



Debates

Weekly Hansard

Eleventh Assembly

3 December 2024

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Tuesday, 3 December 2024

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Tuesday, 3 December 2024

MR SPEAKER (Mr Parton) (10.01): Members:

Dhawura nguna, dhawura Ngunnawal.
Yanggu ngalawiri dhunimanyin Ngunnawalwari dhawurawari.
Nginggada Dindi wanggiralidjinyin.

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

This is Ngunnawal country.
Today we are all meeting on Ngunnawal country.
We always pay respect to Elders, female and male.

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

Petition

The following petition was lodged for presentation:

Roads—Mawson—petition 44-24

By Mr Steel, from 1 resident:

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 that crossing the road at Mawson Place is very hard and unsafe. Many students from Melrose and Marist and lots of other people cross this road all day everyday. Putting a pedestrian crossing in this road would increase the safety of everyone.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to put a pedestrian crossing in front of the Italian continental bakery. There is already a place for a crossing and there is a direct pathway to the middle of the shops.

The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petition would be recorded in Hansard and a copy referred to the appropriate minister for response pursuant to standing order 100, the petition was received.

Ministerial responses

The following responses to petitions have been lodged:

Transport—Latham bus services—petitions 29-24 and 37-24

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Transport, undated, in response to petitions lodged by Mr Cain concerning the Macrossan Crescent bus route in Latham.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petitions E-PET 029-24 and PET 037-24, lodged by Mr Peter Cain MLA, regarding reinstating the bus route along Macrossan Crescent, Latham.

Transport Canberra provides 4,192 services operating every weekday on the bus network with a fleet of 456 buses across our beautiful but dispersed city. Whilst the Government strives to provide as much coverage as possible across our city, this must be guided by service vision and principles, and balancing the costs and need for frequent, direct, and reliable fixed route service for the whole community.

Our public transport network vision has moved away from long, meandering, and circuitous routes to focus on frequent Rapid spines with shorter, straighter and more direct local or feeder routes. I am advised there are no current plans to reintroduce bus services on Macrossan Crescent, Latham.

I note reference to distance and access barriers to public transport in the area for vulnerable residents or those with reduced mobility. Eligible residents in the area have access to Transport Canberra's Flexible Bus Service or community transport services. Information on this can be found at <https://www.transport.act.gov.au/travel-options/bus/accessible-travel/flexible-bus-service>.

I have asked Transport Canberra to consider opportunities to address the concerns raised in the petition as part of future improvements to the public transport network. Particularly, whether there may be opportunities to better service the area with flexible or on-demand concepts that balance the desire for connectivity with the aforementioned vision for fixed route public transport service.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Transport—Hawker College bus services—petition 38-24

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Transport, undated, in response to a petition lodged by Mrs Kikkert concerning bus services for Hawker College.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petition E-PET 038-24, lodged by former member for Ginninderra, Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert, regarding bus services for Hawker College.

Transport Canberra provides 4,192 services operating every weekday on the bus network with a fleet of 456 buses across our beautiful but dispersed city. Whilst the Government strives to provide as much coverage as possible across our city, this must be guided by service vision and principles, and balancing the costs and need for frequent, direct, and reliable fixed route service for the whole community.

Our public transport network vision has moved away from long, meandering, and circuitous routes to focus on frequent Rapid spines with shorter, straighter and more direct local or feeder routes. Where there is a report of overcrowding or insufficient service timings, Transport Canberra has officers observe in person prior to further review.

The Network Scheduling Team has undertaken a review of the existing services in the area of Hawker College around school finishing time. I have asked Transport Canberra to consider the use of higher capacity bus services and adjustments to the timetables to address the concerns raised in the petition as part of future improvements to the public transport network.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Page—playground—petition 26-24

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 26 November 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Mrs Kikkert concerning the Newberry Crescent Neighbourhood Playground in Page.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petition E-PET-026-24, lodged by former Liberal member, Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert, regarding improvements to the Newberry Crescent neighbourhood park in Page.

The ACT Government manages over 500 playgrounds located across the ACT to meet the objectives of the ACT Play Space Strategy which are to keep playgrounds safe and welcoming for better health, wellbeing and connectedness of the ACT community.

As each playground varies in age and condition, audits against Australian Standards for safety are regularly conducted with more than 26,000 safety inspections undertaken on Canberra playgrounds each year. Any general maintenance and repairs are completed during these visits while significant work is programmed to be undertaken as soon as practicable.

Importantly, child safety is the most important criteria in the audit process. The audit results, combined with demographic, spatial and social information, are used to determine a prioritised list of playgrounds for an upgrade, with the highest priority being to manage play space safety and amenity.

At times, temporary or permanent closures of playground equipment occurs to promptly address safety risks. The small spring rocker at the Newberry Crescent neighbourhood park in Page was the only piece of equipment at this play space and was removed because it was at end of life.

The ACT Government recently upgraded the playground at Page Oval, which now has multiple spring rockers, a shade sail, adjacent car parking spaces and a large

oval. It is located within a convenient walking distance of 400 metres of the Newbery Crescent site.

Feedback from the community through consultation on the Play Space Strategy has highlighted a greater desire for investment in higher quality, larger play spaces in central locations, such as the upgraded playground at Page Oval.

Therefore, there are currently no immediate plans to replace this piece of equipment at Newbery Crescent.

The ACT Government through Transport Canberra and City Services welcomes further engagement with the local Page community about playgrounds and urban open spaces across the neighbourhood.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Hawker—group centre—petition 30-24

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 26 November 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Mrs Kikkert concerning a pedestrian crossing on Coniston Street in Hawker.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter regarding petition E-PET-030-24, lodged by former member for Ginninderra, Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert, requesting the installation of a crossing on Coniston Street in Hawker.

The ACT Government takes road safety and residents' amenity seriously and encourages all road users to share responsibility for road safety. To identify the need for pedestrian crossings, Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) Directorate considers a range of factors such as traffic volume, pedestrian volumes, vehicle speeds and the surrounding land use.

For a priority crossing (including a raised zebra crossing) to be established there needs to be a reasonable level of demand for the facility. Transport research has demonstrated that pedestrian facilities used infrequently may become ignored by drivers, thus giving a false sense of safety to pedestrians and potentially leading to poor safety outcomes.

TCCS has previously undertaken traffic surveys on Coniston Street. The traffic survey undertaken on Coniston Street in 2023 found that the average speed of vehicles travelling along the street was well below the posted speed limit of 50km/h.

Two separate pedestrian and vehicle surveys were conducted on Coniston Street during peak times in early September 2024. On both occasions, the numbers of pedestrians observed crossing the road and vehicles driving along the street were low (less than 10 pedestrians crossing the road and less than 200 vehicles travelling along the street). These numbers are significantly less than the amount required to warrant the installation of a pedestrian crossing.

Zebra crossings are generally not installed/permitted unless minimum criteria is met as transport research has demonstrated that pedestrian facilities used infrequently can become ignored by drivers, thus giving a false sense of safety to pedestrians and potentially leading to poorer safety outcomes. The criteria is to observe at least 60 pedestrian crossings and at least 600 vehicles passing in close proximity to the site within two separate one hour periods, on a weekday.

Given the above there are no immediate plans to install a raised pedestrian crossing on Coniston Street in Hawker.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Garran—footpaths and roads—petitions 31-24 and 36-24

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 26 November 2024, in response to petitions lodged by Dr Paterson concerning pedestrian and parking issues at Stephens Place in Garran.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petitions E-PET-031-24 and PET 036-24, lodged by Dr Marisa Paterson MLA, regarding footpath access and parking issues at Stephens Place in Garran.

The ACT Government supports building a more accessible and inclusive ACT, where people with disability can fully participate in all aspects of community life. The ACT Government also understands the need to balance different parking and active travel needs whilst keeping the road available for the safe movement of traffic.

Stephens Place in Garran is a residential cul-de-sac and a low-speed environment. Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) has previously been made aware of parking issues relating to building construction within Stephens Place over the past year and spoke with the relevant contractors to resolve these issues.

During September 2024, officers from TCCS inspected Stephens Place on several occasions across different times of the day during the week. On each occasion, vehicles were observed parking throughout the cul-de-sac, with most parked vehicles appearing to be associated with the nearby residential homes (residents or visitors).

During the inspections, vehicles were not observed parking on both sides of the street in a manner that would prevent vehicle movements in and out of the street. However, some vehicles parked near the intersection with Robson Street during the weekday inspections may have been associated with the nearby shops.

Whilst TCCS has not observed the parking issues raised in the petition, Access Canberra's Parking Operations team has been notified and will take appropriate action if vehicles are observed parking in a manner which does not provide a safe flow of traffic. TCCS will continue to monitor the parking behaviours in Stephens Place and consult with the nearby residents about any changes to traffic control devices (signs and line marking).

The ACT Government is also working to better connect existing path networks and create new connections considering demand and community interests. This is a significant undertaking that needs to be approached strategically including assessing and prioritising requests. The request for a new path along Stephens Place has previously been received through Access Canberra and assessed by TCCS against other community requests for new paths. Requests for new community paths are assessed using parameters such as proximity to shops, bus stops, terrain and overall impact to the path network and the community.

The requested new path along Stephens Place has been classified into the category of paths with a medium positive impact. As such, the overall analysis has found that the works are not an immediate priority. However, the community path priority list is dynamic as new requests are received and works are completed. This means that the proposed path will be reconsidered as part of the annual review process and subject to relative priorities across the ACT and may be included as part of a future capital works program.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Rivett—roads—petition 33-24

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 26 November 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Dr Paterson concerning pedestrian safety in Rivett Place, Rivett.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter regarding petition E-PET-033-24, lodged by Dr Marisa Paterson MLA, regarding making Rivett Place one way to address parking issues.

An officer from Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) has inspected the road network and parking serving the Rivett shops and the new childcare centre on the corner of Bangalay Crescent / Rivett Place.

The recent changes to the parking were implemented to prevent illegal parking and to encourage drivers to park within the parking bays at the shops. Parents and caregivers for children at the childcare centre should be encouraged to use the parking and walk the short distance to the centre.

The development of the childcare centre (i.e. Block 2 Section 28 Rivett) was the subject of a development application (DA-201528713) and an appeal through the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT). The traffic impact statement for the development argued that parking was not required on the site as parking is available at the Rivett shops.

On the 17 October 2017, a decision was made by the Planning and Land Authority to approve the proposal with conditions. One of the conditions required five formal pick-up and drop-off spaces, located on Territory land within Rivett Place.

The approval was appealed through the ACT and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) and parking was raised by the Tribunal during the proceedings.

Subsequently, the Authority received further advice from the proponent regarding the availability of parking within the local centre. The further advice outlined adequate parking within proximity of the site, without having to provide the five spaces on Territory land. As such, in consultation with TCCS, the Authority formally corrected the decision to remove the requirement for the five spaces.

The loading zone for the Rivett shops is off Rivett Place and needs to be kept clear of parking so that trucks can safely access the rear of the shops. Truck access to the rear of the shops is also the reason why a one-way system is not supported as it would require trucks to manoeuvre within the Rivett shops carpark.

TCCS will continue to monitor the parking restriction times for the parking bays at the Rivett shops and if further changes are required the restrictions will be revised accordingly. Additionally, TCCS will review the parking restrictions on Rivett Place which will require further engagement with nearby businesses and users of the shopping precinct.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Narrabundah—roads—petition 24-24

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 28 November 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Lee concerning pedestrian safety on Sturt Avenue in Narrabundah.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petition E-PET-024-24, lodged by Ms Elizabeth Lee MLA, regarding a safe Sturt Avenue crossing for Old Narrabundah.

