful for regular members of the community, as well as our elite sportspeople. We certainly do not want to see it relocated. We will always fight to keep our public service jobs and our national institutions here in Canberra. It is essential that we make sure we are using our facilities to their best purpose, for all members of our community.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (3.55): I thank members for their broad-ranging contributions in the debate so far. I think it would be fair to summarise that there is tripartisan agreement about the desired location—the continued location—of the Australian Institute of Sport in Bruce. That is unsurprising.

The question that we and the government are engaged in, including through the memorandum of understanding that Minister Berry and I signed four or five months ago that has been some years in development, is really around what a revitalised AIS should look like, what facilities it should have to meet the elite sporting needs of the Sports Commission and the Institute of Sport. We are also discussing the dual role that that campus serves, as a number of colleagues have touched upon, in providing both elite and community-level sporting facilities that are utilised by either Canberra teams in national competitions or our national teams in international competitions.

The focus of work with the MOU, in partnership with the Sports Commission—which pre-dates this debate, obviously—is to look at the precinct, to look at a refurbished arena and stadium facilities, and the management and operation of those facilities, noting that we lease the stadium and we are the operators of it. The arena was under a different arrangement, but we have reached an agreement with the Sports Commission in relation to the ACT government playing a similar role with the arena, once refurbished, to the role we currently play at the stadium, in terms of its management.

No-one has really touched on the terms of reference for the review. Aside from the location issue, the terms of reference specifically focus on the facilities that are required at the AIS to achieve its purpose and to deliver on its responsibilities, and on examining the business case previously commissioned by the Sports Commission, which will now be out of date. All of the costings will have escalated considerably from the time that that business case was prepared, noting that this issue has been kicked around by at least four sports ministers that I have had engagement with—three, I think, on the coalition side, and Minister Wells since the change of government last year.

The terms of reference called for targeted consultation with key stakeholders, including state and territory governments. We are in the best position of all of the state and territory governments, given that we have an existing MOU with the Australian Sports Commission in relation to the precinct. We will seek to utilise the MOU in the discussions we are having about renewing the infrastructure that is relevant to the territory, and combine that with the process of engagement as it relates to the elite national sporting infrastructure. There will also be an opportunity, as part of the MOU discussions, to look at the community access issues that have been raised in this debate.

It is going to take a lot more than \$200 million to revitalise this precinct. I indicate that I will not be writing a letter asking for \$200 million, because that will not even touch the sides of what is needed. I am not going to make up a number ahead of an actual process, but it is clear that it is not \$200 million. It will need to be more; \$200 million would not address the stadium issues and \$200 million would not now address the issues related to the elite sporting facilities. There has been cost escalation. That is one of the reasons why the business case is being reviewed.

There is also clearly a need, as the terms of reference indicate, for a decision to be taken on the level of investment required for each major facility, short and long term, and to examine capital and operating costs. This is important. This is what would underpin an investment decision. It then goes on to touch upon the commercial and

financial options to achieve a sustainable funding model, including opportunities for cost recovery and co-investment. This is where the precinct, and the role that the ACT government can play, is unique. We own the land surrounding the campus.

I announced last week, in the State of the Territory address, a significant focus on renewal of this precinct that includes the north-side hospital, the CIT Bruce campus, the AIS precinct and the University of Canberra. I announced that we would bring together all of those partners—health, education and sport—to create a new and improved precinct at Bruce. That is the commitment we have. That is the pathway forward. That is why we have been getting on with it, why I announced it last week, why we signed an MOU many months ago that we have been working on for some time, and why we will engage with this review to address the specific issues and opportunities that the precinct presents.

There is a precedent for commonwealth government investment, both in precinct development and in stadium infrastructure. That precedent was set in Tasmania only this year. That is the basis on which we will proceed with continuation of our work on the MOU; engagement in the operation of the arena, once the refurbishment has been completed; and engagement with this review on the specific infrastructure needs, both at an elite sport level and that would benefit the territory at a community level here in the ACT.

For those reasons, Mr Pettersson's motion is the appropriate way forward, because engaging with the commonwealth is what is needed. They are willing to engage with us. We have a pathway. We have an MOU. We have a way forward.

Mr Hanson: Really? This is new. Not the way it used to operate, is it?

MR BARR: The commonwealth government is willing to talk to us, willing to engage. That is the difference. That is why, last week, we signed the National Skills Agreement, Mr Hanson, after 10 years of nothing on skills, because the commonwealth government wants to engage with the states and territories to deliver outcomes.

We are several steps ahead on this because we signed an MOU months ago with the Sports Commission and we are in alignment with the Sports Commission on the desire to keep the AIS in Canberra. We are now working on how that is done, what is the best investment pathway and how we can help. And how can we help? By bringing the surrounding land into a broader health, sports sciences and education precinct. That is what I announced in the State of the Territory address last week.

I commend Mr Pettersson's motion to the Assembly. I indicate that, having seeing Ms Lee's amendment, \$200 million is nowhere near enough. I will be writing to the Prime Minister, but not in the terms that Ms Lee suggests I should.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (4.03), in reply: I thank all members of this chamber for their contributions to this debate on my motion. It is clear, and I think we are on the unity ticket on this front, that all of us realise and accept that the AIS belongs in the nation's capital. The rightful home of the Australian Institute of

Sport is right here in Canberra. What is disappointing is that, despite the fact that all parties are in agreement about the topic, we again have members from Labor and the Greens playing politics and saying that they cannot support my motion as it stands.

Let me go through my motion in a bit more detail, because this motion is an important one. I moved it because we have seen in the last week the Albanese Labor government play politics with this national institution. It throws up uncertainty for our community—not just for Canberrans, not just for elite athletes, but for all Australians. What this announcement by the Albanese Labor government has done is create dismay amongst Canberrans but create hope amongst Queenslanders.

When this starts to happen it begs the question: what is next? That was the very point I made in my speech. Which national institution is on the chopping block next for Canberra? That is a serious question that many, many Canberrans will be asking themselves. That is why I bring this motion—

Mr Barr: Do they want the veterinary medicines association? It is all right. Barnaby already moved it to Armidale.

MS LEE: Barnaby is not in my party. That is why we bring this motion to the chamber. Minister Berry has gone on about how she cannot support it because it talks about “condemning” and she says it should be about working positively and cooperatively with the federal government. It is interesting how, when the shoe is on the other foot, the tone changes. How many times have members of Labor and the Greens come into this very chamber with motions condemning and wanting to seek remonstrance against the federal Liberal-Nationals government? How many times? And not even on issues that are relevant to Canberra. How many times have they brought those types of motions in?

Members interjecting—

MS LEE: Mr Barr, the very first motion that I spoke to was by Ms Le Couteur, who brought in a motion about the Adani coalmine, for God’s sake. That is the type of motion that the Greens bring in.

Members interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Cain): Members!

MS LEE: Do not gaslight me!

Members interjecting—

MS LEE: Do not gaslight me!

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Ms Lee, take your seat. I will be warning members if this level of interjection continues. Mr Hanson has already been warned. Mr Barr, you are on notice as well.

MS LEE: We are talking about pure politics when it comes to motions of this type. So let's have a look at what every member of Labor and the Greens is about to vote against, leaving aside the condemnation; I just talked about that. They will be voting against my motion, which calls on all members to affirm that the Assembly remains steadfast in its commitment that the Australian Institute of Sport remain in Canberra. I repeat: every member of Labor and the Greens is about to vote against a call for all members to affirm that the Assembly remains steadfast in its commitment that the Australian Institute of Sport remain in Canberra.

This is what we are up to. It is all good to play with words and say, "Look at us! We are all on a unity ticket." Actions always speak louder than words. We know that the way Labor and the Greens vote always—always—is to protect their alliance and to protect their political allies up on the hill. That is always put above Canberra and its people. We will always stand up for our community.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 16

Peter Cain
Leanne Castley
Ed Cocks
Jeremy Hanson
Elizabeth Kikkert
Nicole Lawder
Elizabeth Lee
James Milligan
Mark Parton

Andrew Barr
Yvette Berry
Andrew Braddock
Joy Burch
Tara Cheyne
Jo Clay
Emma Davidson
Johnathan Davis
Mick Gentleman

Suzanne Orr
Marisa Paterson
Michael Pettersson
Shane Rattenbury
Chris Steel
Rachel Stephen-Smith
Rebecca Vassarotti

Question resolved in the negative.

Australian Institute of Sport—location

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (4.13): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) is an important facility not only for elite Australian athletes but also the Canberra community;
- (b) the ACT Academy of Sport is co-located on the AIS campus, which benefits and supplements the Academy's work to support local elite and aspiring athletes;
- (c) the Federal Government has recently announced a review of the AIS, which includes an assessment of its current and future location options;

- (d) a 2018 masterplan commissioned by the Commonwealth found that:
 - (i) the best option for the AIS was to keep it in the ACT;
 - (ii) it would cost more than \$1 billion to relocate the AIS campus to Queensland; and
 - (iii) it would cost approximately \$200 million to refurbish the AIS Bruce campus;
 - (e) in June 2023, the ACT Government and the Australian Sports Commission signed a memorandum of understanding that included the consideration of a new stadium and discussion about development on the AIS site;
 - (f) both the ACT Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister have long advocated for increased funding for the AIS campus, particularly since the previous Federal Coalition Government failed to provide enough maintenance funding which resulted in the closure of the AIS health and fitness centre in 2021 and the AIS Arena in 2020; and
 - (g) the closure of the AIS Arena in 2020 had a significant impact on elite women's sport in the ACT; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to positively engage with the Federal Government's review of the AIS to ensure a clear understanding of the benefits to Australian sport and the ACT community of the facility remaining in the ACT.

