DEBATES

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DAILY HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

14 May 2024

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 **Tuesday, 28 May 2024**.

Tuesday, 14 May 2024

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MADAM SPEAKER (Ms Burch) (10.00): Members:

> Dhawura nguna, dhawura Ngunnawal.
> Yanggu ngalawiri, dhunimanyin Ngunnawalwari dhawurawari.
> Nginggada Dindi dhawura Ngunnaawalbun yindjumaralidjinyin.

The words I have just spoken are in the language of the traditional custodians and translate to:

> This is Ngunnawal Country.
> Today we are gathering on Ngunnawal Country.
> We always pay respect to Elders, female and male, and Ngunnawal Country.

Members, I ask you to stand in silence and pray or reflect on our responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Absence of Clerk

Madam Speaker informed the Assembly that, due to the absence of the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk would act as Clerk.

Petitions

The following petitions were lodged for presentation:

Woden—crime—petitions 29-23 and 18-24

By **Mr Cocks**, *from 136 and 417 residents, respectively:*

> **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 ACT Legislative Assembly that small businesses in the Woden Town Centre are seeing an increase in crime, and there is not enough police presence to keep the small business owners and the public, safe.
>
> Your petitioners therefore request the ACT Government to increase foot patrol frequencies in the Woden Town Centre to protect small businesses and the public from crime.

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petitions, having at least 500 signatories, were referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety.

Richardson—shops—petitions 2-24 and 16-24

By **Ms Burch**, *from 317 residents and 362 residents respectively:*

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

The residents and supporters of Richardson draw the attention of the Assembly to the neglect and derelict state of the Richardson shop precent.

The following residents note that:

- the local shops in Richardson have long been closed, with some retail space being empty for 9 years
- the supermarket closed in May 2019
- the last tenant closed in 2022
- the entire precinct is now empty and in a state of derelict neglect, covered in graffiti and a site for dumping of rubbish
- these shops are privately owned, and the owners should be more attentive to keep the area clean and also to seek new tenants or alternate uses for the precinct.

Your petitioners, and the residents of Richardson therefore, request the Assembly to, in relation to the Richardson Shops, refer this petition to relevant committee and to call on the ACT Government to:

- seek a full update from the owner on any future plans for the site
- provide advice on what obligations the owner has in terms of meeting all the conditions on the use of land agreement
- provide advice on what residents can do to compel owners to provide a public good
- provide advice of what alternate use of the land and site can be considered
- provide advice of what changes can be made to planning rules such as purpose clause changes to the crown lease that would facilitate more timely responses and remedy for situations such as this
- report any findings and progress back to the Assembly by 27 August 2024.

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petitions, having at least 500 signatories, were referred to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services.

Housing ACT—maintenance—petition 10-24

By **Mr Parton**, *from 249 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: Housing ACT was recently exposed in the media as being the worst landlord in Canberra and as a result have put lives at risk and forced tenants to live in third world conditions.

The Canberra Times quoted Minister Berry saying “Minister Berry speaks of Housing ACT as being a model landlord and they are in reality the worst landlord in Canberra.

As a result of this gross neglect to maintain public housing properties and Housing ACT's constant breach of the Tenancy Act tenants lives, safety, wellbeing and mental health have all been put at risk.

Several people are living in third world conditions with life threatening hazards that are not being addressed tipping their health and mental health into crisis. Public housing tenants are some of our most vulnerable members within our community and deserve basic human rights, dignity and livable homes.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to launch a Royal Commission into Housing ACT's conduct around neglecting public housing tenants and constantly failing to repair serious life threatening maintenance issues placing themselves in breach of the Tenancy Act.

Macquarie—playground—petition 17-24

By **Mrs Kikkert**, *from 74 residents:*

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

This petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention of the Assembly that:

- the Erskine Street Neighbourhood Playground in the suburb of Macquarie is small, with an old swing set as the only piece of play equipment
- there is space for potential upgrades; and
- attractive, accessible, and well-equipped playgrounds are particularly important for local families who reside near this playground

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

- work closely with the Macquarie community to determine what improvements should be made to the Erskine Street Neighbourhood Playground; and
- implement those improvements.

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.

Ministerial responses

The following responses to petitions have been lodged:

Macgregor—play space—petition 3-24

Ms Cheyne, Minister for City Services, dated Monday, 15 April 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Mrs Kikkert on Thursday, 8 February 2024 concerning improvements to the Pulleine Crescent neighbourhood playground in Macgregor.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter regarding petition 003-24, lodged by Elizabeth Kikkert MLA regarding 'Improvements to the Pulleine Crescent Neighborhood Playground in Macgregor'.

The ACT Government recognises that play spaces can enhance health and wellbeing, strengthen the social fabric of our communities and contribute to environmental outcomes.

In May 2022, the ACT Government released the ACT Play Space Strategy following community engagement and consultation. The Strategy provides a clear vision, supported by key principles, objectives and actions to guide the future planning, delivery and management of play spaces in the ACT.

All requests for improvements to Canberra's play spaces, including local play spaces, are assessed and prioritised annually, guided by the direction set by the ACT Play Space Strategy. This includes taking into account factors such as demand, hierarchy, proximity to recent playground upgrades, condition, demographics, equity, sustainability and availability of funding.

Consultation through the development of the ACT Play Space Strategy identified that the ACT community supports a 'quality over quantity' approach to improving the play spaces network. This support for quality reflects how play spaces are used across Canberra, with many more people visiting district and central play spaces than local play spaces. As such, a key focus area identified within the ACT Play Space Strategy includes prioritising district and central play spaces for refresh and major upgrade because these are much more valued by the community.

The ACT Government manages over 500 playgrounds across Canberra, including 13 in Macgregor. The Pulleine Crescent Neighborhood Playground in Macgregor is classified as a local neighborhood play space with these play spaces containing basic structured play equipment to support most residences in Canberra (as most residences are located within 400 metres of a local play space).

The most recent independent playground safety audit identified the swing frame for the Pulleine Crescent Neighborhood Playground to be in good condition. Given the results of the audit, and the community's preference to focus on upgrades to district and central play spaces, there are no immediate plans to upgrade this play space. Regular fortnightly maintenance checks will continue, and any maintenance/safety issues will be addressed as they arise.

Further information about play space upgrades and play activities being delivered can be viewed at www.cityservices.act.gov.au/Infrastructure-Projects/programs/playspace-upgrades.

I appreciate the passion Macgregor residents have shown for their local play spaces through their support of this petition and look forward to continuing to work with them on upgrades to play spaces and other community infrastructure in the broader West Belconnen region.

Justice—child sexual abuse—petition 27-23

Mr Rattenbury, Attorney-General, dated Wednesday, 8 May 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Braddock on Tuesday, 6 February 2024 concerning the use of good character references in child sexual abuse processes.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 6 February 2024, regarding petition E-PET-027-23, the Petition to Remove the Provision of Good Character References for Paedophiles in the Sentencing Procedure of Child Sexual Abuse Cases. The petition requests the Assembly to amend section 34A(b) of the Crimes (Sentencing) Act 2005 (ACT), by deleting the words "to the extent that the offender's good character enabled the offender to commit the offence." Pursuant to Standing Order 100, this letter constitutes my response.

I thank the *Your Reference Ain't Relevant* campaigners for their strong advocacy, for their courage in sharing their lived experiences of child sexual abuse, and for bringing this petition before the Legislative Assembly to call for change. I also thank Mr Andrew Braddock MLA for sponsoring this petition in the Assembly.

I recognise the significant impact that the presentation of 'good character' references during sentencing of child sexual abuse offenders has on victim-survivors. I agree it is timely to consider what reform could look like in the ACT to make the sentencing process more trauma-informed.

The sexual abuse of a child is a horrendous crime perpetrated against the most vulnerable in our community, and it cannot be tolerated. It is a fundamental breach of the trust which children are entitled to place in adults. The ACT Government stands committed to the protection of children in our community and to bringing perpetrators of child sexual abuse to justice.

As the ACT Attorney-General, I acknowledge that participating in the criminal justice process can be challenging for all victims of crime, but I particularly acknowledge the tremendous courage, bravery and personal sacrifice required by victim-survivors of child sexual abuse to participate in criminal proceedings. Our criminal justice process relies on victim-survivors to not only report but share their experience of these heinous acts of abuse and they should not have to endure further trauma as a result of their participation in this process.

The sentencing process is a highly complex and nuanced process with judicial discretion as a central component.

In recognition of this complexity and the need to make the process more trauma-informed, the Government undertook targeted consultation with key justice stakeholders to inform its response to the petition, including organisations that represent or advocate for victims of crime and for accused persons.

I will convene a roundtable with key justice stakeholders in the ACT, including the advocates of the *Your Reference Ain't Relevant* Campaign, to be held in the next 3-4 weeks to discuss reform options. The purpose of this roundtable is to

identify changes that could be implemented which align with the objectives of sentencing, address the legitimate concerns raised by those with lived experience through the petition, and are compatible with the human rights of all persons involved in the criminal justice system. Options to discuss could include, for example, considering revised language (moving away from the concept of 'good character') or reviewing court processes to mitigate the risks of re-traumatisation for victim-survivors.

The ACT Government is committed to listening to victim-survivors and to making the criminal justice process as a whole more trauma-informed. The ACT Government is already working hard to implement recommendations of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Steering Committee's *Listen. Take action to prevent, believe and heal* report 2021 (the SAPR Report) which made several recommendations to improve justice system responses to sexual abuse, including improving the collaboration between agencies, and training of legal practitioners, law enforcement personnel and judicial officers.

The ACT Government is also working to implement recommendations of the Board of Inquiry into the Criminal Justice System, which arose from the *R v Lehrmann* trial, which highlighted areas where reform is required to improve the criminal justice process and mitigate unnecessary trauma on victims of sexual violence.

Most recently, the Final Report of the Sexual Assault (Police) Review, has presented a number of recommendations for Government's consideration which are drawn from the lived experiences of victim-survivors of sexual violence, including analysis of the experience of victim-survivors of child sexual abuse.

I also note that the use of good character evidence in sentencing has been added to the Standing Council of Attorneys-General's forward work plan as a priority for 2024, and I look forward to productive discussions in this significant national forum.

I again thank the petitioners and Mr Braddock for bringing this petition before the Assembly and reiterate my commitment to consulting further on this important issue.

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.

Justice—child sexual abuse—petition 27-23

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (10.04): Listening to victim-survivors matters. Understanding, and being informed by, their trauma is critically important. We need to learn from victims' experiences. They are telling us how harmful it is to listen to convicted offenders being described as having good character and for a convicted paedophile to have the consequences of their actions diminished because of a supposedly good reputation—particularly if that good character was the very strategy utilised by the perpetrator to gain access to their victim in the first place. We need to listen; we need to act. We must not forget about the likes of Rolf Harris, Michael Jackson or George Pell.

Watching things play out, following this petition, I am increasingly glad that I agreed to sponsor it. It has exposed a problem, and I am glad to see that the ACT government has acknowledged in its response that this problem exists. I am also glad to see forward movement in addressing that problem, with the Attorney-General committing to a roundtable to discuss the best way forward and, in particular, by including the petitioners. I applaud this approach.

Rule of law advocates have some good points, but we need to get them around a table with the victim-survivors. There may be a way that we can achieve the practical effect of what the Your Reference Ain't Relevant campaigners want whilst also satisfying the technical concerns of the legal community. There is scope for creative thinking that can address both viewpoints. We cannot wait forever, because justice delayed is justice denied.

I would like to once again thank Harrison James for starting this petition. I understand he is watching online, perhaps with fellow campaigners Jarad and Josh. It has been a privilege to serve them in their campaign. The Greens are glad to be able to stand with you all in your efforts to achieve meaningful and lasting change for victim-survivors.

Housing ACT—maintenance—petition 10-24

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (10.06): I rise today to speak to two petitions which clearly spell out why this long-term Labor-Greens government must be booted out of office in the election in October. I refer to the petitions on housing maintenance and the site that used to be known as Richardson shops. These petitions highlight the decay that sets in when a lazy, long-term government turns its back on community.

The Canberra Liberals and pretty much all public housing tenants have lost patience with the ongoing lack of maintenance and upkeep to properties, and the lack of consideration of the wellbeing of tenants. Sitting week after sitting week, I come into this place with questions and with motions raising major concerns about the maintenance of housing. I have talked about the maintenance work being completed to a substandard level; the lengthy wait times; the absolute lack of ongoing maintenance, causing unlivable properties; and the disconnect between the program, the directorate and the minister.

The people have had enough. They have had enough. I thank Bianca and Dimitri for getting off their backsides and rallying the voices to try to get things done. When you get a sizeable number of people coming together to call for a royal commission into the failures of government, you know that they are seen as extreme.

I wonder what it will take for the government to open their eyes, acknowledge that they are the ACT's worst landlord and acknowledge the harm that they are causing for thousands of tenants. That is what it is about. My office is inundated with calls for help, pleading with me to get work completed on their property so that they are safe. This should not happen. Tenants should not have to jump through those hoops to live in a safe property. I look forward to some sort of meaningful response to this petition, but I acknowledge that I could be expecting way too much.

Richardson—shops—petitions 2-24 and 16-24

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (10.07): Respectfully, Madam Speaker, I think it is a little laughable that a government member of this place had the audacity to bring forward a petition absolutely highlighting (a) how difficult it is to do business in the ACT and (b) the neglect in Tuggeranong. The Richardson shops should stand for all as a symbol of what Labor and the Greens really think of Tuggeranong. I am not sure that the people of Richardson will ever get shops again. I hope they do.

This petition seems to put the blame fairly and squarely on the owners of the shops. It fails to acknowledge that running a business requires a positive balance sheet. We know how Labor and the Greens run balance sheets, don't we? We know it. We will be $18 billion in the red at the end of the current forward estimates. That is not how things work in the real world.

You can put forward as many petitions as you like, compelling business owners to "provide a public good". What does that mean? If they do that at a loss, it is as unsustainable as the current budget trajectory here in the ACT. Nevertheless, I acknowledge the concern and I acknowledge that there are a bunch of people in Richardson who have heeded the call and put their signature on this petition. I feel their pain and I feel their plight. I think we should all, in this place, be doing whatever we can to provide to people the services that they need in Tuggeranong. Thank you.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (10.09): I rise to briefly speak to the petition sponsored by Ms Burch on Richardson shops and to thank her and Ms Tough for bringing it forward. I acknowledge that this is the second petition on Richardson shops this term. Its predecessor was sponsored by Ms Lawder, back in 2022, and I thank her for her work too.

I have lived in Richardson for most of my life. These were the shops Mum and I used to walk down to twice a week. It was the first place I was allowed to visit unsupervised—about two years ago—and an absolute life-saver for last-minute balloon shopping. The first time I was eligible to vote, in the 2019 federal election, the path Mum and I took down to Richardson Primary School to vote was straight past Richardson shops. At that point, they had been closed for a number of months and only had two windows smashed.

For a lot of us young 'uns, our first engagement with politics is the big stuff. For me, it was climate change, refugees, and general social and economic equality. Getting people to care about local stuff is a little bit harder, but you would be hard pressed to find a single Richardson resident for whom the phrase "Richardson shops" does not ignite a deep and unbridled frustration, a sense of injustice and a civic-mindedness unlike anything I have seen.

I have seen firsthand on the doors that if you lead with Richardson shops everyone cares about politics. I am no different. We have a vacant, derelict building with every window smashed and boarded, and some deeply offensive graffiti that no-one is paid enough to clean. It squats between the local primary school and the local playground. The playground is pretty nice, thanks to recent upgrades, but often you have to walk your

kids past the broken glass and the crude drawings to get there. We used to have a space for the community. Now, if you do not drive, if you are not a confident walker and you live on the far side of Richardson, the walk to Calwell or Chisholm can be prohibitive.

The buses on the weekend—every two hours on a Sunday, still!—are a rare event to plan your day around if you want groceries. Everything I have heard from people in Richardson goes something along the lines of: "Just give us something, and assure us it's coming." I note that in response to the petition lodged by Ms Lawder back in 2022 the Chief Minister advised that:

> The draft Tuggeranong District Strategy identifies the Richardson local centre as one of a number of 'possible' sites for investigation of appropriate planning and non-planning initiatives to support its viability and role as a community meeting place. Further work will need to be undertaken to confirm the Richardson local centre as a candidate for this investigation …

While theoretical commitments to consider improvements to Richardson shops are welcome, I would urge the ACT government to clarify whose job it is, and would be, to secure the future of Richardson shops, to provide a time line for this future work and to communicate this work clearly to the Richardson community. I think they would really appreciate it.

Finally, I would not mind getting a little contrary and asking why, when it is so unprofitable to keep commercial buildings vacant, this one has been kept vacant for at least half a decade? Are our policy settings right, are they fair on the community and, for bonus points, should they include a vacancy tax? Thank you.

Woden—crime—petitions 29-23 and 18-24

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (10.12): I start by thanking Mr Psihogios, who led the petition for more police in the Woden town centre. The government likes to claim that somehow it is building police numbers, but the simple fact is that, in real terms, Labor has cut police numbers. Labor has cut policing, and that is why we are facing real problems with law and order. This has real impacts on livability and quality of life for people across Canberra.

Labor's cuts to policing have real impacts everywhere across Canberra, but this is especially clear in a town centre like Woden, where, despite the presence of a police station in the town centre, police have neither the resourcing nor the capacity to address increasing problems. This is clear both from the number of signatures Mr Psihogios has collected and in the stories that people have shared.

A worker in the Woden town centre said:

> I work in Westfield and I have seen a lot of things happen, especially a lot of young children stealing and fighting, and we as staff can't do anything. We need more police presence and safety for all the staff and customers in Westfield.

Another said:

> As a worker in Woden Plaza for five years I have witnessed the change in adolescent behaviours drastically for the worse. I have been not only a witness to

> but also a victim of threats. With the recent Australian events, it has come to our attention that none of us feel safe in this environment. It has taken a toll, as we have seen fights and brawls within this mall. It is not a safe environment to work in.

Another, a business owner, said:

> Opened two months ago. They stole, damaged, and threatened me as well.

Another said:

> We lose $10,000 per week in theft alone.

Here is yet another story:

> We have no rights as team members, duty managers and store managers. We cannot touch the young teenagers who do the crime. They can walk out with two bags full of shopping, jewellery—walk out with it. If we try to stop them, we can get in trouble because the legislation does not protect us.

Another person said:

> Don't know the last time I saw the police patrolling the town centre.

Another said:

> I have been pushed, assaulted, spat on by the young teenagers. I have no rights to defend myself. They have power over me. We do not have power over them.

That is a retail worker. Another business owner said:

> We call security, then they come. Then they tell us to call police. The crime has already happened and gone is the time when the police can come.

It is not just businesses suffering under the impacts of crime in the Woden town centre. Members of the public, too, share their stories. This parent said:

> I cannot let my kids be on their own when I am in the Woden town centre. It's not what it used to be, where you could let your kids roam around the town centre. But in the past two years they are always holding my hand because I am afraid as a parent that if I let them let go of my hand they may get attacked by the teenagers who are doing these crimes.

This is not a tolerable situation for people across Woden. It is absolutely time that we properly examine what the people of Canberra are asking for. That is why I am commending this petition. I am proud to sponsor this petition, and I look forward to hearing the government's response.

Macquarie—playground—petition 17-24

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (10.16): I am pleased to present a petition calling on the ACT government to make much-needed improvements to the Erskine Street neighbourhood playground in Macquarie. In total, 74 people signed the petition, all but

nine of them residents of Macquarie. Many supporters of this petition live in homes located close to the playground. These numbers indicate strong support.

As the petition notes, the only piece of play equipment in this playground is a very old swing set, with just two swings. This swing set is located at a low point in the park that has been further worn down over decades of use. This means that whenever it rains much of the run-off in the playground pours over the footpath and under and around the swing set, making it inaccessible for days after a storm, unless one wants to wade into a pond. You can imagine how frustrating this situation has been for the neighbourhood children and their families.

Beyond asking for overdue improvements to this playground, this petition asks for the government to work closely with the Macquarie community to determine what improvements are most needed. To help drive that discussion, I will forward to the minister later today a document with specific suggestions that I have received from residents. Unsurprisingly, nearly everyone who has shared input with me has said that the flooding issue needs to be fixed as a matter of top priority. After that, the two most common requests have been for some additional play equipment, with a slide being the most requested, and for some seating.

As one resident wrote:

> It's very tiring have to stand the whole time while children are playing on the swings.

Many families have told me that they have to leave Macquarie to find a suitable playground of any interest to their children. I assert that families who live in older suburbs have as much right to attractive and well-equipped playgrounds as those who live in newer suburbs. Something is very wrong in Canberra if families with small children have to get into their cars and pack a lunch, rather than just hold hands and walk down the street, in order to visit a suitable playground.

In a recent statement, the minister emphasised that this government's key focus is to prioritise district and central play spaces for upgrades because "these are much more valued by the community". I take this opportunity to assure the minister that many hundreds of community members across our electorate strongly value their local neighbourhood playgrounds and cannot understand why, for more than 20 years, these playgrounds have received no attention from this government, apart from regular safety inspections. On this point, I quote what one local parent shared with me. She said:

> Unfortunately, playgrounds such as these fall through the cracks of the ACT Play Spaces Strategy and they are not meaningfully considered at all. I am sure that some small upgrades would go a long way for this play space, and we would welcome consideration for upgrade in upcoming budgets.

On behalf of this family, other Macquarie residents and their neighbours, I commend this petition to the Assembly and look forward to the minister's response.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (10.20): I want to endorse the words of Mrs Kikkert about this playground in Macquarie. As with many small playgrounds in the Belconnen area

which provide a focus and an amenity for families in our region, the government has let these areas sadly decline. These are wonderful opportunities for families to enjoy the outdoors. I encourage the members on the other side to look closely at the facilities that are available in our suburbs, particularly in Belconnen, in my electorate of Ginninderra, and to look at enhancing these play spaces. I again thank Mrs Kikkert for bringing forward this petition. I wholeheartedly support an improvement and an enhancement of the Erskine Street playground.

Woden—crime—petitions 29-23 and 18-24

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Community Services, Seniors and Veterans, Minister for Corrections and Justice Health, Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Population Health) (10.21): In response to the petition to increase police numbers in the Woden town centre, we must acknowledge the trauma and suffering of people who are victims of crime. The damage caused by violence and other forms of crime can cause lifelong effects for victims of crime and their loved ones. That is why it is so important that we take the most effective approaches to improving community safety. By preventing harmful behaviour in the first place, we can prevent the suffering that that behaviour causes.

We need to look at the factors that we know make people more likely to come into contact with the justice system and use that understanding to address those factors and prevent crime from taking place at all. This is a job for drug and alcohol services. It is a job for housing services. It is a job for family support services. It is a job for mental health services. It is a job for disability services. It is a job for education services. It is a job for employment services. This is a social issue, and we can make the job of the police easier—and the community safer—by addressing the social causes of crime.

Woden has been through many years of not having enough sports and recreation, arts and community spaces, reducing opportunities for social connection and meaningful opportunities to engage in pro-social behaviour. The increased pressures on the cost of living mean more people are finding it hard to put food on the table and a roof over their heads. There is an epidemic of domestic and family violence in our community. All of this is contributing to higher rates of mental distress, to increased drug and alcohol dependence and to harmful behaviour that can make our community less safe.

With community organisations, the private sector and the ACT government working together, we are making Woden town centre safer for everyone. Woden Community Service recently partnered with Westfield Woden to provide mental health group programs and a food pantry service from a space inside the Westfield shopping centre. I really must thank Woden Community Service for taking the initiative to find a space to do this important work.

The new Woden CIT, now under construction, will include a beautiful new arts space for performers and community groups. The ACT government recently invested in a new, bigger, fit-for-purpose space for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service in Woden. Just last week the ACT government announced funding for community organisations to provide more support for reducing the harms of alcohol and vaping.

I would like to see even more investment in reducing the financial, housing, social and health pressures on our community, reducing domestic and family violence, and thereby reducing the workload for police. It has been great to see that Woden's business community, the community sector and the government are able to work together to deliver innovative solutions. We should do more of this. What we need is better services and a focus on justice reinvestment, because we know that is what works and we know that is what will keep all of us safer.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

New South Wales—Bondi Junction attack
Ministerial statement

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Tourism and Minister for Trade, Investment and Economic Development) (10.24): On behalf of the territory government and, indeed, everyone in the territory, I rise today to express our horror and sadness at the devastating attack that occurred at the Bondi Junction Westfield shopping centre in Sydney.

On a quiet afternoon on Saturday 13 April, a lone male attacker assaulted shoppers and staff in an unprovoked act of violence. Eighteen people were attacked during the rampage. We are shocked by this and abhor this needless brutality perpetrated on innocent people who were just going about their normal everyday life. We mourn the six victims—five women and one man—who leave behind families, friends and communities, all of whom are coming to terms with this unexpected and intense grief and loss.

We offer our condolences and sympathies to the families of the victims and express the ACT's and, I hope, this Assembly's collective support, care and sympathy. We think of the survivors who are recovering from the attack, whether that is from their physical injuries or they are experiencing distress and trauma, and how they are managing the impact to their mental health. We wish those injured and unwell a full and swift recovery. Our city is full of people from many backgrounds and there will, of course, be people in our community who have a connection to Sydney and to Bondi Junction and, indeed, people who have friends and relatives in the eastern suburbs and have a connection to the victims and others affected by this incident.

Among the chaos of that day, we are encouraged by the brave actions of members of the public and the New South Wales Police Force. We recognise the courage and bravery of Police Inspector Amy Scott who, by bringing the attack to an end, undoubtedly prevented further tragedy. We recognise the powerful acts of humanity of bystanders who took extraordinary action and came to the aid of strangers and those around them, helping them to take shelter and doing what they could to stop the attacker in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. These heroic acts undoubtedly prevented even more terrible loss.

We thank the New South Wales Police Force and other first responders, emergency services staff, and the nurses, doctors and other healthcare workers who have worked tirelessly to care for all those caught up in the event of that Saturday. With time, we may understand more of the details of what happened that day, but the effects and impacts of the event will linger.

At this time, it is so important to consider the mental health of ourselves, our loved ones and the people around us in the community and do what is needed to support psychological health and safety. I encourage anyone who needs to reach out to health professionals to do so. There is information, help and support available for everyone who needs it.

I think we can have every confidence that the New South Wales government and the New South Wales Police Force will continue to do everything that is needed over the coming days, weeks and months to ensure the victims, their families and others affected have the support that they need. The ACT stands ready to provide any support that is asked of us.

I present the following paper:

> Bondi Junction attack—Ministerial statement, 14 May 2024.

I move:

> That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (10.28): On behalf of the ACT Greens, I extend my deepest condolences to those who have lost loved ones in the tragic Bondi incident and those who were injured and traumatised by the terrible event on that day. On what otherwise would have been, and appeared to be, a normal Saturday in April, six people lost their lives: Ashlee Good, Faraz Tahir, Dawn Singleton, Jade Young, Pikria Darchia and Yixuan Cheng.

Many Canberrans will be familiar with the Bondi area and will have felt shock, sadness and worry about the events that unfolded, seeing what their fellow Australians were experiencing. Many Canberrans will have felt real empathy with the people who witnessed or were active participants in this situation and would have considered how they might have responded in such unexpected circumstances. Like the Chief Minister, I want to acknowledge all the first responders, as well as members of the public who bravely took action to help prevent further injuries or loss of life. Their courage and selfless acts were shafts of bright light on an otherwise dark day.

I also want to acknowledge this event in the broader context of violence against women in Australia. The Commissioner of the New South Wales Police Force has stated that it was obvious that women had been targeted specifically by the attacker. I note reports that there has been higher demand for domestic violence support following the recent event, and I encourage anyone affected to reach out to support services when they need to. The ACT Greens remain committed to ending violence against women and will continue to work to improve our domestic violence support services. We will continue to amplify the voices of advocates who bravely share their stories in the hope that we can end this violence.