The ACT Government takes road safety and residents' amenity seriously and encourages all road users to share responsibility for road safety. To identify the need for pedestrian crossings, Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) considers a range of factors such as traffic volume, pedestrian volumes, vehicle speeds and the surrounding land use.

For a priority crossing (including a raised zebra crossing) to be established, there needs to be a reasonable level of demand for the facility. Transport research has demonstrated that pedestrian facilities used infrequently may become ignored by drivers, thus giving a false sense of safety to pedestrians and potentially lead to poorer safety outcomes. In addition, given that Sturt Avenue is a four-lane arterial road (two lanes in each direction) with a posted speed limit of 70 km/h, a zebra crossing would not be suitable for this location.

TCCS has investigated Sturt Avenue near McMillan Crescent on two separate occasions during peak times in September 2024 to observe and count the number of pedestrians/cyclists and vehicles in the area. On both occasions, the numbers of pedestrians observed crossing the road were low at 30 pedestrians within the hour.

In relation to signalising the intersection of McMillan Crescent and Sturt Avenue to provide a pedestrian crossing, Roads ACT uses a ranking system to assess the need and relative priority of intersection safety improvements. The intersection of Sturt Avenue and McMillan Crescent is currently ranked as a relatively low priority based on historical crash data.

Given this, there are no immediate plans to install a pedestrian crossing on Sturt Avenue in Narrabundah or signalise the intersection of Sturt Avenue/McMillan Crescent.

Planning and design work is underway to improve Hume Circle, the intersection of Canberra Avenue, Wentworth Avenue and Sturt Avenue. As part of this work, the ACT Government will upgrade the surrounding footpaths and complete missing links in the path network. The Government will engage with the local community as this work progresses.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Kaleen and Giralang—crime—petition 32-24

By **Dr Paterson**, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, dated 28 November 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Pettersson concerning increasing crime in Kaleen and Giralang.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 3 September 2024, regarding the petition E-PET-032-24. The petition requests the Assembly to call on the Government to:

- a. Ensure Police are adequately resourced;
- b. Ensure the DPP is adequately resourced so Police are confident in referring cases to them;
- c. Pursue law reform and work towards identifying and implementing novel ways to intervene with youth offenders which promote the safety and well-being of the whole community;
- d. Install cameras in a number of key locations where youth crime is known to occur; and
- e. Ensure that all youth offenders and their families are required to be assessed by ACT Child and Youth Protection Services including when provided with a caution.

Pursuant to Standing Order 100, this letter constitutes my response.

Crime and Incident Statistics at Kaleen and Giralang

Data from ACT Policing reflects increased incidents reported in both Kaleen and Giralang from 2022 and 2023. This increase indicates that people are willing to come forward to report matters to ACT Policing. Incidents reported to police include reports from any source including police operations and cover a wide range of behaviour or issues, which may or may not be criminal.

- ACT Policing has observed that incidents reported in Kaleen have increased by 9.3 per cent, with 896 incidents reported in 2022 and 979 incidents reported in 2023. Between 1 January to 31 August 2024, there has been 556 incidents in Kaleen reported to ACT Policing, this compares with 630 incidents reported in the same period in 2023.
- ACT Policing has observed that incidents reported in Giralang have increased by 29.6 per cent, with 287 incidents reported in 2022 and 372 incidents reported in 2023. Between 1 January to 31 August 2024, there has been 236 incidents in Giralang reported to ACT Policing, this compares with 249 incidents reported in the same period in 2023.

The PROMIS database is a live system which is updated on a daily basis, therefore data extracted is subject to slight change dependent on the date of extraction. The data in this report was extracted and accurate as at 24 September 2024.

*An **incident** includes reports made to police from any source (operations, front desk, online reporting etc.) recorded in PROMIS, where a criminal offence may or may not have occurred. This term also encompasses pro-active police activity recorded in PROMIS, including random breath testing, criminal targeting operations etc. where a criminal offence may or may not have occurred.*

In terms of offences reported, ACT Policing data shows the offences reported for Kaleen have increased year on year, while in Giralang, this has decreased.

- Regarding the perception of an increased crime trend in the suburb of Kaleen, ACT Policing advises that offences reported for Kaleen have increased by 6.2 per cent, with 354 offences reported in 2022 and 376 offences in 2023.

Number of offences reported to ACT Policing – Kaleen

Source: PROMIS database as at 24 September 2024

Offence	2022	2023	2024 (1 January - 31 August)
Assault	29	40	13
Sexual offences	3	8	4
Other offences against the person	5	5	1
Robbery	4	5	0
Burglary	16	28	12
Stolen Motor vehicle	19	22	10
Theft (excl motor vehicle theft)	71	83	47
Property damage	45	68	20
Other offences against property	22	18	4
Government security/operations	1	0	0
Justice procedures	23	36	23
Firearms and weapons	15	2	4
Other offences against good order	8	12	10
Drug offences	9	7	3
Traffic Offences	84	41	25
Other offences n.e.c.	0	1	1
Total	354	376	177

- Regarding the perception of an increased crime trend in the suburb of Giralang, ACT Policing advises that offences reported for Giralang have **decreased by 27.1 per cent**, with 170 offences reported in 2022 and 124 offences in 2023.

Number of offences reported to ACT Policing – Giralang

Source: PROMIS database as at 24 September 2024

Offence	2022	2023	2024 (1 January - 31 August)
Assault	14	12	7
Sexual offences	1	0	0
Other offences against the person	3	2	2
Robbery	0	1	0
Burglary	11	6	4
Stolen Motor vehicle	4	6	5
Theft (excl motor vehicle theft)	23	21	11
Property damage	12	30	12
Other offences against property	61	7	0
Government security/operations	0	0	1
Justice procedures	14	6	14
Firearms and weapons	1	2	2
Other offences against good order	3	3	2
Drug offences	1	2	0
Traffic Offences	22	26	18
Other offences n.e.c.	0	0	0
Total	170	124	78

On a year-on-year comparison in 2022 and 2023, the decrease in the offences reported in Giralang is consistent with an overall decrease in offences reported in the Belconnen patrol zone which Kaleen and Giralang are within. Offences reported within the Belconnen patrol zone totalled 6,682 in 2022, and 6,159 offences reported in 2023. The decreasing trend is also consistent with the offences reported across the ACT, offences reported in 2022 were 28,997 compared with 28,000 offences reported in 2023.

*One or more **offences** are recorded against an incident when credible criminal activity is reported to, or becomes known to ACT Police. To be classed as an offence:*

- The circumstances as reported or detected amount to a crime defined by law and fall within the jurisdiction of the police agency; and*
- There isn't credible evidence to the contrary.*

Police Actions in Kaleen and Giralang

ACT Policing, specifically Belconnen Station General Duties patrols, routinely conduct proactive policing in all Belconnen suburbs of the ACT, including Kaleen and Giralang. ACT Policing also respond where reports of criminal behaviour are received, including drug-related incidents. In response to information reports

submitted to ACT Policing and to address concerns raised by the Kaleen and Giralang community, ACT Policing executed several search warrants related to drug dealing in 2024.

A large component of ACT Policing's crime reduction strategy is engagement with the community and Community Interest Groups. In June 2024, senior members from ACT Policing and a representative from Neighbourhood Watch held a community engagement event with the residents of Kaleen and Giralang. The community raised their concerns in this forum and members from ACT Policing spoke candidly about staffing, the priority dispatch model, as well as general safety information. In July 2024, ACT Policing attended Kaleen Plaza and hosted Cop Pop-Up, a community engagement initiative that enables community members to meet some of their local police officers and ask any questions they might have about policing, community safety and crime prevention.

ACT Policing also works with partner support agencies and other areas of government, such as Housing ACT to identify issues of concern and social issues that often underpin anti-social behaviour and collaborate on appropriate responses.

Response to Youth Crime and Youth Offenders

The ACT Government has considered the concerns of the residents in Kaleen and Giralang regarding their concerns about youth crime and offending. Evidence based research demonstrates children and young people engaging in harmful conduct or youth offending behaviours, or at risk of engaging in harmful conduct and youth offending behaviours, often have complex underlying and unmet therapeutic needs requiring coordinated trauma-informed and holistic supports and services.

By addressing the underlying therapeutic needs of children and young people engaging in harmful conduct or youth offending behaviours, the risk of their behaviours continuing are expected to decrease, their social and health outcomes will improve, and the community will be safer.

Instead of being assessed by the Child and Youth Protection Services, as suggested by the petition, children and young people who engage in harmful conduct or youth offending behaviours or at risk of engaging in harmful conduct can now be referred to the Therapeutic Support Panel for Children and Young People (the Panel) for assessment and coordination of their underlying therapeutic needs.

The Panel is a multi-disciplinary panel of experts in identifying and assessing the therapeutic needs of children, young people and their families. The Panel provides voluntary services to referred children, young people and their families by assessing their therapeutic needs and coordinating supports and services via a therapy plan and brokerage provided by the ACT Government.

The Panel is part of the ACT Government's reform to change the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR) from 10 to 12 years of age. A further increase to 14 years of age will commence in July 2025. ACT Policing also supports measures to divert young people from the criminal justice system and where appropriate, young people will be provided with support options rather than the laying of charges. When considering appropriate pathways for young offenders involved in an incident, ACT Policing considers the MACR and channels young offenders appropriately, including referrals to the Panel.

ACT Policing has four dedicated Youth Liaison Officers (YLO) within the Community Engagement Team of the Vulnerable Persons portfolio. YLOs seek to disrupt dangerous or criminal behaviours among at risk young people by working with partner agencies like Child, Youth and Families, and Canberra Police Community Youth Club (CPCYC) to reduce police contact with these young people through increasing their involvement with voluntary support programs.

The YLOs attend monthly case management meetings with Child, Youth and Families and fortnightly Recidivist Offender Multi-Agency Round Table meetings with representatives from relevant ACT Government agencies and organisations. They also engage at risk young people personally, reminding them to be responsible for their actions, and consequences for their behaviour.

Besides the MACR Reforms, the ACT Government also supports measures to divert young people from the criminal justice system. ACT Policing provide an annual grant to the CPCYC to deliver the Project 180 (P180) Program, a diversion program for young people 12-16 years of age who are identified as being at risk. The Justice and Community Safety (JACS) Directorate also provided \$300,000 to the CPCYC from the Crime Prevention Budget over financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24 to increase CPCYC's capacity to intake 10 more young people into the P180 Program. In FY2023-24 JACS also funded \$20,000 to subsidise young people at risk to play sports through a grant to EveryChance. Another \$30,000 grant was provided to CrimeStoppers for a youth engagement campaign to encourage them to report crime.

The Public Safety CCTV Network (CCTV Network) is administered by the Security and Emergency Management Division (SEMD) within JACS, and is located across key shopping centres, transport interchanges, public open spaces and major venues in the ACT.

In the 2023-24 Budget Review, the ACT Government agreed to provide JACS with \$207,000 in capital funding and \$417,000 in expense funding over four years from 2023-24 to replace 10 solar-powered CCTV cameras within the Public Safety CCTV Network (CCTV Network) with new models that provide enhanced video quality. Replacement of these 10 solar-powered CCTV cameras is due to be completed by mid-2025 and provide opportunities for re-deployment to suitable locations to support safer spaces and events across the ACT.

There are no immediate plans to expand the CCTV Network within the ACT. However, when planning for future CCTV deployments and re-deployments across Canberra, consultation occurs with ACT Policing in relation to public safety risk, crime trends and resource availability.

Resourcing of ACT Policing and the DPP

The ACT Government notes the concerns of petitioners regarding resourcing of the ACT Policing and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution.

To provide some context, ACT Policing allocates their resources in various ways when it comes to responding to incidents and crime in the community. Besides community engagement, ACT Policing's Intelligence Team analyses a variety of information sources to identify patterns, convergences, and prioritisation to maximise crime reduction opportunities and increase community safety. The intelligence informs target areas for police patrols.