It is always foolish, in this place, when you go to submit your motion at the start of the week and think things are going to be straightforward! All too often, things are not as you hope them to be. For those that have witnessed the back and forth about trying to debate these matters cogently—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR PETTERSSON: Mr Hanson—15 seconds! For all members that had the pleasure of watching members trying to navigate a cognate debate, I can understand that the uncertainty was not just with me today. This motion today, I thought, was a simple and straightforward one that all members could agree to. I was none the wiser that Ms Lee, at the start of this week, had similar intentions—that she also sought to highlight the concerns that exist within the Canberra community about the future of the AIS. Those concerns, I think, are legitimate for the many Canberrans that have made this city their home for the AIS; for the many Canberrans that have always called Canberra home and have the great fortune to use the facilities of the AIS, maybe more as amateur athletes than professionals; and for those Canberrans that have lived here their whole lives and gone on to elite performance in sports through the use of AIS facilities—a great inspiration to all Canberrans.

I was surprised that there was such a tension between the intentions of Ms Lee and me. I can distil it down to a couple of key points: some of the sections of Ms Lee's notes in her motion, plus a bit of a measuring contest between the respective political parties about who, seemingly, cares more about Canberra.

On the content of Ms Lee’s motion that is different to mine, I note that Ms Lee did try to highlight some of the sections of her motion, but there was one part that she did not seek to highlight, which was point 3, which states:

... condemns the Albanese Government for creating uncertainty for Canberrans and athletes by considering moving the AIS out of Canberra ...

Seeking to condemn an entity as we are about to go into a review process in which we hope to put the best foot forward for the ACT is foolish. To condemn an entity for a decision that has not been made is a foolish way to go about seeking the best outcome, so I am in complete disagreement with the inclusion of phrasing like that.

Then, seemingly of much more interest to the debate today, there was the debate on the respective merits of each political party in regard to how much they support Canberra and the public service. This was a remarkable debate to watch—watching the Liberal Party stand up for some of the egregious Canberra bashing that existed under the former coalition government.

The decentralisation agenda of the previous coalition government was based on a disdain for Canberrans. Edicts were directed at senior public servants to outline why they should move out of the ACT, and as quickly as possible. The reason was not that it was an effective measure for administering the public service. It was about disdain for Canberrans, and it was an attempt to uproot the lives of the many people that have dedicated their lives to the service of the public.

I thought another part was quite funny. I think that all members in this place hold very strong opinions that the public service and the national institutions should stay in Canberra. So to see this debate, which I think could have remained a very straightforward, simple and positive one, instead descend into something very different I thought was remiss of this Assembly.

At this point in time, in the midst of a review process, for this Assembly to get too far ahead of itself is, I think, foolish. There is an important role for our voice in this national discussion, and our voice should be a sensible and considered one, which is why I believe my motion is a superior motion to Ms Lee’s, and why I would recommend that all members support my motion.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (4.18): I move:

Add new paragraph:

“(3) calls on the ACT Government to write to the Albanese Labor Government to commit \$200 million to refurbish the AIS Bruce campus.”.

I now have a further amendment to my amendment to Mr Pettersson’s motion. I now move:

Omit new paragraph, substitute:

“(3) calls on the ACT Government to write to the Albanese Labor Government to commit at least \$200 million to begin the refurbishment of the AIS Bruce campus.”.

Sometimes weird and wonderful things happen in this place. In this instance, I think there has been some consensus between the Liberals and the Greens in relation to my amendment to my amendment to Mr Pettersson's motion. What my latest amendment seeks to do is to provide a little bit more certainty to the Canberra community about the genuineness of the Labor Party, federal and local, in what they say is a commitment to keep the AIS in Canberra.

Mr Barr has gone into great detail to say that he is not going to support my original amendment, because it would cost way more than \$200 million. This was the figure that was quoted not only in Mr Pettersson's original motion but in the documents that have been made available under FOI in relation to the Australian Sports Commission review that was undertaken some years ago into how much it will cost to revitalise the AIS Bruce campus for it to remain in Canberra. Mr Barr said that is nowhere near enough. That is fine. So, my latest amendment, which I understand is supported by the Greens, is for the ACT government to write to the Albanese Labor government seeking a commitment of at least \$200 million to begin the refurbishment of the AIS.

There is no doubt that the AIS has a vital role to play in our community. There is also no doubt, as Ms Berry pointed out herself in her speech, that we are all in agreement that it must be refurbished. What we are doing today with my latest amendment is to ensure that we get some genuine commitment to make sure that that gets started. That is what the latest amendment is about—at least \$200 million.

Let's not forget that Mr Pettersson called it "only \$200 million" and Mr Davis said that it is the kind of money that the federal government can find down the back of the couch. So it looks like the representatives from each of the parties agree that it is the least that the federal government can put up, and that is what my latest amendment seeks to do.

This is an important national institution that has a significant role within the nation's capital. Whilst we are all in agreement on the sentiment of it, it is important for the certainty of the Canberra community, for the certainty of our elite athletes and for the certainty of the people of Australia that there be some action, cemented into a commitment that includes funding. That will mean that we will see the refurbishment start sooner, rather than later.

I commend my latest amendment to the Assembly.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (4.22): I thank Ms Lee for proposing to amend her amendment so as to not leave us in a position where I am asking the Prime Minister for something that will not do the job. That is a huge risk when amendments are handwritten on the run in the chamber. It is not the way to undertake federal-state-territory financial relations.

Nevertheless, the revised wording at least gives me some wriggle room. To be clear, though, I will not write in exactly those terms. I will need to say something a little more than, "The Assembly has asked for you to commit at least \$200 million to begin the refurbishment." I will be very conscious of the terms of reference in relation to the

inquiry, the fact that we will be engaged in that process, and that, as I mentioned in my remarks earlier, one of the key terms of reference is an examination of the following:

... for each major facility, the level of investment required (short and long-term, capital and operating costs), and commercial and financial options to achieve a sustainable funding model, including opportunities for cost recovery and co-investment ...

Simply trying to shoehorn this into a capital investment does not take account of the operating costs; it does not take account of longer term commitments or, indeed, funding models, cost recovery and co-investment, which is what we will actually have to engage in, because it is little bit more grown up than undergraduate amendments in the Assembly this afternoon.

Nevertheless, there is tripartisan commitment to keeping the AIS in Canberra, and I will take that from this debate this afternoon. When we get down to the detail of what that will require—and the opportunity that I have put forward that will involve the ACT government contributing towards this as well, particularly as it relates to stadium infrastructure, the operation of the refurbished arena and the land around the AIS precinct—I will repeat what I said in the earlier debate, and what I said in front of an audience of 300 and released to the *Canberra Times* and every media outlet that was interested. The precinct plan includes the new North Canberra Hospital, renewal of the CIT's facilities in Bruce, the AIS and the University of Canberra, which of course has been advanced in its campus development by legislation passed in this place in 2015—opposed by the Liberals, I note.

That is what we are talking about—not just the AIS precinct but the totality of that Bruce precinct for health, sports sciences and education purposes. That is the opportunity. That is what we are pursuing, but the AIS is a critical part of that. That is why we signed the MOU months and months ago and why we have been working on this for quite some time. That is what I will be talking about with the Prime Minister. It goes a little broader than this amendment. Nevertheless, I will be needing to ask for more than \$200 million, so we are happy to support the amendment in its amended form. But I will need to say a lot more than that, and I hope that is understood by everyone in this chamber and everyone listening to this debate.

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) (4.26): I am really pleased that this debate was brought into the Assembly today. For those of us who grew up with the AIS and that whole Bruce precinct, with the CIT, the hospitals and everything around that place, it is a really great opportunity now to talk to the federal government about some real outcomes, particularly for people on that side of town, as well as for the rest of Canberra.

It has been refreshing, I have to say, to have Kieren Perkins sign up to an MOU with the ACT government that provides us with that opportunity, because it did not exist under the former government. Whilst not everything has gone to plan more recently,

with respect to the announcement about a review, we have also had the federal Labor government commit to funding to upgrade the AIS arena, which the former federal government refused to do, while telling us to pay for their facility ourselves.

The federal Labor government went even further and said, “\$9 million or \$10 million is not enough; we’re going to add another \$5 million to it to make sure that the upgrade is done right.” I think that is what the Chief Minister was saying. We know it is not enough. We know that the \$200 million will not be enough for the plans and aspirations that the Chief Minister has for the ACT community. It is a part of Canberra that has always been around for us over-50-year-old politicians, and we would like to see it improved and grow to be even better for future over-50-year-old politicians and their children, and for the children of all Canberrans.

I thank Mr Pettersson for moving his motion, and Ms Lee for bringing her motion to the Assembly, because this is an important part of Canberra. It is a place that brings people together like no other, and I want to see it continue to grow, evolve and be better now and for generations into the future.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you want to wrap up, Mr Pettersson?