I am sure I speak for all of us when I say that we were horrified to hear about this act of violence and our hearts will remain with the families and friends of Ashlee, Faraz, Dawn, Jade, Pikria and Yixuan, and others who were impacted by this tragic event.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Community Services, Seniors and Veterans, Minister for Corrections and Justice Health, Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Population Health) (10.30): I echo the words of the Chief Minister in expressing my sadness about the tragic event that occurred at Westfield, Bondi Junction, on 13 April. I offer my sincere condolences to the families and friends of those who lost loved ones and acknowledge the harrowing impact on all those affected by this attack. When something like this happens, it is felt throughout the whole community. Whilst Bondi Junction is 290 kilometres from Canberra, this heartbreaking event felt awfully close to home. As news of the attack broke, many Canberrans reached for the phone to check that family and friends who live in Sydney were okay.

This tragedy was unpredictable, and it is natural to reflect that it could have happened to any one of us or our loved ones. I want the Sydney community to know that we are with them. Anytime something like this happens, there are numerous ways that governments must respond to support their community. We know that the sooner people are provided with mental health support following a traumatic event the better they respond and the more likely they are to engage with help.

I commend the New South Wales government for their quick work in facilitating multiple options for mental health and counselling support within 24 hours of the event. This continues to be available to those who need it. I thank the members of the public, New South Wales government staff, police and others who were present at Bondi Junction and responded to the event on the day, and those continuing to support people impacted. Your community will not be defined by this tragedy; instead, it will be defined by how you have responded to it.

I echo the Chief Minister's comments and encourage anyone who needs support to reach out to health professionals or contact services that are there to help, like Beyond Blue or Lifeline, or services like Head to Health or Safe Haven in Canberra, where you can talk to someone face to face. For those of us who find this event difficult to process, it is important to take the time to look after yourself and stay connected to your community. We are all stronger together.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.32): On behalf of the Canberra Liberals, I rise to add to the comments today. We were all shocked by the event that took place at Bondi Junction in April. The breaking news on the TV gripped many people with the surprise that people could be going about their quiet business on a Saturday afternoon in a shopping centre and yet suddenly be faced by such a horrifically violent attack. It did appear to target women. Women were the majority of those stabbed in this incident, and it does make us question some attitudes in our community about women, which we have been talking about in a range of other contexts: domestic, family and sexual violence.

I would like to echo the comments about gratitude for members of the public, staff and first responders who stepped in to make many people as safe as possible and offered comfort, support, assistance and aid to the people who had been injured. As we all know, the injured people—some of whom were very seriously injured—are not the full extent of the people impacted. Anyone there or nearby on the day will have been impacted by this shocking act of violence. Witnessing events such as this, feeling under

threat yourself or worrying about the safety of your own family or friends in the immediate vicinity will potentially have a severe and long-lasting effect on the mental health of people. I hope that they reach out for support and do not just try to soldier on on their own.

To all those affected, I would like to offer the Canberra Liberals' condolences. It is shocking and we are unable to comprehend such an attack, but please know that the thoughts of so many people are with all of those affected: the families of those who died, those who were injured, those who were present, and of course the first responders and police, many of whom acted so bravely.

There is no place in our community for this type of violence. Certainly, what made it seem all the more shocking was that it happened as people were going about their Saturday afternoon shopping. It is hard to put into words the grief and shock that many people feel. As we have heard, many people in Canberra have links to those who were there on the day and may have been killed or injured, and they are going through their own suffering and grief, even though they may be here in Canberra. So please know that the thoughts of all Canberra Liberals are with all affected.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—Our Booris, Our Way—update

Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Children, Youth and Family Services, Minister for Disability and Minister for Health) (10.35): I am pleased to present the seventh combined six-monthly progress report from the government's response to the recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way review and the *Out of home care snapshot report* for 2018 to 2023.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication of the Our Booris, Our Way Implementation Oversight Committee, whose unwavering commitment and willingness to share their knowledge and experience continues to drive the government to improve the care and protection system and reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care.

As at 31 December 2023, 244 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people were living in out-of-home care, comprising 30 per cent of the total children and young people in out-of-home care. This over-representation continues to be unacceptable and addressing it remains a priority for the government. But it is also important to recognise that this number represents a seven per cent reduction in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care since 31 December 2017. Within this, there has been a 16 per cent reduction in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people on long-term orders with the director-general holding parental responsibility. By contrast, there has been an increase of almost 60 per cent in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people on third-party orders—that is, in stable permanent homes and where their carers hold full parental responsibility.

While we have a long way to go to address over-representation, these figures remind us that progress is not only possible but is being made because of the hard work of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners. The government is committed to implementing the recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way review in full, and the ongoing collaboration with the committee ensures we remain accountable to this commitment and the spirit of the review.

This work also aligns with the government's commitments to the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031. All these agreements and partnerships recognise the central role of supporting the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families as one of the keys to addressing intergenerational disadvantage and the statistical gap in outcomes.

The voices of people with lived experience are central to this work and allow us to understand the wider historical and structural issues that continue to affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today. While we continue to work closely with the committee on much needed reforms within the child and youth protection system, we also acknowledge the need to put more energy and investment into early support. This is a key recommendation of the *Our Booris, our way* final report.

By supporting families early, before they enter crisis and before they find themselves at risk, we can change their interaction with the child protection system. I am keen to share some important achievements that have been made in this reporting period. The ACT government has made a commitment to modernise the Children and Young People Act to establish a responsive, high-functioning legislative framework for the ACT's child protection and family support system. This ongoing reform is part of Next Steps for Our Kids 2022-2030, the ACT's strategy for strengthening families and keeping children and young people safe. It will also address recommendations from key reviews and reports regarding the ACT's child protection and family support system that have called for legislative change.

The changes to the Children and Young People Act prioritise the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people, preserve families, and provide earlier support to families in need. Importantly, the first stage of amendments to the act took the first steps towards fully embedding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in legislation, which is a direct response to a key *Our Booris, our way* recommendation.

Additionally, during this reporting period there has been important progress in the second stage of the modernisation of the act, which resulted in the Children and Young People Amendment Bill 2024 (No. 2), which I introduced in the March sittings. To develop this bill, a six-week consultation process was undertaken, including workshops with the Our Booris, Our Way Implementation Oversight Committee chairperson, representatives from SNAICC, as well as all impacted commissioners, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Advocate and the Aboriginal Co-Design Network.

This is structural work for our child protection system, and the partnership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders is vital. The Aboriginal Service Development Branch is supporting the development of the ACT's Aboriginal community controlled sector in partnership with the community. In this reporting period, the branch has supported new, emerging and established Aboriginal community controlled organisations to engage in the procurement of out-of-home care services. This includes work with the Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation to support it to become a registered care and protection organisation. The Aboriginal Service Development Branch has also worked closely with interested Aboriginal community controlled organisations on their application process to deliver various services to be considered as part of the new Children, Young People and Families Panel.

Additionally, in this period the First Nations Family Support Team has provided culturally safe and informed support to over 50 families. This team is also continuing to develop a new practice framework led by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. A care and protection legal advocacy service, which is being delivered by the Aboriginal Legal Service, commenced in the first half of 2023 to provide legal and advocacy services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who come into contact with the ACT's child and youth protection system. During this reporting period, the service has supported 55 clients, including 28 litigated court proceedings and 27 clients who were assisted in non-court attendance services.

To strengthen the support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers, a First Nations Kinship Liaison Officer has commenced and is providing targeted and culturally informed support for any kinship carer, regardless of where they are in their caring journey.

Finally, I want to reiterate our ongoing commitment to being guided by the Our Booris, Our Way Implementation Oversight Committee. Together we are dedicated to implementing the necessary systemic reforms to reduce the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system, enhance their experiences in out-of-home care and improve pathways to family reunification. I commend the six-monthly implementation update to the Our Booris, Our Way review to the Assembly.

I am also tabling the *Out of home care snapshot report* for quarter 2 of 2023-24. As members would be aware, the six-monthly progress report on A Step Up for Our Kids has been presented to the Legislative Assembly since April 2018, with the most recent snapshot report tabled in November 2023. The title of the report has been updated to "out-of-home care" to reflect the transition to the current strategy, Next Steps for Our Kids 2022-2030, which I launched in June 2022. While the name of the report has changed, the data items remain consistent. In considering the snapshot report, it is important to note the data is internal operational data that can be updated and changed between reporting periods, and caution should be exercised when using and interpreting data in this report and comparing between reporting periods.

This snapshot report continues to provide insights into the impact of the A Step Up for Our Kids and Next Steps for Our Kids reforms, as well as the continued challenges in out-of-home care. For the year to the end of quarter 2 of 2023-24, 89 children and young

people had entered out-of-home care. This is a significant increase from the same period the previous year, when 49 children and young people had entered care. During the same period, however, there were 86 children and young people who exited out-of-home care, which also represents a notable increase in the number of exits from out-of-home care compared to the same period in the previous year, when there were 58 exits from care.

Overall, we see a slight reduction in the number of children and young people in out-of-home care so far in this reporting year—from 826 in quarter 1 to 807 in quarter 2. It is positive to see this number coming back down following an increase in 2023. The reasons for the fluctuations in the number of children and young people in out-of-home care are complex. We know that children, young people and their families need earlier support if we are to divert them from contact with the statutory system.

I have mentioned Next Steps for Our Kids, the ACT strategy for strengthening families and keeping children and young people safe. This strategy provides us with a reform road map over the next seven years. Next Steps makes a strong commitment to providing earlier support for families with a central focus on improving outcomes for children, young people and families where there is vulnerability and risk and intersection or risk of engagement with statutory systems. Under Next Steps, we are working to ensure comprehensive engagement with the child and family services sector to deliver an integrated service delivery system to better meet the needs of children, young people and families in the ACT.

We are ensuring there is strong governance oversight of the implementation of the strategy. In September 2024, I appointed a Child and Family Reform Ministerial Advisory Council. Since the last report was tabled, the council has established clear areas of focus for the next 12 months which include internal reform within the Community Services Directorate, legislative reform focusing on our work to modernise the Children and Young People Act, and cross-sector workforce, evaluation and data reform.

We are also close to completing a procurement process for partners in the delivery of out-of-home care services. The territory will be moving away from the consortium model and is establishing a panel of appropriately qualified and experienced non-government organisations, including Aboriginal community controlled organisations, to deliver statutory and non-statutory services to children, young people, families and carers. The transition to the new providers will be phased and will evolve over time to include multiple service categories. These are an important set of service packages that will deliver the intent of Next Steps for Our Kids.

Work with the Aboriginal community controlled sector will be a priority in progressing this work, especially as over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care continues to be a significant concern.

While I have outlined the significant work underway to deliver against the recommendations in the *Our Booris, our way* report in the first half of this statement, it is also vital to address over-representation in our broader reform journey. As at 31 December 2023, 30 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people had entered care in the 2023-24 reporting period. This represents 17 new entries and 13 children and young people returning to care.

As at 31 December 2023, 25 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people had exited out-of-home care in the 2023-24 financial year, constituting 29 per cent of all children and young people exiting out-of-home care during that period.

As at 31 December 2023, 32 per cent of children and young people living in out-of-home care and subject to long-term orders, with parental responsibility transferred to the director-general, were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. This figure has remained steady since snapshot reporting began in 2017-18, fluctuating between 28 and 33 per cent, as reported at the end point of each financial year since that time.

This remains an unacceptable level of over-representation and highlights the need for continued work. This is why the first domain of Next Steps is *Our Booris, our way*. The work to implement *Our Booris, our way* recommendations continues to be guided, as I have said, by the implementation oversight committee. While this work sits alongside Next Steps, it must also be embedded within the strategy to ensure a broader focus on earlier supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families that is culturally safe, integrates service delivery and leads with self-determination as a core principle.

We are committed to the phased transition of approximately 30 per cent of the existing funding for intensive family support and out-of-home care to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. This percentage of funding reflects the percentage of over-representation.

I have already spoken about the establishment of the new Aboriginal Service Development Branch, which is doing fantastic work with the community to support, develop and enhance the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled sector.

The snapshot report data indicates that the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the care of the director-general with a cultural care plan in place was recorded as 100 per cent in quarter 2 of 2023-24, marking the first time this has been achieved in six years, following a trend of high percentages in the previous three quarters.

Data from the snapshot report shows the placement types within out-of-home care continue to remain relatively stable, with most children and young people living in kinship care placements as at 31 December 2023. At the end of the snapshot reporting period, there were 51 children and young people residing in residential care or other supportive living arrangements. This figure includes children and young people in therapeutic residential care, bespoke accommodation arrangements and in the Community Adolescent Program, which supports young people in semi-independent living accommodation.

In quarter 2 of 2023-24, nine children and young people who were in out-of-home care became subject to a finalised enduring parental responsibility or adoption order. Of these, eight orders were finalised for children and young people who identified as non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, while one enduring parental responsibility order was finalised for a child or young person who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Previously, I indicated that the lower than targeted result in the first half of the year stemmed from a short-term bottleneck due to changes in adoption legislation and processes, changes in staffing across all agencies, and an increase in court time frames. It was anticipated that there would be significant movement in the system progressing matters in the second half of the financial year, and I am pleased to report that this has occurred.

I will continue to report on key data as the Next Steps strategy matures and we see its impacts flow through the service system and the children and families involved with it. As part of this work, the Community Services Directorate will look to build capacity to capture robust data to inform these updates. This ongoing refinement of data is pivotal to support a responsive and agile system to work to address and eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this update with you on the progress of the Our Booris, Our Way review recommendations and the most recent *Out of home care snapshot report*.

I present the following papers:

> Our Booris, Our Way—Review—
>
> Six-monthly update (July to December 2023).
>
> Six-monthly implementation update—Government response and Out of Home Care Snapshot Report—Ministerial Statement, 14 May 2023.
>
> Out of Home Care Snapshot Report—A presentation of data covering 1 July 2017 to 31 December 2023.

I move:

> That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Light rail—benefits realisation report
Ministerial statement

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Planning, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for Transport and Special Minister of State) (10.51): I rise today, five years since light-rail operations commenced in April 2019, to provide an update to the Assembly on the benefits of the realisation of stage 1, including benefits from land value changes, in line with the Assembly resolution of 27 June 2023.

I am pleased to advise that earlier this month the ACT government released the *Light rail five years on: benefits realisation report 2024*, the five-year report, which evidenced the positive impact light rail has had on transport, land use and the economy of Canberra since operations first commenced in April 2019.

The city to Gungahlin Light Rail Stage 1 project represented the largest single transport infrastructure project undertaken by the territory since self-government. Inspired by Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahoney-Griffin's master plan for Canberra, light rail is also one of the most significant investments in the history of Canberra. The Light Rail Stage 1 project delivered our city's first mass-transit system as a key component of our vision for Canberra as a connected, sustainable and vibrant city with a high-quality integrated transport network. With light rail, Canberrans have now experienced what it means to have a mass-transit system, and this report demonstrates they have clearly benefitted, economically and socially, through the employment and housing opportunities unlocked by the project and the ongoing access to safe, convenient and reliable transport options.

The Labor government is planning for Canberra's future, and we are committed to delivering the transport infrastructure our city needs now and into the future. Light rail is central to our future focused plan to deliver an integrated public transport network to meet future population growth and to support a sustainable and liveable city for all Canberrans for generations to come.

Since operations started in 2019, over 16.5 million passenger journeys have been on our light rail network. Despite the transport challenges faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, light rail has continued to demonstrate strong patronage performance throughout changes to our ways of working. In March 2024, average daily boardings were 14,100 on weekdays and 7,100 for weekends, both tracking well towards pre-pandemic levels, with the first quarter of 2024 experiencing the highest patronage compared to comparable quarters since operations commenced. Even as public patronage recovered to pre-pandemic levels, light rail maintained its popularity, with 20 per cent of all trips across the public transport network made on light rail services, and this year it has gone well above 20 per cent week to week, and this is more than Canberra's top three rapid buses combined.

Customers have demonstrated their satisfaction with light rail, with an online survey conducted in October 2020 recording over 43 per cent of passengers stating they had not used public transport in the ACT before light rail operations commenced, again demonstrating the integral role light rail plays in attracting and retaining passengers to Canberra's public transport network.

Light rail has delivered an accessible, frequent and reliable service, with 99.98 per cent of services delivered and running on time since operations commenced. Running on their own dedicated corridor with priority at intersections, services were able to be increased to every five minutes during morning peaks to meet customer demand.

Regular customer surveys are undertaken, which have demonstrated consistently high levels of customer satisfaction. In the most recent survey undertaken in September 2023, 95 per cent of light rail passengers expressed satisfaction with services and almost all participants would recommend light rail to their friends and family.

Transport Canberra and the operator of light rail, Canberra Metro, have been able to achieve this through close, collaborative and respectful partnerships, resulting in them consistently exceeding targets against key performance indicators measured under the public private partnership contract in the territory.

The strong popularity of light rail has also resulted in broader benefits to the road network through a significant reduction of average motor vehicle trips in high-use areas along the corridor. For example, at the Northbourne Avenue and Macarthur Avenue intersection, light rail has contributed to a total daily volume reduction of 21 per cent in 2019 and 18 per cent in 2023. Light rail has also reduced carbon emissions by being powered by 100 per cent renewable energy and supporting Canberrans to shift their mode of travel away from petrol and diesel vehicles onto public transport.

Furthermore, light rail continues to support the government's active travel policies and has resulted in health benefits. Light rail stops are connected to the local cycling network. Each light rail vehicle has space for four bicycles, and bike racks are also installed at access points adjacent to light rail stops along the alignment. Based on the September 2023 customer satisfaction survey, the majority of rail users report using active travel as part of their journey, with over 90 per cent walking as part of their journey and approximately one in 10 combining light rail travel with cycling.

Unlike other forms of public transport, the benefits of light rail go beyond public transport patronage. People want to live and work near light rail stops, generating land-use benefits, with population growth 2.5 per cent higher along the corridor than in the rest of the ACT. This is supported by significant land use and development along the corridor providing high levels of access for patrons, with approximately $2.3 billion in construction having been given development approval or being currently under consideration by the authority in suburbs directly adjacent to Light Rail Stage 1—and that is just the first five years.

Since 2016, the light rail corridor has seen a strong shift away from building investment in separate houses and towards higher density housing. Since 2016, there were 6,100 new dwelling approvals along the corridor, with unimproved land values of residential non-unit blocks within the corridor increasing by 113 per cent between 2011 and 2023 and by 78 per cent for other residential blocks. That is ten percentage points higher than the ACT average.

The most notable increase in unimproved land values that occurred between 2011 and 2018 is attributed to the announcement of light rail activating development in the corridor and the replacement of existing lower-value land uses with higher-value land uses, more homes with higher density residential units and mixed residential-commercial developments. This trend is consistent with the experiences of major projects in the transport space in other jurisdictions.

The more efficient use of land and urban regeneration supports the growing population of residents along the corridor, along with business and the wider community. Redevelopment of the corridor, particularly Northbourne Avenue, is attracting new businesses and commercial operations. Between 2018 and 2022, business growth increased by 26.4 per cent in Gungahlin suburbs along the corridor and by 19.7 per cent in the city suburbs along the corridor.

Land release and purchases along the light rail corridor is reflective of the strong commercial appetite for future development around the light rail corridor as it expands

into stage 2A. Canberra's continued development as a compact and efficient city will provide increased density in where and how people live, while making the best use of existing land, infrastructure and assets to provide for a higher quality of living.

In addition to revitalising precincts, encouraging investment in urban mixed-use developments and contributing to business growth along the corridor, stage 1 of light rail has directly and indirectly created thousands of jobs and showcased Canberra as a modern and progressive capital city.

Light rail's operator, Canberra Metro Operations, currently rely on over 110 local employees who contribute as customer support officers, light rail drivers, technicians, engineers, cleaners, gardeners and support staff. Additionally, construction of Light Rail Stage 2A is playing an important role in supporting more construction jobs as we support the ACT's economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Significant and consistent usage of light rail indicates that Canberrans have seen and want to experience the broader economic and social benefits that light rail has brought to our city, and this has been especially evident where light rail has demonstrated that it has the capability and capacity to move large numbers of visitors and residents around our city.

As a part of the ACT's integrated public transport network, Light Rail Stage 1 connects the service and entertainment precincts of Civic, Braddon, Dickson, and Gungahlin as well as revitalised precincts and urban mixed-use developments, such as New Acton, Verity Lane, Braddon, Dickson Village and Kambri at the Australian National University. Light rail has also demonstrated its ability to move large numbers of visitors around our city during large events such as the National Multicultural Festival, Spilt Milk, Summernats and the Royal Canberra Show.

The first five years of light rail operations is an opportunity to reflect on the project's achievements and lessons learnt to guide future delivery. The ACT government will continue to leverage the productive relationship between the territory and Canberra Metro and collaboration with our counterparts across Australia and New Zealand to deliver quality public transport solutions.

Harnessing new and emerging technologies to improve our light rail offering will also play a part in the future of light rail, with a prototype of the green track currently being trialled, as well as light rail vehicles being fitted with batteries to provide a wire-free light rail solution for part of the journey between the city and Woden.

The ACT government is committed to continuous improvement to meet the needs and expectations of Canberrans and visitors to our city travelling on light rail, and we will continue to engage with our patrons and the broader community in doing so. Light rail represents a significant investment in the lives of Canberrans. It is not just a commitment to delivering more sustainable transport options, but a reflection of who we are as a community: forward focused, innovative and environmentally conscious.

The delivery of stage 2A of light rail is currently underway. A dedicated community engagement approach has been adopted for stage 2 to assist the community to

understand and engage with the project. The community was invited to review and provide feedback on the documentation submitted as part of the works approval application with the National Capital Authority and the development application with the planning and land authority, which included plans, designs and an environmental assessment.

The ACT government welcomes the additional $50 million committed by the Albanese Labor government earlier this week, and in the budget tonight, towards the planning and design stages of Light Rail Stage 2B to Woden. Public consultation on the draft EIS for stage 2B is underway, and I encourage people living along the future line and public transport users to get involved by having their say on the design of their transport corridor.

Light rail is a long-term investment for the city of Canberra, and it is my pleasure to present *Light rail five years on: benefits realisation report 2024.* I look forward to working with my territory and Commonwealth colleagues to deliver further stages of light rail to the Canberra community into the future.

I present:

> Light Rail—
>
> Five Years On: Benefits Realisation Report 2024, undated.
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> Stage 1—Benefits realisation five years on (in response to Light Rail Stage 2B—Cost benefit assessment—Assembly resolution of 27 June 2023)—Ministerial statement, 14 May 2024.

I move:

> That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.03): The *Light rail five years on: benefits realisation report 2024* reeks of desperation. The government finds itself in a sticky position, because they are very clearly losing the communications battle on stage 2 of the tram. Is it not fascinating, in itself, when two political opponents go into battle on policy development and communications and one of them has a thousand times the resources of the other? I do not have ministerial staff. I do not have a directorate. I do not have a $100 million contract with AECOM to examine the Woden route. I do not have access to all of the government's survey data, and I do not have the ability to put hundreds of thousands of propaganda newsletters—at taxpayers' expense—in letterboxes right across the city every month.

This is David and Goliath. This is not like Russia versus Ukraine. This is like Russia versus the Solomon Islands. When you consider the armoury at his disposal, you have to wonder how Mr Steel could possibly find himself on the back foot in this policy and communications battle, but he is. I have been out in the suburbs, and he is. The government is clearly losing the communications battle on stage 2 of the tram and now feels the need to inflate numbers and make some quite preposterous assumptions in an attempt to defend the indefensible. Stage 1 of the tram was designed to tackle the genuine public transport problem between Gungahlin and Civic. There is no such problem between Woden and Civic. Indeed, the tram will likely double the travel time between the two.

Stage 1 of the tram involved two straight, flat roads, and those roads were always going to deliver substantial amounts of medium and high-density residential development. Stage 2, although potentially six times more expensive, has about a third of that potential, at best. The report seems to assert that, had the tram not been constructed between Gungahlin and Civic, there would have been zero development, that nothing would have been built in that corridor since 2016 in our fast-growing city. I think it is ludicrous to assume that every single brick laid between Civic and Gungahlin in the last eight years was because of the tram.

I love that the report suggests that the tram has resulted in the reduction of cars on Northbourne Avenue. Why do you think, Mr Assistant Speaker, there are fewer cars on Northbourne Avenue? I would suggest that, if you set up a 40 kilometre per hour tax-boosting speed trap on a major interstate link road, if 10 to 15 per cent of the city's population score large fines in that speed trap, and if a substantial number of those motorists actually lose their licence, people might find another road to drive on. Hashtag: #justsayin, I think they might find another road to drive on!

Canberrans have learned that this government cannot be trusted to mark its own homework. Do you remember the last time the ACT government put out a sizeable document about the benefits of the tram—the business case for stage 2A? We certainly do, and the Auditor-General certainly does. The Auditor-General was scathing in their criticism of the business case, accusing the government of grossly exaggerating the wider economic benefits of the project while at the same time leaving out many of the costs. The Auditor-General, indeed, called upon the government to do it again—which it has not.

I have a challenge for Mr Steel and the government. I have been out and about, as you would expect, knocking on doors in Tuggeranong. The negative feeling for the tram down in the deep south is palpable. It is massive. It is extreme.

I challenge the government to put out an *Our Canberra* newsletter with a big headline on the front that says, "Light Rail is Coming to Tuggeranong", like they have in the past. I challenge them to do that again now and see what happens—see what the response is. I think people might actually march on the Legislative Assembly.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.07): The ACT Greens have a vision for Canberra. It is a vision of a connected, sustainable city that prioritises people and the environment. We want a city that grows sustainably and that learns from the lessons of the past to build a future which is better than the present we have inherited. We need to make long-term decisions to get there, and none of that work is easy. Sometimes it is controversial but it is often proven right, once the dust settles and people can see the final product.

That is what Light Rail Stage 1 represents. It is a great achievement of public transport. It is a really good achievement of the Greens in government. It is something we need to expand on, and I was really pleased to hear the benefits outlined by the transport minister in his statement. We know that light rail is working.

In 2012, Canberra was a city of cars with the occasional bus. We did not yet know it, but we were at the beginning of a record decade of growth in our city as more and more people chose to live in this progressive capital—chose this place as where they wanted

to live. But a growing city experiences growing pains, and we are still seeing these today, just like we saw them back then. Our city limits keep expanding and our historically unsustainable town planning is seeing us consuming more bushland, not leaving enough room for trees and green space.

Back then, every year we were seeing more people drive wherever they needed to go. Obviously, that was not going to work, because we put more than 10,000 new Canberrans into our city every single year. So the Greens and Labor decided that long-term, reliable, fixed infrastructure would be the only way to ensure our growing city could meet its future planning and transport needs. We have seen transit-oriented development as an ideal in our planning documents for many years, even before 2012. The 2004 *Canberra spatial plan* mentions it, and I am sure it goes back even further. But, without a guarantee that the public transport corridor you are using will still be there in a decade or two, or five, you are not going to buy a home based on a bus route. It is much harder to plan your city for the long term and to deliver high-quality transit oriented development without the certainty of this fixed infrastructure. That is why we made a commitment to start the city-wide light rail network. It had to start somewhere, and that somewhere was the fast-growing district of Gungahlin.

Many people at the time said it could not or should not be done. Light rail has always had sceptics, and many of those who were sceptical of light rail from Gungahlin to the City now accept that it was a good decision. It has been incredibly successful. Many of the people who opposed it in 2012 and in 2016 are now seeing that it is working, and they are saying that this works. There are some who have dug in and some who cannot accept that stage 1 has been a remarkable success. I encourage these opponents to please speak to some of the people who are using Light Rail Stage 1 every day—the people who are using it and loving it.

People are renting and buying new homes on the light rail corridor specifically because they know they will be on reliable public transport for the next 50 years. They are making that decision about where to live because of light rail, and we cannot say the same for bus routes.

Light Rail Stage 1 has been successful; even many of the original critics now admit this. Some are pivoting and saying, "Of course stage 1 was successful, but you do not know, there is no way you can tell, if the next stage will be too." Again, if we do not learn from lessons of the past we will be doomed to repeat them. The criticisms of stage 1 were not borne out in practice. The forward-looking decision to make a long-term investment into our city has been worth it. We have seen more homes and more people choosing public transport—more people choosing this reliable, comfortable and accessible choice. We can and should deliver these benefits city wide to everyone in Canberra.

Canberra has not stopped growing. We have not stopped needing housing; we need it more than ever. According to the benefits realisation report, there were 1,278 new dwelling approvals in Gungahlin suburbs along the corridor over the period of 2019 to 2023. There were a further 4,840 new dwelling approvals in the city suburbs along the corridor over that same period. My office did our own numbers ahead of this report coming out. The completed developments on Northbourne Avenue have already seen more than a thousand new homes built across five projects, with more than 6,600 further homes planned or under construction in the inner north light rail corridor alone.