Canberra's condensed geographical nature means that officers can move across the territory in a timely manner, with police regularly undertaking duties in different patrol zones if the resources are required. In addition to those located at the Belconnen Police Station, ACT Policing's dispatch system ensures the closest and most available resources will be allocated to incidents. Police response time and resourcing are based on all other operational priorities occurring at the time.

In June 2023, the ACT Government committed to enhance community safety by investing more than \$107 million in the recruitment of additional 126 ACT Policing personnel for the next five years. This is the largest single investment ever made in ACT Policing in terms of staffing and funding boost. All areas of ACT Policing will see an increase in numbers with priority areas receiving assistance as soon as possible. The funding will allow an additional dedicated ACT Policing recruit class to be run each year for the next five years. In addition, the Labor party has committed to increase ACT Policing's resources to 150 police officers to 2029, an increase of 24 police officers beyond the current commitment.

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and ACT Policing continues to engage with the ACT Government regarding its resourcing needs.

I trust this information provides the petitioners with assurance that their concerns are understood, have been acknowledged by the ACT Government and efforts are being made by Government and ACT Policing to address these issues.

Emergency services—frontline response veterans—petition 41-24

By **Ms Orr**, Minister for Seniors and Veterans, dated 28 November 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Hanson concerning a proposed facility for veterans of the ADF, AFP, ACT fire fighters, paramedics and other frontline responders.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 4 September 2024 regarding petition 041-24 lodged by Mr Jeremy Hanson MLA. The petition calls on the ACT Government to “provide a building or facility for Veterans of the ADF, AFP, ACT Fire Fighters, Paramedics and all other frontline responders which needs to be secure to house equipment for musicians, yoga, martial arts and other functions” to “enhance the wellbeing of all Veterans in the ACT”.

The ACT Government affirms its commitment to improving wellbeing outcomes for the significant veteran population residing in the ACT. Veterans and their families are viewed as equally significant by the ACT Government, in terms of wellbeing service provision, and inclusion of families is essential to any program or service delivered to this cohort.

The 2023-24 ACT Budget committed to the development of an ACT Veterans' Wellbeing Framework (the Framework). The Framework will provide a principles-based approach to supporting veterans and their families now and into the future, taking into account the unique characteristics of the ACT veteran population. The 2023-24 budget also enabled the second Veterans' and Families' Expo to be held, supporting veteran engagement with a view to building a more coordinated and connected service system in the ACT.

The Final Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide was released on 9 September 2024. The ACT Government will work with the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments to respond to the recommendations of the final report from the Royal Commission. This will inform future planning and investment to support the wellbeing of the ACT veteran community.

The ACT Government works closely with the Ministerial Advisory Council for Veterans and their Families, along with local stakeholders and the Commonwealth to understand the needs and opportunities for better supporting our veteran community.

Regarding the needs of other frontline workers noted in the petition, ACT Policing has access to a broad range of internal and external health and wellbeing services, including enhanced services provided through the Safety and Health Improvement: Enhancing Law Enforcement Departments program (SHIELD). ACT Policing has three dedicated mental health clinicians who work in conjunction with Welfare Officers, SHIELD and Injury Prevention and Management staff.

Policing Futures, SHIELD, ACT Policing HR and the Workplace Culture Committee have been working together on a Project called ACT Wellness Program, that focuses on supporting ACT Policing members in utilising time within the normal working hours for physical and wellness activities. ACT Policing Executives have endorsed this initiative, and work has now progressed to implement the programs across the ACT Policing workforce.

The ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) provides wellbeing and support programs and initiatives to ESA staff and volunteers including onsite wellbeing support, peer support and chaplaincy support programs, and participation in the ADF Arts for Recovery, Resilience, Teamwork and Skills (ARRTS) program.

The ACT Government acknowledges many veterans in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) have experienced physical and psychological injury because of their service to our country, and the petitioner's request to provide a functional space for veterans and frontline responders to enhance their wellbeing.

As members may be aware, an agreement between the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and RSL LifeCare has been executed for the Veterans' and Families' Hub (the hub) in Queanbeyan. This has seen RSL LifeCare awarded a grant of \$5.4 million to support the project. RSL Lifecare currently run five other hubs across New South Wales.

RSL LifeCare has secured a long-term lease for the hub site, which will be located on the second floor of the RSL Queanbeyan Sub-Branch at 251 Crawford Street, Queanbeyan. The site will have a significant refit and refurbishment, with community consultation on the hub design to commence in the coming months. In the interim, a temporary hub will operate from the first floor of the RSL Queanbeyan Sub-Branch. Timing for the opening of the temporary hub is yet to be confirmed, though the RSL LifeCare Queanbeyan Hub website indicates the hub will be operational by early 2025.

Acknowledging feedback received from stakeholders and the veteran community, RSL LifeCare's endorsed proposal included an ACT 'spoke' to extend services into the ACT. RSL LifeCare acknowledges the importance of ensuring the veteran

wellbeing hub is relevant to the local community, with a key focus of discussion between key stakeholders relating to the cross-border nature of the facility, in terms of access to the hub itself and access to services.

In-line with its election commitment to *explore a wellbeing hub within Canberra, to provide the ACT veteran community with a place to come together and connect close to where they live*, the ACT Government will continue to support the development of the Australian Government funded Veterans' and Families' Hub in Queanbeyan, which is being led by RSL LifeCare as well as working with RSL LifeCare on extending those services into the ACT to support veterans wellbeing. In progressing this important project the ACT Government will continue to engage with the Veteran community to ensure their needs are reflected in the final outcome.

Thank you for bringing this matter to the attention of the Assembly and I look forward to providing further updates as the development of an ACT Veterans Hub progresses.

Belconnen—cyclepaths—petition 42-24

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 28 November 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Clay concerning active travel needs of Cook and Macquarie.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petition 042-24, lodged by Ms Jo Clay MLA, regarding the active travel needs of Cook and Macquarie.

The ACT Government takes road safety, and in particular pedestrian safety, seriously and is keen to encourage greater uptake in active travel with the many benefits this provides for health and sustainability. The ACT Government manages and maintains approximately 3,190 kilometres of community paths across Canberra. Each year improvements and maintenance activities are carried out across the network. This includes adding new connections and upgrading existing connections as needed.

The C5 cycle path through Macquarie and Cook is a principal route between Belconnen and Tuggeranong via Weston Creek. The width of this route has been assessed and meets the requirements of a trunk path (between 2.5 to 5 metres).

In regards to maintenance, Roads ACT conducts regular path inspections across the ACT to identify areas that require work. Maintenance and repairs are also undertaken in response to reports from the community. I would encourage local residents to submit such request via the Fix My Street Portal at services.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/s/forms/fix-my-street.

The determination of speed limits in the ACT is based on the classification of roads through a formal road hierarchy. This classification fundamentally relates to the predominant function of a road and to the extent it serves the two basic purposes of the road network – the movement of traffic and access to property.

Redfern Street and Lyttleton Crescent have been designed and constructed as major collector roads with a desirable environmental capacity of 6,000 vehicles per day. They have a posted speed limit of 60 km/h as per the design standard of a major collector road. Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) will investigate the concerns raised regarding travelling speeds on Redfern Street and Lyttleton Crescent.

I am pleased to advise that as part of the School Safety Improvement Program, new pedestrian crossings and infrastructure is being constructed in the vicinity of the Jamison Centre, to improve connectivity with the local community and Canberra High School. This includes:

- A new zebra pedestrian crossing across Bowman Street near Wiseman Street;
- Two new zebra pedestrian crossings across Bowman Street near the YMCA Early Learning Centre; and
- A new refuge island, footpath and kerb improvements at the intersection of Bowman Street and Redfern Street.

Additionally, improvements will be made to the crossing across Redfern Street near Dexter Street. Access ramps will be realigned with the refuge island and kerb blisters will be constructed to reduce the crossing distance across this major collector road. This work has been added to the Roads ACT minor new works program to be constructed this financial year.

I have also been advised that TCCS intend to undertake design planning for crossings along the C5 cycle route at Catchpole Street, Redfern Street and Lyttleton Crescent.

A desktop assessment of active travel needs around the Jamison Shops and catchment has been undertaken. This assessment identified potential future routes from the Jamison Shops to the existing route that runs parallel to Belconnen Way, and broader connections along Redfern Street and Catchpole Street towards C5 in Macquarie and Bindel Street. Specific 'accessible pedestrian routes' for Jamison can be found on the Active Travel Infrastructure Practitioners tool (refer to <https://activeinfrastructure.net.au/>). This includes connections from Bowman Street and Redfern Street to the Jamison Shops.

At the recent ACT election, ACT Labor committed to a raft of active travel improvements this term, including delivering a \$5 million fund for new and upgraded footpaths across Belconnen. The location of new and upgraded footpaths to be constructed in Belconnen from this fund will be determined through a prioritisation process to ensure improved infrastructure is constructed where it is needed most.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Cook—playground—petition 43-24

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 28 November 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Mrs Kikkert concerning playgrounds on Lyttleton Circuit and Teague Street in Cook.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petition 043-24, lodged by former Liberal member, Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert, regarding Lyttleton Circuit and Teague Street neighbourhood playgrounds.

The ACT Government manages over 500 playgrounds located across the ACT to meet the objectives of the ACT Play Space Strategy which are to keep playgrounds safe and welcoming for better health, wellbeing and connectedness of the ACT community.

As each playground varies in age and condition, audits against Australian Standards for safety are regularly conducted with more than 26,000 safety inspections undertaken on Canberra playgrounds each year. Any general maintenance and repairs are completed during these visits while significant work is programmed to be undertaken as soon as practicable.

The ACT's Play Space Strategy helps guide a strategic approach to investment across the entire play space network to ensure Canberrans have equitable access to a mix of district, central and local playgrounds. Feedback from the community through consultation on the Play Space Strategy has highlighted a greater desire for investment in higher quality, larger play spaces in central locations. For this reason, a key focus area includes prioritising district and central play spaces for refresh and major upgrades, whilst investment towards local play spaces will be for safety maintenance and minor refurbishments.

The playgrounds at Lyttleton Circuit and Teague Street are classified as local neighbourhood play spaces. The ACT Government recently completed significant upgrades to the playgrounds at Macquarie Shops and on Banambila Street in Aranda. These playgrounds now include a broader variety of larger equipment and are within walking distance of many homes in Cook.

Therefore, there are currently no immediate plans to upgrade the Lyttleton Circuit and Teague Street neighbourhood playgrounds. The ACT Government through Transport Canberra and City Services welcomes further engagement with the local Cook community about playgrounds and urban open spaces across the neighbourhood.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Disability—sensory sensitivities—petition 35-24

By **Ms Orr**, Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services, dated 29 November 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Miss Nuttall concerning a database of sensory friendly venues in the ACT.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 3 September 2024 regarding e-petition 035-24, which was lodged to the ACT Legislative Assembly by Miss Laura Nuttall MLA, on 3 September 2024.

The petition calls for the ACT Government to develop and maintain a user-friendly online database and accessible website of sensory friendly venues in the ACT. It further requests the ACT Government liaise with local business and community groups to promote and list their accommodations and ensure the database is kept up to date and is well advertised to the community. The petition calls for the database to record information about each venue, including but not limited to venue name, address, contact information, accessibility and specific sensory accommodations offered; and that the database can be organised by type of venue (e.g. restaurants, grocery stores, private practices, community venues and government services).

The ACT Government affirms people with disability, including people with neurodivergence and sensory sensitivity, have a right to equity of access and fair treatment in community, across public, community and private sectors. These rights are protected through the Australian Government's *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *ACT Discrimination Act 1991*. These Acts uphold people's rights to request and receive accommodations, adjustments or modifications which can reasonably be made to overcome barriers to access and participation in all services or opportunities on offer to the ACT community.