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (4.29): I made my closing remarks when I moved the motion. I fully support Mr Barr’s and Ms Berry’s contributions to the amendment.

Amendment to the proposed amendment agreed to.

Amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Casey—traffic management

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (4.30): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that Casey residents have a number of concerns relating to transport infrastructure and traffic management around the Casey Group Centre; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
 - (a) acknowledge the ongoing concerns of Casey residents;
 - (b) undertake a Casey commercial and retail precinct traffic and transport improvement study in consultation with the community;
 - (c) provide an update to the community on the proposed use of the Casey community land regarding Blocks 12 and 13 Section 132;
 - (d) provide guidance on how Casey residents can provide their feedback regarding the matters under consideration by the ACT Government so that those concerns can be taken into account; and
 - (e) report back to the Assembly before the last sitting day of the 10th Assembly.

I rise today to tell members in the chamber why I am introducing a motion focused on roads and infrastructure within the suburb of Casey. As members would recall, in March this year I sponsored a petition on behalf of the Casey community. This petition was lodged with the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services, and asked the ACT government to commit to a time frame to fully duplicate a range of roads, as well as a number of other things, including interim measures to ease road congestion, improvements to shared paths and footpaths around the Casey group centre, and further improvements to public transport.

The Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services decided not to inquire into the petition due to ongoing work that the Minister for Transport and City Services is currently undertaking. As indicated by Minister Steel, the ACT government is currently developing traffic models for the Gungahlin region that will help to inform evidence-based infrastructure planning and prioritisation of road network upgrades within the Gungahlin region, including in and around Casey. This work follows on from an ACT Labor 2020 election commitment that I am happy to see being delivered.

The ACT government confirmed that it is also developing a multimodal network plan which will confirm priorities for key corridors and transport areas, including the Gungahlin town centre and the Casey group centre. This leads me to an important aspect of my motion, which is seeking an update on how these works are progressing. Like the Casey community, I am very proud of where I live, and I want my community to be the best that it can possibly be. This includes ensuring that our roads and infrastructure are built appropriately and cater for our current and future demands.

As we know, the Gungahlin region has seen an unprecedented amount of growth over the past couple of years, particularly in the north of Gungahlin, where Casey is located. Many residents have seen this exponential growth and have noticed its impacts, particularly with an increase in road users and demand on public transport. We have to ensure that our roads and infrastructure can keep up with the demand, especially in areas such as Casey, where the population is growing rapidly.

I am introducing this motion today to make representations on behalf of my community. In this term there has been a common issue that the residents of Casey, as well as those in the surrounding suburbs of Nicholls and Ngunnawal, have raised with me. Many residents are concerned that the roads around the Casey group centre may not be able to meet the demands of the current and future development in that area. These residents often shop at Casey, and I do not blame them, as the shopping facilities in this precinct are quite impressive.

For those who are unaware, the Casey group centre is a fabulous shopping centre with a very popular Supabarn and Aldi, and lots of delicious restaurant options, my favourite being Myanmar Corner, with the crispy zucchini being amongst the best I have ever had. This popularity naturally sees an increase in demand on the roads and parking facilities.

Around the Casey shops there are a few empty blocks that are zoned for more residential dwellings and other uses, which makes residents worry about whether the

current roads and infrastructure are fit to cater for the increase in demand once these blocks are developed. I look forward to receiving an update on the proposed use of the community land. I know that the Casey community is very interested to receive an update, too.

As outlined in my motion today, undertaking a Casey commercial and retail precinct traffic and transport improvement study in consultation with the community will help to alleviate some of the concerns that residents have. I am confident that the Casey community will welcome the opportunity to consult on this process, as they are very passionate about this issue. I thank Minister Steel for his support for this initiative and for paving the way for this to happen.

In closing, I am committed to making representations on behalf of the Casey community to the ACT government about improving a range of roads infrastructure within the ACT region. I look forward to continuing to work with Minister Steel on what comes next after what is contained in this motion. I thank the Casey community for continuing to raise their concerns with me and for working alongside me to ensure that the infrastructure around the Casey group centre is well planned to meet the needs of residents now and in the future.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (4.35): I rise today to talk to Ms Orr's motion regarding transport and traffic infrastructure in and around Casey. I want to thank Ms Orr for responding to my initiative on this matter and raising it here in the Assembly.

It is no secret that residents in Casey and surrounding areas have made their concerns clear regarding the proposed mixed-use developments in the middle of their suburb. On top of this, the government has committed to building a second college for the Gungahlin region just down the road in Nicholls. I am not anti development at all, but there must be proper planning and foresight to assess the impact that these two projects will have on existing residents.

As I have spoken about many times, Gungahlin was poorly planned from the beginning. With a cramped town centre and immense traffic congestion during peak hours, it is no wonder that Casey residents are concerned. They can see the same thing happening in their shopping centre, and worse. The arterial roads, Clarrie Hermes Drive and Gungahlin Drive, suffer from traffic congestion during peak hours as it is. Can you imagine what the traffic congestion will be like during construction or upon completion of these two major developments? Recently, I reached out to residents of Casey, Nicholls, Ngunnawal and Taylor through email and social media. This is what a few people have had to say in their responses:

I'm against it. There appear to be no plans to improve traffic conditions in and around Casey Market Town nor thoroughfares to the city or Belconnen. These are already heavily congested during peak hours.

Another response was:

As a resident in Casey now, and nearly 20 years in Gungahlin area, I have seen things getting bad to worse. Traffic congestion is bad, yet ACT government never accept or provide any solutions.

And another was:

I am a long-time resident of the ACT. It seems to me no matter what the residents object to, the government does not listen. I have lived in Nicholls since 1995 and have watched the area grow. The traffic is a nightmare. No infrastructure on roads, and some of the roads around the shopping centres are so narrow.

All of the arguments that residents have put forward are valid concerns for our community. Again, I want to thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion in response to initiatives that I have been running recently in that area, and call on the government to conduct a commercial and retail precinct traffic and transport improvement study in consultation with the community. Development should exist in the right area with the right support and infrastructure.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (4.38): I will speak for only a short time today because it seems as though every one of us is just as engaged with our community. I want to thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion to the Assembly, and I also thank Mr Milligan. I know he has been working really hard on his initiative. We will not call it a campaign, but he works out what people want.

I have been door-knocking, and I point out that it is not just Casey residents who are struggling with the development that is going on. Like Mr Milligan, I am not anti-development at all, but I want to point out that it is also about Nicholls residents and Ngunnawal residents—it is all around—because the problems in the Gungahlin town centre are so dire that Casey is the next best shopping centre for so many people, and they are really worried that similar things are going to happen. It is already tough for people to get in and out of the entrance at the end near Casey Jones. It is a bit of a struggle.

I just want to say that Gungahlin has been poorly planned, and the residents know it. I feel a bit tired. We have the same conversation over and over again. I will echo everybody's sentiments and say to the government: before any further development goes on, please go and look at what it is like at peak times. For those of us who live in Gungahlin, it is tough. I ask the government to consider this motion and check what it is like at peak times. I really look forward to hearing what the answer is and what the future looks like for these roads.

I used to live in Palmerston and at that point I said, "I'm not going to live on the Gundaroo Drive side, near Nicholls," because the congestion was atrocious. It got better for a short time, but now there are so many residents moving in that it is getting worse again. Now I am in Ngunnawal, and Mirrabai Drive is bad and Clarrie Hermes Drive is bad. So, please—I feel that I am pleading at this point, so I will stop—it is important to get this right because the area is only getting bigger, and it is currently getting worse. We need a proper solution. Thank you, Ms Orr, and I also thank Mr Milligan for the work that he has been doing.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (4.40): I would like to thank Ms Orr for bringing forward this motion and providing us with the opportunity to talk about Casey and its surrounds. Construction of Casey commenced in 2008 and its first residents started moving in in 2010. Casey probably has the dubious honour of being the first and

probably also the last suburb that was able to get onto the NBN. The suburb of Casey and its surrounding areas have grown considerably with roads, public amenity, public transport and community infrastructure all needing commensurate investment to keep up with growth. Casey sits right on the urban fringe of Canberra. I have heard it jokingly referred to as South Yass. It is approximately 21 kilometres by road to the city centre—50 minutes by public transport during peak times and quite a bit longer on the weekends.

I have received—as have other members—many representations from local community members about the ability of public infrastructure and services to keep up with population growth in the suburb. These representations have been given an extra impetus, given a development application for a 219-apartment complex that is 11 storeys tall. I fully empathise with the members of the community who signed the petition. They raise totally appropriate questions about how public infrastructure will cope with further population expansion. I do not want to jump to solutions at this point, but I am interested in the evidence on how the infrastructure is going to be able to cope with the extra population.

What I found very interesting in the government response to the original petition is how much it misses the mark. Looking at the original petition and then the government response is like the fable of watching two blind men touching an elephant, with one saying it is a snake and the other saying it is a tree. They are both saying something that is true, but there is no connection or communication going on. For example, the petition stated that many footpaths and shared paths servicing Casey are too narrow. The government responded, saying the ACT government has provided an extensive network of paths around Casey shops for all types of users. Yes, the government has, and, according to 701 residents, those paths are too narrow. If anything, it is a sign of success that so many residents are using those paths and there is also congestion on the path network. At least that is an easy one to fix at a low cost.