Light Rail Stage 1 has been open for five years now. We have seen five years where the success has been self-evident and has compounded. Many of the original critics have now come to accept that this is a transport system that works and that Canberrans like to use. I would love to see this continued long-term vision for Canberra. We need to agree that we are growing and changing and that we need to become more sustainable. We need to get on board with the long-term planning for a city-wide light rail network and the associated new homes that will be delivered alongside this.

Light rail will not be built overnight, and it will not be cheap. It is infrastructure that we will use for at least 50 years. It will shape our city and it is a long-term decision for a sustainable future. We need to make these decisions today for our growing and changing city.

We have seen light rail work, so let's get on board with the city-wide network and bring the great benefits of this project to Belconnen, Woden, Tuggeranong and Molonglo. Let's not be a city that had a good idea once and then gave up on it in favour of short-term decision making. We need to build the city today that we need for tomorrow.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Agriculture—urban agriculture—update
Ministerial statement

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Parks and Land Management, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (11.13): I rise to provide the Assembly with an update on the work of the government in response to the motion proposed by Mr Braddock MLA on 25 October 2023 and subsequently passed in the Assembly. This resolution focuses on urban agriculture and the opportunities that can be of significant benefit to the Canberra community. I thank Mr Braddock for bringing the Assembly's attention to this very important opportunity and to an issue receiving considerable attention at a national level.

We already know that there is a huge interest and effort by the Canberra community in growing their own food. Community gardens and urban agriculture enterprises have been established across Canberra, with strong interest to expand both. We have heard from community members that growing food has helped many to connect with their communities, work with and enhance the local ecology, and help reduce our environmental footprint.

The Canberra region local food strategy, which is being finalised by the government, aims to ensure that Canberrans have access to healthy, affordable, locally grown and sustainably produced food. The strategy will support the local food economy to achieve this ambitious goal. There is excellent alignment between this resolution and the *Draft Canberra region local food strategy*, which has been developed in a highly collegiate manner across government, industry and the community and has been shown to have significant community support and enthusiasm for its implementation.

Mr Braddock's resolution called on the government to investigate opportunities for urban agriculture activities co-located with suitable ACT heritage sites. This resolution refers to unutilised public lands and the investigation of educational programs.

I am pleased to advise that the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate has been working with other agencies and directorates to identify suitable ACT heritage sites for the urban agriculture activities mentioned in the resolution. Some of the sites under consideration include those managed by the Cultural Facilities Corporation, specifically Lanyon Homestead and Mugga-Mugga Cottage. They are both rural properties with rich ecological, Aboriginal and pastoral history. I am excited to see what opportunities these properties may provide for the community, while protecting their heritage and existing uses as cultural museums. I wanted to particularly acknowledge the Cultural Facilities Corporation for this positive response to the objectives in the resolution.

There is also the opportunity to explore the potential of other historic sites managed by the ACT government. The Suburban Land Agency is currently assessing the potential of Horse Park Homestead to support community food production and associated commercial opportunities. We must ensure that potential sites are suited to growing food and associated activities. These sites need productive soils free from contamination, reliable and affordable access to water and accessibility for the whole community.

Some of our heritage properties, such as Lanyon, are challenging to reach for those reliant on public transport. I am again pleased to advise that the ACT government has expanded the search to consider sites beyond heritage properties. Both Transport Canberra and City Services and the Suburban Land Agency have committed to undertaking robust desktop exercises to identify underutilised ACT government sites and infill sites for suitability for the activities mentioned in the original motion. The Suburban Land Agency will also investigate land that comes into its custodianship for food production suitability, whether ongoing or temporary.

With respect to education programs, I am sure we will all agree that this is a complex area that requires a lot more expert investigation and engagement. But the potential benefits are enormous in expanding community literacy in various subject areas of urban agriculture. These include: assisting ACT residents to learn how to grow their own food and to choose local healthy options; sharing farming and food growing knowledge between ACT residents participating in community gardening; learning opportunities about native bush foods and traditional agriculture practices; learning opportunities about how modern land management practices can contribute to emission reduction by via carbon sequestration and water-wise food production and climate sensitive sustainable farming practices associated with livestock, fertilisers and animal feed; and understanding ecologically sustainable production practices that improve the urban ecosystem by creating pollination corridors and reducing urban heat island impacts through increased green cover, habitat and voluntary environmental participation.

Going forward, the ACT government is developing the implementation plan for the Canberra region local food strategy, which is expected to directly address the areas mentioned in the resolution. The government is giving ongoing consideration to the resourcing that may be needed to support urban agriculture activities, including education and social and economic participation opportunities.

The implementation plan is being co-designed with a community reference group. Membership of this group includes representatives from the Ngunnawal community, volunteer and community organisations, urban farming groups, rural farmers, academics, local community councils and retailers.

Fiona Buining, whose 2020 Churchill Fellowship report was presented to the Assembly as part of this original motion, is also a member of the community reference group. The group has provided feedback on the initial ideas of how heritage sites could support urban agricultural activities, should funding be secured later this year. EPSDD is continuing to refine those plans with the group.

The implementation plan is also being informed by a detailed stakeholder survey as part of the Agriculture and Food in the ACT study. This, combined with the stakeholder engagement being led by the community reference group, will ensure the government is well placed to make strategic and well-formed decisions on urban agriculture related matters.

I acknowledge the tremendous support this initiative has been given by our fellow directorates and the passion with which it has been supported by our industry and our community representatives. This resolution has been a great opportunity to further support the local food strategy and I look forward to continuing to work with Minister Cheyne and directorate officials to ensure we meet the expectations of a highly supportive Canberra community.

I present the following paper:

> Urban agriculture—Assembly resolution of 25 October 2023—Government update—Ministerial statement, 14 May 2024.

I move:

> That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (11.21): I rise to speak on this ministerial statement on urban agriculture. As I previously noted, the Majura Valley has many famers, and they offer enormous potential in terms of providing niche agricultural products and agricultural experiences right here on our doorstep. They are already working very hard, yet this government refuses to give these leaseholders any certainty over the future of their leaseholds.

On Friday, I received a response to a question I put on notice about the processes involved in having the land transferred from the commonwealth to the ACT, and then granting 25 year leases to the Majura Valley leaseholders. Minister Steel's answer is far from reassuring. What sticks out a mile is that the government still can give no date for the transfer of this land to the ACT. We are told discussions between officials are continuing. We do not know how long for, because there are no statutory time frames applicable.

We are also told that Chief Minister Barr wrote to the Minister for Finance on 31 January 2024, something Senator Gallagher either could not recall or was not aware of two weeks later when she was asked about this in Senate estimates. All this is completely unsatisfactory, especially in light of the ministerial statement we have just heard. It is a complete failure by the ACT government and the senator to care for their constituents and also to provide an opportunity to promote urban and semi-urban agriculture.

As we know, Minster Steel still will not give the guarantee that his predecessor Minister Gentleman gave, to actually give these leaseholders a 25-year lease once the commonwealth land is transferred. Minister Vassarotti has said in her statement just now that the government is supporting urban agriculture. This is great news. I say let us get on with the job and give the Majura Valley farmers the guarantee that they need, being the urban agriculture legends that they are.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (11.23): I thank Minister Vassarotti for her response to my resolution, which was about urban agriculture in historic homesteads. I thank the minister very much for her response and, judging by the nature of it, I am hoping there might be something in the budget. I know she cannot answer the question, so I will just be optimistic and look forward to it. I am also extremely pleased to hear Horse Park Homestead, in my neck of the woods, is listed amongst the options. My intent with this resolution was to dangle a thread for our public servants to pull on, prompting and endorsing some cross-directorate collaboration. I would like to think we have been somewhat successful.

This motion was just as much about our local food strategy and systems as it was about justice reinvestment. Every time I have spoken to Fiona Buining, she has been keen to emphasise how the most central and critical part of her recommendations was the Heart program, the scheme through which people who have fallen on hard times can find the skills and means to create a new life for themselves. In case it was not obvious, that translates as a program to reduce recidivism.

Throughout the entirety of this term, every inquiry or investigation that I have been a part of which touches on the criminal justice system has, without exception, pointed me towards a singular truth—when people re-offend, it is almost always because they have not found a new direction for their lives, which is itself a failure of our justice system in rehabilitation. If the justice system is about making sure offenders learn their lesson, then it is incumbent upon the system as a whole to teach. From first principles, our entire corrections system is an investment in our people, or at least it should be. Institutionally and historically, it has been built on the premise of punishment rather than education. This has required multi-generational efforts to unpick, and those efforts are still ongoing.

Our system benefits from innovative ideas and responses that think outside the box, and from things which consider the intersection of education and human instinct. Agriculture does this. There is something about working with soil that is hardwired into the human brain. It helps us see the value of creation, it adds to the beauty of the world, and it does not care where we come from or what we have done before.

I asked the government to explore Fiona's idea because I saw it as a chance to do something different—to give people who have fallen into our justice system a new

chance, and at the same time, to build on the ACT's need for food security and the preservation of our heritage sites. These sorts of things are where our political attention needs to be, rather than on the knee-jerk, law-and-order type responses that elevate anxiety and increase Indigenous incarceration rates—the kind that some of my colleagues in the old parties seem to be hyper-fixated on! But we can do better than that, and we need to do better than that, because jailing is failing.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity—Standing Committee
Report 11

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.27): I present the following report:

> Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity—Standing Committee—Report 11—*Inquiry Into Environment Protection (Fossil Fuel Company Advertising) Amendment Bill 2024,* dated 3 May 2024, including a dissenting report *(Ms Clay)*, 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 of the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity on the Inquiry into Environment Protection (Fossil Fuel Company Advertising) Amendment Bill 2024. This is the 11th report of the committee and was published out of session on 6 May. The committee announced this inquiry on 14 February, and the committee received 16 submissions. The committee has recommended this bill not proceed, because its costs would outweigh its benefits. On behalf of the committee I would like to thank everyone who participated in the inquiry.

I would also like to make some comments as a member on that committee. Basically, this inquiry was not about fossil fuel adverting; this inquiry was all about Ms Clay. Blatant self-interest persisted from the moment the bill came to our committee to this point today. We did not sit in the committee and debate the ins and outs of this issue. We spent every single meeting, at significant length, debating Ms Clay's process arguments in her attempts to control every single aspect of this inquiry.

To me, this is a situation of a member's serious inability to manage their conflict of interest and their self-interest. The minutes demonstrate the committee's attempts to manage this as best we could, but the bottom line is, this is a fundamental example of how conflicts of interest have the ability to corrode confidence in our parliament and in our committees. Next term, when standing orders are reviewed, I think amendments should be moved so that members should step off a committee if the decision is made to inquire into their bill. I greatly thank the secretariat for their professionalism and for providing impartial advice.

I will spend the last stages of my speech outlining my views on this bill. My work and advocacy are very focused on gambling advertising. I have thought at length this term

about going down the same path on gambling advertising as this fossil fuel seeks to do. But to me it is semantics, it is symbolic and it will not achieve the change that is needed.

I have consistently said that gambling advertising needs to be banned at the federal level and there needs to be a very serious discussion around sports advertising standards in Australia. My priority is very much on gambling advertising because we know from research when a person views the ads it can have a direct and immediate impact on their behaviour, where they will pick up their phone and place a bet, potentially causing direct, immediate harm. The advertising is also directly marketed to children and young people, which should be illegal because gambling is an over-18 activity. Not to mention the issue of integrity in sport! When you look at the teams that have fossil fuel industry sponsorship, the vast majority are not the principle major sponsors, unlike the vast majority of teams that have gambling companies as their major or premier sponsor.

I see a major urgency in stopping gambling advertising. I consistently write to federal ministers, federal members and to the sporting codes at the national level and in the ACT around this issue, because I see this is where the problem sits and I see those people as the people who have the power to change this. So, consistent with my advocacy on gambling advertising, I believe that if fossil fuel advertising is to be banned it should be banned at the national level; not ad-hoc bans on four sports grounds in the ACT. I understand there is a point about making a statement but that needs to be balanced with the impact this could have in terms of attracting sporting teams to the ACT and the potential liability to the ACT government. I am even more against taxpayers' money going to these sporting codes to compensate them for losses on unethical advertising. The sporting codes have to change. I do not think that they will until there is federal government legislative intervention. That is my perspective on why this bill should not pass in the ACT.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.32): I am speaking in my capacity as an MLA. I am worried. I am worried about climate change. I am worried about how we are going to cope with the change already locked in. I am worried about how we will avoid more damage when we still put fossil fuel at the heart of every economic decision, as if there is no other choice. And I am worried, really worried, that some of our leaders still cannot imagine a world without fossil fuel.

Last week, the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity handed down its report into my bill. The bill aims to regulate fossil fuel advertising in our government sports facilities. There are two very simple questions at the heart of this bill. Should we allow fossil fuel companies, the biggest drivers of climate change, to continue to buy social license? Should we let fossil fuel companies advertise in our ACT government venues?

The vast majority of evidence received by the committee recommended passing the bill. Of the 16 public submissions received, 13 expressed support for the bill and for regulating fossil fuel advertising in venues. Support came from members of the community, experts and stakeholders working in the field. They included the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, the Climate Change Council of Australia, the Conservation Council ACT, Councillor Amanda Stone, Master Electricians Australia, FrontRunners, Dr Matthew Rimmer, Comms Declare and Parents for Climate.

These submissions noted the bill is consistent with ACT government climate policy. They spoke about how the bill is consistent with existing ACT government advertising regulations. They pointed to the similarities between the tobacco lobby and the fossil fuel lobby, and they noted the effectiveness of regulation on tobacco advertising. I am old enough to remember tobacco ads at sports events and on TV, and I remember buying chocolate cigarettes. They sold these to kids to make tobacco seem harmless and fun. I tell young people about this and they cannot believe what they are hearing.

The submissions noted that 15 Australian councils have already voted for fossil fuel ad bans, including the City of Sydney. They spoke about the dangers of greenwashing and sportswashing. Dr Matthew Rimmer's submission gave an overview of the Australian Senate inquiry into greenwashing and action taken by the ACCC and by ASIC. The submissions refer to research showing fossil fuel company sponsorship sways consumer behaviour. Fossil fuel companies are using the players' bodies to gain social credit. The submissions spoke about the exposure of our children to fossil fuel advertising in government venues when watching matches and attending school holiday programs. They spoke about the impact of climate change on sport already. This came up a lot when I was consulting on the bill. Climate change is already the biggest risk factor for our major sports and venue operators. They regularly cancel events because of floods, fire, smoke and heat.

Submissions spoke about the climate crisis and how it is driven by fossil fuels. Some submitters called for a much stronger fossil fuel ad ban than was presented in this bill. The Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment said it was not enough to ban fossil fuel ads in government venues. In the face of the climate crisis, she said we should bring in a wholesale jurisdiction-wide ban like France and Amsterdam. Several submitters held this view.

There were two submissions that opposed the bill. One was from an individual who described it an attack on company free will. It was a brief submission and it did not appear to play much part in the committee's report. The other submission was lodged by Minister Barr in his capacity as Minister for Trade, Investment and Economic Development. This appears to be the main piece of evidence for the committee recommendation not to pass the bill. It is cited extensively and it is the only piece of evidence relied on in the report to oppose regulation on fossil fuel advertising in our government sports venues. This submission has been treated by the committee as the ACT government position, but it is not an ACT government submission. It is a submission lodged by and on behalf of Labor's trade, investment and economic development minister.

The Minister for Trade, Investment and Economic Development had a number of objections. Minister Barr said that the bill will not have a direct impact on emissions reduction. As the committee did not hold hearings, there was no opportunity to ask the Minister for Emissions Reduction what he thought, but he is on record as supporting the bill. But never mind, the trade minister said it will not, and that is the evidence the committee has relied on! Minister Barr spoke up for the right to future fossil fuel sponsorships and I found this section quite extraordinary. He wrote about the Canberra Raiders, ACT Brumbies and GWS Giants, none of whom have fossil fuel sponsors

currently. He wrote about a licence for a Canberra A-League team that was under consideration. He said that team had not yet been established and so had not secured sponsors, but it might form, and if it did, it might seek sponsors in future and, if so, it might want to seek fossil fuel sponsorship! I cannot believe that we want teams that do not yet exist to obtain new sponsorship deals from the fossil fuel industry. It is an industry which we have all agreed is fuelling climate change and which we have all decided in here that we will phase out. We have decided that, haven't we? So how is that a stable commercial footing for a new team? Why would we make a regulatory decision today based on a hypothetical team that does not yet exist but which might want to seek sponsorship from companies like Woodside and Santos in the future?

Minister Barr spoke about visiting teams that are sponsored by fossil fuel companies and whether they would play in ACT government venues if not permitted to advertise there. The tobacco lobby made very similar arguments when faced with regulation on their industry. The 1992 federal tobacco sponsorship ban came at a time when the three largest tobacco companies were the three biggest sponsors of Australian sport in the 80s. So, if you are old enough to remember chocolate cigarettes and cigarette ads on your favourite teams, you might recognise some of the arguments we have heard and read!

Minister Barr also said the bill might impact current fossil fuel sponsorships and expose the territory to claims for damages for breach of contract. This is an interesting point. Comms Declare proposed a useful amendment to address it. Comms Declare suggested that regulation need not affect current commercial operations or contracts. The bill could be amended so that regulation only applies to new agreements, not existing agreements. This is the approach taken by many Australian councils including Merri-Bek, Lane Cove, Waratah-Wynyard and Yarra. I would be happy to bring this amendment and I would be really happy for Minister Barr to bring that amendment if he would rather. It is a compromise that matches well with the ACT government's approach to phasing out fossil fuel gas and phasing in EVs. Those two policies, EVs and phasing out fossil fuel gas, were labelled by both of the other parties as crazy Greens ideas at the last election. Both of those are now mainstream government policy.

If the primary objection to regulating the fossil fuel industry is that we do not want to change existing contracts, let us run the Comms Declare amendment. Let us amend the bill so that regulation only applies to future contracts. That would limit the greenwashing from the fossil fuel industry. It would stop any new damage. It would also protect our sports industry from further exposure. It would prevent them from getting into commercial arrangements with an industry that we have all agreed to phase out.

The government have agreed to phase out the fossil fuel industry. They have agreed that it will no longer exist at some point in the future, haven't they? Because something else happened last week that has made me doubt: another Labor minister took climate action, apparently. Minister King handed down a new policy that was meant to make our future safe. It was long expected, much anticipated and on the back of a federal election that gave a clear mandate to overturn the fossil fuel policies of the previous conservatives and give us a bold new pathway to a safe climate. On the same day that scientists declared the world has just experienced the hottest April on record, federal Labor released their Future Gas Strategy. It comes from a federal government that handed out $14.5 billion in fossil fuel subsidies last year. That is a huge sum, and it is

$3 billion more than they handed out to them the previous year! It comes from a federal government that have planned $10 billion for the Housing Australia Future Fund, which is great, and a whopping $54 billion in fossil fuel subsidies!

What does this Future Gas Strategy do? It paves the way for new gas developments to 2050 and beyond. How will it reduce emissions? By approving new gas. It is based on a myth that gas is critical to the Australian economy—a myth that has been debunked again and again and again. Gas is not essential to our economy. Jobs in oil and gas extraction make up 0.1 per cent of Australian employment. The Australia Institute has pointed out that beer drinkers pay more in beer excise than the major gas companies pay in tax. Motorists pay more in vehicle rego than the gas industry pays in royalties. The gas industry is largely foreign owned. Profits go overseas. That industry does not help our country. We do not need new gas to make sure we have energy security. Most of our gas is exported, and most of the gas that is used domestically is used by the gas industry itself.

What was the reception to this announcement? I will read some of the headlines in case you missed them: "The greatest capitulation of any Australian government to the fossil fuel industry;" "Experts condemn Australia's new gas strategy;" "Gas shortage? Yeah, nah;" "Labor's strategy is to reduce emissions from gas—but not if that means doing anything to cut its use;" and "Labor's future gas strategy an absolute betrayal". *The Australian* ran a good headline. They said, "Labor's future gas strategy is a step in the right direction." Sometimes, you can judge the merits of a policy by the company it keeps. The fossil fuel industry was also very positive.

There was some trouble in the ranks. The ABC told us that "Federal Labor MPs rebel over government gas strategy". Labor seems undecided amongst its own if greenlighting gas is the right thing to do to address climate change, but obviously not undecided enough to set an effective climate change strategy that phases out fossil fuel.

People are pretty angry about that strategy. I was at a climate change rally at Parliament House on Friday. We joined the Pacific branch of 350.org. I spoke to Mahealani Delaney, who gave me an excellent take on what it feels like to see another Australian government fail to act on climate change while Pacific nations go under water. Australia is still expecting to host a UN climate conference in 2026 in partnership with Pacific Island countries, despite the contribution our fossil fuel exports make to climate change. Foreign Minister Penny Wong has been in Tuvalu witnessing the impact climate change is having on small island nations and offering support. Meanwhile her colleague was handing down the plan to guarantee fossil fuels' future to 2050 and beyond.

Here in this parliament, we do not have the tools to stop our federal government from propping up the fossil fuel industry. We have taken some good local steps. We are phasing out fossil fuel gas thanks to a crazy Greens policy launched at the last election, and there is much more we could do. We could contemplate a future where fossil fuel sponsorships deals do not exist. In 2015, the ACT was one of the first jurisdictions in the world to ban fossil fuel advertising on light rail vehicles. In 2019, the ACT declared a state of climate emergency. In 2021, the ACT signed up to the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty. Why in 2024 would we choose to allow new fossil fuel sponsorship ads, unregulated, in ACT government venues? Is it acceptable for fossil fuel companies, the biggest drivers of climate change, to be allowed to continue to buy social license?

I am worried, because it is clear that some of our leaders cannot even imagine a world without fossil fuel. I do not know how we are going to create one.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (11.45): Independent of all the policy aspects of this particular report—and I fully support Ms Clay and what she is doing—I wish to talk to the inconsistent body of practice we have developed here over the past term in the situation where a member puts forward a piece of legislation into this place and they happen to be on a committee that looks into it. For example, there was the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill which Ms Clay had brought forward earlier this term where she stepped aside as the chair of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services but remained on the inquiry for consideration of that bill. There was my Electoral Amendment Bill 2021 where I remained on the JACS committee but did not provide any submission in terms of that particular bill. There was the Gaming Machine Amendment Bill which Dr Paterson brought forward to this place where she remained on the committee and cast a vote on that particular bill.

I am concerned that we are developing an inconsistent body of practice; hence we need to examine how we address the situation where we have a conflict of interest between a member who has sponsored a particular bill versus the requirement for them to be an active participant within the committee and processes inquiring into that bill. I note this conflict of interest could also be considered to apply to inquiries into petitions which have been sponsored by members into this place. I use the ECCB inquiry into Dr Paterson's petition on Indian myna birds as an example that we might need to include petitions in this consideration as well.

It should not be in the committee's powers to deprive a member, who has been elected to this place and then appointed to a committee, some involvement in the process but that needs to be balanced with the conflict of interest that this may create. Therefore, there needs to be some consideration—whether it be by the committees, committee chairs, or the Standing Committee on Admin and Procedure—as to whether any amendments are required to the standing orders in order to ensure we are appropriately managing these conflicts of interest while still enabling members to fully participate in what are their duties here.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee
Report 11

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (11.47): I present the following report:

> Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee—Report 11—*Inquiry into the Disability Inclusion Bill 2024,* dated 30 April 2024, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

The report was circulated to members on 6 May 2024 pursuant to standing order 254C.

I move:

That the report be noted.

In my role as chair of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, I am pleased to speak to the report of the Inquiry into the Disability Inclusion Bill 2024. This is the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion for the Tenth Assembly. At a private meeting on 13 February 2024, the committee resolved to inquire into this matter and report to the Assembly. The bill seeks to promote and facilitate disability inclusion in the ACT through a suite of strategies and plans developed and implemented in consultation with people with disability. The bill also establishes a Disability Advisory Council to advise the minister on disability inclusion in the ACT.

The committee received 12 submissions and held one public hearing. Witnesses took two questions on notice. Throughout the inquiry, the committee heard overwhelming support for the bill. Key themes which emerged from the evidence included: the important and valued role people with disability play in the ACT community, the importance of introducing a social model of disability which recognises society must change to address barriers experienced by people with disability, the need for a coordinated framework for disability inclusion in the territory, the fact that meaningful consultation must take place as it is vital for people with disability to be consulted and involved in decisions which impact them and for their contributions to be heard and addressed effectively, and the Disability Advisory Council is a positive step towards promoting inclusive representation.

The report makes 12 recommendations to strengthen the bill based on the feedback provided by the diverse range of perspectives shared throughout the inquiry. It is supported by all committee members. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this important inquiry and took time to write submissions and appear at the hearing. The committee particularly acknowledges and thanks those who shared their personal experience in order to enhance this inquiry. I also thank the ACT government and Ms Suzanne Orr for their participation in the inquiry, as well as the other members of the committee, Miss Nuttall and Ms Lawder, and also the hard-working committee secretariat. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee
Scrutiny Report 41

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (11.50): I present the following report:

> Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 41, dated 7 May 2024, 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 41 contains the committee's comments on 11 bills, 37 pieces of subordinate legislation, proposed amendments to the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2023, and eight government and member responses. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I thank again the Assembly secretariat for their professional support to us. I commend this report to the Assembly.

Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee
Report 12

MS BURCH (Brindabella) (11.51): I present the following report:

> Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee—Report 12—*Report on the conduct of Mr Rattenbury MLA and Ms Davidson MLA,* dated 14 May 2024, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (11.51), by leave: I would like to thank the Commissioner for Standards for his full and detailed report on this matter, and note his conclusions which were as follows:

> 94. I recommend that no finding be made that either Ms Davidson or Mr Rattenbury committed any breach of the Code of Conduct.
>
> 95. I might mention that this conclusion is consistent with Ms Briggs conclusion that from my reading, while it took some time for them to make reports, the actions of the Greens were largely in line with the Legislative Assembly's Child Safety Code of Conduct and Policy ...

The admin and procedures report contains one recommendation that will be implemented with the adoption of this report:

> That Continuing Resolution 5A—*Code of conduct for all members of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory* be amended by omitting (C) (7) (d) and substituting:
>
> "(d) take all reasonable steps to ensure that, as far as practicable, their personal staff are mindful of the Member's commitment to this Code of Conduct and, in the course of their duties, take no action for or on behalf of the Member or the Member's Office which, if taken by the Member personally, would be contrary to this Code of Conduct; and"

This recommendation is to ensure members are accountable for exercising their due diligence towards their staff members.

I move:

> That the report be adopted.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Statement by chair

MS BURCH (Brindabella) (11.53): For the information of members, pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure. On behalf of the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure, I wish to update the Assembly on the committee's consideration of the Briggs report and related matters.

As members are aware, Ms Briggs conducted her review into the handling of certain allegations, pursuant to the Assembly resolution. In her report, Ms Briggs noted:

> …the Legislative Assembly has a comprehensive and excellent suite of laws, policies and procedures to ensure that allegations of sexual misconduct are appropriately reported and investigated, in particular, the Child Safety Code of Conduct and Policy is first class because it puts the interests of children and vulnerable young people first.

Ms Briggs made a number of recommendations about where processes and obligations can be made clearer. In reviewing the Briggs report, the committee has considered advice from the Legislative Assembly Commissioner for Standards and the Assembly's Ethics and Integrity Adviser.

At its meeting of 6 May, the committee agreed to circulate to the party rooms revised drafts of (1) the Child safety code of conduct and policy (2) the Respect in the Workplace policy. It also agreed to circulate a proposed reporting and complaints referral framework, which sets out the broad range of conduct obligations and reporting options that will apply in the Assembly workplace.

I have also written to the Chief Minister, Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the ACT Greens seeking their views on these proposed changes. The committee will consider any feedback from this process with a view to finalising the documents for formal agreement by parliamentary leaders. In an ideal world, we will have that tied up and brought back to the Assembly at the next sitting.

Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee

Statement by chair

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (11.55): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion.