The ACT Government, as a Human Rights jurisdiction, and in alignment with its commitments to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability, Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31, the ACT Disability Strategy 2024-33, and *ACT Disability Inclusion Act 2024*, adopts a human rights understanding and social model approach to disability access and inclusion.

In context of the social model of disability, accommodations and reasonable adjustments are needed when the standard design of an environment, system, process or service presents a barrier to a person with disability's ability to fully and equitably participate and engage in a service, environment or opportunity that is available to others.

The ACT Government acknowledges the burden for people with disability, including those who experience sensory sensitivity, to constantly have to seek, advocate for and request specific supports and reasonable adjustments. The ACT Government further acknowledges this burden can be reduced through the systemic and practical application of universal design principles into planning, processes and decision-making for environments, systems, processes or services.

The more universally designed an environment, system, process or service is, the more likely it is to meet the broadest needs of all people. Adopting universal design principles will inherently reduce the need for accommodations to be made, or people to make specific requests. When universal design is done well, the full diversity of human needs is considered, planned for and embedded in standard practice.

The ACT Government has a range of existing commitments to create more systemic and practically inclusive outcomes for people with disability, including neurodivergent Canberrans. This includes:

- a. Responding to recommendations of the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review which include commitments to improve information provision for, and assessment of, people who are neurodiverse.

- b. Implementing the *ACT Disability Strategy 2024-33*, including the development of an ACT Neurodiversity Strategy, and the interconnected suite of disability strategies and policies including the *ACT Disability Justice Strategy 2019-29*, the *ACT Disability Health Strategy 2024-34* and the *Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools 2024-2034*.
- c. Ongoing contribution to national policy and strategies such as the development of the National Autism Strategy (which will sit alongside Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31 and is currently under development by the Australian Government with the final version expected to be released by the end of 2024).
- d. Implementing the *ACT Disability Inclusion Act 2024* passed the Legislative Assembly in September 2024. The Act provides a legislative framework to address ableism and remove physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers people with disability face, through the implementation of disability inclusion strategies, disability inclusion plans and the establishment of a Disability Advisory Council. The *ACT Disability Inclusion Act 2024* will also require the ACT Government to undertake diverse consultation, including with people with neurodiverse experiences, to ensure their experiences and perspectives are considered in the development of strategies and plans and delivery of services.
- e. Ongoing implementation of sensory friendly environments and activities including quiet hours in Access Canberra service centres, dementia friendly film screenings and audits at public events, and the establishment of a low stimulation room delivered by the Canberra Hospital Expansion Project in the new Building 5 Emergency Department.

In addition, all Access Canberra Service Centres are now proud members of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower initiative. The initiative was created to encourage inclusivity, acceptance and understanding of disabilities, conditions or chronic illnesses that are not immediately obvious to others. By wearing a sunflower lanyard or pin, individuals can indicate to our Service Centre teams that they might need extra help, understanding, or just more time. All Access Canberra Service Centre staff have undertaken training and are wearing a Hidden Disabilities Sunflower supporter pin to signal they are willing and able to support people with a hidden disability when completing government services and transactions.

With the current agenda and work underway, the ACT Government is not considering creating an online database and accessible website of sensory-friendly venues in the ACT as described by the petition at this stage given:

- a. The extensive community consultation undertaken to develop the *ACT Disability Strategy 2024-33* and *First Action Plan 2024-26* did not identify this as a priority.
- b. The ACT Government is committed to resourcing and effectively implementing current and planned activities and actions under a suite of disability dedicated policies, strategies and actions to create a more universally accessible and inclusive Canberra for everyone, including for Canberrans with sensory sensitivity.
- c. Sensory-friendly elements are only some of the considerations required for creating accessible and inclusive places and spaces (other elements include

inclusive design and planning, communications, physical infrastructure, facilities and wayfinding). People with disability face complex barriers to access and participation and it is essential to take a person-centred and intersectional approach to meet people's diverse needs and address the different barriers they face.

- d. The existing suite of disability policy work that is planned and underway will have a deeper, more sustained, systemic and practical impact on creating inclusive outcomes for people with disability, including people with sensory sensitivity, than a standalone database and website for sensory-friendly venues can achieve.
- d. Providing 'sensory-friendly' accommodations and reasonable adjustments are practicable ways for organisations and businesses to meet their minimum legislative requirements under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and *ACT Discrimination Act 1991*. There is a diversity of ways sensory-friendly initiatives can be implemented by organisations and businesses depending on their size and nature of the services and opportunities they provide to the public. Best practice would have sensory-friendly accommodations embedded into standard practice, or business as usual processes, through inclusive design and planning.
- f. These details can change and be updated at any time. It is considered more cost-efficient and efficient for public, community and private entities who implement 'sensory friendly' initiatives as an accommodation to access and inclusion to publish and update those details

The ACT Government's continued investments in its existing suite of disability policy work will continue to create the change needed to ensure Canberra is inclusive and accessible to all Canberrans, including people with sensory sensitivity. I thank you for bringing this matter to the attention of the Assembly and I am happy to provide yourself or the petitioners with further information on the current agenda and work underway should you wish.

Workers compensation—petition 40-24

By **Mr Pettersson**, Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations, dated 2 December 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Mrs Kikkert concerning workers compensation for a workplace incident.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

I write to respond to petition PET-040-024, tabled in the Legislative Assembly and referred to the then Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety on 3 September 2024.

The petition calls for an investigation into a workers' compensation claim by Mr Ashley Martin and for the government to act on any anomalies that may be found.

Mr Martin's death was tragic. I express my condolences to his family and loved ones for the loss of their family member and friend.

Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy staff, within the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, are responsible for oversight of the ACT Government workers' compensation self-insurer, including the conduct of Employers Mutual Limited (EML), the contracted claim manager in Mr Martin's case.

Senior staff from the Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy have conducted a detailed review of the management of Mr Martin's workers' compensation claim.

The claim in question is currently subject to legal action. To avoid prejudicing that legal action and to protect Mr Martin's privacy, I will not comment further on the investigation or circumstances of the claim.

Investigating officers from the directorate will revisit their findings once the legal action is complete, to ensure that any new information that may come to light is fully considered.

In addition, the operation of the ACT Government workers' compensation insurer is monitored by a statutory advisory committee comprising ACT Government, insurance industry and trade union officials.

In my capacity as the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations, I will be receiving regular updates on the scheme's performance from the committee. In this respect, I have directed that the committee also advise me on the arrangements in place for identifying and managing risks to the mental health of people when receiving advice about insurer decisions.

I hope that this response to the petition, although limited in the information it can provide, offers some reassurance to the signatories about services for injured and ill public servants.

Motion to take note of petitions

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

That the petition and responses so lodged be noted.

Hawker—group centre—petition 30-24 Belconnen—cyclepaths—petition 42-24

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.05): I note that we have a number of petitions lodged that are asking for safer crossings and footpath upgrades that will make walking and riding around the city a lot easier. In particular, we have one for Cook and Hawker, and we have another one for Macquarie.

There are a lot of people who would like to be able to walk and ride around a lot more easily than they can at the moment. I read with interest some of the government responses which seem to involve doing a traffic study to monitor how often people tried to cross a road; if people did not try to cross the road often enough, the conclusion seemed to be that there was no need for a crossing! I would note that a lot of people

may not be confident to cross a road when it is a 50-kilometre-per-hour or a 60-kilometre-per-hour road. In particular, some of our residents who are vulnerable residents or are vision impaired might find that a particularly difficult challenge. I am hoping that we are doing some better investigation than simply seeing who is using this inadequate infrastructure now as a determinant as to whether we need to make better infrastructure to help people walk around our town.

Garran—footpaths and roads—petitions 31-24 and 36-24

Rivett—roads—petition 33-24

Workers compensation—petition 40-24

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform) (10.06): I rise to speak to three responses to petitions.

With regard to the Stephens Place in Garran and the pedestrian issues, I would like to thank Abbeyfield residents for approaching me with their concerns about the pedestrian access to that street and the need for a footpath there. While I thank the minister for the response, and recognise that this path was not an imminent priority, I am very keen to work with Abbeyfield residents to see this progress down the track.

With the Rivett Place petition regarding pedestrian safety, there is an issue there—quite a significant safety issue with a childcare centre and trucks going down Rivett Place. That is an ongoing issue that we will have to keep going back to, I think, to find a solution.

I would also like to speak to the petition on the workers compensation for the workplace incident that Mr Pettersson tabled, just to acknowledge Mr Martin's family and story. I will have more to say on that in the new year in the next sitting of the Assembly.

Transport—Latham bus services—petitions 29-24 and 37-24

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (10.08): I rise to express some disappointment in response to the petitions 29-24 and 37-24. I want to thank Ms Barry—now an MLA—for, in her earlier role, asking me to act on behalf of the residents of Macrossan Crescent in Latham. They used to have a bus route along this road, but that has been taken off the schedule.

I note, with disappointment, Minister Steel's response:

Our public transport network vision has moved away from long, meandering, and circuitous routes to focus on frequent Rapid spines with shorter, straighter and more direct local or feeder routes.

Quite frankly, Mr Speaker, and members of this Assembly, long, meandering and circuitous routes seem like an ideal place to have a bus route. As I doorknocked Macrossan Street before the election, it was certainly the view of many residents—many older residents as well—that it was very inconvenient to have to walk along this long, circuitous route to get to a bus stop on a more major road.

I also note that the minister closes that paragraph with:

I am advised there are no current plans to reintroduce bus services on Macrossan Crescent, Latham.

It is rather strange that the minister is advised; I thought the minister was the one that made such decisions. So I ask the minister to reconsider the approach of Transport Canberra to long, circuitous, meandering routes.

I would also like to close by asking the minister to please put the date when you sign one of these letters, which your colleagues who have responded to petitions in this pack here have done. It seems like a rather obvious flaw in your processing, Minister. I do not know if anyone in this place would actually sign something without dating it, but it seems like the minister has that practice, and I do hope that changes.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Legislative Assembly—member attire

Statement by Speaker

MR SPEAKER: A couple of members have raised with me privately this morning dress code issues in this chamber. I thought that I would clear this up now, so that we do not have to revisit it. I wanted to draw to your attention, members, that Mr Emerson and I have had some lengthy conversations about dress code in this chamber. To my disappointment, Mr Emerson has stated clearly that he does not wish to ever wear a tie in this chamber. I have communicated my disappointment to Mr Emerson about that.

We do not have a specific dress code stated in our standing orders and, as such, we refer to the House of Representatives requirements in the federal parliament. *House of Representatives Practice* observes that, while the standard of dress in the chamber is a matter for the individual judgement of each member, the ultimate discretion rests with the Speaker. I note that there have been several precedents up on the hill: Mr Chandler-Mather in the House of Representatives and Senator Pocock and others in the Senate. I also note that rulings on dress code for women are a little less binary—and certainly not something that I want to be wading into.

It has been the convention and the practice in this place for members to dress in a formal manner similar to that generally accepted in business and professional circles. That convention and practice has led every male member in this place since its inception in 1989 to wear a suit and tie, which I personally believe demonstrates a level of respect for the parliament and the constituents. I do not wish to be the presiding officer of this place at a time when the dress standards dramatically decline, but I also do not wish to make a ruling, as a Speaker, that a member cannot participate in proceedings should they not be wearing a tie.

So it gives me some grief. I ask members: if you were invited to speak at a black-tie function, would you choose to attend wearing smart-casual clothing? Are you bigger than the function, or is the function bigger than you?

Mr Emerson has given me his assurance that he will always wear a nice jacket and shirt, as he has today. I certainly do not want to see people turn up to this chamber, to quote the Nationals MP Mr Conaghan, dressed like “they are heading for a barbecue”.