There are the residents' statements that bus based public transport is grossly inadequate, especially on weekends, to which the government responded:

Transport Canberra remains committed to working towards increasing weekend local bus services to an hourly frequency, starting with Saturday services in the future.

I note that Transport Canberra has been committed to this for an extended period. I am interested in when that commitment will actually turn into action.

The quality of the government response to the original petition and the requirement of this motion today does make me feel a bit better about some of my own successes and failures in this place, but I am quite happy about, and readily agree with, the concern of the residents of the suburb that is literally on the urban edge—and the first call in the motion—about services and infrastructure in the area and the capacity for future population demands.

Moving on to the second call, which is about undertaking a Casey precinct traffic and transport improvement study in consultation with the community, I recognise this is the core element of the motion or the piece of work that Ms Orr is pushing to be

conducted. I guardedly support it. I will say that there absolutely does need to be such a study to ensure that the public infrastructure is fit for purpose, but it is important, when we move to the next stage of developing solutions to meet the mobility needs of Casey residents, that we do not simply pay lip service to the road users' hierarchy and then go on to promise expensive populist road duplications during election commitments which will have to be borne by the ACT ratepayers at great expense.

I want to see the application of a transport hierarchy that prioritises active transport and multimodal travel. In my eyes, any expansion of the road pavement should be prioritised for active transport use to ensure that the buses and bikes are not simply stuck in traffic. This would also be in line with the planning direction for Gungahlin, which states:

Enhance public transport connections between Casey, Moncrieff and Amaroo group centres and the growing northern suburbs to the Gungahlin town centre.

With respect to the next call, which talks about blocks 12 and 13 of section 132, a little bit of history is required. When concept plans for Casey were developed, there was the idea that there could perhaps be a bowls club on these blocks, which would provide a sports and recreational benefit to the local community. I think many in this chamber and in the community would understand that community interest in various sports is dynamic, and bowls might no longer be a suitable selection for this area, but the community has consistently expressed an interest in obtaining a community benefit from those blocks of land.

Those blocks of land are also listed in the Indicative Land Release Program, and the concern of the local community, the Gungahlin Community Council and me is that the proposed number of residences for those blocks may squeeze out other land uses for them, possibly denying the community of the benefit that would arise from the use of the land. It is important that any scoping study considers the community views, particularly as was found in the *Community and recreational facilities assessment—Gungahlin district*. This assessment demonstrated widespread community support for more community and recreational facilities—in particular an indoor sports centre in the Gungahlin district.

In closing, I would again like to thank Ms Orr for the opportunity to discuss the challenges in Casey and what the government can do to address these in genuine consultation with the community.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (4.47): I thank Ms Orr for raising this motion and her tireless advocacy on behalf of Casey residents and the people of Yerrabi. I was recently delighted to go to Casey shops to walk around with Ms Orr and discuss the many issues that she has been talking about with residents for some time.

I am pleased to provide an update today on the ACT government's significant investment in Gungahlin, including Casey and surrounding areas, that addresses the issues that were raised in Ms Orr's motion, as well as provide some information on the progress of measures which I first outlined in my response to petition 3-23, lodged by Ms Orr earlier this year.

Gungahlin is one of the fastest growing regions in the ACT, and that is why the ACT government is investing in the infrastructure and services needed to ensure Gungahlin remains a desirable place to work and live, and for recreation as well. We are making balanced investments in public transport, roads and active travel, and we are building the infrastructure our city needs to support all modes of transport, including mass transit, and of course the light rail system going through the Gungahlin. We consider all modes of transport holistically as part of our integrated transport network and are investing in new and renewed infrastructure across all modes.

Light Rail Stage 1, between Gungahlin and the city, commenced operations in April 2019 and has revolutionised travel in Canberra's north, providing high-quality and high-frequency services that have significantly boosted public transport patronage. Casey residents are currently served by local bus routes which connect with those mass transit options, and those are routes 25, 26, 27 and 28, which operate at a minimum of 30-minute service frequency during the day from 7 am to 7 pm, Monday to Friday. These local bus routes provide a direct service to Gungahlin, where passengers can transfer onto light rail to the city or jump onto a rapid route, like route 8 to Belconnen.

Transport Canberra remains committed to working towards increasing weekend local bus services to an hourly frequency, starting with Saturday services in the future. We are in negotiations on a new enterprise agreement that is going to inform when we can make sure that we can reliably deliver those services.

We recently improved public transport services in north Gungahlin by implementing a new bus timetable from Monday, 9 October, aligning with the start of term 4, which provides Canberrans with an additional 154 bus trips per weekday. One of the key improvements made through the timetable was the return of 30-minute frequency for nearly all bus routes throughout the day. This improvement ensures reliable services will be available any time during daytime off-peak hours between 9.30 am and 3.30 pm on weekdays across the network, including Casey and surrounds.

Currently, light rail network planning is focused on the options for stage 2, from the city to Woden, before we move on to consider future stages like stage 3, from Belconnen to the city, and investigating further expansions. Investigations will be undertaken as part of the planning processes that Transport Canberra conducts using its multimodal corridor and transport planning approach.

We will continue to also review the bus network to ensure that we are providing quality services for Canberrans as new suburbs develop or for existing suburbs, as Casey is now known as, as demographic needs change based on feedback from the community.

The government has delivered duplications of a range of different roads to provide extra capacity as Gungahlin has grown, and that has included the duplication of Gundaroo Drive in three parts, with the third being completed at the moment, and Horse Park Drive in recent years, in addition to many intersection augmentations and improvements.

In recognition of the significant growth in the region and how this may place a strain on Gungahlin's roads in the future, ACT Labor committed at the 2020 election to develop traffic models for the Gungahlin region to inform and provide an evidence base for future investment. These models have now been delivered and will assist with the assessment of land use policy and inform evidence based infrastructure planning and prioritisation of road network upgrades within the Gungahlin region, with accurate outputs such as forecasted traffic volumes, travel times, queue lengths and congestion delays.

Following completion of the traffic models, as part of the 2023-2024 budget I was pleased to announce an investment of \$400,000 in new funding to develop a transport plan for Gungahlin which will utilise those new models. The transport plan will consider the various modes of transport such as private vehicles, public transport and active travel. The transport plan will focus on priority areas and corridors within Gungahlin, including Gungahlin Drive, Well Station Drive, Mirrabai Drive, Horse Park Drive and Clarrie Hermes Drive. The plan will identify the infrastructure and service priorities required to cater for the region's growing population and transport needs.

Providing a safe and convenient path network is critical to boosting walking, cycling and other forms of active travel in the community, and that is a priority under our Active Travel Plan. The ACT government has provided an extensive network of paths around Casey shops for all types of users. The link between the retirement village and Casey shops is well developed through a network of main and local community routes. Canberra's community footpaths have been delivered over many years to the design standards of the era in which they were built.

Of course, under our Active Travel Plan, we are looking at how we can further augment our path network through better maintaining our paths, building new paths, widening existing paths, and looking at the separation of pedestrians and cyclists. Work is underway to better connect existing path networks and create new connections. This is a significant undertaking, and TCCS approaches this in a strategic way. That multimodal transport planning approach will help to inform that strategy. TCCS is investigating opportunities to improve the path network in Casey, including maintaining and augmenting existing paths and creating new path connections, and that is in addition to the detailed design that is already underway on several improvements to shared paths in the Gungahlin town centre, which were also funded for design in the 2023-2024 ACT budget.

The Casey Group Centre is an important hub for northern and western Gungahlin, providing services such as food, retail, entertainment and health care. The ACT government acknowledges that, as the surrounding region has developed, this has placed increased pressure on access to the group centre and has led to some concerns in the community.

In recognition of those concerns and in response to Ms Orr's motion, the ACT government will investigate the feasibility of undertaking a Casey commercial and retail precinct traffic and transport improvement study. This study would be undertaken by the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate and would

investigate potential improvements to the road, path and transport network in the Casey precinct to improve traffic flow and safety for all users. This may include investigating the operation of intersections, availability of parking, location of bus stops, speed limits, traffic volumes and community path width and connectivity, and access and egress out of the car parks, which is an issue that Ms Orr raised with me on our walk-through of the group centre.

I know the Casey community also has many ideas on how their roads, paths and other local infrastructure can be improved, so, as part of the study, the ACT government will consult with the local community to ensure their input is incorporated into these investigations.

The ACT government understands the importance of providing the infrastructure and the services that our growing community needs. That includes infrastructure and services for the busy and successful Casey Group Centre and the broader Gungahlin region as a whole. I look forward to progressing the delivery of the Gungahlin Transport Plan and the Casey traffic and transport improvement study to ensure that Gungahlin broadly remains a desirable place to live and to work and for recreation into the future.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (4.56), in reply: I would like to thank everyone for their contributions today and note that I look forward to working with the minister as we continue to improve the transport network around Casey.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Motion to take note of papers

Motion (by **Mr Deputy Speaker**) agreed to:

That the papers presented under standing order 211 during the presentation of papers in the routine of business today be noted.