Following the release of the report on the inquiry into annual and financial reports 2022–23, the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion wishes to table a corrigendum to the report to correct a typographical error. The corrigendum corrects the date on which the Minister for Multicultural Affairs appeared before the committee, which the report incorrectly states as 14 November 2024, when the correct date is 14 November 2023. I seek leave to table the corrigendum.

Leave granted.

MR PETTERSSON: I table the following paper:

> Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee—Report 10—*Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-2023*—Corrigendum.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee
Statement by chair

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (11.56): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety. Following the release of the report into the inquiry into annual and financial reports 2022-2023, the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety wishes to table a corrigendum to the report to correct a typographical error.

The corrigendum corrects a statement concerning the number of complaints received by the ACT Human Rights Commission, which the report incorrectly states as 11,477, when the correct number is 1,477. I seek leave to table the corrigendum.

Leave granted.

MR CAIN: I table the following paper:

> Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 27—Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-23—Corrigendum.

Statement by chair

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (11.57): Pursuant to standing order 246A I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety.

At a private meeting on 23 April 2024, the committee resolved to conduct an inquiry into the administration of bail. The committee will inquire into and report on the administration of bail in the ACT, with particular reference to support service interaction for people on bail; young people on bail; mental health and bail; supervision of people on bail; prevention of re-offending on bail; dangerous driving offending on bail; presumption of bail; bail support programs; and any other related matter. The committee called for public submissions on 23 April 2024, with a closing date of 17 May 2024.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee
Statement by chair

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (11.58): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in relation to reportable contracts under section 39 of the Government Procurement Act 2001.

The Government Procurement Act 2001 requires responsible territory entities to provide the public accounts committee with a list of 'reportable contracts' every

12 months. Reportable contracts are defined, with some exceptions, as procurement contracts equal to or over $25,000—also known as notifiable contracts—that contain confidential text. The responsible entity is required to provide the committee with the parties to the contract; a brief description of what the contract is for; the date the contract was made; the end date of the contract; the value of the contract; and any other information prescribed in the Government Procurement Act 2001 or by regulation.

The committee acknowledges that the information provided in relation to reportable contracts is publicly available on the ACT government contracts register. However, its scrutiny is assisted by receiving a consolidated report every 12 months. The committee has been provided with consolidated lists of reportable contracts for the 12-monthly period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The committee believes that there is value in tabling the consolidated list of reportable contracts for the period specified, as a transparency mechanism to promote accountability. I therefore seek leave to table the list of reportable contracts for these periods as received by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Leave granted.

MR COCKS: I table the following paper:

> Reportable contracts—Agencies reporting reportable contracts for period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

Environment Protectional Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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

Title read by Clerk.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Parks and Land Management, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (12.01): I move:

> That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to present the Environment Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. Protecting the environment and strengthening existing legal frameworks remain a priority for the government and are key responsibilities for me as the Minister for the Environment, Parks and Land Management.

The bill will amend the Environment Protection Act 1997 and the Environment Protection Regulation 2005 to improve the administration, efficiency, clarity and regulatory responses to protect human health and the environment of the ACT.

The bill also makes consequential amendments to the Water Resources Act 2007. The bill updates the offence provisions to make sure that wood heaters meet emissions standards when sold and installed. It updates the principles that apply to the Environment Protection Act to include ecologically sustainable development and the consideration of culture in decision-making.

The bill also confirms the use of Australian and international standards in regulatory instruments used by the Environment Protection Authority, or the EPA. It will update the maximum penalty units available for offences in the Environment Protection Act and the Water Resources Act, which aligns with current ACT government policy.

I will now outline in more detail the amendments in the bill. The bill includes a new offence for the installation of a wood heater in residential premises that do not meet the current Australian standards and associated regulations for emissions and efficiency which already apply to the sale of a wood heater. This amendment supports aspects of the government response to the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment's investigation into wood heaters.

This amendment addresses a current gap whereby older wood heaters, including second-hand heaters and other wood heaters that are noncompliant with current standards, could potentially be lawfully installed. The installation of noncompliant wood heaters is contrary to the government's policy intent of the existing provisions that have prohibited the sale of noncompliant wood heaters since 1998.

This offence adds to the ways that the installation of wood heaters in the ACT are already regulated in the existing legislative regimes: all wood heater installations require a building approval; and crown leases and development conditions restrict the installation of wood heaters in Dunlop, East O'Malley and Molonglo, except Wright. These regulatory mechanisms will continue to apply in addition to the new installation offence.

The bill amends the Environment Protect Act to ensure that cultural matters are expressly considered by the EPA in administering and making decisions under the legislation. The objects of the Environment Protection Act do not explicitly refer to cultural considerations at present but, in practice, are included under the existing consideration of social matters. This amendment will confirm that the cultural considerations of all cultures in the ACT must be included in decisions taken by the EPA under the Environment Protection Act.

In addition, the specific reference will support the EPA to make culturally informed decisions, including, for example, in relation to the use of fire at community celebrations and ceremonies. The insertion of an explicit reference to culture in the Environment Protection Act is designed to underpin a broader concept of the interaction between the environment and culture in the ACT and surrounds. The EPA will use this inclusion as a clear basis for ongoing work to develop cultural practice in environment protection and collaboratively include the lore and the knowledge of First Nations peoples and other cultures.

The bill inserts ecologically sustainable development as a principle that applies in the Environment Protection Act. Ecologically sustainable development is a well-established principle for environment protection, is consistent with other jurisdictions and appears in other environment-related ACT legislation. The definition of 'ecologically sustainable development' is drawn from the Nature Conservation Act to provide consistency.

The act will retain reference to other important component principles that apply to environment protection, including the polluter pays principle and the intergenerational equity principle. These principles apply to environment protection in their own right.

The existing access to information provisions of the Environment Protection Act imply that a person is physically required to attend the Office of the EPA to access documents and ask for photocopies. The present practice of the EPA is to provide access to documents electronically and online. This amendment will clarify that documents can be provided electronically or are available online, while also maintaining the ability of members of the public to attend the Office of the EPA to request and access the documents if they so choose.

The Environment Protection Act and the Water Resources Act currently provide that the regulations can contain penalty units up to a maximum of 10 penalty units. These provisions have not been updated since the regulations were made in 2005 and 2008 respectively. At that point, the ACT government policy was to limit penalties in regulations to 10 penalty units. However, since then, the ACT policy has changed to allow a maximum of 20 penalty units.

The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate internally reviewed the penalties in the Environment Protection Regulations and compared penalties and fines in regulations across jurisdictions in Australia. That review found that the value of each penalty unit is broadly comparable across Australian jurisdictions. The value of a penalty unit ranged from $110 to $172 at the time of review. However, the internal review noted that the ACT consistently had fewer penalty units allocated to each offence than other jurisdictions. This results in the ACT having lower penalties for comparable offences than in other jurisdictions. It is appropriate that the ACT increase the maximum penalty units for environment protection offences. This will support future work to review the appropriateness of offences in regulations in more detail.

In summary, this bill makes some important amendments to support the contemporary operation and administration of the ACT's environment protection legislation by the Environment Protection Authority. The amendments ensure that information is readily available to the public and provided in the most efficient way. They also ensure that the legislation recognises the contributions of all cultures in protecting the environment in an ecological sustainable way.

This bill includes offences and the provision for penalties that represent the community's expectations of government to provide a clean and healthy environment for all Canberrans. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Sitting suspended from 12.09 to 2.00 pm.

Questions without notice

Economy—performance

MS LEE: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for taxation revenue show that the ACT had the

largest increase in taxes from the previous year's figures, making it the second highest taxing jurisdiction per capita in the country. In September of 2023 you managed to lose the ACT's AAA credit rating for the first time in 20 years. Treasurer, how did you manage to fail, where no other Treasurer for the past 20 years has, given that you were imposing the largest increase in taxes and making Canberra the second highest taxing jurisdiction in the country?

MR BARR: Firstly, the factors that contributed to the revenue in fiscal year 2022-23, which the Leader of the Opposition is referring to, included a very strong payroll tax return. It did also demonstrate the strength of the economy in that year; we had the fastest growing economy in the nation. There is no doubt that there is a linkage between the strength of your economy, low levels of unemployment, the highest level of economic growth, and taxation revenue. There is a link between the performance of the economy and tax.

In relation to the territory's credit rating, the territory government, like all other governments around the world and indeed those of all other states in Australia—with the exception of Western Australia, which has a particular GST preferential deal—had a ratings downgrade as a result of the COVID pandemic.

MS LEE: Treasurer, how do you justify the fact that you posted a deficit of almost a billion dollars in 2022-23, despite imposing the latest increase in taxes?

MR BARR: There were considerable expenditures associated with the COVID pandemic, as well as the territory's infrastructure program to meet rapid population growth. These were contributing factors to the territory's fiscal position. That fiscal position is improving over time. The approach of the government is not to adopt an austerity agenda, not to seek a surplus for the sake of it.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members!

MR BARR: The budget that we are currently preparing will seek to meet the needs of our community in the 12 months ahead.

MR CAIN: Treasurer, why are you continuing to rack up billions of dollars in debt while simultaneously imposing the largest tax increase on Canberrans?

MR BARR: I refer Mr Cain to my answers to the Leader of the Opposition's questions. Our economy was the strongest growing in that year. Part of that economic growth was driven by public sector investment undertaken by the territory government. Our investment in infrastructure, Mr Cain, which is the primary driver of the territory's debt—

Mr Cain: I think the fed was doing that too.

MADAM SPEAKER: You have asked your question, Mr Cain.

MR BARR: The federal government has the benefit of taxes on resources that the ACT does not. It has a broader tax base than the ACT. Our tax increases were driven by a very strong economy, by very low unemployment and by a high payroll tax take. That is coming down, as a result of decisions by the commonwealth. I would anticipate that, all other things being equal, the level of taxation in the current fiscal year will in fact fall, on a per capita basis, because a number of tax lines are not performing as strongly, because of decisions external to the territory government. Mr Cain, we do intend to continue to invest in the infrastructure that our growing city needs.

Ms Lee interjecting—

MR BARR: You are free to adopt a different position, which clearly you are heading towards with this line of questions.

Government—services

MS LEE: My question is to the Treasurer. The latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics for taxation revenue show that the ACT is now the second-highest taxing jurisdiction per capita, with the largest increase in taxes from the previous year's figures. At the same time, in this term alone the ACT has consistently reported some of the worst performances relative to other jurisdictions in the country, in health, education, housing affordability and rent prices. Treasurer, why are you continually failing in these core service delivery areas whilst simultaneously imposing the largest tax increases on Canberrans?

MR BARR: Tax increases have largely been imposed on multinational and national companies by way of payroll tax because they are predominantly the only businesses in this jurisdiction that pay payroll tax. Ninety-three per cent of businesses operating in the ACT sit below the payroll tax-free threshold. The majority of payroll tax revenue comes from multinational companies and large national organisations, like banks, supermarkets and the multinational companies that operate in the ACT. That is the basis of our payroll tax system and our collections. We had a very strong year in fiscal year 2022-23. The big four consulting firms paid a lot of payroll tax in that year as well.

Ms Lee: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: the question was very clearly about why the Treasurer is continuing to fail in these core service delivery areas whilst simultaneously increasing taxes for Canberrans. I ask that you direct the Treasurer to be direct.

MADAM SPEAKER: He is replying to the various tax regimes that are being applied. Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In relation to service provision, the ACT continues to be one of the top performing jurisdictions. The suggestions in the Leader of the Opposition's list include areas where we have had falls—for example, in rent. We are, on a per capita basis, one of the best performers amongst the states and territories.

MS LEE: Treasurer, on what basis do you justify fleecing Canberrans with the second-highest level of taxation revenue per person, particularly given you have wasted hundreds of millions of dollars in this term alone on failed projects and dodgy procurements?

MR BARR: I am not. The biggest contributors to tax in this jurisdiction through payroll tax are multinational companies and large corporations. That is what has driven the increase, and the fact that we have had record levels of employment. So, if the Leader of the Opposition's position is that we should be reducing revenue by taxing multinational companies less and ensuring that the supermarkets and the banks should not be paying payroll tax in the ACT, and that what is needed is tax cuts for multinationals—

Ms Lee interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order on the interjections, perhaps, Ms Lee?

Ms Lee: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: the standing orders are very clear in relation to answers to questions so that they do not become debating points—and that is what the Chief Minister is doing.

MADAM SPEAKER: The standing orders are also very clear about interjections and noise across the chamber. Mr Barr, you have the call.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was indicating, a lot of our tax increases have been driven off the back of a strong economy. That is the whole point: grow your economy, grow your revenues—revenues coming from, in the payroll tax area in particular, multinationals and large national corporations.

MR CAIN: Treasurer, will you apologise to Canberrans for high taxes and poor core services?

MR BARR: We are very proud of the services that this government offers our community. We are proud that the ACT government invests in the services that our growing community needs. We are proud that the ACT government invests in the infrastructure that our growing community needs. If the Liberal Party's position through this line of questioning is that we should have a smaller government and we should be doing less, they should take it to the election.

Proposed stadium and convention centre—federal government

MS LEE: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, reporting in the *Canberra Times* indicated that you wrote to the federal Labor government seeking fifty-fifty funding for a new stadium and convention centre on 5 March this year. However, the federal territories minister, Kristy McBain, declared on ABC radio in response to your stunt: "Any proposal needs to have a strong business case to go with it and that's obviously something the ACT government needs to bring forward and present to the commonwealth at this stage." Chief Minister, why did you fail to provide a business case with your request for funding, as required by the federal Labor government?

MR BARR: It is not a requirement. The ACT government has been engaging with the federal government in relation to a number of these projects. A number of

announcements have, in fact, already been made on joint initiatives between the federal and territory governments. I note that, for the first time in a decade, we have a federal government willing to invest in Canberra, a federal government that is investing in Canberra and a federal government that will continue to invest and partner with the territory government.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, have you given the federal government a business case for the stadium and convention centre? If so, will you make it public?

MR BARR: We have sought to partner with the commonwealth on precinct development under a national partnership arrangement. We are not seeking construction funding for either of those projects at this stage; we are seeking funding for precinct development. We have received that funding already for the Bruce precinct, and we intend to pursue, under the national urban precincts policy that was announced in last year's budget, a partnership in relation to the convention precinct in the city. We are not yet at a point where we are seeking construction funding. Our infrastructure program is full for the next three years with existing projects. We will approach the commonwealth in due course for construction funding. In the interim, we are partnering with them in the development of those projects.

MR MILLIGAN: Chief Minister, have you received any formal response from the Prime Minister or the federal government regarding your letters—other than from the federal minister for territories, who slammed your stunt on ABC radio?

MR BARR: The federal minister for territories did no such thing. And, yes, I have received responses. There have been some pretty significant announcements made already, and we look forward to more to come.

Government—transparency

MS LEE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, in March this year it was revealed that less than 40 per cent of the ACT government's cabinet records that became publicly accessible in 2023 have actually been reviewed and released a year later. On 1 February this year, I requested 11 documents from the March 2012 to March 2013 period, which largely relate to your dodgy tax reform policy, which I have been advised will not be returned until late July.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Lee, can you hold your thought, as I think I heard a point of order.

Ms Berry: I am after your advice, Madam Speaker, on the wording of Ms Lee's question; perhaps she might like an opportunity to withdraw and re-word her question?

MADAM SPEAKER: I am not sure, but I think I may have heard "dodgy tax". If you did say that, I will ask you to withdraw.

MS LEE: I withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

MS LEE: In addition, I received an email yesterday from CMTEDD alerting me to the fact that a request from the previous MLA, Mrs Jones, on 17 March 2022, is now available. That is over two years since it was requested and, of course, since Mrs Jones has left the Assembly. Given what we have found in those cabinet documents that are released, which shed light on your time as Chief Minister and Treasurer, have you directed CMTEDD to "go slow" in releasing these documents ahead of the ACT election?

MR BARR: No.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, when were you made aware of the significant delays in your government releasing cabinet documents and have you taken any action to ensure that they are released in the required time frame?

MR BARR: I do not think there is a specific date, but I am aware there has been a large volume of requests for historic cabinet documents. There is a process that needs to be gone through and staff in that area are working very hard.

MR CAIN: Chief Minister, is it acceptable for documents to be reviewed for a further two years after their ten-year lock up? If not, why have you continuously failed to improve access times?

MR BARR: I understand the volume of requests for release is significant. It is at historically high levels. That area within government has had its resources expanded. FOI requests and other document release requests have been resourced considerably, but there is a limit to how many resources can be poured into these areas without detracting from the delivery of other services.

Australian Institute of Sport—funding

MS LEE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, last week the Prime Minister announced $250 million to improve the ageing AIS facility—something the Canberra Liberals have been calling for for some time—and earlier that week the federal infrastructure minister announced $50 million for stage 2B light rail, a drop in the ocean of the over $5 billion price tag of 2B. Chief Minister, why were you not present at the announcement with the Prime Minister for this significant funding to improve the AIS and the announcement earlier that week with the federal infrastructure minister?

MR BARR: I was on leave.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, was part of the reason for you not attending have anything to do with the fact that you were disappointed with the federal government's underwhelming announcement of $10 million for the sports precinct and the $50 million contribution for 2B?

MR BARR: I was on a long-planned week of leave.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, does your government not consider it necessary to advise the opposition, or indeed Canberrans, when the Chief Minister goes on leave and there is an acting Chief Minister in the ACT?

MR BARR: Acting arrangements are put in place, yes.

Light rail—stage 2A

MS LEE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, freedom of information documents reveal that your government sent a proposal report for Light Rail Stage 2A in July last year to Infrastructure Australia. Unfortunately, the business case, including the costs and benefits of the project, have been redacted from these documents. In 2021, the ACT Auditor-General released his report into the economic analysis of Light Rail Stage 2A, where he exposed serious flaws in your government's assumptions and methodologies when calculating the project's costs and benefits. In recent answers to questions on notice, you said that the business case that you sent to Infrastructure Australia was already publicly available. Chief Minister, is the business case that was redacted in these FOI documents the same as the one that the Auditor-General slammed in his report in 2021?

MR BARR: I will take the question on notice.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, why were the FOI documents redacted, and why did you say that the business case was publicly available?

MR BARR: To be consistent with the law.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, are the federal minister for infrastructure and transport and Infrastructure Australia aware of the ACT Auditor-General's significant criticisms of how your government calculated the costs and benefits of Light Rail Stage 2A?

MR BARR: I am not sure. I presume they would follow public debate on the matter.

Climate change—gas

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Climate Action. Minister, last week the federal Labor government released their Future Gas Strategy, which concluded that Australia will need gas through to 2050 and beyond. The federal resources minister, Madeleine King, said that the Future Gas Strategy will be "based on facts and data, not ideology and wishful thinking". In 2022 you announced, along with your Greens governing partners, a decision to phase out gas by 2045—an idea that before the 2020 election you labelled as "crazy". Minister, who is correct—the federal Labor government, which says that gas will be required beyond 2050, or you and your governing partners, who say that gas can be phased out by 2045?

MR BARR: We believe that, given that we are not a gas-producing jurisdiction but simply a gas-consuming jurisdiction, we can transition between now and 2045. We are already undertaking a process of transition. We have seen significant moves to electrify our city. My comments in relation to the 2020 election campaign referred to bringing

that 2045 date forward. We had agreed on the 2045 date in the previous Assembly and I did not support bringing that forward, for reasons of practicality. I agree with some of the sentiments of Minister King: that we will still be using gas in the ACT over the next 20 years, but it will be phasing down. I think that is important.

Ms Lee: Phasing down or out?

MR BARR: Out, by 2045 in the ACT. It is a 20-year journey that we can take in partnership with our community.

Mr Hanson: But not with the federal government.

MR BARR: The federal government will also be part of that transition.

Mr Hanson: Will they?

MR BARR: Yes. That is what they have said: gas will be a transition fuel, on the way out.

Ms Lawder: It will be required beyond 2050.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! The question has been asked.

MR BARR: In some jurisdictions it may be required beyond 2050. In the ACT it should not be, beyond 2045.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, isn't it true that your decision to phase out gas was made to hold on to political power in your partnership with the Greens, rather than being "based on facts", as your federal Labor colleague suggested?

MR BARR: No. It is based on the fact that, for our jurisdiction, we can make this transition over the next 20 years. We are putting in place an integrated energy plan to do so. Other political parties may wish for there not to be a transition. That would be the Liberal position. I will not speculate as to whether the Greens party would seek to advocate a faster transition. What we have agreed on is 2045. I believe that is based on evidence and is achievable. That is why we are supporting it.

MS LAWDER: Chief Minister, why will you force households and businesses to phase out gas by 2045 when your federal colleagues are saying that this "would do untold damage to our economy" and "impede efforts to get to net zero"?

MR BARR: I think that is a statement made about Australia overall, particularly those areas of our country that do not have the benefits and advantages of being a compact city-state. The ACT and, I believe, Victoria will be the national leaders in the phasing out of gas. The clear theme of this line of questioning is that the Liberals do not support the phase-out of gas.

Ms Lee: Madam Speaker, once again, I remind you about the standing orders in relation to the answering of questions.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. To the question, Mr Barr. You have a minute left.

MR BARR: I have concluded my answer, Madam Speaker.

Planning—north Curtin

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Planning. Minister, how is the ACT government progressing plans to deliver more housing to Canberrans through an additional 1,300 homes in north Curtin?

MR STEEL: I thank Dr Paterson for her question. It is good to be back. My priority is on housing, as it is for the rest of the ACT government at the moment. The proposed urban infill in north Curtin provides a significant opportunity for the government to deliver more housing to support the needs of our growing city. Canberra is a great place to live, but our population is growing—potentially up to 700,000 by 2050—and we are facing housing pressures, as is the rest of the country. I recently announced that the government has identified land with potential for development in the north of Curtin. We are in the early stages of planning to address the needs of Canberra's expanding population whilst creating a new neighbourhood.

This land is currently subject to the remit of the National Capital Authority and was rezoned to residential use under the National Capital Plan. Advice to me from EPSDD is that this does not rule out some commercial retail as part of a development. The site is approximately 13 hectares in size, which represents a significant opportunity within the existing urban footprint of the territory to deliver more housing. With this early planning work, we will develop a draft planning considerations report to get a deeper understanding of what sort of development could occur on the site. As I stated recently, community consultation is an important part of this, and I am keen to ensure that the community is able to have their say on the project. So, at the very earliest stage, the government is seeking the public's views to inform future consideration of residential development in this area, and we welcome the feedback.

DR PATERSON: Why has the government identified north Curtin as the site for urban infill?

MR STEEL: I thank Dr Paterson for her supplementary. One challenge we face in Canberra is that we have finite land in the ACT. That is why the government has committed to strong urban infill targets for the territory. This does not mean that there will be no greenfield development, but it does mean that the majority of housing the government provides will need to be in existing areas—indeed, in the future, for what the private sector provides as well. Some of these areas, like the Curtin horse paddocks, were always designated for future development, with agistments provided on a temporary basis in the interim until the land is needed for higher value uses. It is now needed for housing.

As Minister for Planning, I am committed to exploring a range of ways to ensure that we continue to deliver both more housing and housing choice. This area in north Curtin is important because it is very well located, with close proximity to the city centre and

serviced by transport networks, both our road network and future light rail. However, this is just the beginning and, with the development of a new area, there will be more infrastructure to support these new homes, and we want to have that conversation with the community. The north Curtin consultation will also feed into further consultation on a broader draft southern planning and design framework over the next two years which will guide future development along Canberra's southern transport corridor, from Woden to the city.

In the future, we will be engaging with the community on the principles of growth and the development of more housing, public spaces and infrastructure, whilst respecting the heritage of this important corridor along Adelaide Avenue and Yarra Glen in particular. This will be similar to what was developed with the City and Gateway Urban Design Framework, which has been a very useful and well-supported document in informing future development, including community infrastructure like the new Garden City Cycle Route. Unlike buses, we know that light rail can unlock significant land use benefits, with opportunities for better connections to public transport.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how can residents have their say on this development?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. There is an opportunity for Canberrans to provide their views to help shape what is a new neighbourhood located in the south of Canberra. There is a range of ways in which the community can get involved in the project. Feedback is currently open until Tuesday, 11 June. I encourage any interested members of the community to visit the ACT's YourSay conversations website. That provides further information about the proposal and time line for the consultation process. In addition, the ACT government is holding a range of pop-ups and workshops where people can drop in and learn more about the project. On Thursday, 16 May, Canberrans who visit the Curtin shops can engage with EPSDD officials from 12 pm until 2.30 pm. On Saturday, 18 May, there will be a pop-up stall at Deakin shops from 9 am until 11 am. And there will be another one at Curtin shops from 2.30 pm until 5.30 pm on Tuesday, 21 May as well.

Light rail—stage 2

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, in March it was revealed that light rail to Woden will not be completed until 2033, 17 years after originally being announced in 2016. You have stated that it is the most complicated project in ACT history, and that is one of the reasons it will take so long. But, for six of the last seven years, the Light Rail Stage 2 project team had fewer staff than the Capital Metro agency did when it was delivering stage 1. Given that Light Rail Stage 2 is so much more complex than stage 1, and it has been government policy since 2016, why have there been so few staff working on Light Rail Stage 2?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Clay for her question. Consideration of full-time-equivalent numbers alone does not provide a holistic picture of the delivery effort associated with light rail. Light Rail Stage 1 was a single-term key project delivered through a public-private partnership arrangement, with key planning approvals allocated to Canberra Metro under the contract. So there are key differences between light rail and Light Rail Stage 2.

As the Greens would be aware—maybe not Jo Clay, but others would be aware—there are significant planning approvals that are required for stage 2 of the project. Of course, we have stage 2A underway and contracted, starting with the raising of London Circuit. One of the reasons we split the project into two parts for stage 2 was that it was far simpler to do that.

We have been getting on with the elements that we can with the project team. They have been focussed on 2A up until recently. The shift has now occurred, and they will be focussing on the development, design and approvals for stage 2B, which requires a specific range of approvals that are not required for other stages of light rail. These include the Australian government's requirements under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act process for the areas of the footprint that would impact on matters of national environmental significance on commonwealth land. We are currently consulting, as part of the development of a draft EIS and as part of the EPBC process at the moment, which I announced last week.

This is also subject to the ACT's territory planning authority, our Planning Act process, the Australian government National Capital Authority works approval process and, as well, the Australian Capital Territory PALM Act for the areas of the footprint impacting on designated areas. This requires the approval of both houses of parliament, under the Commonwealth Parliament Act 1974, for the areas of the footprint impacting on the parliamentary zone.

MS CLAY: Minister, does a more complicated project require more staffing for the project team?

MR STEEL: We are advised by Major Projects Canberra about the number of staff required to get on with the approvals, but we are getting on with the approvals. I know there has been a suggestion, particularly from the Greens, that it may be possible to fast-track this, but that simply ignores the significant approvals that are required for this project—which we have been very clear with the community about.
We are working diligently through each of those approvals, and that starts with the environmental approvals under the EPBC Act. That is why we are out there now consulting with the community. It is part of the development of a draft EIS. The decisions that are made are under the various approvals processes—the EPBC Act process, the parliamentary act process and the National Capital Authority works approval process—are decisions made by third parties. We cannot control those. It is a fantasy to suggest that we can. We are getting on with progressing the approvals as quickly as we can, but we acknowledge that some of those decisions are outside our control. We will continue to resource the project. The funding from the commonwealth last week, which they are announcing tonight in the budget—of $50 million—is a very welcome investment to support the design and planning for this project so that we can get underway as soon as possible.

MR BRADDOCK: With increased staffing, could the project be delivered sooner?

MR STEEL: It would not speed up the approvals, as far as I am aware; we still need to go through all of those approvals. We still need to work with the commonwealth on

the design of the project. That has already been funded. We have $50 million in our own budget. The contribution from the commonwealth will support the design and approvals process. We have funded this, and we are getting on with the work. We are not going to say to the community that it can be fast-tracked when it simply cannot be. We have to go through the approvals first, before we then get on with the final design, the development of a business case, the procurement and the construction of the project.

This is the very first stage. We are out there consulting with the community on it now. We are getting on with the job. We are being realistic with the community about the time frames, because that is the right thing to do. We are not living in a fantasy that this can somehow be sped up and that these approval processes do not exist.