But I do want to make it clear, as the Speaker, that for the male members of the Speakers panel—the Deputy Speaker and Assistant Speakers—I will not have you sitting in this chair without wearing a tie. I do not want to say any more about this. I have probably said too much. So that is where that sits.

Nomination of Assistant Speakers

Statement by Speaker

MR SPEAKER: Pursuant to the provisions of standing order 8, I table a nomination of the appointment of Ms Barry, Mr Cain and Mr Werner-Gibbings as Assistant Speakers dated 14 November 2024:

Pursuant to the provisions of standing order 8, I nominate Ms Barry, Mr Cain and Mr Werner-Gibbings to act as Assistant Speakers.

Given under my hand on 14 November 2024.

Mark Parton MLA
Speaker
14 November 2024

Inaugural speech

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (10.14): I seek leave of the Assembly to make my inaugural speech.

Leave granted.

MR SPEAKER: Before I call Ms Carrick, I just want to remind members that it is traditional that inaugural speeches are heard in silence. Ms Carrick.

MS CARRICK: I stand before you today honoured to represent the electorate of Murrumbidgee as an independent member. This privilege has been made possible by the trust placed in me by the residents of our diverse electorate, the tireless work of my running mates and dedicated volunteers, and the unwavering support of my family. Their faith in independent representation signals a desire for fresh perspectives in our Assembly.

Murrumbidgee is a microcosm of Canberra’s evolution. From the established leafy streets in the inner south to the vibrant new communities emerging in the Molonglo Valley, and with Woden and Weston Creek between, our electorate reflects both our city’s heritage and its future. My connection to this region runs deep. I grew up in Woden. I went to school in the inner south, played sport in Weston Creek, and am raising my family in the Murrumbidgee electorate.

When I was a child, all the neighbourhood kids played on the street, and I played tennis and netball at the local courts. My friends and I played basketball at the Woden

basketball stadium. We had fun at the Phillip pool and we would go out to see bands at the nightclubs in Phillip. Also, I manage my son's soccer basketball teams. These experiences have shaped my understanding of what makes a community thrive and have given me a unique perspective on our local opportunities and challenges. Our town centres were planned to have social and economic infrastructure, to be accessible by public transport, and for residents to have a sense of belonging. I have seen firsthand how local shops and community activities create bonds between neighbours and build the social fabric that makes our suburbs special places to live.

As my three boys were growing up, I became increasingly concerned about the ongoing loss of the community's social amenities. For example, the basketball stadium, pitch and putt, bowling greens, tennis courts and the YMCA have all been demolished and are now residential towers. The pool and the ice rink have been sold to Geocon, who are high-yield developers, and the nightlife in the Phillip trades precinct has disappeared.

In 2016, I joined the Woden Valley Community Council to get involved and try to get better outcomes for our community. Over the seven years I spent as president of the Woden Valley Community Council, I had the privilege of meeting many people who volunteer so much of their time to the community through the residents' groups, Landcare groups and our Community Fire Units, and the many local champions who organise activities to bring the community together. What began as attending monthly meetings grew into a profound commitment to serve our community alongside all the terrific members of the council. We tackled issues ranging from planning and development to public transport and community facilities. These were not just meetings; they were forums where residents could voice their concerns, share their dreams for our community's future, and work together to find solutions.

But perhaps my proudest achievements have been the community events that I organised in collaboration with the Tuggeranong Arts Centre and Woden Community Service—watching families gather for Carols on the Square, seeing children dance at Music by the Pond, celebrating our district's heritage at Woden's 60th, and seeing local talent showcased at the Creative Woden Art Exhibition. These moments remind us that a community is more than just buildings and infrastructure. It is about creating spaces and opportunities for people to connect, share experiences and build lasting relationships; it is about understanding the rhythm of community life, recognising what brings people together, and working to preserve and enhance these connections, even as our city grows and changes. This hands-on experience has given me a deep appreciation of the power of genuine community engagement. The approach I intend to take in this Assembly is one that values collaboration, respects diverse perspectives and puts community interests first.

The Prime Minister understands community. On 26 November 2024, he issued an opinion piece supporting parents in the context of the new minimum age of 16 for using social media. He said that he wanted young Australians to grow up happy, active and safe, playing outside with their friends; off their phones and onto the footy and cricket field, the tennis and netball courts, in the swimming pool, and trying every sport that grabs their interest; discovering music and art; being confident in the classroom and at home and confident in themselves and around their peers. The Prime Minister said that every parent and every level of government understands the benefits of these things to individuals, families and society as a whole. He said:

That's why we invest in grassroots sport and community facilities and all the infrastructure and programs that support them.

I could not agree more. Young people should be encouraged to be active and discover likeminded people in their local community. The problem is that in the ACT we do not invest enough in grassroots community facilities so that the community can run programs and support itself.

I note that, four months ago, the ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion delivered its report into loneliness and social isolation in the ACT. It highlighted the *State of the nation report: social connection in Australia 2023* by the organisation Ending Loneliness Together, which found that ACT residents reported the highest prevalence of loneliness across Australia, with 40 per cent meeting the criteria for loneliness. We should be talking about what we can do to support a culture of connection to the community for people from all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

One way is to provide facilities that bring people together locally to run programs and form friendships. This is particularly vital for the new Molonglo town centre. Our local basketball team is playing across six school halls and a church hall. This community should not have to use so much energy to manage logistics and so much of its registration fees on school hall hire. There should be an indoor sports stadium in the centrally located Woden town centre so people can access training by taking public transport and the club volunteers can use their energy and resources to focus on building the community.

The arts sector is another example of where we could improve community building. The ACT government policy is titled "Canberra: Australia's Arts Capital". Its first stated strategy is:

Create amazing art and culture—everywhere, at any time, for everyone ...

However, the distribution of arts facilities across Canberra is very uneven. Through artsACT, the government owns 12 art facilities in Kurrajong, along with the Canberra Theatre and the Canberra Museum and Gallery. Ginninderra has two arts facilities. Brindabella has one facility. However, the Murrumbidgee and Yerrabi electorates do not have any arts facilities at all.

The priorities for government investment are the Kingston Arts Precinct, the Canberra Theatre Centre and refurbishment of the Gorman Arts Centre, all in the Kurrajong electorate. These investments further entrench activity in the inner areas and do not promote the creation of amazing art everywhere—certainly not in the Murrumbidgee electorate. This is not just about nostalgia but also reflects a fundamental shift in priorities and the structure of the city.

In the Chief Minister's 2015 *Canberra: a statement of ambition*, he said:

Cities don't succeed by accident or by leaving things to chance—they require design, good governance and great collaboration.

This view was implemented in 2017 by the establishment of the City Renewal Authority. Labor has made the authority's primary purpose to renew the Dickson to the lake precinct.

The Chief Minister has announced that he is considering another urban renewal precinct to help coordinate the ACT government's directorates to work together on precinct planning for a health, education and sports precinct in Bruce. The Woden town centre has nearly 40 residential towers built or in the planning stage. I have asked the government twice for this town centre to be declared an urban renewal precinct so it can benefit from better governance, collaboration and design. This has not happened. Instead, there has been piecemeal development and disjointed oversight under the current arrangements. Woden's town square now stands without a single coffee shop and will be overshadowed from zoning that allows for 28-storey buildings around its perimeter.

When I talk about social infrastructure, the response I get from the ACT government is that they are investing in Woden; they have built the new emergency building at the Canberra Hospital; the light rail is coming; the CIT and the bus depot are under construction, and so is the Phillip enclosed oval, which is an oval that will not be available to the public.

I know that health and public transport are important, but they are not places where people go to meet each other and build their social networks that are good for our physical and mental health. I have heard about a community centre in Woden since the 2012-13 budget. Over 10 years later, we understand that one day we will get a building for the Woden Community Service to deliver their critical services and the community will have access to some meeting rooms where we can do art.

We need to return to the principles of holistic town planning that made Canberra great, where development serves community needs, not just developer interests. We need to have conversations about our social and economic development, about the balance between housing, commercial areas and jobs, services, public spaces and community facilities to improve our quality of life. We need to understand the impact of very high-density residential towers and improve the public green spaces around them.

We need to understand the risks of privately owned community facilities and know when public ownership is a better option. We are very aware that the private sector can have different motives for running community facilities. We have seen reduced operating hours at the Phillip pool, higher access charges, a lack of community programs, a lack of maintenance and a lack of transparency. The public 50-metre Oasis swimming pool in Deakin is now a small four-lane, 25-metre pool that is only available for swimming lessons.

The 2024 election result sent a clear message: Canberrans want change. The election of two independents, the first in 26 years, shows a desire for diverse voices in our Assembly. My vision for Murrumbidgee, and indeed for Canberra, centres on five key priorities that are both ambitious and achievable. Firstly, we need more public and social housing. People in need are still waiting six months for priority housing and over

three years for high-needs housing. In 2023, the proportion of all clients in the ACT who experienced persistent homelessness was 45 per cent, compared to 26 per cent across Australia. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in the ACT who experience persistent homelessness was 51 per cent, compared to 28 per cent across Australia. These are terrible statistics.

We urgently need more social housing and more accessible supportive housing for people in crisis, including women and children fleeing domestic violence, as well as for people with disabilities and those experiencing chronic homelessness. We also need to find a way to make our housing more affordable. To inform our decisions, I would like to see a study that looks at the ACT's housing input costs—for example, the cost of land, the lease variation charge, contract costs, land tax and rates—and compare them to the surrounding region and other jurisdictions. Many people in our electorate support densification; however, they want it to be done well.

Firstly, our residential areas need housing that has great designs and controls in place to stop overlooking and overshadowing, with adequate green areas and tree canopy to keep us cool in the hot summers.

Secondly, we must better support our frontline workers, health professionals, teachers, police, city service workers, retail workers, and many more. GPs are at the centre of the primary health system, yet the ACT has the lowest number of GPs per 100,000 people. People delay seeing a mental health professional due to the time it can take and the cost. We need to improve access to specialists and elective surgery and reduce waiting times in the public system. The health system is complex. I value our health professionals and will support initiatives that provide appropriate systems, facilities and equipment to deliver a coordinated health system and help to attract and retain staff.

Teachers are at the heart of our students' outcomes, and literacy and numeracy are a priority as they improve the lives of students. However, we have difficulty attracting and retaining teachers, as well as increasing rates of anxiety, depression and other mental health issues among students. I will advocate for implementation of the recommendations of the Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel report and sensible measures that influence teacher satisfaction and retention rates. The community sector also needs secure funding and accommodation to be able to retain staff and deliver their critical services to vulnerable members of our community.

Thirdly, city maintenance was a significant issue in the election. Fixing our paths and lights is important so our residents feel safe. The path network in Murrumbidgee is up to 60 years old, with many sections in poor condition. The network needs to be expanded, made safer, better connected and suitable for all users. We need to plan and build safe, dedicated, separated, direct cycle paths, including the Woden to city bikeway and the Molonglo to the main cycle route to the city. The most common reason for people not cycling are safety and comfort concerns, particularly interacting with busy and fast traffic.

Fourthly, we need transparent and accountable governance. The era of making decisions behind closed doors must end. Our community deserves genuine planning and consultation, not tick-a-box exercises after the critical decisions are made.

Lastly, we must restore fiscal responsibility. ACT government net debt is projected to continue increasing to over \$12 billion and net interest payments are projected to increase to around \$450 million per annum by mid-2028. We need better oversight of major projects and government expenditures. This is not about stopping investment; it is about ensuring we get value for money and that our expenditure genuinely benefits the community.

As an independent voice for the people of the Murrumbidgee electorate, I am committed to working collaboratively to achieve these goals while always focusing on what is best for our community. I commit to being accessible, responsive and transparent, ensuring your voices are heard in this Assembly. I love this city, and I am honoured to serve the community.