Circular Economy Bill 2023

Debate resumed from 30 August 2023 on motion by **Mr Steel**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (4.58): I rise today in support of the Circular Economy Bill 2023, which will support and foster a circular economy in the ACT. Transition to a circular economy is a long-term goal and will be an ongoing process. This bill takes the next steps to set us on this path. Along with the Circular Economy Strategy, this bill provides a foundation from which we can continue to build in the future.

A circular economy will involve moving beyond the take-make-dispose approach, and we need to properly value goods and materials and move beyond a throwaway convenience culture. This will require designing out-waste and pollution and embracing reuse and repair.

Indeed, members of this place will know that, throughout my time here, I have gone out of my way to advocate for and introduce initiatives in the territory which encourage waste and pollution reduction. I remain very proud to have promoted investing in initiatives like reusable coffee cup schemes for territory cafes and the inclusion of textiles in the draft Circular Economy Plan. There are already many great examples within the Canberra community of people demonstrating this approach. For example, there is the Repair Cafe and the Tools Library and people are buying second-hand and recycled goods. We need to continue to embrace opportunities like these.

A circular economy will bring a wide range of benefits. For example, a repair economy will support economic opportunities and consumer rights, and composting food waste will help address climate change by reducing emissions from organic waste decomposing in landfill.

The first step to meeting the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement of the 10th Legislative Assembly of the ACT's agreed legislative reform item 21 was the Plastic Reduction Act 2021. The bill addresses the remaining aspects of this commitment and builds on the existing single-use plastic bag by targeting other sources of waste. It repeals the Plastic Reduction Act 2021 and incorporates these provisions into this bill. All the items currently banned will continue to be banned, including single-use plastic plates and bowls; expanded polystyrene used for packaging; expanded polystyrene trays; and microbeads in rinse-off personal care and cleaning products. In addition, from 1 January 2024, heavyweight and boutique plastic bags will be banned, which will also be carried over from the Plastic Reduction Act by the bill.

The Canberra community and businesses have embraced the single-use plastic ban and the move to more sustainable alternatives. This has seen a reduction in litter and waste from these items. The bill expands the power to ban problematic products to extend beyond only those products that are single-use plastic. While there are no specific products currently being considered for banning under this expanded power, this will provide a greater ability to address environmentally harmful products in the future.

The enforcement provisions in the bill have also been carried over from the Plastic Reduction Act and will also apply in relation to the new offences in the bill. While it is important that there are effective enforcement provisions in case they are needed, the primary approach to implementing the requirements will be education and working with people and businesses to comply.

Requiring co-mingled recycling to be recycled is a logical next step in moving towards a greater circular economy. The initial consultation and draft regulatory impact statement indicate that most businesses are already doing this and there is capacity in the market for increased co-mingled recycling collections. Requiring those businesses without such a collection to have one is unlikely to impose a significant burden on businesses; however, this requirement will keep material out of landfill and is an important move towards seeing this material as a resource and not simply a waste.

Similarly, requiring food businesses to have separate collections for food organics will reduce waste to landfill and will retain the value of this material in the economy. This requirement will complement a food organics and garden organics household collection service. Requiring food businesses to have food waste reduction plans is not designed to be an overly prescriptive requirement. It will allow businesses the flexibility to develop a plan that suits the needs of their business, while requiring them to engage with the issue of food waste. This will support opportunities to reduce waste before it is created, in line with the circular approach of avoiding waste in the first place. It could also help businesses to identify opportunities for cost savings from reduced food waste.

The bill creates the ability to make these requirements by regulation, and the details of the requirements are contained within these regulations. This approach is designed to make the legislation flexible. The waste industry and circular economy are rapidly changing spaces, and the bill needs to be able to respond to this. This approach also means that the powers to make requirements could in future be used to address other types of waste. There are safeguards in the bill, including consultation requirements, to ensure that there is adequate consideration of potential requirements before these regulations are made.

This bill will support the Circular Economy Strategy and provide a mechanism for reducing waste and moving towards a circular economy in the ACT. Requiring co-mingled recycling and food organics collections and food waste reduction plans will provide the essential next step to achieving this. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (5.03): I am really pleased to see the Circular Economy Bill 2023 come before us today. This is part of the push to phase out single-use plastics, which the Greens have been calling on the government to do for years. Caroline LeCouteur called for a ban in 2019, and I think she would be really pleased to see how far this work has developed since then.

This bill builds on the work started in the Plastic Reduction Act. I was really happy to get a briefing on the Circular Economy Bill. It has been great to see the Plastic Reduction Act proceeded in the tranches. We have had tranche 3 commence recently. That is phasing out our plastic plates, some of our polystyrene packaging, some of the plastic microbeads and some of those really dangerous products that are in our society at the moment. So it is really good to see this next stage.

I am really happy to see this Circular Economy Bill taking much more of a holistic approach to how we are dealing with waste in our society. The Circular Economy Bill will introduce plans for businesses to set up a food waste reduction plan. At the moment, organic waste in landfill accounts for almost 10 per cent of our carbon inventory. That is because that food waste and other organics that go into landfill generate methane when they break down in landfill. That is a really powerful greenhouse gas.

Food waste also represents enormous waste and loss in terms of climate and all of our natural resources. Because of all the energy, the water and the resources that went into

making that food, if it ends up in landfill instead of in someone's belly, that is an enormous waste. So it is good to see that food waste is being targeted. Quite a lot of our businesses—in particular, supermarkets, hospitality and the restaurant sector—have quite large amounts of food waste, and I think there is an awful lot we can do that will really help them to reduce that. I am also pleased to see that there are going to be new requirements on businesses to do better with their co-mingled recycling, and that is really important too.

I was glad that we saw some waste audits that were released recently. They were conducted in 2022. I was a bit disappointed that that was the first batch of audits we had had since 2015. It is really important that we have this ongoing information and that we get it publicly reported regularly. We always used to have those audits every two years, and I hope that we are going back to a two- or three-year schedule on that.

I was really interested in reading that audit and seeing quite a lot of the key targets in this Circular Economy Bill. That audit told us that around 70 per cent of waste in landfill is coming from the commercial and industrial sector. So our businesses certainly can do better, and they certainly need a lot more help to do better. The audit also told us that around 27 per cent of the material that is going to landfill is potentially recoverable. This is why it is really important to get the food waste out of landfill; to make sure that our co-mingled recycling is properly sorted and being properly recycled through the correct facilities; and to really help our businesses step up and do that much better.

The Greens are happy to support this bill. It is a really promising step. It is taking us towards a truly circular economy, and that is fantastic to see. It is also tackling waste avoidance at the start. So this is getting us much closer to actually dealing with the problems in a genuine way.

But of course, the ACT is only dealing with part of the problem. Most of what we consume here in Canberra is not actually made here. We do not have control over where it is made, and we do not necessarily have control over how it is sold and how it is used. It is really hard for us to deal with this problem at the end of the line. That is why these local measures are part of national and international action.

I have often heard Minister Steel share the view—and I share this view with him—that nationally-led mandatory product stewardship and extended producer regulation are a much more effective way to deal with packaging waste, in particular, and with all of our products. I am really excited to see a lot of movement in the right direction on this. It has been a long time coming. We recently had 175 countries sign on to a treaty to end plastic pollution. We are seeing much more positive statements from our commonwealth environment minister than we have seen for some time.

From our phase-out of plastics that we are rolling out, we know that here in the ACT that there is high public appetite to move ahead. I know from how many people write to me about plastics and packaging and how many people were so concerned by the collapse of REDcycle in soft plastics, that the community will is very much here. We just need the national coordination and the national will to really make sure we do this well.

At the June environment ministers meeting earlier this year, ministers agreed to mandate obligations for packaging design as part of the new regulatory scheme. I understand that the commonwealth government will soon publish its consultation draft on that scheme. I have not been involved in that work. I have spoken to some organisations who are involved in that work, and some of the announcements I am seeing are promising. It is a really key opportunity. We need to advocate very clearly and carefully at the moment to make sure that we get this scheme right. It has taken a long time to get to this point. We have to get it across the line.

I will talk about a few of the elements that the recyclers, community organisations and members of the community have told me that they think are crucial and need to be covered. They want to make sure that those new national standards are mandatory, not voluntary, and they want to make sure that they include targets for reducing the amount of packaging used and targets for actual recycling and recovery in locally-accessible recycling facilities—so making sure that we can actually recover the materials in the new materials recovery facility once we have built that. They want to make sure that there is an independent, publicly-funded regulatory body to enforce these, not an industry-funded, industry-controlled regulator. We have heard a lot of words from industry, but we know that, if we leave it up to industry to self-regulate, that just does not work.

The new scheme needs effective enforcements so that good corporate citizens who comply are not punished commercially by being outcompeted by others who do not comply. The standards need to apply to products and packaging that are imported, as well as those that are locally manufactured. That is really important here in Australia, because we do not do that much local manufacturing. The scheme could be supported by an extended producer responsibility levy that charges importers, manufacturers and industry for packaging. These levies are really effective in Europe. They do eco-modulated levies. That means that they charge more money for materials that are harder to recycle and they charge less money—a lower levy—for materials that are easier to recycle.

What you might see, for instance, is that something like soft plastics, really heavy packaging with lots of unnecessary layers, or something with a lot of composite materials that is hard to recycle might get a really high levy. Something that is quite simple—cardboard, lightweight aluminium, and things in plain colours that are easy to recycle—might attract a lower levy. That is a really good incentive for industry and manufacturers to make sure that they are making material that uses less in the first place, that does not have any unnecessary layers and that is easier to recycle at the back end.