Health—community health assets

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. I refer the Minister to the strategic review of community health assets across the ACT which she and the Chief Minister announced on 4 July last year. Is it the case that, over 10 months later, this review has not yet commenced, there are no terms of reference for it and nor is there any clarity as to whether community health assets include nurse led walk-in centres?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I can advise Ms Castley that community-based health assets do include walk-in centres. But she is correct that that review has not commenced at this time. The Health Directorate is working through the terms of reference and the process for that review.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, when will it commence, and can you confirm for the record that it will include nurse led walk-in centres?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I did just confirm that, I believe—that it will include nurse led walk-in centres, but not as a review of the model of care, which I suspect is where Ms Castley is going with this. I expect it is a bit of a gotcha—"Oh! they are going to have a review of nurse led walk-in centres. Oh! they are going to have a review of the model of care." This is not a review of the model of care. This is a review of all of our community based services: how they work together; and how they work with our acute services, primary services and assets. This is what we have said consistently that we would be looking at. Ms Jo Morris from Canberra Health Services has been looking at all our community based services and we will also be looking at our community based assets and how we utilise all of those things.

Ms Castley: On a point of order: I asked when it would begin.

MADAM SPEAKER: You have time if you want to add to that. I am going to give you an allowance and include that as your supplementary without going to the third supplementary. Did you have a response to that, or have you resumed your seat?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Sorry, Madam Speaker, I believe I have, in fact, answered that question in my first response, when I said that the Health Directorate is currently working on terms of reference. I understand Ms Castley has also asked a question on notice or has previously received a response to this question. I will double-check that

and also ensure she receives a response to that. This was a topic of conversation with the Health Directorate this week; I just cannot remember if they were preparing for a response or a freedom of information request. Ah! My memory has been jogged by my own words! Ms Castley did put in a freedom of information request, which advised her there were nil documents available and provided an explanation to her which she can refer to.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Thank you for that tidy up, for both of you.

MS LAWDER: Minister, were you aware of, and did you approve, a 2023 in-principle agreement to fund GPs to work after-hours and weekends, providing consultations across the nurse led walk-in centre network but without their availability being advertised?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: My understanding is there was no in-principle agreement—as Ms Lawder appears to indicate. Again, this is something that has been discussed in this place before. There was a consultation process about how we would respond to the commonwealth government's work to establish urgent care centres in the ACT. We were very keen to ensure we built on the success of our incredible nurse led walk-in centres in doing this. We did not want to duplicate or create a confusing further fragmentation of the system by establishing a single, separate service that operated on a different model, when we have a highly successful nurse led walk-in centre model here in the ACT.

There was engagement with the commonwealth government and with a range of stakeholders about what the urgent care centre model would look like in the ACT. As part of that engagement with stakeholders and working through a model of care, there was a consideration about whether it would be helpful to have a general practitioner available on-call to the nurses and nurse practitioners in walk-in centres. This was built on a model that was implemented through COVID-19. It was a very similar model to what operated through COVID as a referral process. That was part of the consultation. In the end, it was agreed between the ACT and the commonwealth government that we would not go down this path. The proposal that Ms Lawder is referring to was part of a broader consultation with stakeholders and with the commonwealth government. What we announced is what we have finally agreed with the commonwealth government, and that is that nurse led walk-in centres will continue to be nurse led and they will have expanded services as per the announcement and the campaign we have been talking to the community about.

Transport Canberra—bus fleet

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, the Transport Canberra fleet of Scania L94UB gas buses is rapidly approaching the end of its service life, with the gas tanks having a fixed expiry date. According to ACTBus.net, five of these Scania buses have been withdrawn since January of this year. However, my sources suggest that the true number of withdrawn Scania L94UBs is a double-digit number. Minister, how many of these 40-odd Scania gas buses have already been retired and how many are you set to lose before the end of the year?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Parton for his question. This transition is quite obvious, because we of course anticipated, as part of the development of our Zero-Emission Transition Plan for Transport Canberra, that we have a range of buses that need to be retired from the fleet. These are not just the DDA non-compliant Renault buses but also some of our CNG bus fleet. It is not the buses themselves that come to a hard deadline of an expiry date; it is the gas cylinders themselves that need to be retired. While they can be replaced, that would be at great expense. So we have factored into our fleet replacement strategy the need to replace these buses over time. They have different expiry dates—and I can come back on notice with the specific number—but what I can tell the Assembly is that we have been progressively retiring those buses.

We will be using the replacement buses that we are receiving with the new contracts that we have signed—like the new contract for 90 new electric buses—to retire not just retire the DDA non-compliant Renault buses but also some of the CNG buses. That has already been factored into our Zero-Emission Transition Plan for Transport Canberra. That can be read on Transport Canberra's website. We are updating that plan at the moment. It has been factored into the replacement of our bus fleet that we need to retire the CNG buses which are currently housed at Tuggeranong.

MR PARTON: Minister, can you confirm that, in reality, when the new Yutong buses arrive, they will simply be replacing the ageing and retired gas buses and not the non-compliant Renaults?

MR STEEL: It will be both. There is only a very small number of DDA non-compliant buses in the fleet. Of course, with every bus that we receive, we are replacing both the Renault buses and those CNG buses that need to be retired at their end of life. That is the reason that we have gone out for procurement in recent years to purchase more buses, both through leasing arrangements and through direct credit purchase agreements—to be able to replace these buses and then also look at planning for the future in terms of the growth of the transport system.

MR COCKS: Minister, how can you possibly sustain the current bus network with all of these buses, which you say are more than just the non-compliant buses, going out of service, the new Yutongs many months away and the Custom Dennings potentially still off the road?

MR STEEL: I can provide an update on the Custom Denning buses now that I have been asked. There are four buses that we have leased from the Australian supplier. Technical acceptance is now complete and the vehicles are currently progressing through commissioning and local registration. We expect them to be used for training in the short term and then they will be entering the fleet. Again, they will be used to then replace some of those buses that need to be decommissioned from the fleet.

We have put in place a range of contracts in anticipation of the need to replace these buses over time. For some of those contracts, it has taken a little bit longer than expected; and others are actually coming in ahead of time. That is particularly with the Yutong contract, where we are seeing some of the first buses starting to arrive slightly earlier than we expected. Each one of those buses will be used to support the fleet in replacing buses, and in the future we are also planning for the growth of the fleet as well.

Yerrabi Pond—lighting

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, local residents have repeatedly requested park lighting around the entirety of Yerrabi Pond so that they can walk, run, scoot and ride around the pond. Can you please provide an update in terms of the implementation of lighting around the pond?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Braddock for the question. As members would be aware, $3.153 million was allocated by our government for upgrades to Yerrabi Pond, including delivering new lighting around the pond loop path, including along Mirrabei Drive and at the skate park. Footpath lighting works commenced in the week of 15 April and are expected to take three months to be completed.

Just this past week, the skate park lights were installed and tested. They are operational, and I believe from this week they will be permanently operational. It will be scheduled so that 50 per cent of the lights will turn off at night, at 9.55 pm, and 100 per cent of the lights will turn off at 10 pm. Signage will be installed to inform users of the scheduling. With a start date of April, and with three months for the lighting works to be completed, I expect that to be in June to July.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, you said that lighting will switch off at 10 o'clock. At what time of the morning will it switch on?

MS CHEYNE: I will take that on notice.

Advisory councils—remuneration

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Women and for young people. Within the ACT, I understand that the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women and the Youth Advisory Council are the only councils whose members are not formally remunerated, other than the chair. Considering the prejudices already in place against these groups, what does the ACT government plan to do to address this inequity?

MS BERRY: I am addressing this discrepancy. I wrote to the Chief Minister, asking him to put forward to the Remuneration Tribunal the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women and the Youth Advisory Council. I understand that they are considering that matter and that a determination will be tabled in the Assembly this week.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, is the ACT government considering options for back payment for members of these councils?

MS BERRY: No. That is not usually the case. I do not believe I have ever seen a circumstance where an advisory council or any group has been back paid by the government.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members!

MS CLAY: Minister, will the ACT government address the fact that the chair of the women's advisory council receives less than the chairs of other councils?

MS BERRY: As I said, the Remuneration Tribunal will be providing its report to the Assembly this week, and then we will know what the answer to that question is.

Housing—Jacka

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, earlier this month you launched a new stage of the suburb of Jacka. How many new homes will this provide for Canberrans?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. Jacka stage 2.1 will have around 500 dwellings and it will be home to about 1,800 residents when it is complete. That is on top of the 316 dwellings that were built around 10 years ago as part of Jacka stage 1 which are home now to around 800 Canberrans. I am happy to report that the government is going full steam ahead on Jacka stage 2.2, with planning work and subdivision design applications currently underway for another 190 dwellings. It is all part of the government's plan to deliver housing options for Canberrans and build places where people will have a great quality of life.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what features will this new part of the suburb have?

MS BERRY: Jacka stage 2 will be an all-electric suburb. The government is offering a range of rebates and bonds to future residents to include energy-efficient features such as solar panels on their homes. Adding to this, there will be a local centre, several suburban playgrounds, parks and netball facilities. People may not be aware that a large proportion of Jacka is natural bushland and natural spaces, which is a good example of where new greenfield suburbs can be balanced with the protection of the natural environment. Of course, as part of this government's ongoing commitment to social and affordable housing, 15 per cent of the dwellings across Jacka stages 2.1 and 2.2 will be affordable community and public homes.

DR PATERSON: Minister, when will this new part of Jacka be complete?

MS BERRY: Thank you for that supplementary. Civil works have now been completed and the finishing touches on the landscaping works are underway, which means these 500 blocks are ready for home-building activity to get underway. It normally takes around two to three years for that many homes to be built, so we expect to see a lot of building and economic activity over the coming years in Jacka.

In other exciting news, the sales process for the Jacka local centre is set to kick off before the end of this financial year, which is something I know the Jacka community and locals in the area will be interested to hear.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice

Health—community health assets

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I can provide some further information to the chamber in relation to Ms Castley's question about the Community Health Asset Renewal Program.

Ms Castley is correct that this was included in a media release from the Chief Minister and me in July 2023. That media release was about the infrastructure plan update for health. If you go to page 15 of that document, it clearly indicates that there was no expectation that the Community Health Asset Renewal Program would be commencing in the next year or two. It starts within the zero- to five-year time frame but it is to be completed within the 10- to 15-year time frame.

It is about undertaking a strategic review of community health assets and developing a long-term program for the upgrade, renewal and construction of these facilities across Canberra. It says:

> The government will consult key stakeholders—including community health providers and NGOs—in the development of this program to ensure community health facilities are in the right location, are functional for clinicians, welcoming for patients, and environmentally sustainable. Through this work, the ACT Government will produce an overarching pathway for the upgrade/renewal of existing facilities and the construction of new facilities.

So that is what the program is intended to do, and it was very clear from the document. If Ms Castley were able to click on the link from our media release, she would find the document. It is on page 15 that there was no intention for it to have started before now. So the gotcha approach of "Why hasn't it started yet' is pretty irrelevant.

Yerrabi Pond—lighting

MS CHEYNE: Mr Braddock asked me what time of the morning the lights would turn on around Yerrabi Pond. I will take it with the intent I assume there was about what time of day. They will be turned on at the same time as the other street lights in the area. This does vary across the year, of course, depending on whether daylight saving is employed or as the sunsets differ throughout the year.

I am sure, Madam Speaker, that you can engage with any of the Weatherzone or Bureau of Meteorology data about sunset times that inform the programming of the lights.

Attorney-General—order to table documents

Clerk: For the information of Members, and pursuant to the resolution of the Assembly of 11 April 2024 and standing order 213A, I present:

> Attorney-General's meeting notes—30 January 2024—Copy of—
>
> Attorney-General and Acting Director of Public Prosecutions meeting—
>
> Notes by Chief of Staff to Shane Rattenbury MLA, dated 30 January 2024.

Notes by Senior Legal Adviser to Shane Rattenbury MLA, dated 30 January 2024.

Follow up email to the Attorney-General from the Acting Director of Public Prosecutions, dated 30 January 2024.

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to subsection 17(5)—Auditor-General's Reports—

No 2/2024—Management of key contracts under A Step Up For Our Kids, dated 17 April 2024.

No 3/2024—Management of the Growing and Renewing Public Housing Program, dated 8 May 2024.

Bills, referred to Committees, pursuant to standing order 174—Correspondence—

Bills—Not inquired into—

Crimes (Disclosure) Legislation Amendment Bill 2024—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, dated 18 April 2024.

Crimes (Sentence Administration) Amendment Bill 2024—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, dated 18 April 2024.

Education Amendment Bill 2024—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, dated 30 April 2024.

Education and Care Services National Law (ACT) Amendment Bill 2024—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, dated 30 April 2024.

Health (Improved Abortion Access) Amendment Bill 2024—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing, dated 30 April 2024.

Heritage Amendment Bill 2024—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity, dated 30 April 2024.

Housing and Consumer Affairs Legislation Amendment Bill 2024—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, dated 18 April 2024.

Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission Amendment Bill 2024—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, dated 17 April 2024.

Nature Conservation Amendment Bill 2024—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity, dated 30 April 2024.

Planning and Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2024—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity, dated 30 April 2024.

Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance) Amendment Bill 2024—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, dated 18 April 2024.

Standing order 191—Amendments—

Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, dated 16 and 17 April 2024.

Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, dated 16 and 17 April 2024.

Mr Gentleman, pursuant to standing order 211, presented the following papers:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act—

Pursuant to section 7—Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Declaration 2024 (No 1)—Notifiable Instrument NI2024-176, dated 8 April 2024.

Pursuant to subsection 8(5)—Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Directions 2024—Notifiable Instrument NI2024-175, dated 8 April 2024.

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 26—Consolidated Financial Report for the financial quarter ending 31 March 2024.

Inspector of Correctional Services Act, pursuant to section 39—Statutory Review Report—*Inspector of Correctional Services Act 2017*, dated April 2024.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 22—*Inquiry into the Human Rights (Healthy Environment) Amendment Bill 2023*—Government response, dated May 2024.

Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2023—Select Committee—Report—*Inquiry into the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2023*—Government response, dated May 2024.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act—ACT Teacher Quality Institute (Fees) Determination 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-77 (LR, 22 April 2024).

Building (General) Regulation—Building (General) (Alternative requirements for unaltered parts) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-83 (LR, 30 April 2024).

Building Act—

Building (Fees) Determination 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-81 (LR, 30 April 2024).

Building (General) Amendment Regulation 2024 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2024-6 (LR, 30 April 2024).

Building (Ministerial exemptions for regulated swimming pools) Guidelines 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-82 (LR, 30 April 2024).

Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Act—Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Amendment Regulation 2024 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2024-5 (LR, 26 April 2024).

Financial Management Act—Financial Management (Transfer of Funds from Capital Injection to Other Appropriations) Direction 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-80 (LR, 2 May 2024).

Gambling and Racing Control Act and Financial Management Act—

Gambling and Racing Control (Governing Board) Appointment 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-60 (LR, 18 April 2024).

Gambling and Racing Control (Governing Board) Appointment 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-62 (LR, 18 April 2024).

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Act—

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Advisory Council Appointment 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-73 (LR, 30 April 2024).

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Advisory Council Appointment 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-74 (LR, 30 April 2024).

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Advisory Council Appointment 2024 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-75 (LR, 30 April 2024).

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Advisory Council Appointment 2024 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-76 (LR, 30 April 2024).

Heritage Act—

Heritage (Council Chairperson) Appointment 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024 63 (LR, 26 April 2024).

Heritage (Council Deputy Chairperson) Appointment 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-64 (LR, 26 April 2024).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-65 (LR, 26 April 2024).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-66 (LR, 26 April 2024).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2024 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-67 (LR, 26 April 2024).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2024 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-68 (LR, 26 April 2024).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2024 (No 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-69 (LR, 26 April 2024).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2024 (No 6)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-70 (LR, 26 April 2024).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2024 (No 7)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-71 (LR, 26 April 2024).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2024 (No 8)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-72 (LR, 26 April 2024).

Land Tax Act—Land Tax (Affordable Community Housing) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-79 (LR, 26 April 2024).

Liquor Act—Liquor (Exempt Business) Declaration 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-78 (LR, 26 April 2024).

Official Visitor Act—Official Visitor (Disability Services) Appointment 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-89 (LR, 6 May 2024).

Public Place Names Act—

Public Place Names (Kingston) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024 90 (LR, 6 May 2024).

Public Place Names (Monash) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024 59 (LR, 22 April 2024).

Racing Act—Racing (Appeals Tribunal Assessor) Appointment 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-58 (LR, 11 April 2024).

Road Transport (General) Act—

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation (Pedders Test) Declaration 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-56 (LR, 2 April 2024).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation (Rally of Canberra) Declaration 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-55 (LR, 2 April 2024).

Road Transport (General) Driver Licence and Related Fees Determination 2023 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-85 (LR, 2 May 2024).

Road Transport (General) Fees for Publications Determination 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-88 (LR, 2 May 2024).

Road Transport (General) Numberplate Fees Determination 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-86 (LR, 2 May 2024).

Road Transport (General) Refund and Dishonoured Payments Fees Determination 2024(No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-87 (LR, 2 May 2024).

Road Transport (General) Vehicle Registration and Related Fees Determination 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-84 (LR, 2 May 2024).

Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act—Utilities (Technical Regulation) (Electricity Network Boundary Code) Approval 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-61 (LR, 18 April 2024).

Veterinary Practice Act—Veterinary Practice (Fees) Determination 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-57 (LR, 11 April 2024).

Leave of absence

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

That leave of absence be granted to Ms Orr for this sitting period due to personal reasons.

Domestic and family violence—coercive control

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (2.54): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

(a) coercive control precedes almost all intimate partner domestic violence homicides;

(b) coercive control is a form of domestic and family violence characterised by abusive patterns of behaviour designed to exercise domination and control in a relationship;

(c) coercive control behaviours include, but are not limited to, threats of violence, deprivation of liberty, financial coercion, social and cultural isolation, stalking and intimidation, reproductive coercion, psychological manipulation, threats of suicide and threats against other people and animals;

(d) legislation criminalising coercive control has been passed in New South Wales, Queensland, and Tasmania, and is under development or consideration in Western Australia and South Australia;

(e) prior to the commencement of New South Wales' coercive control offence, they have launched an education campaign with the tagline "It's not love, it's coercive control";

(f) criminalising coercive control in the ACT, and educating the community about this form of abuse, is a critical step towards cultural change and saving lives; and

(g) the Australian Federal Police Association has expressed its support for the criminalisation of coercive control, stating that stronger legislation and a standalone offence is needed to combat coercive control, which they believe to be under-represented and under-reported in the ACT;

(2) further notes:

(a) criminalising coercive control should be complemented by a community education campaign about the offence and identifying its behaviours;

(b) criminalising coercive control should be complemented by the provision of support and necessary training and resources to police and other frontline services to identify and respond to the abusive behaviours;

(c) the ACT Government has been considering reform to criminalise coercive control for four years, and has been monitoring progress in other jurisdictions; and

(d) the community is desperately calling for cultural change and a stronger response to domestic and family violence; an education campaign on coercive control needs to begin as soon as possible; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

(a) implement an education campaign on coercive control which:

(i) outlines that coercive control is incompatible with respectful relationships;

(ii) educates on what unacceptable coercive behaviours are and how to identify them;

(iii) highlights that coercive control can impact anyone in an intimate or domestic relationship; and

(iv) is accessible to Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities; and

(b) commit additional funding and resources in the 2024-25 budget to frontline domestic and family violence services: in particular, to expanding ACT Policing's Family Violence Unit; including consideration of adapting the successful PACER model to address domestic and family violence incidents. This further support should also include training to identify and address coercive control.

I rise today to speak on my motion and call on the government to increase the community's education around coercive control. I am moving this motion in my capacity as shadow minister for the prevention of domestic and family violence; however, this is an issue which has been personal to me since long before I took on this role. This motion, calling for an education campaign, complements my private members bill to criminalise coercive control, which will be introduced later this year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague Mr Cain and his office for their legal expertise and close collaboration on addressing the issue of coercive control.

I join with many in the community when I express my utter disappointment that the government have chosen to continue dragging their feet on this issue, demonstrated by their proposed amendments to this motion, which I will address later. All of us in this place are familiar with the issue of domestic and family violence, whether that be from personal experience or because of the hundreds of heartbreaking stories we hear from those we represent.

An issue at the heart of this, which has been overlooked by our legislation and the criminal justice system, is coercive control. Coercive control is characterised by abusive patterns of behaviour that are designed to dominate a relationship and exercise control. Behaviours that can constitute coercive control if repeated over time include threats of violence, deprivation of liberty, financial coercion, psychological manipulation, threats of suicide and threats against other people and animals.

Coercive control is a form of domestic and family violence. It needs to be treated as such, and we owe it to the community to send a strong message that it is not acceptable. According to the ACT Domestic and Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework, 99 per cent of intimate partner domestic violence homicides are preceded by coercive control. This is a staggering figure. Accounts from victim-survivors highlight that coercive control is the worst aspect of domestic and family violence.

Legislation criminalising coercive control has been passed in a number of jurisdictions around the country. Tasmania first criminalised coercive control behaviours, economic and emotional abuse, back in 2004. The New South Wales coalition government legislated a standalone criminal offence for coercive control in 2022, which commences in July this year. Queensland followed suit in March. Both Western Australia and South Australia have taken action and announced their intentions to legislate a criminal offence.

We have learnt a lot from the New South Wales and Queensland governments in particular, who inquired into the need for a specific coercive control offence. The New South Wales Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control released its report in June 2021. The committee recommended the creation of a criminal offence on the basis that it would educate the public about coercive control, prevent intimate partner homicides, make help and legal protections more accessible for victims and improve enforcement and prosecution of domestic abuse.

New South Wales, with whom we share a large cross-border community, also found that inconsistent domestic violence laws and poor coordination between jurisdictions

can be an extra barrier for victims of domestic abuse who live in border areas. The Australian Federal Police Association has also voiced their strong and welcome support for criminalising coercive control in the ACT. AFPA President Alex Caruana has said that this measure is sorely needed, as rates of domestic and family violence are continuing to climb here. He said:

> Statistically, we believe that coercive control offences are under-represented and under-reported in the ACT as there is no specific offence defined for this type of crime.

He went on to say:

> …we strongly believe that it needs to be recognised as a standalone offence.

That is the AFPA—and they really are strong on this. I repeat:

> …we strongly believe that it needs to be recognised as a standalone offence.

All of this evidence points towards the need to legislate a standalone criminal offence for coercive control. That is why I announced, at the beginning of the month, that I am working on a private member's bill to do just that.

The past few weeks have been marked by tragedy and shocking violence against women. If the marches and demonstrations have shown us anything, it is that the community are angry. They want to see real action from their governments—meaning reform and preventative measures. The facts are clear. Coercive control leads to assaults and murder. Addressing coercive control will save lives, prevent tragedy and hold families together.

Criminalising coercive control is a no-brainer; however, as we have heard from stakeholders, an education campaign is critical to ensure that the community is aware of what coercive control is, that it will be illegal and that victims of this form of abuse have a legal avenue to escape it. An education campaign on coercive control needs to complement criminalisation. Its aim must be ensuring that Canberrans know that it will be an offence before it becomes one. Our New South Wales neighbours have demonstrated that this is entirely possible. New South Wales passed their legislation in 2022. They recently launched their education campaign with the tagline, "It's not love; it's coercive control." Following this launch, the substance of the bill will commence in July.

An education campaign in the ACT around coercive control should explain coercive behaviours, explain to people how to identify them, provide examples and foreshadow a future criminal offence; it should outline that coercive control is incompatible with respectful relationships; it should highlight that coercive control can impact anyone in an intimate or domestic relationship—women and men; and, to ensure that everyone in the community understands coercive control, it must be accessible to Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The advice from stakeholders and the community is crystal clear: we need to act quickly and pass real preventative reforms to keep women, men and families safe, but we also need to ensure that everyone in the community is aware of their rights and obligations

when it comes to their families and intimate relationships. We need to draw a line in the sand when it comes to coercive control.

I understand that the government has been considering criminalising coercive control for the past four years. Minister Berry stated in 2020 that she was undertaking consultation and keeping a watching brief. I appreciate that this is a complex issue. Stakeholder consultation is essential, and the community needs a chance to be educated on coercive control offences. However, the sentiment of the community and of victim-survivors of coercive control is that the time to act is now. When one woman has been violently killed every four days this year, it is clear that we cannot afford to wait any longer. That is why I want to see the Assembly call for an education campaign today, one which gets up and running as soon as possible. We cannot sit on our hands when it comes to domestic and family violence. This is a cry which is echoed from every corner of the community.

Frontline services, whether they be crisis services, shelters or law enforcement, have had to repeat themselves like broken records. For years they have been asking for more funding, better resources and greater support from the government. Adjacent to an education campaign and criminal offence for coercive control, they want to see education and training for frontline staff on how to identify and address coercive control behaviours.

On the frontlines of combatting domestic and family violence, it is our police who have the difficult and thankless job of enforcing the law and trying to protect victim-survivors and their families. We know that the situation for ACT Policing is dire, and asking more of them without addressing this is simply going to make matters worse. The AFPA said that in order to properly address coercive control, a long-term significant investment will have to be made into ACT Policing. It needs to be consistent and include long-term funding.

In my conversations with the police and the AFPA, I have heard all too often about the problems they face being understaffed, overstretched, struggling to retain experienced officers and dealing with serious risks to their physical and psychological welfare as a result. We simply cannot expect our frontline police to address coercive control if they are not properly funded and resourced. That is why the last section of my motion today calls on the government to commit additional funding and resources in the next budget to frontline domestic and family violence services.

It is all well and good to talk the talk on the prevention of domestic and family violence, but Canberrans want to see their leaders take real, tangible action. I know that there is goodwill across the chamber, and I implore the chamber now to show that and answer the calls from our community. The time to act is now to draw a line in the sand and to commit to better outcomes. We need to prevent domestic and family violence. We need to end the murders, the assaults, the tragedies and torn apart families. We need to educate all Canberrans on coercive control and respectful relationships. We need to answer the call of frontline services and give them sufficient funding. We need to send a message in the strongest terms: coercive control is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. I implore you to do this today by supporting my motion.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.06): I rise as the Greens spokesperson on prevention of domestic and family violence to thank Ms Castley for bringing this

motion today. I also want to thank Minister Berry and Minister Rattenbury for the improvements through the amendments that have been circulated.

The calls in this motion and in the amendments go to the education and cultural change that is needed in our community to improve prevention of domestic and family violence and to better fund frontline services for people who are experiencing this violence—because coercive control is violence. It is critically important that we understand the range of frontline services who are working so hard every day to deal with the domestic and family violence epidemic in our community, not just for coercive control violence but for all forms of domestic and family violence.

Ms Castley's motion only talks specifically about the resourcing needs of the police. Australian Bureau of Statistics National Crime Victimisation Data from 2022-23, which is based on surveys of people aged 15 years and older, and therefore includes crime not reported to police, shows that 48.1 per cent of women who experienced physical assault in the past 12 months did not report it to police. Physical assault is a criminal offence—that is well known—and yet almost half of women who are physically assaulted do not report it to police. Over 70 per cent of those women have been assaulted by someone known to them, usually a current or previous intimate partner, compared to 42.3 per cent for men who have been physically assaulted.

Frontline services that can help us understand what victim-survivors are experiencing include our health services, counselling services and crisis support services. This is because they see people in need of support who are not reporting violence to the police. I will repeat the data again: 48.1 per cent of women in Australia who have experienced a physical assault in the past 12 months did not report it to police.

National Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data from 2017 on hospitalised assault injuries in women and girls shows that in 59 per cent of cases where the relationship to the perpetrator was recorded, it was a partner or a former partner. In another 19 per cent of cases, it was parents or another family member. Most of the injuries were a result of bodily force, usually to the head or neck. For victims aged 15 years or older, eight per cent were pregnant at the time, and those victims were more likely to have an injury to the trunk, at 33 per cent, than non-pregnant women in that age group, at 12 per cent.

The death review in the ACT, conducted by the Domestic Violence Prevention Council in 2017, showed that victims rarely identified their experience as domestic and family violence; that non-physical behaviours were often not identified by bystanders and first responders; and that cultural change is needed around understanding that coercive control is a form of domestic and family violence, but we also need frontline services to be better resourced.