I thank my beautiful family and members of the electorate who have given me this opportunity. I will work tirelessly to make Murrumbidgee flourish for all who call this place home. I am here because I believe in the power of independent representation to build better communities. I am local, committed and independent. Thank you.

Inaugural speech

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS (Brindabella) (10.30): I seek leave of the Assembly to make my inaugural speech.

Leave granted.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Decent, positive and principled—those words will be the maxims of my service as a member of the Legislative Assembly, my motto and my inspiration. They were written of Bill Wood, MLA—a Labor representative for Brindabella, a minister in ACT Labor governments, a mentor, a supporter, and a wonderful human. He left us earlier this year, lamented and celebrated. His Labor values are the ones I aspire to.

To begin, I am honoured to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people on whose land we are meeting. I am glad to recognise their continuing contribution to the life of our community and I pay my respects to their elders.

I have been listening to a lot of experienced people in the Assembly and out and about on London Circuit. They all say that this speech will be the touchstone for those seeking insights into who I am, what I stand for, what I will fall for and why I am here. This speech is the first thing that most will read about me—perhaps the only thing; maybe even just the first few paragraphs or the top line. So be it.

To my fellow ACT politics nerds from the future: if it is 2 am and you have a few more of these to read, the TLDR is that, while there may well be infinite realities in the multiverse, this is the one where I got luckiest. I have a good imagination, but I will not conceive of a reality where Libby did not say yes when I asked her to marry me! There is no alternative existence better for me than next to her—my heart dancing with the daffodils.

Otherwise, understand that, in heed of Bill Shorten's advice, my spikes are on and laced. I am ready to begin my leg in democracy's perennial relay, wherein I will fill the unforgiving minute with 60 seconds worth of distance run. I will conduct myself decently, positively and with principle in my community, and, in this Assembly, as a proud Labor representative of the Brindabella electorate's progressive majority, as a motivated and reliable member of this extraordinary Labor team.

Mr Speaker, did I notice you bristle slightly, perhaps curdle, at the idea of Tuggeranong's progressive majority? Walk with me (metaphorically). In five of the nine Hare-Clark elections since 1995, the people of Brindabella have elected three Labor candidates, or two Labor candidates and a Green. In three of those elections, the people of Brindabella elected Bill Wood as one of their Labor representatives. In four of those elections, they elected either or both of Joy Burch and Mick Gentleman. I have thanked Joy and Mick personally, and I thank them again here and now for their work on behalf of Brindabella. It is a strong Labor legacy they have built in the valley as a springboard for Caitlin and me.

To my neighbour for Brindabella colleague, "Caitlin the Tough", if things keep going how they have started, we are going to have a lovely time working together. I am looking forward to being the Tuggeranong representatives and Tuggeranong residents contact first. I am looking forward to discussing with our neighbours what Labor has done for our community, what it is doing and what it will do. The more we get to listen to our community, the better we will represent it—arguing, annoying and fighting, constructively, for what we need.

I am very grateful to the people in Tuggeranong who voted for me in this election, and perhaps also in 2016 and 2020. Over three elections, I have door-knocked up and down nearly every street in every suburb. It is an extraordinary feeling to have your support, trust and confidence. I understand how privileged I am to be chosen by my neighbours. It is the honour of my life to try to make a positive difference for Brindabella. I am in this for you.

But it was not just me. There is a wonderful team of more than 150 people who, by their extraordinary efforts, generosity, friendship and support over a decade, have put me in this place. Many of you are members of Labor's Tuggeranong sub-branch—ACT Labor's top sub-branch, in the opinion of most fair-minded observers! Some of you do not support my politics, but you believe in me. All of you are positive, engaged, people-first people. The equally terrifying and motivating part of being a candidate was the humbling knowledge that people of your quality are all in supporting me. That feeling abides. You know and I know who you are and what you have done. Thank you. Everything I can control to make your efforts worthwhile I will do. There are, however, a few "but-fors" I will celebrate. But for you, I would not and could not be here: Libby, Keagan, Judith, Eric, Cathy, Tim, Noor, David, Ben, Jacob, Drew, Tony, Lisa, Andrew, Mah-rie, Barbara, Chris, Ash, Toby, Cesc, Henson and Octavia. Because of you, I am not throwing away my shot.

Mr Speaker, I have a vision for Tuggeranong. I suspect it is rather similar to yours: a vision of a positive and renewed community chosen by families that want to enjoy every chance in a wonderful place, like my family did. Our vision, Mr Speaker, is shared by

my colleagues in the Labor Party. It starts with our schools, our health services, community sport, culture, recreation and footpaths.

Caitlin and I were elected to deliver Labor's comprehensive plan to level up Tuggeranong. The commitments to improve infrastructure and services filled up the whiteboard in our second shared office. With this plan, the Barr Labor government is loudly embracing the unsexy projects in Tuggeranong: fixing footpaths and streetlights, improving schools and shopping centres, and building and renewing changerooms, car parks and cricket nets at public ovals—the basics; the services that city-state government is about. But this plan is just the beginning.

I am troubled when I hear how some Tuggeranong residents feel underserved, or even ignored, by their government. That is not a feeling in Tuggeranong I am prepared to accept. It is a conversation I want to change, in partnership with the active, positive and energetic community members and organisations throughout the south who have achievable and feasible ideas about the big things and the little things of government. There is more to do. My job is to help get as much of it done as possible so that Labor keeps being given the responsibility to go after the big things and reach for incredible opportunities because the people of Tuggeranong trust that it is running our community well. It is a job I have been applying for, as-near-as-makes-no-difference, for 10 years.

Like Gough Whitlam and Margaret Thatcher, I have been successful at the third time of asking. Like them, I ran again and again because I believe in my community and I want to be involved in it as usefully as I can. I may fail sometimes in front of an audience, but I will never be afraid to try. I will move on with enthusiasm to try again and fail again, but, in Samuel Beckett style, fail better, which Winston Churchill suggested is about as close as anyone gets to success in politics.

Mind you, in the ongoing game of golf that is life thus far, I have had more than a couple of duck hooks or, perhaps more pertinently for me, rancid slices that nestle a hot dot right up behind the only tree in the long rough on the far side of the adjacent fairway! But, for most of my round, fortune has favoured me with opportunities to putt for pars, and sometimes even birdies. When I say "fortune", I mean Mum and Dad. To appropriate one of Gibbo's great lines, I would like to thank my parents for making me possible. Because of them, this. Judith grew up in Canberra. She went to the University of Sydney. She met Eric from Deni at Wesley College. They got married at Wesley four months later, about 49 years and 362 days ago. I am putting it on the record that, for various obvious reasons, my speech at Mum and Dad's 50th anniversary knees-up this Saturday will not be as well written or as well rehearsed as I would like.

Judith and Eric are children of Whitlam, and it is their support for the Labor Party, based on progressive, open-minded engagement with people and the world around us, that has shaped me. I was born in Deniliquin, a flat, hot and small rice town in the Riverina, 6½ hours south-west of Canberra. I am 43, which makes me early harvest Gen Y—lots of bubbles, but slightly less substance! Two years later, my brother Keagan, who is far smarter, much more athletic, more talented, and, for 41 years, my aggravating source of like-minded humour, frustration, provocation, inspiration, motivation and support, completed the family.

We moved into the middle of Canberra's middle-class in 1988. We travelled around the city, the region, the country and to different parts of the world. We discussed ideas, we challenged each other and we learned a lot. We went to Tilley's to have coffee all the time because it was the only place in Canberra in the 90s you could latte. We became a very solid family unit at the *Good Weekend* quiz. Judith opened a business in Weston Creek and Eric taught at Lake Tuggeranong College, which is where I earned my year 12 certificate in 1999 and with mates from where we won the ACT under 18s cricket championship for the Tuggeranong Valley Cricket Club.

I went to the University of Sydney. I saw Libby for the first time in March 2002 running on the Wesley College front lawn. Sensibly, I waited 2½ years before asking her to marry me. We talked about eating sushi, we travelled a bit, we do some pretty cool things together, and are growing up three kiddies we are deeply proud of—the gifts of frustration and elation that keep on giving every day and make our lives so much more “interesting”. They mean to me, as I found out in 2012, in the middle of the Madigan Street zebra crossing in Hackett, more than everything I am.

Eleven years ago, the young Werner-Gibblings family made a deliberate and informed choice to build a happy life in the Tuggeranong Valley. We chose well. In Tuggeranong, we came home. Who I am and the decisions our family makes are the same decisions made by the residents of Tuggeranong. Libby and I are eyeing the looming mortgage cliff and counting the cost of living. Our kids are enjoying the benefits of being educated at our local public schools. Be it as a P&C president or committee member, on a school board, coaching junior teams, coaching senior teams, cheering from the sidelines, winning ACT multisports championships, playing masters Aussie Rules at Greenway or founding Shakespeare by the Lakes, our family is more invested in Tuggeranong's success than ever.

That is one of the reasons I joined the Labor Party in Tuggeranong: I like our people. I signed up so I could join in the struggle to ensure Brindabella remains a brilliant place to live, as well as a community of great possibility for happy families and good people. Tuggeranong, Canberra's most attractive and family-friendly community, is worth that struggle, as hard as possible, for as long as possible.

Also, I joined the Labor Party because I believe outstanding public education is a right. Education is, in the words of Sam Seaborn, “the silver bullet”. He said:

Education is everything ... Schools should be incredibly expensive for government and absolutely free of charge to its citizens, just like national defense.

I am almost completely the product of a strong and ambitious ACT public education system, focused not just on science and technology but also on culture, literature, arts and critical thinking. Judith went to Downer Primary School and Watson High School. She became a dentist in Canberra. I have door-knocked a few of her patients. Keagan went to Weston Primary School, Mount Stromlo High School and Canberra College. He is a vascular surgeon in Sydney. Eric taught physics and/or flight at Copland College, Erindale College and Lake Tuggeranong College. I have door-knocked a few of his students and teaching colleagues. I went to Weston Primary School, Mount Stromlo High School and Lake Tuggeranong College. Libby was president of Fadden Primary P&C for four years.

As the only representative of Brindabella with children at two Tuggeranong public schools, I am here to promote public education, not just protect it. ACT public schools are outrageously good value community institutions that deliver generally excellent outcomes. But, in some respects, they are under more pressure than ever before. When I went to Stromlo high school in the 90s, I could study French or Indonesian. My boys cannot study any language other than English at their high school. They do not know what they are missing, but I do. It is an issue on my list.

I am here to support the Barr Labor government's work to ensure that helping public schools enhance their educational atmosphere, experiences and resources is at the beginning and end of every decision it makes about our community. I want to encourage communities to lock in behind their public schools—the natural centre of gravity for many suburbs in Tuggeranong. I want a Tuggeranong public education—starting at Fadden Primary School like our daughter, Octavia, going to Caroline Chisholm High School like our boys Cesc and Henson, and ending at Lake Tuggeranong College like me—to give every Tuggeranong child more opportunities to make their best possible choices.

If public education is the be-all, public health is the end-all. I am a long-term outpatient of the ACT's public health system and need it to be as accessible and effective as feasible so I can remain reasonably healthy and, basically, alive. I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at Canberra Hospital on 13 January 1999 at 2.33 pm. Every six months, including later this month, I have my blood tests done and my urine checked at the hospital's pathology centre prior to my appointments at the hospital's endocrinology ward. I held Libby's hand as she gave birth to our stillborn son in the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children in 2017, where we were so well looked after and supported by the midwives and caretakers. A year later, in the same building, I held the hand of our gorgeous new daughter. I sat next to Henson when he was two years old, while the Canberra children's hospital doctors and nurses got him through a battle with pneumonia, and then again when he was three. I have recovered in Canberra Hospital's emergency ward after its team fixed my dislocated shoulder, and recovered in the general ward at the then Calvary Hospital when my shoulder was reconstructed off the public list.