Of course, any levy that gets raised by the commonwealth really needs to come back to the states and territories so that we can use it directly in our recycling facilities, our recycling programs and our recycling education. It is not going to help us recycle if we do not get that money and spend it on those schemes.

We need the scheme to be supported by changes to the Australian standards to phase out harmful chemicals and other contaminants in our packaging, to make sure that the

alternative materials we come up with can be safely composted and safely recycled in our local facilities. It also needs to be backed up with really good support, including secondary market development. That was the problem we saw with REDcycle. Not enough thought went into that commercial model for what we were going to turn the product into. From what I have seen in the recycling sector—I used to run a recycling company—you actually need to start with: what is the product we are going to sell, how are we going to do this and how does our recycled material feed into that product? There needs to be a holistic approach and it needs to be backed up with education for community, business and industry.

I am really pleased to see today's Circular Economy Bill come forward. I am hoping that very soon we will get a really strong national product stewardship scheme that will support these local measures. That will help our local businesses enormously in reducing their waste and in complying with our new measures, and it will help enormously with our local problems. It will reduce our waste to landfill. It will make our lives so much easier when we are building a new materials recovery facility knowing that we will have clear guidance on what materials we will be sending into that facility, and we will have clear commitment at the national level to make sure that all of those materials will be easily and readily recycled.

I think it will give people a lot of hope too. Recycling is actually one of those environmental issues that connects with a lot of people across the board because we see it directly. We are not always directly seeing and thinking about climate change, although increasingly we are, and we are not always directly seeing habitat destruction or the destruction of wild places. But everybody has rubbish coming into their house and everybody who throws things away can see the impact of that. It is an issue that really brings people in, and I think that is why it has had a lot of focus here in Canberra. So I am pleased to see these next steps, and the Greens are happy to support this bill.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.12): I rise to speak on the Circular Economy Bill 2023. The purpose of this bill is to implement item 21 of the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement's agreed legislative reform to create circular economy legislation to phase out single use plastics and require businesses to have a separate collection for commingled recycling and organic waste collection and a food waste reduction plan from 2023.

The bill repeals the Plastic Reduction Act 2021 and incorporates this act and its subordinate legislation. The Plastic Reduction Act was aimed at addressing plastic pollution and the prevalence of single use plastics. Some of it has not yet come into place—the next part about heavy bags will come into being on 1 January, I understand.

This bill's context is formed by the circular economy strategy that focuses on its aims to advance circularity in relation to food and organics, emerging and problematic waste streams and consumer goods. We have heard a lot, for example, about soft plastics. We had the REDcycle, which has failed more recently. I think that people are really keen to find a way forward on soft plastics. Food and organics is another area about which people are keen to find an answer, and we have a number of initiatives underway through the government in this regard.

This bill creates regulation-making powers to require food businesses to have a waste reduction plan and require a business to sort, dispose of and arrange for the collection of food waste in certain ways. The regulation-making powers allow for future flexibility regarding waste types and affected businesses.

The bill expands the types of products which can be banned to include any that may be deemed harmful to the natural or built environment or to human health, and any for which an affordable and available alternative exists. In effect, this means there may be items which will be covered under this bill that we do not even know about yet. They are not named yet, but this creates the legislative framework or foundation that means they can be included in the future.

The Canberra Liberals are supporting this bill today and its action on waste reduction. However, I want to add a word of caution. I know that the Canberra community generally is very supportive of waste reduction, and that means also that Canberra businesses are very supportive of waste reduction. Equally, I want to make sure that this does not introduce any more onerous red tape or bureaucracy for businesses. We know that businesses are already doing it tough after the COVID years and are trying to recover. This applies to food businesses just as much as any other businesses. In addition, of course, we are facing a cost-of-living crisis here in the ACT. Additional bureaucracy or red tape can sometimes translate into additional or higher business costs, which are then passed on to the consumer.

I heard during the briefing from the directorate that there is a campaign of education and support for businesses, and I hope that that is successful, in order to make sure that businesses can undertake what is required with the minimum of disruption to their normal business, which is earning money to feed their families, pay their mortgages and pay all of their living costs. So I do want to highlight our fears about further red tape and the need to avoid that.

The bill went to the scrutiny committee, of course, and the committee raised concerns about the severity of maximum penalties set out in the bill. The government response to that stated that the maximum of 50 penalty units will be necessary in cases of intentional breach for commercial reasons, and that enforcement will prioritise engagement and education. As we have already talked about, engagement and education are so important to help businesses through these changes.

I am also keen to ensure that product stewardship continues to be developed. It is important for us to make sure that product stewardship can take place to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, and that people who are, in effect, creating what will become waste in the future take responsibility for it, where possible.

I will finish by taking the opportunity to thank the directorate for the briefing, including James from Minister Steel's office, and reiterate that the Canberra Liberals will be supporting this bill today.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (5.17), in reply: I thank members for their support of this Circular Economy Bill. The ACT government is committed to building

a circular economy that designs out waste in the first place and keeps resources in the economy for longer.

Creating a circular economy provides a unique opportunity to pursue innovation, create new jobs, develop more resilient supply chains and make better use of the resources that we have—all while building a more sustainable Canberra. A circular economy is about fundamentally reshaping the way that we think about waste as a resource, moving away from a take-make-dispose model to a more holistic approach that considers the whole life span of a product. It is about being more resource efficient and regenerative, keeping our resources in continuous use and avoiding putting materials into landfill.

The Circular Economy Bill 2023 takes this very important concept and enshrines it in law. This bill will provide the legislative framework to implement key actions under the recently released circular economy strategy and action plan, including some of the 53 actions in that plan, and including the government's commitments under the parliamentary and governing agreement, and election commitments.

Canberra businesses are leaders in sustainability and are early adopters of new recycling practices, sustainable alternatives to products and supporting their customers to be mindful of the generation of waste. It is in this spirit that I look forward to working with businesses as we look to introduce new waste reduction requirements and new waste collection requirements that are provided for in this bill.

The government is committed to supporting businesses who are taking steps to operate in a more sustainable way. Powers that this legislation will create allow the government to create a level playing field for supporting businesses who are already doing the right thing by introducing new waste reduction and waste processing requirements.

These two new requirements will be used in the first instance to require separated commingled recycling collections for business and for food businesses to have a food waste reduction plan. This is to allow them to understand what food waste they are producing, how much they are producing, and look at ways of reducing that waste that is produced in the first place in ways that are suitable for their business.

With respect to the food waste that they do produce, we will also be looking at how we can require those businesses to divert that material through new waste processing requirements so that it goes on to be recycled, potentially by some of our local food recyclers. The government will be looking at how we can provide great connections, business to business, whether it is through Goterra and soldier fly larvae or one of the local composting businesses, and turn that valuable food waste resource into something that can be used time and time again, and potentially to grow new food as well, down the track.

The government, in the first instance, will require separated commingled recycling collections for business. We have already been consulting with industry on that and on the food business requirements. We have released a draft regulatory impact statement for the proposed changes which would be made under regulations. The draft

regulations have also been released for consultation. We will be undertaking continued public and targeted consultation, and we expect these powers to be used in the future for other things as well. Of course, we will consult with business on any future proposals.

The bill also repeals and replaces the existing Plastic Reduction Act 2021. This was enacted following consultation that the ACT government proposed—I am not sure that Ms Le Couteur proposed it—back in 2019. We were a leading jurisdiction, along with South Australia, in enacting new laws to phase out single use plastics. All of the other states and territories have followed since. We started with the Plastic Shopping Bags Ban Act in 2010. We have since phased out a range of other single use plastics, including straws, cutlery, plates, bowls and, from 1 January next year, heavyweight and boutique plastic bags over 35 microns thick.

By bringing the Plastic Reduction Act within the bill, we have expanded the scope to include other products that are harmful to the natural or built environment or human health. We want the scope of these powers to apply to other problematic products that we want to prevent from going to landfill; currently they may be recycled or indeed be toxic to human health.

We have seen some of those examples during the most recent ABC program, *The War on Waste*. It is great that some of the packaging manufacturers have provided some packaging that is not made of plastic, but some of the alternatives, unfortunately, have included some “forever chemicals”, PFAS chemicals, which means that those products cannot then be re-used. Potentially, they are also impactful on human health as well.

This bill provides powers to look at products other than single use plastic products. We are looking forward to consulting with the community about what products we might phase out beyond the three tranches of single use plastics that we have already identified. This bill also retains the power to ban the supply of prohibited products at public events. These powers will continue to require a public consultation period before a regulation can be made.

The Circular Economy Bill 2023 provides an opportunity to progress the strong work that the ACT government has been doing to reduce waste, design it out in the first place, create innovative jobs, and build a more sustainable future in a circular city. I look forward to progressing the work that this bill will support and continuing to deliver on our circular economy strategy and action plan. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Statements by members

Council on the Ageing ACT—Senior Awards 2023

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.24): I want to speak about the Council on the Ageing ACT, or COTA ACT, Senior Achievement Awards 2023, because nominations have just opened recently. There are six awards: the LDK Seniors Achievement Award; the Capital Chemist Seniors Achievement Award for Aged Care Services; the ActewAGL Seniors Achievement Award for Education for Seniors; the ACT Seniors Card Seniors Achievement Award for Outstanding Service to Seniors; the Beyond Bank Seniors Achievement Award for Community Diversity and Inclusion; and the ACT Human Rights Commission Seniors Achievement Award for Social Justice and Advocacy.