In the DVPC's submissions to government, an area they considered needed to be addressed was homelessness services. These are often funded for immediate housing needs only, but there is a need for funding for additional supports, particularly in relation to children. Other areas needing to be addressed included mental health and counselling and case management; that funding for domestic violence refuges is not provided in a long-term secure way through the commonwealth government's National

Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and is not adequate to meet demand; that there is a lack of affordable, accessible and appropriate long-term housing to move women into in a timely manner, which means that women stay in crisis housing services longer than necessary and those places are not available for other women; that there is a lack of culturally appropriate responses within existing services that allow victims to leave the violence temporarily; that child protection responses need to understand that women are also the victims, and to work with women to keep the family together and the children safe; and that children witnessing and experiencing family and domestic violence need access to ongoing counselling and support services appropriate to their specific trauma experience and age in a timely manner and until they show good progress in their physical and mental health and educational progress; that there is a need to have diverse ways to access housing services, not just the central intake through OneLink, and resources to provide intake outside OneLink's normal service hours; that increased awareness of domestic and family violence leads to increased reporting, but there needs to be adequate resources to meet this increase in demand for services; that maintaining the momentum of long-term change and gender transformative responses in this area requires ongoing bipartisan support and commitment; and that challenging and changing attitudes and culture around domestic and family violence requires appropriate resourcing for primary prevention programs, such as education in schools, community and workplaces.

A KPMG report from 2016 tells us that the total cost of domestic violence to the ACT was $410 million, with 52 per cent of the total cost being borne by the survivors of violence, 19 per cent by commonwealth and ACT governments and the remaining 29 per cent by the community, children of women experiencing violence, the perpetrator, employers and friends and family.

I commend the work of our frontline services here in Canberra, including Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, Beryl Women, Victim Support ACT, Toora, Women's Legal Centre and Legal Aid ACT. I thank you for the work that you do every day to support survivors of violence. What you do saves lives.

We absolutely must implement an education campaign on coercive control and respectful relationships, and we absolutely must fund more sustainable, long-term support for frontline services, as well as for behaviour change programs. I am pleased to support this motion with the amendments today, and I sincerely hope that there will be increased financial support for all our frontline services in a future budget.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (3.12): I thank Ms Castley for bringing this motion before the Assembly and for her thorough and thoughtful review of the state of the law in our country on this issue, and on the need for change. I join with Ms Castley and my other Canberra Liberals colleagues to call on the ACT government to follow the approach increasingly taken across Australia to commit to a scheme to educate the public on coercive control and its harmful outcomes.

This motion calls on the government to recognise the perverse and harmful nature of coercive control and work collaboratively to support the transitionary period to its criminalisation. The motion also calls on the government to consider additional funding and resources for frontline domestic and family violence services, particularly ACT Policing's Family Violence Unit.

This reform comes at a pressing time for change. The status quo is not working. Women around this country, for far too long, have been maliciously and deliberately targeted by strangers and, more tragically, by those with whom they are in an intimate or family relationship. Women are deprived of liberty, ridiculed, abused, beaten and sometimes, unfortunately, killed by their partners or male family members.

Data from the Australian Institute of Criminology shows that the number of women killed by an intimate partner in Australia increased by almost 30 per cent, year on year, in 2022-23. Patterns of domestic violence and coercive control are a blight upon our society, and the scale of abuse against women must end.

This year alone, 26 women have allegedly been murdered by men. Two weeks ago, my colleague Leanne Castley and I announced that the Canberra Liberals would bring a private member's bill to the Assembly to create a stand-alone, independent offence of coercive control under the Crimes Act 1900. This decision was made in light of recent and ongoing events.

In a national poll of 1,074 Australians commissioned by White Ribbon Australia, 70 per cent of respondents supported criminalisation of coercive control. Eighty-one per cent of respondents thought it unlikely that a perpetrator would be detected or charged with domestic violence unless they got to the point of physical injury, stalking or intimidation, a breach of an AVO, or damage to property. The time for signalling our virtues must end. This is the time for action.

As Ms Castley has carefully explained, coercive control is a form of domestic and family violence, characterised by a pattern of abusive behaviour designed to dominate and control another in a relationship. It can take many forms and it can emerge in any relationship. It is rarely limited to a single incident, but manifests as a pattern of behaviour. It is particularly pernicious, as it often occurs silently and incrementally. It does not make it any less dangerous and, unfortunately, it is a frequent precursor to violent and physical assault.

I want to quote a damning finding from a 2020 report of the New South Wales Domestic Violence Death Review Team, which reviewed 112 intimate partner domestic violence incident homicides in New South Wales between 2008 and 2016. The report found:

> In 111 of the 112 cases in this dataset … the relationship between the domestic violence victim and the domestic violence abuser was characterised by the abuser's use of coercive and controlling behaviours towards the victim. In each of these cases the domestic violence abuser—

unfortunately, all male—

> … perpetrated various forms of abuse against the victim, including psychological abuse and emotional abuse.

Nearly 100 per cent of intimate partner domestic violence homicides are preceded by or involve coercive control. It is a form of domestic violence.

Some victim-survivors who experienced both coercive control and violent forms of abuse reported that coercive control was more degrading and harmful because of its ongoing nature. Many women are trapped and given no hope of escape by having their very sense of "self" attacked by their abusers. By depriving the "self", the function of human rights is also deprived as, most perniciously of all, victims begin to see themselves as unworthy and undeserving of support. No-one should ever be subject to this treatment, and the laws must be urgently addressed to reflect this zero-tolerance position.

The motion calls on the government to enhance the education scheme for coercive control. It asks the government to take a clear stance on coercive control in declaring its incompatibility with respectful relationships. It calls on the government to educate women on their rights.

New South Wales, Tasmania and Queensland have already passed coercive control laws and made appropriate headway in educating the community on avenues for reporting and understanding its presence. Western Australia and South Australia are exploring criminalisation schemes for coercive control. We should not be left behind.

As I said earlier, these patterns of abuse can emerge silently and without provocation, making it just as sinister as, if not more than, other forms of abuse, given the difficulties victim-survivors face in gathering relevant inculpatory and exculpatory evidence, as the research suggests. While women disproportionately represent the vast majority of victims, I recognise that men, too, can be victimised.

The Labor-Greens coalition must follow the lead of the Canberra Liberals in this instance. How could there be an argument against this motion? The evidence suggests that providing a clearer mechanism for criminalisation affords victim-survivors greater security while contributing to the prevention of future harm.

I also want to respond to criticisms of the policy that some groups in the community have. As we have acknowledged, and as has been acknowledged by Ms Castley in this motion, this is not legislation that has been drafted overnight. This is about providing a transitionary period by the government, following this motion, for a thoroughly informed community to be informed about this abuse, leading up to legislative reform.

The Canberra Liberals have never wavered from this commitment to prevent and reduce domestic violence in our community. The onus is on the Labor-Greens government, as the government of the day, to do something about this. It was disappointing to hear that Minister Berry, the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, has been watching this area since 2020—watching but not acting sufficiently strongly.

I commend Ms Castley's motion to this Assembly. Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a bit disappointing; you would expect the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, in amending such a motion, to make it stronger. Unfortunately, it is a weaker version of what the Canberra Liberals stand for, and I commend our position to this Assembly.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence,

Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (3.20): Of course, the ACT government recognises the dangers of coercive control. Every single year state, territory and federal governments put additional funding for domestic and family violence services into supporting crisis housing and supporting our police and domestic violence services; but, every year, women are still being murdered by their partners.

One in four women, one in 16 men, is clearly a gendered issue. Ninety-five per cent of the violence that occurs in our community is conducted by men. We need to take the gendered nature of this very insidious issue seriously.

Coercive control is a complex issue. It is an element of domestic and family violence that has been identified as a key indicator of domestic and family violence risk. But I bet that, 10 years ago, if you spoke to anybody in this place, coercive control might not have been a term that they recognised. It is a relatively new understanding of the controlling nature of perpetrators of domestic and family violence.

Victim-survivors often are not aware that coercive control is a risk factor, and sometimes will struggle to identify it, as would some of the frontline service workers and police officers, and as would any frontline responder to any of these kinds of situations. This has enabled perpetrators to conceal their coercion and control and manipulate systems to continue abusing their partners.

Effective responses to coercive control rely on creating a shared and consistent understanding of what coercive control is, and ways to identify and respond to it across our community, which is why the ACT government is committed to prioritising community education and agency training to build awareness and capability, and to understand and respond appropriately to coercive control.

I am pleased to see that the Canberra Liberals, after first announcing that they would introduce this bill, have listened to the comments that have been made by the experts within the service sector that have called for that education and agency training and that awareness building within our community.

As I have said numerous times over the last few weeks and years, I will always listen to the voices of the experts in the domestic and family violence service sector. What they have always told me is to go slowly, not fast, with this kind of legislation. That is what the government is doing, in making the appropriate response. We are taking the time to get this right, based on the expert advice of the services system and the experts within the domestic and family violence space.

The government's response to coercive control, as I said, has been led by advice from the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, which highlighted the importance of community consultation, community-based education and ongoing agency training to ensure that we improve the responses to coercive control and that there is an understanding of this complex issue.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Council also warned us of the potential unintended harms that criminalising coercive control could have for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as culturally and linguistically diverse communities. I am very

concerned about this potential negative impact. The last thing our community wants is a law that causes more harm in our attempt to respond to these difficult circumstances, instead of the positive impact that we would want to have for victim-survivors.

Several recent reports have highlighted the impacts of coercive control in our community. We know that it is a problem, and we have been advised of the need for our system to respond in a more holistic and evidence-based way, including by the death review report which was tabled in the Assembly earlier this year, and the *Sexual assault (police) review* report released on 30 April.

The death review report found that a clear pattern of coercive control was present in nearly all homicides reviewed and was a significant predictor of domestic and family violence homicide. The death review report concluded that community-based education and training for frontline responders is absolutely critical to build understanding and awareness of the dynamics of coercive control, and to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.

The police review report also found opportunities to improve the understanding of ACT Policing officers when responding to and investigating sexual offences within a domestic and family violence context. The ACT government is committed to supporting community-based education and consistent training across the ACT services sector to achieve this.

To date, we have made a number of domestic and family violence training options available across the ACT service sector. For example, ACT public service employees must complete a domestic and family violence eLearn module, which includes specific content about coercive control. In the health context, the Strengthening Health Response to Family Violence training program at Canberra Health Services builds the capability of frontline health staff to respond to domestic and family violence.

At a national level, the ACT is progressing work with other jurisdictions through the Standing Council of Attorneys-General to build a nationally consistent understanding of coercive control. All jurisdictions have endorsed the National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence, which guides this work.

It is also important to note that, currently, the definition of family violence in the Family Violence Act 2016 includes coercive and controlling behaviour. Importantly, this means a family violence order can be sought for coercive control. The breach of an order is a criminal offence. The government understands that we cannot address coercive control through law reform alone. We simply cannot arrest our way out of this issue. That is why we have been educating, and will continue to educate, our public service, frontline agencies and the broader community.

I thank Ms Castley for bringing this motion forward today, and I hope that all parties in this place can continue to work constructively together as we address this national crisis. The more we talk about domestic and family violence in this place, the more people will hear about it, understand the complexity and know about the supports that are available for them.

There are a number of amendments which have been circulated in my name which add further detail to Ms Castley's motion. Of course, I am disappointed, as I know Ms Castley is, that we could not reach tripartisan agreement on this motion, but I welcome the intent of Ms Castley's motion to establish an education campaign, which is what I have been advised from the experts needs to occur, and is occurring, all the way along. I look forward to this campaign being developed with the specialist advice from the experts in the service sector, as well as our partners within the police.

I have heard the views of sector stakeholders regarding their concerns about criminalising coercive control. If that meant that I took the time to listen to them, in order to get the response right, so that it was something that I was held to, then I am happy to take the blame. The sector, in my view, has the expertise that we need to listen to, and that is what I have done.

I also agree that the concerns need to be carefully considered, thought through and addressed, before we progress with law reform. Before considering law reform, we need to be focused on addressing the gaps in community education and frontline training, and that is what the ACT government has prioritised. I move the following amendment that has been circulated in my name:

Omit all text after paragraph (1)(e), substitute:

"(f) educating the community about coercive control is a critical step towards cultural change and saving lives;

(g) the Australian Federal Police Association has expressed its support for the criminalisation of coercive control, stating that stronger legislation and a standalone offence is needed to combat coercive control, which they believe to be under-represented and under-reported in the ACT; and

(h) family violence in the ACT includes "coercion or any other behaviour that controls or dominates a family member" and also "sexually coercive behaviour" (section 8 of the *Family Violence Act 2016*), which means that a family violence order can be sought by those affected by coercive control and granted under Part 3 for coercive behaviour. A breach of a family violence order is a criminal offence (section 43);

(2) further notes:

(a) any consideration of criminalising coercive control should be complemented by a community education campaign about the offence and identifying its behaviours;

(b) any consideration of criminalising coercive control should be complemented by the provision of support and necessary training and resources to police and other frontline services to identify and respond to the abusive behaviours;

(c) the Domestic Violence Prevention Council has provided the Government with advice on criminalising coercive control which highlighted the potential unintended harms such legislative reform could cause various groups of Canberrans;

(d) the Domestic Violence Prevention Council also highlighted the importance of community consultation, community-based education, and ongoing agency training to improve responses to coercive control;

(e) there are a range of training options across the ACT Public Service which address coercive control, however there remains a lack of foundational knowledge and understanding about coercive control in both service delivery agencies and the broader community;

(f) the ACT Government is working through the Standing Council of Attorneys-General (SCAG) to introduce the *National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence*. On 22 September 2023, the National Principles were released by the SCAG, setting out a shared understanding of common features and impacts of coercive control;

(g) the ACT Government has been considering reform to criminalise coercive control for four years, and has been monitoring progress in other jurisdictions; and

(h) the community is desperately calling for cultural change and a stronger response to domestic and family violence; an education campaign on coercive control needs to begin as soon as possible; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

(a) implement an education campaign on coercive control which: (i) outlines that coercive control is incompatible with respectful relationships; (ii) educates on what unacceptable coercive behaviours are and how to identify them; (iii) highlights that coercive control can impact anyone in an intimate or domestic relationship; and (iv) is accessible to Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities; and

(b) consider additional long-term support for frontline domestic and family violence services, including ACT Policing's Family Violence Unit. This further support should also include training to identify and address coercive control.".

I will quickly address part (3) of my amendment to Ms Castley's motion. I note in particular paragraph (3)(b), which states that we will consider additional long-term support for frontline domestic and family violence services, including ACT Policing's family violence unit. It states that this further support should also include training to identify and address coercive control. The reason why we have made that change, as Ms Castley knows, is that the government does not make funding announcements in motions in the ACT Assembly, but that paragraph very clearly states that the ACT government will continue to work on reforms and support frontline services, including the ACT police, in addressing domestic and family violence.

Finally, I want to thank the domestic and family violence services sector, ACT police and the ACT police domestic and family violence unit for their work every day. The phones never stop ringing, day in and day out, and the unit are constantly available to support victim-survivors and to hold perpetrators to account.

It is an issue that we as a country have still not managed to get on top of, but I know that, by working together—and I think we can show that by working together—we can certainly have an impact on keeping more people safe, particularly women. We can work with the experts within our community to address this issue in a justice sense, in a support services sense and in a prevention sense. All of those three responses are required; one alone will not be able to resolve this issue.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (3.31): I wish to express my support for the government taking action on coercive control, which is essentially the issue that Ms Castley has raised today. I welcome her bringing this motion before the Assembly and providing an opportunity for us to discuss it. We will also be supporting the amendment that has been moved by Minister Berry. I think it adds to the original motion and captures the intent of it whilst bringing some further detail.

As the Attorney-General, as a Greens member of this Assembly and as a citizen of the Canberra community, I am certainly committed to doing what I can to end violence in a family and domestic situation, which is predominantly against women. As has been noted in the discussion, it is not exclusively against women, but it is, clearly, a gendered crime to a great extent.

The vast majority of domestic and family violence victims are women. One in six women and one in 17 men have experienced physical violence by a partner. One in four women and one in six men have experienced emotional abuse by a partner. These statistics rightly spur the continued commitment and action of the ACT government to prevent and respond to domestic and family violence. We know that domestic and family violence claims the lives of more than 100 people in Australia every year and causes enduring damage to individuals and to society as a whole.

Coercive control is almost always an underpinning dynamic of domestic and family violence. Coercive control has traumatic and pervasive immediate and long-term impacts on victim-survivors, their families and communities. In Canberra, the recent biennial report of the ACT Domestic and Family Violence Review, *Domestic and family violence homicides 2000-22*, found that, in nearly all cases reviewed, the perpetrator used coercive control. This included limiting the victim's freedom, stalking them and controlling their access to money. The review found that coercive control was present even where there was not a history of physical violence, but that the forms of coercive control intensified leading up to the victim's murder.

Coercive control involves perpetrators using patterns of abusive behaviours over time in a way that creates fear and denies liberty and autonomy. It is complex and nuanced, and its presentation varies in terms of manner, form or intensity, depending on the relationship.

However, despite evidence showing that coercive control is a risk factor for homicide, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women—ANROWS—detailed in its 2021 "Defining and Responding to Coercive Control: Policy Brief" that there is a strong tendency in legal and other settings to construct a hierarchy of violence, where physical and sexual violence sit at the top and forms of non-physical abuse sit below them.

ANROWS noted that a hierarchical understanding of violence is also reflected in the community, as shown in the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey results. The 2017 NCAS survey found that, while most Australians understand violence against women as involving a continuum of behaviours, they are

more likely to recognise forced sex and obvious physical violence than they are to understand social, emotional and financial forms of abuse and control as forms of violence against women.

Coercive control diminishes a woman's ability to exercise her agency and autonomy—the very things that would enable her to leave a relationship. For a woman, this can have serious impacts on her perception, personality, sense of self, sense of worth, autonomy and feeling of security; and, more significantly, on her life itself.

As I said, I support the components of Ms Castley's motion calling for an education campaign on coercive control. The domestic and family violence sector has told us that education and community engagement is a good first step for how the ACT should respond to coercive control. I acknowledge that policy and legislation can only go so far. This national issue needs community and cultural change.

The death review has told us that the signs of coercive control can be difficult to spot. Behaviours can be subtle and insidious, and individually targeted and tailored to the victim-survivor. People who use coercive control can use many different types of abusive behaviours to exert power and dominance. That is why it is so important that, first and foremost, we listen to the sector and victim-survivors and are led by their experience.

I thank Ms Castley for this motion because it is an important conversation to have in this place, in our communities, in our homes and across this city. The government amendment to the motion calls for an educative component to be prioritised. I look forward to working with other members of the Assembly in a united front to implement an education campaign on coercive control, so that Canberrans can gain a better understanding of coercive control—a crucial ability to more easily recognise when our mothers, sisters, daughters, neighbours and friends might be subject to coercive behaviours, and to know what to do and how to respond in a safe and supportive way.

Jurisdictions across the nation, the ACT government included, are recognising coercive control as a pressing issue that requires a coordinated national approach, as Minister Berry noted, and as is noted in the amendment. In September 2023, I joined with my colleagues on the Standing Council of Attorneys-General to endorse the National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence, otherwise known as the national principles. Importantly, the national principles set out a shared national understanding of the common features and impacts of coercive control, which is vital to enhance the safety of Australians, particularly women and children. I am keen to see the ACT government build on this crucial work. I think it was well-understood that having this set of agreed national principles was a powerful way of the Federation working together to improve the community's understanding of this issue.

No meaningful solutions to improve the ACT's response to domestic and family violence can be made without the generous input of victim-survivors and those who have bravely shared their experiences. For this, I simply say thank you. I take the opportunity to thank the domestic and family violence sector, and the victims, advocates and frontline service providers for their tireless efforts, in spending their days listening

to the stories of victim-survivors and working with them and our service system to get victims the protection and support that they need.

I also express my support for improving the ability of frontline services to respond to and prevent coercive control behaviours. My colleague Minister Davidson has already spoken about this, but I emphasise the point that, although police efforts are important, there are a range of frontline domestic and sexual violence services that need support and that play a critical role in working with the community. Our attention should not be too narrowly focused. We need to recognise the range of service responses that are required.

As has been discussed, the government has been considering this issue very carefully, and we have had a range of discussions. For me, as I flagged, that has been at the Standing Council of Attorneys-General; there have also been discussions with Minister Berry and various stakeholders, and there have been cabinet discussions.

There has been this question of whether we should criminalise behaviour of this nature as a stand-alone offence. I think it is fair to reflect that it is a complex issue and, as the amendment notes, in some ways coercive control can be considered to be criminalised already, in the sense that the definition of family violence under section 8 of the Family Violence Act includes coercion or any other behaviour that controls or dominates a family member, and also sexually coercive behaviour. This means that a family violence order can be sought by those affected by coercive control and granted under part 3 for coercive behaviour. A breach of a family violence order is then a criminal offence under section 43 of the act. It is a criminal offence to breach that order.

I understand, of course, the difference, in that others are saying that it should be a stand-alone offence, but it is important to reflect that there are already consequences in the legal system for this behaviour. The interesting discussion is about whether it needs to be a stand-alone offence and whether that will produce more effective outcomes. This is the discussion that the government has been having with a range of people in the sector. It is important to continue that discussion, and I will continue to do so. I certainly support the calls and the urging to have greater levels of community education. I think it is clear that people do not fully appreciate this, and the data that I cited earlier in my remarks underlines that. I look forward to working with colleagues across the Assembly on that important piece of work.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (3.41): I thank Ms Castley for bringing forward this important motion, and the work that she and you, Mr Assistant Speaker Cain, in your capacity as shadow attorney-general, have done in committing the Canberra Liberals to introduce legislation that will criminalise coercive control.

Coercive control, of course, is often defined as a pattern of controlling behaviour used by a perpetrator to establish and maintain control over another person. Shockingly, it is almost always a dynamic of family and domestic violence and intimate partner violence.

Coercive control is abhorrent. It diminishes a person's liberty, and it can have devastating impacts on everything to do with a person—their personality, their perception, not only their sense of self-worth but also their sense of reality and, of course, their feeling of security.

An ACT domestic and family violence review which examined the 12 deaths in the territory between 2000 and 2022, which was publicly released in February this year, found that coercive control was involved in a majority of the deaths and significant physical violence. It stated:

> A clear, ongoing pattern of coercive control was present in almost all the cases. In approximately 75% of these cases there was a clear absence of significant physical violence prior to the homicide.

It is one of those things that can sometimes be hard to define or describe in any articulate way, but it is something that I think we all—certainly in this chamber, but even broadly in the community—know is utterly unacceptable.

Both Ms Berry and Mr Rattenbury have stated, previously and in this debate today, that they believe coercive control is already illegal in the ACT. Mr Rattenbury said in the debate just now, and back in February, that coercive control is covered if a person brings a family violence order and that, in that sense, coercive control is covered by criminal offences here in the ACT. Of course, he was referring to a breach. Ms Berry, in her amendment, specifically states:

> … family violence in the ACT includes "coercion or any other behaviour that controls or dominates a family member" and also "sexually coercive behaviour" (section 8 of the Family Violence Act), which means that a family violence order can be sought by those affected by coercive control and granted under Part 3 for coercive behaviour. A breach of a family violence order is a criminal offence …

Both Mr Rattenbury and Ms Berry, whilst technically correct, ignore the reality of the mere fact that, for so many people who are going through and have been subject to coercive control, the act, in itself, of applying for, seeking and being granted a family order is not realistic or accessible, and can be an intimidating process. What is needed is to criminalise coercive control as a stand-alone offence.

When I read Mr Rattenbury's comment, "Hey, it's already illegal," it took me back to April 2021, when I introduced legislation to criminalise stealthing. At the time he initially said that it was already illegal, but he admitted that there was value "in putting this beyond doubt by creating an explicit definition". When the bill was passed unanimously by this chamber at the time, Mr Rattenbury, as Attorney-General, said that Ms Lee's bill "helps to put beyond doubt that which we know". It is incredibly disappointing that both Mr Rattenbury and Ms Berry have not chosen to bring to this debate the same spirit, to ensure that we can get this done as a parliament.

The police review in relation to their response on reports of sexual violence, which was made public earlier this month, raised some shocking and very concerning issues that are prevalent. I have no doubt that the ACT government is taking those seriously. Here we have the AFPA, the police, publicly calling for coercive control to be specifically criminalised as a stand-alone offence, and this government has chosen not to listen. The AFPA said:

> Statistically, we believe that coercive control offences are under-represented and under-reported in the ACT as there is no specific offence defined for this type of

> crime. While we acknowledge that elements of coercive control can be addressed by the current legislation, we strongly believe that it needs to be recognised as a standalone offence …

This is the opportunity for the ACT government to take that seriously and support Ms Castley's motion.

I also have a few comments to make in response to some of the comments made by Ms Berry and Mr Rattenbury. There were comments like, "It's about go-slow on the legislation," "It's about education," and "It's about listening to the sector." Those comments are as disingenuous as they are insulting to you and your office, Mr Assistant Speaker, who I know have been consulting widely for years, and to Ms Castley and the work she has done.

It is not like we have brought in the legislation and said, "Hey, we're about to debate this now; make up your mind." We have literally said, "This is our intention; we will bring forward some legislation." Also, we have always stated that education must be a key part of this because law reform alone cannot do the job.

It is disappointing that today, in this debate and through the amendments that Ms Berry has brought, for which the Greens have indicated their support, the ACT Labor-Greens government has refused to commit to criminalising coercive control.

Education is vital. We are all on the same page on that. In the "calls on" in Ms Castley's motion, that is in the very first paragraph. It says "implement an education campaign". Canberrans need to know it is not okay for their partner to tell them, "Don't go and spend time with your friends; if you're a good partner, you'll spend time with me." That happens repeatedly. It is not okay for their partner to tell them, repeatedly, "Don't answer that call because you're spending time with me". It is not okay for their partner to tell them, "No, if you don't spend time with me, you're not being a good partner." If you wake up to 72 missed calls through the night because they have been trying to get hold of you and will not give up, and if they leave voicemails on your phone threatening to kill themselves if you do not get back together with them, that kind of behaviour is not okay.

I commend Ms Castley for bringing forward this motion. It is incredibly important. The Canberra Liberals will criminalise coercive control. We know that an education campaign, a public awareness campaign, and listening to the sector and the lived experiences of victim survivors, are absolutely vital to make improvements in this space. I commend Ms Castley's motion to the Assembly.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (3.51): Let's get down to it: coercive control is wrong. It is manipulative, it is destructive and it is abusive. It fundamentally undermines a person's capacity for self-determination and their ability to control their own life. I think it is really important to understand the types of behaviour that we are talking about. We are talking about the psychological manipulation of an individual, generally a life partner—someone you are supposed to love and care for. Coercive control is psychological manipulation through threats of violence, financial coercion, social isolation, cultural isolation, religious isolation, stalking and intimidation, reproductive

coercion, threats of suicide, threats to other people and animals, and manipulation and intimidation through access to children.

Coercive control is a deep form of domestic and family violence, and we as a community and as a parliament must not accept it. We must not normalise it and we must not make excuses for it. Nor should we make excuses for not acting on it. Indeed, as Ms Castley has already outlined, other jurisdictions, across party lines, have already made inroads. Legislation to create a standalone criminal offence has been passed in multiple states and is being developed in more. In 2022 the New South Wales coalition government, under Dominic Perrottet, criminalised coercive control. The Queensland Labor government legislated it as an offence this year. Tasmania criminalised some forms decades ago, all the way back in 2004. It is time that we, here in the ACT, took a step in the same direction.

Some stakeholders have expressed their concern that introducing a coercive control offence might not be effective, might not achieve its objective, without a corresponding education campaign—that is to say, it must be two strands of an integrated strategy. These two elements must go hand in hand, along with adequate funding. Introducing a coercive control offence needs an education campaign to be effective. In just the same way, education without an offence is fundamentally impotent.

That is why I am pleased to speak in support of Ms Castley's emotion—Ms Castley's motion!—today, which calls for an integrated approach. That has always underpinned our strategy to address coercive control. It is important that we send a very clear message: coercive control is domestic violence. It must be treated as such. An education campaign is important. It needs to outline what coercive control is, provide examples of coercive control behaviours, inform victims of the services available to them and make it clear that coercive control is, or at least will be, a criminal offence.

Let's be very clear about what the amendment that the minister has moved today does. It adds some useful context in some areas, but at the very heart what it strips out is the message that we will criminalise a behaviour we must not accept. It strips out a commitment to funding the services that people who are victims of domestic violence depend on. That is not just police, as the Greens seems to think, but the frontline domestic violence services who face this problem every day.