All of our family have had prompt, careful and effective treatment from the expert nurses Tuggeranong's Walk-in Centre. I get to hear about my wife's important work leading a team at the Canberra Region Cancer Centre. I understand what it is like to pay twice as much for an appointment with a non-bulk-billing Tuggeranong GP to get my insulin prescriptions than it does to purchase my life-saving drugs.

Based on that lived experience, I have some understanding of how the health system works, when it works, when it is less effective and where the frustrations are. That is why I am very happy that Labor is committed to do even more to improve and expand the capacity of the ACT's health system in order to provide supportive and clear advice, and effective treatment. We need health care that is easy to access, like the new Lanyon health centre being delivered by the Barr Labor government, and we need the 800 extra medical staff, appropriately supported and trusted, to look after us. Labor made these commitments because Labor is the party of public health, and that is why I joined it.

As the only member who coaches or supports their children playing for Tuggeranong clubs and as a member who plays sport just for Tuggeranong clubs, I will never give up or give in on annoying the ACT government to keep improving the standard of Tuggeranong sporting facilities until they equal or surpass their equivalents in other ACT electorates. Brindabella does not want for infrastructure, but a lot of it is my age. After 43 years of hard and enthusiastic use—like my knees!—Tuggeranong’s sporting infrastructure needs renewal and TLC.

To be a Labor representative is to welcome the community’s ideas for Brindabella, not avoid them. For instance, while on the campaign trail, a constituent gave me the policy idea to fund public schools so they could provide an out-of-school-hours sports coordinator position and/or wages to year 11 and 12 students from nearby colleges to be the head coaches of school teams. He said the social benefits of participating in organised team sports are vast and often overshadowed by the focus on physical benefits. This program might enable more children to participate in and enjoy the many benefits of organised team sports. It could be an employment pathway option for students to become coaches, referees and umpires. It would increase community physical fitness and health, improve community participation in local public schools and increase the pride students have in their schools. In theory, this idea sounds good to me. I am looking forward to testing it.

Ideas like this lead to change and progress. In fact, I joined the Labor Party because it is a big tent of optimistic ideas, not a broad church of conservative fears. I joined the Labor Party inspired by Ben Chifley’s conception of it as a political movement bringing something better to most Australians; a greater share in the things that make life worth living, helping them to the light on the hill. I joined it because it is the only political movement in this city with the will and capacity to do the big things and look after the little things that make people’s lives better. Because I am a member of the Labor Party, I have never been confused, frightened or awed as I desperately tried to recall the things my party never did, the ideas it never had or the risks it never took that improve people’s lives. I have not had to justify why those of us who have benefitted the most from the opportunities for the success Canberra provides should not consider investing more than most back into Canberra to create similar opportunities for others.

Canberra is what it is: and what it is is an educated, healthy, open-minded, safe, accessible paradise for families and family members of all ages, shapes, sizes and persuasions. This did not happen by accident. Executive power derives from a mandate from the masses. The excellent quality of life and breadth of opportunities we enjoy in this city are the outcomes of stable, progressive, practical and proven Labor governments using their mandates, daring to do great things, taking risks, risking failure, and implementing visionary investments in health, education and transport aimed towards a larger goal of making Canberra a well-educated, healthy and prosperous city where we all have a fair go at a decent life. It is a rock solid legacy upon which I know this Labor government will not rest. Those things are done. We are going to do more to manifest Labor’s vision of equal opportunity—a communal obligation fulfilled when governments make investments to give individuals the skills, the tools and the support to improve themselves.

I am looking forward to helping the Barr Labor government focus the territory’s investments on education, infrastructure, health and people. I am looking forward to

watching that investment pay off as Canberra's citizens take the opportunities to improve their capabilities and improve their value to themselves, their families, their communities, their employers and their city.

Tuggeranong needs and deserves that investment to make the most of its potential. We have so much potential. Every house in Tuggeranong has the best views in Canberra. We have a lake of our own; 20 suburban mounts, hills and hillocks to clamber upon; a spectacular snow-capped mountain range out the window; one of the great accessible nature reserves; two historical farmsteads; three adventure playgrounds; beaches and peace on the Murrumbidgee River; expanding cultural and social opportunities; key Australian public service infrastructure; confident and engaged community clubs; and wonderful people in supportive, safe and vibrant neighbourhoods.

It is a great start, but I am here because I think it is just the start. I am here to help improve Tuggeranong's health services, our transport links, our parks, our ovals and our public spaces and to encourage our participation in healthier and more enjoyable lifestyles, refusing to compromise on quality in the schools our children attend so they get the most out of themselves and make the most of themselves.

I joined the Labor Party to play my part in building this path to personal, community and city success—the path up to the light on the hill. While this city is closer to that light than many others, Labor will never give up on improving that path. Labor will keep aiming the path up the hill, and when we, our families and our friends get to the top, we will shine our own light and make Canberra's that much brighter.

That is who I am, that is what I stand for and that is why I am here. I am ready to begin running, Mr Speaker. Start the clock.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Werner-Gibbings, and also thank you, Ms Carrick. Welcome.

Transport Canberra—MyWay+ Ministerial statement

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (10.52): I rise today to provide an update to the Assembly on the implementation of Canberra's new integrated public transport ticketing system, MyWay+.

MyWay+ replaced the legacy MyWay system with the intention of providing a simpler payment process and to provide passengers with the ability to tap on and off public transport using credit and debit cards, and devices such as their phone or smart watch, in addition to the traditional travel card or paper ticket.

MyWay+ went live on buses and light rail last Wednesday, 27 November. It has been great to see so many Canberrans actively getting on board with the new system. Over 57,000 accounts have already been created and the MyWay+ mobile app has been downloaded almost 100,000 times. Since MyWay+ went live, over half of all trip payments have been made using a credit or debit card—a payment method which became available for Canberrans for the first time last Wednesday.

The benefit of this was demonstrated at the Cold Chisel concert last Thursday night, where many concert goers were seamlessly using public transport by tapping on and off with their credit and debit cards. MyWay+ has removed the potential barriers of needing to purchase a travel card beforehand or locate a ticket vending machine. Now anyone can hop on board a Transport Canberra bus or light rail service with their debit or credit card in their wallet, or on their phone or smart device.

Canberrans have also been successfully using the physical travel cards to pay for public transport, which was one of the only ticket options under the old MyWay system. We have distributed over 43,000 new MyWay+ cards to date. However, an initial high demand for the new MyWay+ cards did see some retailers running out of stock last week. To meet this demand, retail agents across Canberra were proactively contacted to ensure they had adequate card stocks, and additional deliveries were fast tracked to address shortages where they were identified.

We have stressed to EPAY, the MyWay+ retail outlet manager and card supplier, the importance of identifying stock shortages and ensuring a timely supply to retailers. The number of MyWay+ retail outlets will continue to grow with new retailers in the process of receiving stock, and more applications to sell MyWay+ cards being received. The Transport Canberra website will be updated with these locations as they are on-boarded.

Transport Canberra customers with old MyWay Cards can use the MyWay+ online portal's balance transfer function to transfer credit to their MyWay+ account. This was temporarily unavailable over the weekend but has since been reactivated. We want to see as much of that credit transferred as possible so Canberrans can access it to take more trips on public transport.

Despite the enthusiasm of the community, there have been some teething issues with the system that have affected people's experiences of MyWay+. The rocky start to the roll-out of MyWay+ has been disappointing and has caused inconvenience to Canberrans. However, Transport Canberra has been working closely with NEC, the delivery partner, around the clock to resolve these issues promptly and to minimise the impact on customers. I would like to reassure all passengers that throughout this change all bus and light rail services have continued to run, and our drivers and staff will continue to take an educative approach to ensure nobody is left behind during the transition.

A key issue with the new system related to a geofencing issue—where the system did not recognise the bus was stationary at a designated stop, therefore preventing customers from tapping on or off. This has been addressed through a major update to the operating systems for the on-board validator, which has been rolling out across the bus fleet since last Thursday. The update has resulted in significant improvement to the automatic activation of bus validators. Testers have been travelling on the fleet to monitor the effect of these changes and inform further refinements to specific, problematic locations as required. In addition to the technical solution, continued training is also taking place with the driver workforce to perform a manual override of the system, if necessary, to allow customers to tap on and off in instances where the validator does not automatically activate.

Another key issue in the rollout of MyWay+ was identified with the QR code (or MyWay+ pass) within the MyWay+ app. With large numbers of people choosing to use the QR code on launch day, a capacity issue emerged, which meant the system could not “keep up” with generating the unique QR codes. This capacity issue was fixed by NEC by 9.40 am on the same day. A further issue with the QR codes was then identified, attributed to the large size of the QR codes on some devices, making it difficult for them to scan. An update to the MyWay+ app to provide a smaller QR Code is now available in the Apple App Store and will become available in the Google Play store in the coming days. I would encourage the community to check for and download the updated version in the app store, particularly if they do not have automatic downloads and updates available on their mobile device. Transport Canberra is continuing to test the functionality of the QR code within the app following the update to evaluate the efficacy of this payment method available through MyWay+.

I want to assure anyone who experienced issues tapping off that they will not be charged any form of penalty fare during this transition. Transport Canberra has requested that NEC turn off any penalties applied to passengers for not tapping off during this period. This is part of our commitment to set fares at the minimum during the transition to MyWay+. To provide additional assurance to the community, NEC has also been instructed to review every transaction from when fare collection was activated to ensure no-one has or will be charged a penalty.

Improvements will continue to be made to the functionality of the MyWay+ system. The contract with NEC Australia for the delivery of an integrated ticketing and real-time passenger information solution includes ongoing support and managed services for the full term of the 10-year contract. I want to acknowledge that the roll-out of MyWay+ has not been as smooth as Canberrans would have liked, and that this process may have caused some people an inconvenience.

On behalf of the ACT government, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Transport Canberra staff and CMET customer service officers who have guided passengers to navigate MyWay+ at our light rail platforms and major bus interchanges, and the Transport Canberra customer experience team and Access Canberra staff who have been providing support over the phone and responding to online enquiries.

The ACT government is committed to making further improvements to the system to live up to the community’s expectations. We are listening to feedback from Canberrans and will continue to undertake the work required to make MyWay+ a smoother experience for all passengers. The MyWay+ portal and app will undergo a program of updates expected to be every few weeks over the immediate future while we work to identify and resolve issues as they arise and respond to feedback as more users get on board. A program of scheduled updates will also be introducing new features. This includes switching on real-time information for bus and light rail services in the mobile app and online journey planner, including a data feed to third-party app providers. The ability to link and manage multiple secondary accounts by a primary account holder, such as a parent or carer, will also be added in time for the new school year.

MyWay+ is a generational system upgrade which provides a whole new level of capability in responding to how Canberrans want to plan and pay for public transport. It provides new features with the intention of making public transport a convenient, accessible and attractive option for travelling around our city. MyWay+ is a big change to how to use public transport for the community and for the workforce. I would like to thank everyone for their patience as we make this transition and as we address the remaining teething issues in the rollout to make it a better and simpler experience to use public transport in Canberra.

I present the following paper:

MyWay+ Update—Ministerial statement, 3 December 2024.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (11.01): I would like to thank the minister for the detailed update on an issue that has raised significant concerns for the Canberra community. I acknowledge it was never going to run perfectly, but this is beyond teething issues and to describe it as such is insulting to the public transport users who have been struggling with the new system.