Nominations close on 3 November 2023. If you know any senior who may be deserving of an award, please nominate them. You can see more information and nomination forms at www.cotaact.org.au. I look forward to hearing about the very worthy winners of these awards. I reiterate: if you know a senior who is worthy of nomination, please fill out the form.

Municipal services—mowing

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (5.26): Have you ever driven through our beautiful city and noticed those unruly patches of grass and weeds taking over our road islands? It is a problem that has plagued us for far too long and it is time for a change. Today I want to highlight the importance of improving city maintenance and tackling this issue head on. These overgrown weeds on traffic islands not only detract from the aesthetics of our city but also pose serious safety hazards. Tall grass and weeds can obstruct drivers' views, making it difficult to navigate intersections safely. Additionally, these neglected areas can become breeding grounds for pests and contribute to litter build-up, diminishing our city's overall appeal.

The solution is simple: we must invest in better city maintenance. By taking a proactive approach to landscaping and maintenance of these traffic islands, we can enhance the safety and beauty of our city simultaneously. Addressing the issue of overgrown grass and weeds on our traffic islands is a critical step towards creating a safer and more beautiful city for all of us. Our rates have increased over the years, and that money should be allocated towards beautifying our city. Through adequate investments and a commitment to regular maintenance, we can make our city a shining example of cleanliness, order and community pride. It is time to act and restore our city to its full cleanliness potential.

Ride or Walk to School Week

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State) (5.27): I am wearing my cycling tie because this week is Ride or Walk to School Week. This morning I had the opportunity to visit Forrest Primary School, who organised a fantastic Ride or Walk to School Day for their students. Many parents got involved as well. I would particularly like to recognise the P&C, who put on a sausage sizzle and, working with Transport

Canberra and City Services, organised a great day, with demonstrations of speed cameras right through to the provision of coffee for the parents who also got involved.

There were many activities promoting safe scooter use and safe riding. It was an opportunity to engage with students about basic road rules so that they can safely get to school and to provide them with information about how they can find their way to school. We know how important it is for children's health and wellbeing that they start these healthy habits early. It is also important for school communities. It reduces congestion around schools and makes it safer for students to walk and ride to school.

I really commend the principal at the school, as well as the key organisers, including Mark Robson, a PE teacher at Forrest Primary School, for their work and ambition to encourage more students at Forrest Primary School to walk and ride to school. There will also be other activities at other schools this week.

Youth—work experience

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.29): I want to give a shout-out to a year 10 student I had as an intern in my office just a few weeks ago. Yunrong Zhao is her name, but she said, "Please call me Minnie," so we did. It was a delight to have her here for a week as part of her year 10 studies. She worked on a variety of activities that were brand new to her. It was a delight to offer her that experience and to give her something new to look at in a unique environment, from her point of view.

She worked on a shadow cabinet submission for one of the bills that I was listed to speak to. She went through some journal articles and provided some helpful summaries. She had a look at some old rules for incorporated associations for some legislative amendments that I had in mind. In the last couple of days she worked on a project that just came to my mind—the case for strong civics education in our schools, and she could reflect on her own school as part of that report. She also looked into the Senate's committee inquiry into the national capital. I want to thank Lara Ghaly from LA Education for facilitating this. (*Time expired.*)

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform—28th Annual Remembrance Ceremony

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (5.31): Yesterday I was invited by Bill Bush and Marion McConnell to speak at the annual remembrance day ceremony for Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform. This was my speech:

I thank Bill Bush and Marion McConnell for inviting me here today. These two are some of the most moving and dedicated advocates I have ever had the

pleasure of hosting in my office. I would like to publicly congratulate them for their well-deserved joint nomination for ACT Senior Australian of the Year.

It is stories of loss and forgiveness like those that were generously shared by Marion and her late husband, Brian, that bring people together to commemorate and pay respect to people who we have loved who have died from drug use.

The annual memorial is a time to remember and honour our loved ones, but it is also a chance to advocate for change. Many of the people we are remembering died not as a result of the inherent danger of drugs but as a result of policies and practices that have served to increase the danger of drug use. The criminalisation of drug use has shrouded those who use drugs in shame, driving them away from help and punishing them to practices that, in a better and more just world, may otherwise have caused little harm. The importance of the ACT government's decision to decriminalise small amounts of drugs can be felt amongst this group; a humble move forward towards building a world and something I am very proud to have been a part of.

As some of you may know, I am someone who has witnessed the effect of drug use within my own family. I have watched a family member grapple with addiction, and it has deeply shaped my perspective on this issue. I understand the complexities, the pain and the fear that surround drug use. But I also understand that our current drug policies have failed us. They have not protected our loved ones, nor have they provided effective solutions to address the root cause of drug dependence.

When I first started work on this policy area in late 2020, I must admit that I found the Greens' position on drug law reform challenging. While I'm incredibly proud of my membership of the Greens, nobody can be expected to be lock step with their party on every policy, and because of my personal experience on the issue, the question of drug law reform always took me to a deeply conservative place. As I have said before, I know what it feels like to wish those I loved would have just said no.

Over the two years that followed, I came to understand how naive that thinking was, and I'm proud to have come to a more informed place, thanks to the fearless contributions of so many that have contributed to the Assembly's work on decriminalisation—including many who were at this memorial event.

Right at the beginning of the legislative process, I was on a committee that inquired into the bill. On the first day of hearings, we heard from family members of people that we have lost to drug use who have suffered from the punitive approach that has been taken on these issues. I particularly remember the testimony of the parents. Their words demonstrated to us so clearly and powerfully that families, parents and friends' experiences of caring for and advocating for their loved ones provide often heart-wrenching insight into the difficulties of navigating care systems under prohibition. I would like to thank everybody who shared their experiences, as friends and families of people who use drugs, for the love and support that you have shown your loved ones.

Until now, our approach to drug policy has been marred by stigmatisation, criminalisation and punitive measures. While the ACT has often led the way on drug law reform, our attempts to do things differently have been met with conservative backlash, federal overreach and fearmongering. We have long

fought against this, and the Greens know that more cops, more court dates and more prison cells do not encourage people with serious health problems to seek help. Nor do they encourage recreational drug users to take steps to check if the drugs they are taking and the circumstances in which they are taking them are safe. It is shameful and upsetting that we have seen the results of these harms once again in recent weeks at a music festival in New South Wales. I am glad to hear of changes underfoot to shift an approach by the New South Wales government. As we know, it cannot come soon enough.

If the results from last Saturday's referendum are as telling as I fear they are, we have a long way to go to realise justice for First Australians. We must acknowledge the disproportionate impact of current drug policies on marginalised communities. The so-called "war on drugs" has unfairly targeted and devastated Indigenous communities around the world, resulting in a cycle of incarceration and disadvantage. Meaningful and impactful policy change like the decriminalisation of drugs is a part of overhauling our justice system to end incarceration. Decriminalisation is a step towards rectifying these historical injustices, a step towards the right direction.

Critics of drug law reform, some of whom we've seen try to undermine our legislation in recent days, may argue that decriminalisation sends the wrong message or normalises drug use. However, people who attend the memorial know that the reality is that drug use is a part of our society, of every society, and punitive measures have only ever increased harms. Harm reduction is not about decriminalisation; it is about recognising the inherent dignity of every human being, regardless of their choices.

I know that we have more to do. While we are supportive of the decriminalisation bill, I believe it remains a relatively conservative interpretation of decriminalisation. I know that future work will need to be done in order to drive change, defend our wins and to ensure an even more just future for those who use drugs.

I thank everyone who attended the memorial event to honour the memory of those we have lost, and I thank you for your commitment to a more compassionate and just world.

ClubsACT Awards 2023

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (5.36): It was my great pleasure to attend the ClubsACT community awards night last night, as the shadow minister for gaming and racing. It was a great night at the Ainslie footy club. It was a good feed. There was a bit of singing from my mate Mitch Cañas. Timmy Gavel was in fine form as the MC. There were a stack of hardworking, good fun club people.

It was great to be in a room full of friends, but I would have to say that, at the end of the day, we were not all friends. The room included two people who have done their darndest to crush the club sector here in Canberra. I speak of the responsible minister, Mr Rattenbury, and Labor's anti-gaming bleater, Dr Paterson. I am glad that Mr Rattenbury and Dr Paterson were there, because I think it is really important for them to see the amazing impact that our clubs are having on the wider community. I also think it is really important that they see the faces of the people whose jobs they want to remove.

I trust that Dr Paterson will go back to Molonglo and tell the people exactly what they are missing out on. I trust that she can send some of the videos of the amazing things that are going on in and around our community clubs and flip them around to her constituents in Molonglo and say, “This is what I am legislating for you to miss out on; unless, of course, you travel across to Stirling and join up at the Labor Club.”