I have seen the psychological impact coercive control has on people. I have watched it suck away someone's self-confidence so that they felt they had to do what someone else said and so that they blamed themselves for the actions of the perpetrator. I have seen strong, confident people begin to doubt themselves and submit. Let me share the comments of a psychologist when they were told of an instance of coercive control. They said, very simply, "She needs to get out. She needs to get out now." But the very nature of coercive control makes it incredibly difficult to escape. When you are on the outside and you can see the impact, it is extremely difficult to find something to do. Today there is something we can do. That is why I urge every one of you to support the motion as Ms Castley moved it.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (3.57): I am disappointed. I had hoped for tripartisan support on this one. I know that there is a lot of goodwill across the community and in this place

when it comes to ending the scourge of domestic and family violence, but this response from the government is feeble. I am so pleased that they have finally committed to educating the community about the patterns and the harms of coercive control, but I cannot see how an education campaign can tackle this issue on its own.

To remove all commitments from my motion to both criminalise coercive control and properly fund frontline services is out of step with the community and stakeholders. Minister Berry claimed she was considering criminalising coercive control four years ago. Fast-forward to 2024 and we have seen no tangible action. The calls of victim-survivors and frontline services are being ignored.

I have spoken to many of these victim-survivors, stakeholders and services. We are all on the same page. We need a legal system that can respond to coercive control, preventing tragedy and torn apart families. That is the kicker here. The police are calling for a coercive control offence so that they can investigate before more violent acts occur, before more homicides occur. They have to have this in.

The Domestic Violence Crisis Service spells it out clearly. Their submission to the ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy, made in 2024, stated that our system is "directed towards individual incidents of violence, not patterns of fear and control". That is what we have to address. This sums up the pervasive issue here. When 99 per cent of intimate partner homicides are preceded by coercive control, we cannot afford to wait for individual incidents of violence to occur.

The minister said that the sector has advised her to go slow. Let me share what the sector has said to us and out in the public. In 2021 then DVCS general manager Glenda Stevens said:

> Ultimately, there needs to be a legal response to coercive control …

The government's amendments to my motion suggest that family violence orders are sufficient to protect victim-survivors from coercive control. Three years ago, principal solicitor Claudia Maclean of the ACT Women's Legal Centre said that a new offence, on top of family violence orders, would need to be introduced to capture the insidious nature of coercive control and properly reflect this form of violence as a pattern of behaviour, rather than a single event.

The government's amendment states that advice received "highlighted the potential unintended harms that legislative reform could cause various groups of Canberrans". I am going to highlight the harm that your government's lack of action is causing right now to all victims of domestic and family violence. Coercive control is a factor in 99 per cent of intimate partner homicides. Ninety-nine per cent of intimate partner homicides could potentially be prevented if the criminal justice system had the power to go in and prosecute abusive patterns of behaviour. We have the government saying that they should continue to go slow. I just cannot swallow it.

Furthermore, Minister Berry's amendment claims that the government have a shared understanding about the impacts of coercive control with other jurisdictions. Five out of the eight states and territories have either legislated against coercive control or they

are committed to doing so. If the government have a shared understanding of the issue, why do they not have a shared commitment to addressing coercive control?

I keep hearing today that it is complex. It is certainly a very complex issue. That does not mean that we should do nothing. We can do hard things in this place. We must do hard things in this place. Today the government have ignored the advice of stakeholders and they have ignored the expectations of the community. They have refused to commit to criminalising coercive control and they have refused to provide proper funding to frontline services, despite their desperate calls. Today the government have committed to, at best, delaying tangible reform to prevent domestic violence and related murders and assaults.

I hope that, at the very least, the government will be swift in their implementation of the coercive control education program. I wish they would put a date in the motion. I am hoping to get the government to take action quickly. This year, in Australia, one woman has been killed every four days as a result of domestic violence. We cannot afford to wait another four years. I reiterate that, yes, domestic violence does seem to be a gendered issue—certainly, that is what the statistics show—but coercive control affects both men and women and we must be doing something to protect families.

Mr Cocks made a slip of the tongue, saying, "Ms Castley's emotion" instead of "motion". It is emotional. Mr Cocks has seen it. I have seen it, lived through it, as has my son. All of these things have ongoing impacts on the mental health of Canberrans. It is not easy to recover from. To not act today is a scourge on the government. Domestic violence is a scourge on our society. It is incredibly disappointing that the government have watered down my motion today. On behalf of all victim-survivors of coercive control in the ACT, I say it again: I am very disappointed in the government's response to my motion. We will not be voting in favour of the amendment.

Question put:

> That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 15		Noes 8
Andrew Barr	Laura Nuttall	Peter Cain
Yvette Berry	Marisa Paterson	Leanne Castley
Andrew Braddock	Michael Pettersson	Ed Cocks
Joy Burch	Shane Rattenbury	Jeremy Hanson
Tara Cheyne	Chris Steel	Elizabeth Kikkert
Jo Clay	Rachel Stephen-Smith	Elizabeth Lee
Emma Davidson	Rebecca Vassarotti	James Milligan
Mick Gentleman		Mark Parton

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Marriage—ceremonies

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (4.09): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

(a) marriages that take place in the ACT are performed by either a Commonwealth registered marriage celebrant or a minister of religion recognised by Access Canberra. Access Canberra does not perform marriage ceremonies; and

(b) in all Australian jurisdictions except the ACT and Tasmania, registry marriages can be facilitated by the government in either their Births, Deaths and Marriages office, or in government-owned spaces that can accommodate a simple ceremony;

(2) acknowledges the rising cost of weddings in the ACT has increased demand from couples for simple government-facilitated marriages like those offered in other jurisdictions; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to investigate the establishment of registry marriages in the ACT in consultation with the community.

I rise today to talk about the ever-increasing cost of weddings and marriage, and what we here in the Assembly can do about it. Let me start by making something clear. Weddings will not always be the first priority in the minds of all Canberrans at all times, but we are in a cost-of-living crisis. Matters of love are important, and love does not stop just because things are getting more expensive. I know that there are lots of couples that want to make the commitment of marriage and have a wedding in a special place, but who are actively choosing not to do so due to the hefty price tag associated with modern conventions of tying the knot.

Celebrating this important milestone in life can cost a lot of money. According to ASIC's Moneysmart initiative, the average Australian wedding costs $36,000. I repeat: $36,000. The Australian Bridal Industry Academy found, via their survey of 5,000 couples, that the average wedding costs about $40,000. That is a lot of money in anyone's books.

Of course, those weddings do include the cost of the ceremony and reception, plus all of the other bits and bobs involved in customising aspects of a wedding. But there is no denying that these sums are large and can be very confronting for most couples, often young couples. Do not get me wrong: I am more than happy for and support those that make those decisions, because it is what they want and can afford to do.

Marriage is a unique, special, commonly religious, government and legal institution. It is of tremendous value. Canberrans deserve to be able to make the commitment of marriage in special ways that do not necessarily cost an arm and a leg, and maybe even a house deposit. That is why I admire the initiatives of other Australian state and territory governments in offering a registry wedding service. Although the offering is slightly different from state to state, this service typically involves the government hosting a basic "legals only" or small ceremony in their births, deaths and marriages office, or a beautiful government-owned venue.

In New South Wales, thousands of couples choose to be married by the New South Wales registry each year. Couples can get hitched in stunning locations like the Old Wollongong Courthouse or the Pyrmont Registry. The best part is that the ceremonies are affordable, intimate and stress-free. The government does all of the hard work of putting it together for you.

In Victoria, couples can say "I do" at the Victorian government's beautiful Marriage Registry in the Old Treasury Building. Interestingly, the Victorian Marriage Registry is the largest provider of wedding ceremonies in Victoria. If that is not proof of community demand, I do not know what is.

The cost of these registry marriages is inclusive of all paperwork and can range from $370 to $699, depending on the location and the couple's preferences. $370 to $699: that is an absolute bargain compared to the $40,000 figure that I mentioned earlier. If you are looking for a special wedding without a large price tag, a registry wedding might just be the ideal option.

I do not want any celebrants out there getting worried about the government offering registry marriages and what it could do to their business. There will always be a demand for a basic "legals only" ceremony in the ACT, as well as for larger private wedding functions. In all of the states and territories that offer registry marriages, there remains a thriving market for the services of celebrants, not to mention religious ministers wedding those of faith.

I would ask Canberrans to think about this proposal as one which complements the services of celebrants and religious ministers. It provides another option that does not currently exist and which may be suitable for some. Heck, it may even mean that more people choose to get married because this is the option that they want. Those that had put off getting married and having a wedding due to modern expectations might now think that this is for them.

Some here in this place may argue that there is not demand for registry marriages here in the ACT. However, discussions with my constituents and Canberrans from right across the city have revealed that this is not the case. Canberrans want a cheaper alternative to a modern wedding. When I speak to Canberrans, they think government has a role to play in providing it.

One couple I spoke to told me of how they had always wanted to get married, but the cost of a normal do-up was just too high for them. At the time they were trying to save for their first home and eventually to have kids, so they had reached out to Access Canberra to query whether registry marriages were a service that they offered. Unfortunately, they discovered that this was not the case. They were, I think rightly, confused.

After doing research into this issue on their behalf on the offerings of other states and territories, I came to agree with this couple and the many Canberrans that I have heard from. Government, I believe, has a fundamental role to play in marriage, and it is unusual that the ACT government is not more involved. I see here a fantastic

opportunity for the ACT government to share in the joy of Canberrans in love. But given the broad range of registry marriage offerings across states and territories, it is important for the ACT government to investigate the feasibility of offering a similar service here. I think we can analyse the best aspects of other services and adopt them. At the end of the day, I am keen to ensure that the first priority of any registry wedding service is to provide value for money to Canberrans.

Today, my proposal is this: colleagues, I ask that you vote in support of my motion today and join me in asking the ACT government to investigate registry marriages in the ACT. Will you say, "I do"?

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (4.16): Let me start by congratulating Mr Pettersson on finding a service that the Labor government has not yet messed up and embarking on an insourcing campaign that will allow the government to do just that! Rising costs for weddings have nothing to do with the lack of a government venue and everything to do with Labor's inflation and cost-of-living crisis.

With the costs that Mr Pettersson was referring to, of course, he is conflating various different types of service. A person who goes out and looks for a $40,000 wedding, clearly, is not in the same market as the person who is out there looking for a $400 registry-equivalent service. Let us be very clear, because the proposal that Mr Pettersson is bringing—the thought bubble—is to expand the number of hours in which Access Canberra is providing some sort of registry service, by the sound of things, which will increase costs.

The proposal that Mr Pettersson is putting will make it more expensive for this type of service than it is in the ACT. As an example, in New South Wales, most registry services start at a higher price than the equivalent service by a private celebrant here in the ACT. Effectively, Mr Pettersson is arguing for an increase in costs, and, at the same time, an increase in cost for the taxpayer. Right now, Mr Pettersson would like to see the government embark on increasing costs to provide something that Canberrans just are not asking for. Canberrans can access, very easily, a private marriage celebrant. Currently, there are 1,500 weddings per year that are provided. My understanding is that, with the number of private celebrants who are out there right now, each of them, on average, provides eight weddings a year. They are clamouring to do more. They would love to say, "I do," but this is not the way that you do it.

There is no need for what Mr Pettersson is proposing. It would increase costs, it would increase the government's expenditure and he has not yet told us what he plans to cut to pay for it. We will not be supporting Mr Pettersson's thought bubble, and I would encourage all others to vote the same.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (4.19): I would like to begin this speech by acknowledging that, a couple of weeks ago, I attended a wedding. In fact, it was the wedding of the adviser who drafted this speech for me. Thank you, Dani. She is too modest to write this, but she looked absolutely stunning. The event was organised by a local celebrant, and the whole day went perfectly.

The Canberra wedding industry is filled with great people who genuinely love love, but Canberrans who want a simple, government-facilitated wedding would have to travel

all the way to Wollongong; therefore they would not have their marriage recorded within the ACT. This is a functional gap in the system. The ACT Greens will be supporting this motion, and I want to thank Mr Pettersson for bringing forward this motion to the Assembly.

Access Canberra is the central hub for government services in the ACT. It is the branch of government that is most commonly used by the community, and it prides itself on its commitment to customers. I am particularly proud of and impressed by the breadth of what Access Canberra offers—everything from car registration to working with vulnerable people cards and giving Canberrans the opportunity to better improve the ACT through the Fix My Street form. The staff at Access Canberra also have my utmost respect. They are at the forefront of government services and are a beacon of knowledge and support for our community.

For the people of Canberra, going to Access Canberra can often be an annoyance—having to replace your licence because you lost it, or simply renewing registration. But I would like to acknowledge the role of Access Canberra in major life milestones—passing your driving test and getting your licence for the first time, having the opportunity to change your name and gender on your birth certificate, and even lodging the land title ownership document for your first home. These are incredibly significant moments and Access Canberra plays a critical role in them.

A natural extension of this would seem to be the inclusion of wedding ceremonies. In its most simplified form, a wedding is about two people coming together to celebrate their love in a way that is authentic and meaningful to them, not dictated by societal expectations or financial constraints.

Marriage has a lot of meaning. For a lot of us queer folk, the fight for same-sex marriage was a hard-won victory, affirming our own right to love who we choose to. For others, they do not feel like a marriage is wanted or needed in their relationship. And for others still, marriage can actually feel like a social obligation or a duty and not a choice. When we work on making marriage accessible, we should be mindful that our systems should actively empower people to make their own decisions for their own reasons.

Marriage is not for everyone, but those who do want to get married should be able to have the wedding that they want to have, whether it be a $50,000 event with all of their friends and family, or a small, intimate affair at a local Canberra institution. Both options are incredibly valid, and we should be giving Canberrans the option.

I have spoken before about my generation having missed the wealth bus—I am hoping it will catch on—and, at a time when we would really like to be celebrating something as genuine and sweet as being in love, the rising cost of weddings just adds to this.

Weddings have always been a massive burden for engaged couples. Prior to 2020, the ACT had the highest average wedding cost across Australia, roughly equating to $35,000. That is already an insane amount of money; now throw in an even more intense cost-of-living crisis and a housing crisis.

Although registry weddings are considered the cheaper option, they can still be expensive, with Victoria being the most expensive, at a whopping $545. Add on extra

expenses such as rings, clothes and photography, and that can easily topple over the $1K mark. This motion urges the ACT government to investigate the opportunity for registry weddings. The ACT Greens believe this should be investigated, but it is important for us to consider the full picture of weddings here in Canberra.

The ACT Greens want the government to specifically investigate how to keep this service affordable and accessible for everyone. We would also like to acknowledge the work of the roughly 200 registered celebrants in the ACT. Here in Canberra, we have been without registry weddings for so long that there are actually already so many great celebrants who do cheap, easy weddings for couples who do not want to make a fuss of the whole day. I have spoken to ACT celebrants, and they actually offer packages for as little as $150, where they offer to do all of the paperwork for you and keep it as casual as possible. If Access Canberra were to offer this service, the ACT Greens would want to see it done as affordably and as accessibly as this.

We would also like to see the need for the service investigated. Community consultation is greatly needed to see if this is something that couples will use, especially considering the ease and low cost of private celebrants here in Canberra that have been operating successfully in place of having this government-facilitated service. We want to make sure that if we do establish registry weddings, we are mindful of the time and capacity of the Access Canberra staff, who already do so much to serve our community.

Small, low-key weddings offer couples a cheap and easy alternative to the traditional wedding ceremony. Whether they choose to exchange vows in the presence of a few close friends and family members or opt for a private ceremony with just the two of them, small weddings empower couples to create a wedding day that truly speaks to who they are as individuals and as a couple.

Having an option for registry weddings in Canberra is not just a step towards affordability and simplicity, we hope, but also inclusivity and accessibility. By offering couples an alternative to traditional wedding venues, registry and small-scale weddings ensure that marriage is accessible to all, regardless of their financial means. The ACT Greens believe that this should be at the forefront of the investigations, and we hope to see this done effectively and meaningfully to serve the community's needs. Peace and love.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Minister for the Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, Minister for City Services, Minister for Government Services and Regulatory Reform and Minister for Human Rights) (4.25): I thank Mr Pettersson for this proposal and the intent with which it has been brought. The current economic climate is creating challenges for many members of the ACT community, so it is unsurprising that couples are thinking carefully about their budgets when planning a wedding.

Registry weddings were previously performed in the ACT until the late 1990s; however, the service was discontinued, primarily due to a lack of demand. There was also an increasing cost associated with maintaining fit-for-purpose spaces, together with staffing, that could not be justified in light of the low demand.

With this historical context in mind, it is important to reflect on the operating context now, which all of those who have contributed to the debate have done. There are more than 200 registered civil celebrants and 600 registered ministers of religion in the ACT servicing ceremonies of all sizes. With around 1,500 marriages in the ACT each year, this suggests there is a lot of choice. It is not surprising, then, that Access Canberra receives fewer than a handful of inquiries each year concerning registry weddings. This does not diminish the confusion or the frustration that people may have when they do ring up and inquire, especially given what we see in other jurisdictions, but it does reflect the broader context—that there is a great deal of choice. Further, this is likely in part because ACT couples are able to engage civil celebrants for smaller and more intimate weddings that do not carry the financial commitment of larger ceremonies. For example, a quick scan of services available through one of the search engines shows that "Harry" offers a Canberra registry-style wedding for $450, and "Suse" offers a no-fuss-or-fanfare wedding for $580. Another marriage celebrant has advised me directly that their personalised small-service offering is $460. These are all comparable to New South Wales registry prices.

In this context, and in considering the role of Access Canberra, a thorough understanding of the interaction of any registry proposal and the livelihoods of civil celebrants, venue operators and related businesses is necessary. As all members are aware, the government must be live to the issue of competitive neutrality. Even with the very best of intentions, the government cannot simply jump into an established industry, take advantage of its government-owned assets and compete with the private sector, not just in the offering of the marriage service but in the ancillary businesses which support weddings, such as florists, artists, photographers and caterers.

Regardless, there would also be a cost associated with public servants as celebrants, noting that this is a specialised industry. Celebrants are trained and accredited, and they are required to maintain professional development. While our Access Canberra service centre staff receive extraordinarily positive feedback, and for good reason, conducting a marriage is a very different skill set to the range of services that they currently offer.

While some jurisdictions do offer this service within the capacity of the registrar, as defined in the Births, Deaths and Marriages Act, and their delegates—who in the ACT are Access Canberra officers—other jurisdictions confine this to or also include registrars of local courts. This requires further exploration. Further, a physical resource for a new registry wedding service in the ACT would be required. I acknowledge Mr Pettersson's suggestion that ACT government owned spaces be leveraged to facilitate simple ceremonies.

While, on the face of it, this does have some merit, Access Canberra service centres, particularly the many that we have upgraded recently, have been specifically designed to maximise the breadth and efficiency of a broad range of services for the benefit of the entire ACT community. They have also had a focus on accessibility, such as being dementia-friendly. Those spaces have been optimised to sensitively respond to the needs of all customers for space, comfort and efficiency. Further, as I think we would all appreciate, many of our most popular wedding destinations are outside, and this is supported through a public land use permit or through the NCA.

So the value of the acquisition or refurbishment of a suitable space requires a consideration of not only the value of a capital investment, especially against our already significant capital program, but also the costs of ongoing property maintenance that result in a standard that is appropriate for an occasion such as a wedding. So, as always, careful scrutiny needs to be given to any new services that the government introduces or supports. That said, with the passage of time since the decision was made to withdraw government registry services, the government is open to exploring the possibility of offering such a service.

I note there has been some concern in the community, particularly among marriage celebrants, about what the airing of agreement to this motion may mean in practice today. Importantly, no decision is being made today, except that this is something that we are open to exploring and investigating. There is no legislation and there is no policy decision. Any exploration necessary will be done in consultation with industry and stakeholders, particularly the small businesses which have ably serviced our community for decades, and especially when they have consistently reflected in their own offerings the variety of services that the community expects, from no frills to the very extravagant, and adjusted their pricing accordingly. Any exploration will be done in a way that is transparent and informed by evidence, together with an education piece that ensures the community is aware of the variety of services already offered in the ACT.

I commend Mr Pettersson for this motion and the interest that is captured for our times. It is an opportunity to recall why the decision was made in the first place and put that on the record, and also remind the community of what services remain available from our qualified marriage celebrants across the ACT.

I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (4.31), in reply: I thought I would start by reflecting on the conflation of marriage and a wedding. It is not as clear-cut as some of the terminology would make it seem. At the low end of the spectrum, there is something known as a legals-only service offered by celebrants. Commonly, this is undertaken in someone's kitchen or lounge room or maybe a place of significance like a local park. It is offered at the lowest price point, there are no more witnesses than are required and it is a very private ceremony. Commonly, the larger the event the larger the cost the celebrant will charge. I think that is reasonable: it is more work and is harder. I completely understand.

The idea that I am proposing for the ACT is not a radical one. Every other jurisdiction, except Tasmania, has this service and has never got rid of this service. It was a decision in the 90s, and I am not sure I am fully supportive of the reasons listed for why that decision was made. It was a decision in the 90s to remove this as a government offering. Other jurisdictions have largely continued to operate this service, and other jurisdictions are great examples of how popular this service is.

The Victorian Marriage Registry is the largest provider of weddings in the state. People in Victoria like this service and they want to use this service. I attended a wedding in Victoria last year officiated by a celebrant. Celebrants and religious ministers will still continue to have a large amount of work. There is no future in which celebrants and

ministers of religion will be out of that line of work. I think it is a preposterous idea that people would put. All this simply does is add another offering. It gives people a choice that they can then make.

I am not married. Maybe one day I will be. I suspect that I would not likely get married in a registry, but for some people that is something that they want to do. That should be an option for them, and the reason I think it should be an option for them is that we can look around the country and see that this is a choice that people are making.

Minister Cheyne made a comment about the number of inquiries that Access Canberra receives. I think it is a fair observation that Access Canberra only receives a small amount of correspondence every year asking about this issue. It should be noted that the Access Canberra website says, "We do not offer this service," so to then have people email and contact above and beyond the website saying, "We do not offer this service," I think says a lot about demand and people's interest in this topic.

I think this is a sensible idea for the ACT. Government has an important role to play in the institution of marriage. I think the ACT government can be involved in this space. I do not necessarily think this should be a headline focus for the ACT government, but I think it is something that we should look at in the long run. We should look at reintroducing it to the services provided by the ACT government. It is a service that is provided by most jurisdictions and has historically been provided by the ACT government.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Motion to take note of papers

MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to standing order 211A, I propose the question:

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

Justice and Community Safety Standing Committee—report 22—government response

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.35): I would like to speak briefly to the government response regarding the right to a healthy environment. Protecting our environment is a key part of many traditions. It is an essential element of our First Nations cultures, who understand exactly what it means to care for country.

Keeping our environment healthy matters for its own sake. It matters for the sake of the plants and animals who live here, and for the people passing through. That is why it is a core belief that cuts across cultures. Formal recognition of the right to a healthy environment is part of our modern rights movement. This recognition began before I was born. The right to a healthy environment was first recognised over 50 years ago. In 1972 it formed part of the Stockholm Declaration. The first principles of that declaration are that humanity has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate

conditions of life in an environment of a quality that permits a life with dignity and wellbeing. It is a great statement of what a right to a healthy environment means and why we need to recognise it.

More than 80 per cent of UN member states now recognise this right to a healthy environment. They have done this through regional human rights treaties, national constitutions and domestic legislation. In 2022, the right to a healthy environment received universal recognition when the UN General Assembly passed a landmark resolution reaffirming recognition of the right as a human right.

We need to recognise this right here in the ACT, too. Like everyone else, we are facing the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Recognising that we have a right to a healthy environment is one powerful symbolic and legal step we can take to address this, among many steps that we need to take.

I will talk about just one of those planetary threats. Climate change is now being treated by many as the core threat and human health issue that it clearly is. Climate change is why groups like Asthma Australia and Doctors for the Environment, are speaking out and becoming politically active. It is why, when I went to the midwifery awards last week, the keynote speech was about climate adaptation and midwifery. Practitioners can see that climate change affects every area of human health and treatment, and they also know they have some of the tools to deal with it.

Climate change is why our parliamentary committees are hearing alarming evidence, like the submission tendered by the Mental Health Community Coalition ACT, which said heatwaves contribute to around one in 50 deaths in Australia—one in 50 deaths, from one aspect of an unhealthy environment. It is astonishing.

Many individuals and organisations, including the Greens, have been campaigning to recognise the right to a healthy environment for many years. What is the right to a healthy environment? It is very simple. It is the right to clean air; the right to a safe climate, access to safe drinking water and sanitation; the right to healthy biodiversity and ecosystems; the right to live, work and play in toxic-free environments; and the right to healthy and sustainably produced food. What would Canberrans have that is worth having if we do not have those basic needs met?

In February 2022, I moved a motion to put this right into our Human Rights Act. I am pleased to say that that motion passed, and the minister has been working on the right ever since. Many of us are looking forward to seeing the completion of that work. Recognising a right is only one part of addressing the root cause of a problem, but it is an important step, and it is one that we in the ACT are ready to take.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (4.39): I realised something this week, while I was preparing for today's proceedings. It caught me by surprise, but I think it is worth reflecting on for a moment. During the inquiry into the bill on the right to a healthy environment, at the time we discussed how, not if, this right should be a thing—and I mean that in a tripartisan sense.

There was consensus demonstrated by the unanimous agreement of all three members of the Justice and Community Safety Standing Committee that the right to a healthy

environment should be enshrined in the law of the ACT. What we were arguing about was how we should do it properly. If that is the argument we are having, that is good, and let us have it. But let us not forget a central and good thing: given the consensus we have, it would be an indictment of this Assembly if the reform does not pass into law in this term, before the end of our final sitting week in September.

At the heart of what we have is disagreement on the question of the justiciability of the right—that is, the ability for someone to take the matter to the Supreme Court if they think their right has been unfairly restricted. It came really strongly through the submissions to the inquiry; the committee was unanimous that it was inappropriate to provide this right without the option to ensure enforceability through the courts. Without this step, the right is limited in its scope of application. But it is worth reflecting on how we got there.

On one side we have the environmental campaigners and human rights advocates, who are clearly emphasising the points of no rights without remedy and are not comfortable with relying on an assertion that it will be implemented at some point in the future. On the other side we have the bureaucracy, who like to say—and I will quote here from the government submission, "Public authorities need time to fully understand, implement and institutionalise the right to a healthy environment in decision-making policies and legislation."

To translate that, this means the public sector wants time to focus on becoming compliant with the right to a healthy environment, because they do not think they are right now, without having to worry about the threat of punitive court litigation hanging over their heads—basically, giving them the space to make mistakes and to get better at what they need to do before things actually become serious.

In looking at both of these arguments, I can honestly say that they both have merit. Yes, the bureaucracy needs time to get its affairs in order, so as to learn from its mistakes. But the justiciability of the right must come. It needs to be scheduled. If the bureaucracy think they really need more time, they can say so during the statutory review and make their case to the ACT legislature during the next term of the Assembly. The community sector could then have the confidence that, barring any actual changes to the law, both the right and its remedy are coming.

We can see this in how Mr Cain and I have both lodged competing amendments to this bill. I look forward to working with all parties in this space to ensure that we implement the right to a healthy environment with the legislative pathway for enforceability in the courts in this term. We will make this happen.

Select Committee on the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2023 report—government response

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Minister for the Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, Minister for City Services, Minister for Government Services and Regulatory Reform and Minister for Human Rights) (4.42): I wish to speak to the government response to the report of the inquiry by the Select Committee on the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2023 that was tabled today.

The inquiry continued the critical public discussion around the introduction of voluntary assisted dying to ensure that the ACT's model reflects the needs and expectations of our community—one that is workable, promotes human rights and protects them, without being unduly burdensome, and has the confidence of our health professionals.

In preparing our response, the government has carefully considered each of the committee's 27 recommendations, as well as the additional recommendations provided by members of the committee. The government has agreed, agreed in part, agreed in principle or noted 25 of these. Where possible, the response details where government amendments will be proposed for consideration in the detail stage of the bill, and they will be circulated shortly for transparency, or the government response makes clear where they will be given due consideration during the implementation phase of voluntary assisted dying.

Of particular note to the community, and to all stakeholders, is that the government has agreed to amend the definition of "advanced" to more clearly define the use of the term. The amendments will provide for clinical flexibility in assessing whether an individual's condition is advanced on a case-by-case basis.

In doing so, they will also clarify the policy intent that an advanced condition is not limited to the final days, weeks or months of a person's life, and that a person may be considered to be eligible for voluntary assisted dying, even if it is uncertain whether their relevant conditions will cause death within a 12-month period.

That is because, Madam Speaker, as you would be well aware, there are significantly differing clinical trajectories for different diseases, illnesses or medical conditions that are advanced, progressive and will cause death, and it is therefore difficult to broadly define an interpretation that is appropriate for all conditions. Further information on the meaning of "advanced" will be provided through clinical guidance material developed in consultation with health practitioners during the implementation period.

The government has also agreed to introduce amendments to the bill to increase the time frame for reporting requirements that have strict liability offence provisions attached from two working days to four business days. This will meet the government's policy intent to deter noncompliance that might limit the voluntary assisted dying board's oversight, while also not unduly burdening practitioners with reporting requirements that create disincentives to participate. However, referral to the care navigation service for those with a conscientious objection will remain at two days, to underline the principle of accessibility throughout the bill, and noting that the requirement is straightforward and is not a burden.

Other recommendations agreed, agreed in part or agreed in principle by the government relate to clarifying the intent of a range of clauses within the bill, the legal obligations of medical practitioners and health service providers, and the interaction of voluntary assisted dying with existing palliative care services in the ACT.

The government has not agreed to two of the committee's recommendations. The government considers the committee's recommendation for a shortened time frame to

return an unused or expired approved substance following the death of a loved one would put unreasonable pressure on the contact person, who is often the partner, close family member or friend, during what is typically an emotional and challenging time with many competing priorities, where survivors may feel overwhelmed, debilitated and are particularly vulnerable to compounded grief. Fourteen days reflects the return time frame in all other jurisdictions and the ACT government will implement measures to remind and support those holding unused or expired voluntary assisted dying substances to return the substance.

Further, given the multiple steps to be considered eligible for voluntary assisted dying, the government does not consider that the introduction of a 48-hour minimum period between the first and final request for voluntary assisted dying will provide any practical difference to an individual's capacity to access voluntary assisted dying, especially in light of the safeguard requiring enduring, repeated requests to be made in a number of different stages to different health practitioners.

I am deeply grateful to all of those who made submissions or gave evidence to the committee based on their personal experiences, many of whom provided such evidence following a very recent or still palpably felt death of a loved one. I also appreciate the wide range of expertise that the committee engaged throughout its inquiry, much of which is reflected in its recommendations.

Finally, I thank our officials and stakeholders for their detailed engagement and reflection in preparing this response and in drafting the amendments, particularly the Parliamentary Counsel's Office, and the coherent and iterative approach that continues to be adopted across government as we look to implement this historic reform.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Domestic Violence Agencies (Information Sharing) Amendment Bill 2023

Debate resumed from 30 November 2023 on motion by **Ms Berry**:

> That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (4.48): I rise to speak today on the Domestic Violence Agencies (Information Sharing) Amendment Bill 2023. The purpose of this bill, which the Canberra Liberals will be supporting, is to create an information sharing scheme for the Australian Capital Territory. An information sharing scheme represents a tool in the war chest to combat domestic and family violence and is a step wholeheartedly supported by the Canberra Liberals. Such a scheme has been in operation for many years in other jurisdictions, and it is about time we see the ACT finally looking to enact a scheme of its own. It is long overdue.

Normally I would commend the government for bringing on legislation such as this in this policy space. We look to have a unity ticket. However, in this instance, I would instead note that the timeline given on the YourSay project notes that this bill was to have been passed in late 2023 to early 2024. It is now May, and we still have a way to

go yet before Canberrans will actually see it up and running. The ACT government says it could be up to May 2025. Frankly, I think domestic and family violence victims are sick of waiting for this, after initial consultation was run in 2022 and a draft bill and listening report published in 2023. I will say it again for the minister's benefit: 2022, two years to progress this domestic violence initiative, never mind how long there have been calls for one in the ACT—well before this—and that it might not be operating until next year. I believe Ms Lawder will cover more of that when she rises to speak.

I confess that the only reason I am not more shocked is the ludicrous delays with tram, health infrastructure, economic reform, coercive control and the stadium. However, I am truly saddened and feel for those who experienced domestic and family violence. Had this scheme been in place, they may have avoided further suffering and distress. When it comes to combating and preventing domestic and family violence, there is no excuse for delay. The Canberra Liberals will do everything we can to prevent domestic and family violence, and I am glad to be in the process of introducing legislation around coercive control as another avenue to combat this insidious and serious scourge on our society.

The unwelcome delay notwithstanding, the passing of this legislation today is an important step, and one critical in the set-up of an information sharing scheme, but it is not the only step that needs to occur, and more work yet remains. We need to see this government working with the sector to produce ministerial guidelines to help operationalise and implement the legislation. We are not working with laws that affect large corporations who have an army of lawyers on hand to help interpret and understand how they will be impacted. This bill will impact frontline workers and public servants who will now be asked to undertake risk assessments, identify what information to request to share and with whom. How will workers across the service system be supported to make difficult determinations about risk?

For some organisations now potentially in scope—for example, early learning services or drug and alcohol services—domestic and family violence is not their core business. But we know that, to be the most effective, they are going to be integral to the information sharing regime. They are not all professionally trained to identify domestic and family violence, assess risk or safety plan the way that specialist domestic and family violence experts are. The production of supporting material is critical to help these organisations effectively engage with an information sharing regime. Likewise, what training and capability building will be rolled out across the wider ACT agencies about domestic and family violence, common risk assessments and consent? This is especially relevant given that organisations can be compelled to share. So asking for the right information is vital.

Lastly, we note that we are still in the dark about how this additional workload for frontline services will be managed. If, in scope, an organisation could receive a large volume of requests to share information, which they will need to either prepare or tell the information-sharing coordinator in writing why they are refusing, how will the government monitor and understand this additional workload and, if necessary, what extra resources can they be allocated so as not to reduce frontline service capacity? These are all serious issues which the government will have to work through and seek to address when implanting this important legislation. It is not surprising then that, in the listening

report, stakeholders gave feedback that "Support for the bill was contingent on the content and the ministerial guidelines which would operationalise and clarify the bill."

We believe it is possible to both walk and chew gum at the same time. We have heard that a lot in this place. I find it very disappointing that, given all this time, supporting materials were not exposed to comment and worked on publicly so this scheme could be given effect as soon as possible. It is ironic that this government does not seem open about sharing information, even when dealing with an information sharing bill. Let us hope some work has been done in the background that can be expedited.

We are supporting this because it is the right thing to do and because we listened to the community and know that they want the ACT to have an information sharing scheme implemented to combat domestic and family violence. But we note that they seem to be let down time and time again by this government that does not act with urgency but chooses to go slow and that does not respond to their concerns nor listen to their feedback. If there is a learning to take from this process it is to work with stakeholders, listen to your own listening report and understand that time is valuable.

The listening report noted that the majority of respondents primarily asked that the government ensure that this reform is workable and effective and achieves the aim of facilitating greater integration and collaboration across the service system. Think about that: greater collaboration. Wouldn't it have been great to have seen draft guidelines produced before the bill is up for debate?

This was a time for unity; to send a strong message to the community that this scheme will be in place, that we will use every tool, leave no stone unturned and look to remove the scourge of domestic and family violence from our community. Instead, we need to ask you to please finish the work and implement this important reform. This is too important a reform to get wrong. The community rightfully demands better. Work with stakeholders, get it right, produce supporting guidelines and let's get this information sharing scheme active in the ACT.

When it comes to combating domestic and family violence, this Assembly will always have an ally in the Canberra Liberals, and I commend this bill to the Assembly. We stand ready, and I expect that the government will work with the sector to produce material to support and effectively implement this important initiative—and, please, without any further delay.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Community Services, Seniors and Veterans, Minister for Corrections and Justice Health, Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Population Health) (4.56): As the Greens spokesperson on the prevention of domestic and family violence, I thank this government for the work that has gone into reaching this point today, where we can improve the sharing of information while respecting and supporting the privacy of individuals in order to reduce the often lethal impact of domestic and family violence in our community.

The death review in the ACT, conducted by the Domestic Violence Prevention Council in 2017, showed that victims rarely identified their experience as domestic and family violence. Non-physical behaviours were often not identified by bystanders and first

responders. Too often, it is someone outside of the situation who is able to identify that what is happening is violence. That is why cultural change is still needed around understanding of domestic and family violence. The DVPC made recommendations to that ACT government back then relating to a minimum dataset around domestic and family violence from community sector and government agencies. These included increased granularity in demographics recorded; keys to facilitate data linkage across systems if needed; and greater detail about the person's relationship to perpetrators of, victims of or witnesses to violence and the type of violence used. The DVPC at that time included a number of key stakeholders who are also working in the community sector themselves. So they knew exactly what they were talking about when they were making these recommendations.

This bill will support greater protection for people experiencing or at risk of domestic and family violence and it puts their safety and protection first. It means greater collaboration and coordination between the different agencies that support survivors of violence, thereby reducing the trauma of having to manage this coordination alone, and it gives context to the information that each agency holds, so that they can form a more accurate understanding of the nature of what is happening. Most importantly, it enables this information sharing to occur only with the consent of the person experiencing the violence, unless there are exceptional circumstances in which it is necessary to share information for the safety and protection of victim-survivors. The agency and autonomy of people who experience domestic and family violence must always be at the centre of any legislative changes intended to improve their safety and protection. I and my Greens colleagues support this bill.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.58): I am very pleased to speak today on the Domestic Violence Agencies (Information Sharing) Amendment Bill 2023. This is a significant bill. To state the obvious, we all want to reduce and prevent domestic and family violence here in the ACT and more broadly, and I think it is also safe to say that everyone agrees and understands that privacy and confidentiality of information is vital as well. We have in place a number of laws to ensure that information is only used for the purposes it is given and that the information is not misused, but unfortunately, over time, privacy has often been used as a reason, if not an excuse, for not sharing vital information.

There is sometimes a misunderstanding of privacy laws such as the Information Privacy Act 2014 and the Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997. As well, there is a culture of risk aversion in the handling and dealing of information, particularly within public sector agencies. This is an issue that has faced us here in this place time and again. The explanatory statement itself refers to some of the background and history relating to this bill. In my time here, examples of this include the ACT Family Violence Intervention Program in 2012 and, in November 2014, a guide to reporting child abuse and neglect in the ACT called *Keeping children and young people safe—a shared community responsibility*," which said:

> Confidentiality and privacy are important but should not override the safety of children or young people. Sharing information between Care and Protection Services and other agencies is essential to protect children and young people from experiencing abuse or neglect.

While that was specifically about children and young people, the principles remain the same.

In late 2015, the *Canberra Times* reported that ACT Victims of Crime Commissioner, John Hinchey, called for a national shift in the culture of secrecy around personal information on domestic violence victims and perpetrators. Mr Hinchey said that better ways of managing and sharing information in family violence cases needed to be at the core of a broader, whole-of-community response to the scourge of domestic violence.

Health, education, care and protective services, juvenile justice, adult corrective services, police, support services, and the criminal justice system all have bits of information about families that, when we put it all together, says, "This family needs help." But common perceptions about privacy rights, laws and policy guidelines often prevent information about safety risks being pooled between services, which is a limitation that Mr Hinchey said at times had deadly consequences. This is a salient point. I reiterated this in a motion I put to the Assembly on 9 March 2016 about the Glanfield inquiry. Under "(2) calls on the ACT Government to:" I included:

> (e) immediately implement any or all possible improvements in information sharing that have arisen from the April 2015 extraordinary meeting of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council.

The point in my motion referred to the 2015 extraordinary meeting of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, because there was a report provided by the council after that meeting to the Attorney-General. The report contained some recommendations about information sharing, such as recommendation 7, which said:

> That the ACT government considers allowing information sharing between agencies (Government and non-Government) within integrated responses, with appropriate safeguards, particularly where a risk assessment indicates it is important for the purpose of protecting the safety of the victim and their immediate family.

So we had the recommendations from the Domestic Violence Prevention Council. We all recognise that need. If we have better information between ACT government directorates and agencies as well as interstate and other jurisdictions, that is only going to improve outcomes for vulnerable people. We need to ensure better information sharing between ACT government and other jurisdictions, directorates and agencies, because that is what will ensure the best interests and the safety of our most vulnerable people.

The issues of privacy and information sharing came under the microscope once again after the tragic death of Bradyn Dillon in 2016. The inquiry ordered after this death, the Glanfield inquiry, undertook a comprehensive review into system-level responses to domestic and family violence under the Inquiries Act. Clearly, the circumstances involved in the tragic death of young Bradyn Dillon were a spur to this review, but the review was not about looking at the individual responsibilities in the Dillon case, because these were of course considered in the course of the criminal proceedings. The terms of reference set out what Mr Glanfield looked at, including the effectiveness of

interactions between government directorates, agencies and service providers in relation to the use of mandatory reporting, as prescribed by legislation, and the appropriateness of responses to those reports.

The review also considered the effectiveness of the responses of government directorates, agencies and service providers to family violence, particularly where children are involved, and the extent to which ACT authorities are legally able to and do actually share and receive information on at-risk families internally and with other jurisdictions. The Glanfield inquiry found no absolute legislative impediment to communication between agencies. That is right: in 2016, there was no absolute legislative impediment to communication between agencies. However, it found perceived impediments. It found that, while agencies do have the ability to share information around domestic and family violence, they are often uncertain of their ability to do so, and the main concern is that relating to privacy.

Chapter 8 of the Glanfield inquiry report in 2016 outlined key deficiencies in information sharing between agencies in the ACT. Recommendation 18 recommended legislative changes to clearly "foster a culture of appropriate information sharing and collaboration". Recommendation 20 stated:

> Any legislative amendments should also be accompanied by an awareness campaign and guideline material.

In June 2016, the ACT government formally responded to the Glanfield inquiry, alongside the *Review of domestic and family violence deaths in the Australian Capital Territory*, a report by the Domestic Violence Prevention Council in May 2016, and the *ACT domestic violence service system—Final gap analysis report* of May 2016 by the Community Services Directorate. In their response, the ACT government "committed to legislate to authorise information sharing for all family violence matters after further consultation with stakeholders". That is on page 9 of the ACT government's response.

This legislation represents the outcome of this process. But, as anyone can work out, this is eight years after the Glanfield inquiry. For a jurisdiction that likes to boast about being first in so many matters, why is the ACT a laggard in this regard? I absolutely support this legislation. The sad part is how long it has taken us to get to this point.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (5.07), in reply: I am pleased to speak in support of the Domestic Violence Agencies (Information Sharing) Amendment Bill 2023. This bill introduces a clear and consistent framework to help agencies know how, when and why they should be sharing information to establish, assess and respond to domestic and family violence risk.

This is vital to ensure that agencies in the ACT can accurately and holistically identify and respond to risk and keep people safe. This is a significant milestone in our ongoing work to improve supports for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence in the ACT, so that people can get the support they need sooner.

Before moving to the detail of the bill, I would like first to acknowledge the many victim-survivors of domestic and family violence in our community and recognise their courage and resilience. Domestic and family violence is a national crisis that impacts every facet of our community. We know that, nationally, one in five Australian adults has experienced violence from a partner and that women are more significantly likely to experience domestic and family violence than men.

The recently released biennial report of the ACT Domestic and Family Violence Review Coordinator identified common trends present in the cases of domestic and family violence homicides in the ACT. Critically, as we have spoken about in detail today, coercive control is a key risk factor in risk assessments for domestic and family violence. It was present in almost every homicide analysed by the review.

It is the responsibility of all of us to work together to prevent, reduce and respond to domestic and family violence. The evidence clearly shows that a system that supports coordination and collaboration between all services across government and the community is essential to support victim-survivors.

Effective information sharing is a key part of this. When different agencies hold different pieces of information and do not work together, no-one sees the complete picture of the abuse. The level of risk that a person using violence is posing to a victim-survivor is not known. The patterns of abuse and coercive control present in a relationship are not known. When we do not know these things, we cannot respond to risk effectively to support victim-survivors' safety or hold perpetrators accountable.

The inquest into the death of Bradyn Dillon and other reports have told us that information sharing in the ACT needs to be done better, and this bill shows that we are listening. This bill will ensure that services can communicate and collaborate with each other to respond to domestic and family violence risks. This aims to promote the safety and protection of those experiencing or who are at risk of domestic and family violence, hold persons using violence accountable, and prevent the escalation of abuse to crisis. At all times the safety and protection of victim-survivors will be prioritised as far as possible.

The bill prescribes certain agencies as information-sharing entities who can use, collect and share information for protection purposes. A protection purpose means establishing or assessing the risk of domestic and family violence occurring or taking action to prevent, reduce or manage domestic and family violence.

Entities can proactively disclose information to another prescribed entity and can also request information held by another entity for a protection purpose. The consent and agency of victim-survivors is central to this scheme. This means that, wherever possible and safe, a victim-survivor's information can only be shared with their full, voluntary and informed consent.

The bill identifies specific exceptional circumstances where an entity may share information without consent, but only if it is necessary for the safety and protection of the victim-survivor. This seeks to ensure the safety, dignity and autonomy of

victim-survivors, who are at the forefront of all of these decisions. There are other specific provisions on engaging with children and young people, people with disabilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The bill also establishes the role of the information-sharing coordinator as the key oversight and governance mechanism for the operation of the scheme. The coordinator will facilitate information sharing among entities and can require entities to share information if it is necessary under the bill. The coordinator can also take appropriate action for a protection purpose and coordinate centralised entities to provide a centralised response. To support entities to understand and implement the bill, the bill will also be accompanied by a protocol and risk assessment and management framework to improve practical guidance and safeguards for best practice information sharing.

While this bill is a milestone in our work to improve responses to domestic and family violence, we know that the legislative changes must be accompanied by changes to policy, practices and organisational cultures to be effective. Entities need sufficient time to build their capacity to implement this scheme in coordinated ways which are trauma informed and have victim-survivors at the centre.

To provide adequate time to develop and finalise this work, there is a 12-month commencement period for the bill. During this phase we will work closely with entities and other key stakeholders to build their capability and understanding, assessing and responding to domestic and family violence in competent and safe ways.

We will also be working closely with community organisations not currently prescribed as information-sharing entities in the bill, which include specialist domestic and family violence frontline services, to consider what supports they require to be able to participate in the scheme. This will ensure that these critical services have the appropriate resources and support to be brought into the scheme and empowered to participate in collaborative information sharing.

After two years of operation, an independent review will be undertaken to deliver preliminary findings on the bill's operational success and outcomes to ensure that the objects of the bill are being met. We know that domestic and family violence is one of the most pressing issues facing our community in the ACT and our nation. It is important to remember that, behind these discussions and policies, there are lives that have been irretrievably changed or lost due to violence. To reduce the statistics of women in Australia dying at the hands of their partners, we must work together to face these issues and create a Canberra community where all people can live safely, free of violence.

This bill puts us on a path to working in a way to better support victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. It also brings us into line with other jurisdictions across Australia. I look forward to working with the prescribed entities to continue the work to improve responses to domestic and family violence across our community and make Canberra safe for all.

I want to thank the government agencies who have been involved in the development of this bill, the community members who participated in the Your Say discussions and,

importantly, the victim-survivors who continue to share their experiences so that we can work together to build a safer community.

I would also like to thank the specialist domestic and family violence sector for their ongoing engagement and support as we progress significant reforms such as these. 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.

Statement by member
Multiculturalism—Yom HaShoah

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.15): I rise to speak about a very special event I attended with my colleague Mr Milligan last weekend hosted by the ACT Jewish community. On Sunday 5 May I was honoured to attend a Yom HaShoah ceremony, which is the commemoration of Holocaust, at the National Jewish Memorial Centre in Forrest. Apart from Mr Milligan and I, there were other ACT and federal parliamentarians in attendance.

As I said a bit earlier, Yom HaShoah is Hebrew for Holocaust Remembrance Day, the day of commemoration in the nation of Israel in particular but also worldwide to remember the approximately six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust under the Nazi regime. It was a great privilege to stand with Canberra's Jewish community to commemorate this important day in their calendar, especially in these particularly challenging times.

I want to acknowledge the outstanding leadership of Mr Athol Morris, President of the ACT Jewish Community, and thank Mr Ernst Willheim, who gave a very touching testimony of his parents' journey through Europe during that very challenging time pre and during World War II. Mr Willheim is an honorary professor at the ANU College of Law.

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

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

> That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Inquiry into the administration of bail in the ACT

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.17): I would like to put it on the record that I did not agree to the Justice and Community Safety Committee establishing an inquiry into the

administration of bail in the ACT. This is for two reasons. Firstly, it duplicates and arguably prejudices work currently referred to the Law Reform and Sentencing Advisory Council, who are expected to report on 30 November 2024. The council's terms of reference for the review of the Bail Act 1992 are more comprehensive than those proposed by the JACS Committee. The Law Reform and Sentencing Advisory Council will be able to examine this issue with an independent, dispassionate, professional and experienced approach, free from political factors during an election campaign. If members wish for effective and meaningful changes to bail arrangements, then surely the best step is letting the expert process that is already in train complete its work. Once that is completed, then we can commence an inquiry based on the expert report from the council.

This brings me to my second reason. As proposed, in the current electoral context, this inquiry does not have time to do the topic justice. Bail is a complicated topic that will take time to fully consider. Cursory examination, leaping to conclusions and kneejerk responses could have substantial and negative impacts for individuals in the community. It could have unintended consequences and ultimately could waste the time of submitters and witnesses. Any recommendations the committee could make will likely be superficial given the time that is available and will not be delivered in time in order to obtain a government response.

I will fully and faithfully participate in the inquiry process but wish for my views on this political fishing expedition to be put on the record.

Canberra—cost of living

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Community Services, Seniors and Veterans, Minister for Corrections and Justice Health, Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Population Health) (5.19): At this moment 30 years ago I arrived in Canberra with almost everything I owned in the back of my car and a mattress tied to the roof. I did not know what I wanted to do with my life but I knew that there would be a chance of finding it here.

Canberra has proven itself to be a city of opportunities. Your public schools allowed me to get a year 12 certificate to study law and software development at university and to work in jobs that I would never have had the chance to do in a small town. Canberra is also a friendly city. I met friends who introduced me to music and art, and were there for me when I needed them, even when I was annoying everyone by insisting that we haul our hungover asses into the city on Saturday mornings to protest the Jabiluka uranium mine, for land rights and self-determination as much as against nuclear weapons and environmental destruction.

But those opportunities are at risk for young people today. Thirty years ago I could afford to pay $60 a week for a share house room and earn $4 an hour at a pizza shop while I studied for year 12. I knew that I could pay off the HECS debt for a law degree from the salary that a mid-range public servant would earn and I had a permanent job that allowed me to take leave to do university exams. The worst feedback that I got at my public service job for being a bit of a lefty was my friend Alex telling me that I would be first against the wall when the revolution came, and that was for not being socialist enough!

But, in this city today, median weekly rent is $674 and rising, with the highest increases over 2023 in the Western Creek district where I found my first share house room; a law degree from the same university where I studied will leave you with a HECS debt of over $65,000; the job market has shifted, which means far less job security for those who are starting out in their careers; we still have to push back on governments who want to spend our common wealth on nuclear weapons; and we still do not have self-determination for our First Nations.

We can do better than this. We need young people who want to make the world a better place, and some of them will be kids like I was who have to be a bit more independent in how they get there. By treating housing as a human right and not as an investment, by making it possible to live decently on a low income and by protecting the right to protest, we can truly be a city where everyone has the opportunity to create a better world.

We can build 10,000 more public houses over the next 10 years in Canberra, and we can make it easier to get around for those who do not have a car. The Greens know that we can go further and faster than the old parties have been in making these changes. We can have a better world, but we have to vote for it—and I hope that the people of Canberra do exactly that.

Housing ACT—waiting lists

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.22): I rise today to bring to the attention of this Assembly a story of a housing applicant and his family. I was contacted in October last year by a Housing ACT applicant who was seeking affordable accommodation for themselves, their spouse and their four children. The applicant was trusting enough to confide in me the extent of their deeply troubling circumstances, some of which I will share here.

This person arrived in Australia from Afghanistan in 2014 and was immediately placed on the ACT Housing list in 2014. This person sought employment as a taxi driver and became quickly swept up in volunteering activity across the community, working tirelessly, alongside raising and supporting their family, to help new migrants settle in Australia, just as they have. This person today is a leading advocate for refugee justice and support in the ACT. By all accounts, and from my own encounters, this individual is an outstanding and generous member of our community who deserves greater support from this government.

This family of six people live in a small and narrow three-bedroom private dwelling on the periphery of the ACT. The family is suffering severe financial instability and, due to work-related injuries, the spouse is unable to complete domestic tasks. This is compounded by the fact that this person themselves suffers from stomach ulcers and is under extreme stress. One of the children has been diagnosed as completely deaf in one ear. As it stands, three of the six family members at the moment are sleeping on the floor to accommodate the needs of the household.

I contacted the minister in October last year to refer the request for a family home by Christmas. I was advised that the commission would be meeting with this resident to accelerate their application, an application that has been sitting there for almost

10 years. They were placed on the high-needs list eight years ago, seemingly due to a sense of urgency at the time, and they have remained on the high-needs list ever since. Since then, I have liaised with this resident who has shared the complete lack of progress on their application.

I have written to the minister three times, I believe, requesting action, and unfortunately this resident is no closer to the outcome than in 2014. This afternoon I heard the minister's response to this individual—unfortunately, not advancing their high-needs application. I encourage the Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services to please show this family some more consideration and look more closely into their needs.

Heritage—Canberra and Region Heritage Festival

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Parks and Land Management, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (5.25): Today I rise briefly to speak about the recent Canberra and Regional Heritage Festival, which was held from 13 April to 28 April 2024. This is the festival's 41st year, and we celebrated it with the theme of 'Connections'.

Once again, it was huge festival and, as I often reflect, a real hidden gem in our festival calendar. We saw 126 events covering 58 tours, 17 open days, 19 exhibitions and 31 talks and workshops. Events were held as far afield as Goulburn, Yass, Araluen, Cooma and Bungonia. In the ACT, events were held all over Canberra and Rural ACT.

There was a significant diversity of styles of events. In addition to walks, talks and exhibitions, there were five events held in graveyards, four cycling events, a careers panel for schools and university students and a showcase of traditional boats. Over one-fifth of the events specifically highlighted First Nations culture. There were walks around sights of significance, talks on First Nations activists, four language sessions held for a non-Indigenous audience and a Yidaki glassblowing demonstration.

The appeal of the festival was demonstrated by the fact that this year we saw many of the ticketed events sold out. This year I managed to attend 16 events—and, gosh, they were diverse. I sailed the high seas of Lake Burley Griffin on Australia's oldest functioning sailboat constructed, by two 21-year-olds in 1896. I walked around St. John's graveyard in Reid by torchlight, being told about the stories of the inhabitants by the indominable June and Penny. While I did not get on a bike this year for the Heritage Polaris, I did welcome participants as they finished the race and provided them with their timings. I explored Yarralumla Woolshed, one of our lesser known heritage sites, and dropped in to see the Girl Guides uniform exhibition.

I went on walks as diverse as a First Nations tour of Hanging Rock and a walk around the suburb of Reid, finished off with a spot of Devonshire tea. I heard from former female elected members of the Legislative Assembly and unveiled not one but two signs celebrating local shopping centres in Dickson and Deakin. Notable milestones that were celebrated through the festival this year were the Dickson Shop's 60th birthday, Gorman House's 100th birthday and Lake Burley Griffin's 60th birthday.

The Heritage Festival continues to be a feast of learning and enjoying our beautiful city. It is an opportunity to reflect on the heritage of a region that stretches back millennia, with the first stories being those of the Ngunnawal community, to the newer stories that are significant in the evolution of our city.

I would like to thank the hundreds of community members and volunteers who make this festival possible. These are the people who every day preserve, protect and celebrate our shared history and our important stories. Understanding our past equips us with moving into the future confidently. Each year we undertake an evaluation of the festival to ensure that we are learning the lessons and organising an even better festival in future years. I cannot wait to see you all at the 42nd Heritage Festival next year.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.29 pm.