Elizabeth Lee delivered a wonderfully supportive speech. Unfortunately, I missed Mr Rattenbury’s speech, but I did hear Bill Shorten’s speech. It was a cracker of a speech from Mr Shorten; it was wonderful. I do hope that Mr Rattenbury and Dr Paterson were listening to Mr Shorten when he spoke about this example: the happiness and wellbeing of the USA as a nation going up dramatically because of the establishment of clubs like the ones we were celebrating last night.

Like pretty much every person in that room last night, I am sick to death of the club sector in Canberra being belted and smashed from pillar to post for the purposes of appeasing a virtuous political base. And everyone in that room last night knows that we have the opportunity to change that in October of next year.

I would also note that last night I had half a dozen conversations with people in the sector who are extremely concerned about the relaxation of our drugs laws, which, based on every other overseas experience, will lead to a massive increase in illicit drug use in public places like our clubs. There is enormous angst over exposing young staff to extreme situations, particularly involving ice, as a new part of their regular workdays. I did not suggest to those people that that was a hypothetical situation that they were making, because I just did not think that would go down well, Madam Speaker.

I do want to congratulate the award winners, starting with the Heart of the Community awards. The Ainslie Group won the large club section; Thoroughbred Park won the small club section. The Vikings Group from down in the valley won the Hospitality Innovation award, as well as the Education, Learning and Development award; and Karin Kaesar from the Vikings won an Emerging Talent award—doing great work in the cafe there.

The Canberra Southern Cross Club were highly commended in the hospitality innovation space—a lot of that around Snapper—and the Visionary Leadership award went to Ian Mackay. The Ainslie Group picked up the Contribution to Sport award, as well as the Sustainability and Environment award.

Congratulations to Harmonie German Club for being highly commended in the diversity and social inclusion space. I certainly look forward to joining them at the Harmonie German Club on Friday night as we get things rolling there for their Oktoberfest scenario.

The RUC were also highly commended for sustainability and environment, and their crowd was definitely the loudest in the room! Thoroughbred Park’s Elizabeth Francis won an Emerging Talent award and Ken Lewis from Thoroughbred Park won the Individual Service to the Industry award. Congratulations to all. Let’s make sure that the club sector can remain strong and vibrant.

Multiculturalism—anti-racism

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.40): I do not pretend to be an expert on caste or caste based discrimination. I do not have lived experience with this issue. But recently I had the opportunity to learn more about this topic from experts who live with this every single day. This speech is not an attack on religious belief, doctrine, cultural practice or a way of life. It is my role, as the Greens anti-racism and multicultural spokesperson, to help elevate and amplify the voices of those who struggle to be heard.

We do not know the prevalence of caste based discrimination here in Canberra for one very simple reason: we do not keep records. But we cannot pretend it simply does not exist. Canberra's success as a welcoming city brings with it an obligation to take an ever more nuanced understanding of the intersectional challenges some of the sections of our multicultural community are facing.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's *National anti-racism framework scoping report* of 2022 has shed light on the profound and extensive consequences of casteism and has noted widespread community demand for the inclusion of caste as a protected category in antidiscrimination legislation and policy. The report identified that casteism permeates all aspects of life, affecting fundamental civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. This discrimination manifests in a variety of ways: direct interpersonal bias, systemic institutional barriers and ways that are structurally invisibilised. Such caste based prejudices lead to dire outcomes such as restricted housing opportunities, limited access to essential services and education, and exclusion from communal and religious activities. The ramifications also extend to the professional realm, adversely affecting labour and employment opportunities. Caste-oppressed groups in Australia have grappled with systemic barriers when accessing government services, often feeling that their unique struggles are not adequately acknowledged.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Coalition Against Caste Discrimination. The coalition is a collection of individuals and organisations committed to combatting caste discrimination and promoting equality and justice for all. It works on multiple fronts, including promoting education and awareness about caste discrimination, empowering marginalised communities, and advocating for legal and policy changes while fostering dialogue and collaboration with key stakeholders.

I would like to thank Mr RJ Niranjana and Mr Haroon Kasim for spending the time to explain caste based discrimination to me. I look forward to working with them going forward to address this challenging issue because we need to start a greater acknowledgement of and education on the overlap of casteism and racism as a key component of recognising the intersectional experience of caste discrimination within Australia's multicultural communities. We need to address the data deficiency I mentioned earlier and then collaborate with caste-oppressed groups to develop tailored and targeted approaches that address the intersectional nature of caste-based discrimination.

I am also examining the question of whether we need to amend antidiscrimination laws to explicitly encompass provisions that combat caste based discrimination, thereby fortifying legal protection for these communities. We all need to take a nuanced approach as we champion multicultural inclusion so that Canberra is truly an inclusive and cohesive city.

Youth—work experience

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.44): I would like to expand on the theme of my first 90-second talk. It is nice to have a little bit more time to do so; 90 seconds went very quickly, as I think many of us would have realised. What I want to talk about is the approach of my office. One of the things I am really so proud of is that my office can offer opportunities for university students, year 10 students and also students from other programs to come and spend a week or six weeks working as an intern in my office, working on projects that they would probably not otherwise have an opportunity to undertake.

I want to give a few shout-outs to some from organisations, just using first names because I have not actually asked all of them for permission to give their full name in this public setting. As many members would be aware, the ANU runs a couple of programs where students, as part of their study, can be part of an MLA office. There is the ANU intern program called ANIP and an intern program in the ANU College of Business and Economics. Those are two of the intern programs in the ANU from which I have been privileged to have had eight different interns since I was first elected, just over three years ago. My office has had interns from international settings as well. We have had people from all over the world who have come here to study at the ANU and have had an opportunity to work in a parliamentarian's office. I am so grateful for the experience that I have had in getting to know them and to see them undertake things that they would not otherwise have available to them.

I give a big shout-out to the ones I have had from the ANU programs: Claire, Oscar, Emma, Isabella, Samuel, Sage, Sarah, and Ulin. Some of my colleagues would recognise the name Samuel because that individual now works for me on a part-time basis. It is wonderful to provide this opportunity to them. I certainly get some benefit from their research. They put together sometimes very comprehensive papers for which they get credit in their own program. There is a bit of benefit to both sides of this arrangement.

I have noticed in my calendar that it is a privilege of mine, tomorrow night, to attend the 30th anniversary of the ANU intern program at Parliament House. It will bring together alumni and showcase the benefits of such programs. It is a very great honour to have been invited to be at that event tomorrow evening.

I touched very briefly in my first 90-second statement on what a delight it has been to have students from the year 10 cohort in our education system from both the non-government and the government sector. I have had three such interns since I have been elected. There have been two this year and one perhaps two years earlier. I was

delighted to have Sofia, Amelia and Minnie as part of the team just for a week or so to give them a different experience and also for me to get the benefit of their research and their inquiring minds, which is always a good thing to have in one's office.

There are other programs that have turned up and people who have contacted me. I have had an intern from the University of Newcastle and one who visited from Western Australia to do a specific course in the ACT. If there is an opportunity to work in a parliamentarian's office, people reach out, and it is a delight in most cases when I can say yes because it fits with my own timetable.

I want to encourage all members in this place to, as part of their own civic duty, consider giving those who are in a really key learning phase of their life, whether it is in year 10 or at university, an opportunity to have an experience in a parliamentary office in this wonderful city of Canberra.

National Carers Week

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.49): I would like to speak today about National Carers Week, which took place very recently, on 15 to 21 October. National Carers Week recognises, celebrates and raises awareness of the 2.65 million carers in Australia. The theme for the 2023 Carers Week was Millions of Reasons to Care. With more than one in 10 Australians identifying as being in a caring role, they are an invaluable part of our health system. Carers are actively involved in our aged, disability, palliative and community care systems.

They are a diverse group within our community. They represent all cultures and all ages and they have a variety of life experiences and skills. They provide unpaid care and support to family members or friends who have a disability, a chronic condition or a terminal illness, and those who are frail aged or have a mental health illness or an alcohol or other drug related issue.

Caring and support covers a broad spectrum. This may be provided daily with personal care, such as dressing, showering, toileting, preparing meals, feeding and managing medications, right through to arranging and attending medical appointments, providing transport or doing housework, shopping or gardening. Some people provide care all the time, while for others it is for only some of the time. Carers carry out their caring and support responsibilities alongside their other day-to-day activities. Your work colleague might be a carer. It could be a student, someone in your exercise group or the person beside you at the supermarket.

I have some statistics about carers in Australia. One in 11 carers are under 25 years of age. Around 861,000 carers are primary carers. Seven out of 10 primary carers are women. The average age of a primary carer is 54 years, and more than half of primary carers provide care for at least 20 hours per week.

We must remember that carers also need support to maintain their own health and mental wellbeing. National Carers Week is one of those opportunities for the community to learn how we can better support carers. Caring for carers, though, should be our priority throughout the year.

In the ACT, we have an excellent organisation, Carers ACT, that are dedicated to providing support for unpaid carers. Carers ACT offers a wide range of services, including information, education, advocacy and direct support. They are committed to recognising the vital role of unpaid carers and ensuring they have access to the resources they need. People can find out more about Carers ACT at www.carersact.org.au.

I would like to add a special thank you from myself personally to all the carers out there who so generously give their time to caring and supporting their family members, friends, workmates and colleagues—generally anyone in our community. Thank you for all that you do.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.53 pm.