Let me be clear, the Greens want the MyWay+ system to be a success. The old MyWay system had to be replaced as we were clearly behind the curve of other cities, where passengers have been able to pay with their debit or credit cards for years. But not everyone wants to pay with their credit or their debit card, and physical MyWay+ cards are still an integral part of the payment methods that Canberrans wish to use. This is evident from the demand from retailers, who have been running out of stock regularly. I have heard from constituents who have been to multiple subsequent retailers which were all sold out. These are Canberrans who want to participate in the new system and who want to enter the MyWay+ era.

It remains in question whether the government has placed the needs of the community at the core of this rollout of the new system. A key group who was caught in the crosshairs of the rollout were the concession holders. While those over 70 can continue to show their seniors cards until May 2025, in order for those aged between 60-79 to benefit from concessional fares during peak times, and free travel during off-peak times, they have been required to register for MyWay+ accounts or get a physical card.

There is an irony that these groups of Canberrans, who are the most in need of government support, have instead been slapped with administrative headaches. It should be easier, not harder, for these people to take public transport. The Greens want to remove barriers to accessing public transport, especially for those who need it most. We have been clear in our position that public transport should be free for concession card holders, seniors and school students.

It is good to see the government is working through some of the issues raised, but it is concerning that key functionalities and improvements promised as part of the MyWay+ overhaul have no timeline attached to them, for example, live tracking. The old NXTBUS system was clunky, but nevertheless it provided a very important source of

information for passengers to plan their journeys. Canberrans have now been without live tracking for over 10 weeks. The reality is that more often than any of us would actually like to occur buses in the ACT do not come on time. At least 15 per cent of buses come too late or too early. I would love to see better, more reliable bus services that turn up at the time shown on the schedule. As those improvements happen, passengers should be provided with live tracking information so they are not left exposed in the winter's frost or the baking summer sun for a bus that either is late, is early or has not even turned up.

One key issue the minister identified in his statement was the geofencing of bus stops, which has impacts on the turning on and off of validators on the bus, making it difficult for users to tap on and tap off. This issue was known to the government prior to the go live date. Stakeholders had identified the issue both to the directorate and to the minister's office, and yet the decision was made to proceed. What I, and many Canberrans, would like to know is, why was the decision was made to proceed despite this identified and known issue with the new system? Instead we had the system go live with this known fault that has already required a major update to the operating system of the validators, as well as training across the entire bus driver workforce on how to override the validator system.

Likewise the issues with the QR readers were identified during testing and feedback provided to both the directorate and to the minister's office. Again the decision was made to continue with the rollout, causing stress and issues for public transport users interfacing with the system. I hope that what the minister has said about the government's commitment to working through the issues with the MyWay+ system and rollout includes finally engaging in genuine consultation with the community—those who know best, those who have been engaging with the system and have been crystal clear about what they are looking for. Engaged community groups have said that the issues we have seen in this first week of the rollout did not come as a surprise. In fact, serious concerns were raised with the government in the days leading up to the launch and yet the decision was still made to go ahead. And so I ask, why?

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy) (11.06): I wanted to echo Minister Steel's comments in his thanks to ACT government staff in the community support function they have provided throughout the introduction of MyWay+, the transition period to MyWay+ and what will continue to be a very busy period for them, during an already busy period. I particularly want to thank Access Canberra contact centres and our service centres. I think it speaks volumes in some ways that this is such a trusted service for Canberrans that so many Canberrans immediately go to our contact centres or our service centres for advice, but it has created some pressures in those services. I want to acknowledge the efforts of those staff members who always go above and beyond and have been nothing but incredible in working with the community, in explaining the new process involved with MyWay+ and in keeping up to date with the rollout of the new information as it is released. So a very, very big thank you to them. I look forward to future updates as we continue the transition.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Parks and conservation—fire trails—update

Ministerial statement

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy) (11.07): With the ACT in the early stages of the high-risk weather season, it is timely that I rise to table and speak to the government's response to the report titled, *Inquiry into the ACT environment's bushfire preparedness*. The report was published on 20 September 2024 by the Tenth Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity. Pursuant to standing order 254B, the government is required to provide a response to the report within four months of it being published. I am pleased that our government has wasted no time in progressing its response to the inquiry early in the new term.

The government notes that the standing committee announced the inquiry in December 2023 in response to Assembly and community interest in bushfire preparedness matters, including the state of repair of tracks and trails in Namadgi National Park. The purpose of the inquiry was to:

... inquire into and report on the environmental factors contributing to bushfires in the ACT and surrounding areas, such as drought, climate change and fuel loads—

and—

examine the management of bushfire risks and preparedness of ACT parks, reserves and open spaces, and coordination among government agencies in relation to bushfire risks.

The committee's report made 23 recommendations that aim to ensure that the ACT Parks and Conservation Service is conducting as much fuel management and track maintenance as is possible for each fire season. The report also recommended that PCS is adequately staffed and resourced to conduct its operations.

On behalf of the government, I acknowledge the current and former members of the Legislative Assembly that were part of that standing committee for their work to prepare the report and the associated recommendations for government consideration. The government has given thorough consideration to the recommendations made by the standing committee, and those have thoroughly informed the response.

Comprising over 60 per cent of the ACT is a network of protected nature areas, including national parks and nature reserves. While these protected areas bring much benefit to the environment and the habitat provided to flora and fauna, they are susceptible to the impact of bushfires. The ACT has sadly witnessed the devastating consequences of bushfires in Namadgi National Park during the 2003 Canberra Bushfires and the 2020 Orroral Valley bushfire. These bushfires resulted in immeasurable damage to the environment and biodiversity, let alone the risk to life and property.

Protecting, conserving, and enhancing the ACT's high-quality environment is a core responsibility of any government. We also know that the people of the ACT care deeply

about our environment, with many taking extra care through volunteering, and the government relies heavily on that valuable work. The government continues to invest heavily in bushfire mitigation activities across the ACT's protected conservation areas, known locally as parks and reserves. The government invests around \$10 million in these bushfire mitigation activities, with PCS being the primary agency responsible for delivering these responsibilities. Bushfire mitigation activities are delivered under an annual Bushfire Operations Plan, commonly known as the BOP, which is a requirement of a land manager, such as PCS, under the Emergencies Act and the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan Version 5.

Following the Orroral Valley bushfire of 2020, significant areas of Namadgi National Park were burnt. Immediately after these fires, significant rainfall caused damage to the maintenance trail network and creek crossings, which made vehicle access difficult and in some cases impossible. It is most pleasing that, since late 2023, with areas of Namadgi National Park drying out after the significant rainfall we have had, the road network has been restored and resilience building activities are underway. This activity included restoring some creek crossings to a more resilient, more natural state to eliminate the risk of future infrastructure washing away during floods, while also allowing aquatic animals and fish to pass. I congratulate the PCS team for their conservation efforts and resilience building work. I also acknowledge the significant funding provided to the ACT by the Australian government as part of the Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Program to help with the recovery of Namadgi National Park in particular. This funding has been significant and has allowed the ACT to undertake a wide range of bushfire recovery and resilience building activities.

We support the objectives of all recommendations made by the standing committee as demonstrated in its response. I am pleased to share that 17 of the recommendations are either existing government policy, completed, agreed or agreed in principle. I draw to the Assembly's attention several key achievements.

The government delivered 30 prescribed burns planned in the 2023-24 BOP, and this reduced the residual risk of bushfire across the ACT from 37 per cent to 31 per cent. PCS has a dedicated team that works throughout the year to deliver the annual BOP and reduce the risk of bushfire. PCS has focused over recent months on building a strong and experienced leadership team within the fire management unit. This is already proving successful in addressing many of the strategic challenges. I acknowledge the incredible contribution that was made by so many people who submitted to the inquiry and how that has informed what the government has done since. PCS is progressing a strategic review of all tracks and trails to guide and inform plans and management practices of the future, and it is working closely and collaboratively with the ACT Rural Fire Service and the Multi Hazard Advisory Council about bushfire risk management and response. Finally, the government has delivered a Natural Disaster Strategy. These are just some of the examples that illustrate the focus of the government on strengthening environmental bushfire preparedness.

During the preparation of the government response, the devastating impact that high-intensity and frequent bushfires have on Namadgi National Park has been front of mind. Earlier this year, the government's conservation researchers published online the report *Recovery of fire-sensitive vegetation communities in Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve after the 2020 Orroral Valley Bushfire*. Key findings

included: the increasing frequency, size and intensity of bushfires is posing a ‘significant threat’ to fire-sensitive ecosystems and species that require ‘long recovery fires’—decades or longer, in many cases; high-intensity bushfires at short intervals of less than 20 years may “alter the structure and composition of these ecosystems, potentially causing localised extinctions and a decline in biodiversity at local and landscape scales”; over a third of the Namadgi National Park Alpine Ash forest community “is at risk of permanent loss in the event of further high-severity fire” over the next few decades; and Namadgi National Park is entering a period of major ecological change in response to a changing climate and fire frequency.

These key findings are concerning. They support the urgent need for government to continue to invest in bushfire risk mitigation activities through the BOP, undertake further scientific research and, finally, have clear operational response plans. In future, if considered necessary, the government may consider identifying and protecting key refuge areas where the plants and animals of Namadgi National Park are most likely to persist under predicted climate change and fire frequency trajectories.

I take the opportunity to close out an agreed resolution of the Tenth Assembly about bushfire preparedness. Following that resolution agreed by the previous Assembly on 1 November 2023, the government provided its biannual reporting to the Assembly, including before the fire season, on the progress of repair and maintenance of the fire trails in Namadgi National Park. Since early 2024, all fire trails are now accessible, with only some limitations on larger vehicle access, and further improvements are expected through an ongoing maintenance program. With all trails now accessible and the ongoing maintenance of the fire trail network a business-as-usual activity, any further reporting will be provided as required on a case-by-case basis.

This response to the inquiry reaffirms the priority that the government places on undertaking environmental bushfire preparedness activities to protect life, property and the natural environment from the devastating impacts of bushfire.

It is no secret that, in addition to city services, I have very much wanted to hold the portfolio of Parks and Conservation Service. I sincerely look forward to working with such a dedicated team of people who are on the ground, who work in highly physical and highly demanding jobs and deal with some of the most pressing threats that are affecting our very existence. It will be a busy time over this summer. It does seem like the bushfire season will, at least, be a little delayed due to the rain of December; however, I hope to be able to use the opportunities throughout the summer months to get to know these people on a personal basis and to speak with the rangers, the fire management unit and everyone who is associated with the protection of our parks and reserves to understand their work and to see how we can support them better. That is why the government will continue to focus on ensuring that PCS is appropriately resourced to undertake critical bushfire risk mitigation activities.

The planned future review of BOP arrangements will help to guide and inform future government decision-making about resourcing, particularly noting the impacts of climate change on increasing bushfire risk. We must continue to act, noting that the scientific research suggests that future fires in Namadgi National Park are an extinction risk to vegetation communities, such as the Alpine Ash. I look forward to working with the new Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services to strengthening the ACT’s

bushfire risk prevention, preparedness, response and recovery arrangements, particularly as they apply to our nature environment.

In closing, I remind all Canberrans to prepare for the bushfire season ahead by visiting the Emergency Services Agency website at esa.act.gov.au. Please clean your gutters and please check for overhanging branches. Please help to keep the ACT parks and reserves bushfire free, importantly, by observing restrictions, by calling emergency 000 if you see an unattended fire and, most importantly, stay safe for your family and for yourself.

I present the following papers:

Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity—Standing Committee—Tenth Assembly—Report 13—Inquiry into the ACT Environment’s Bushfire Preparedness—Government response.

Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity—Tenth Assembly—Report 13—Inquiry into the ACT Environment’s Bushfire Preparedness and Bi-annual Report to the Legislative Assembly (31 October 2024)—Bushfire preparedness—Assembly resolution of 1 November 2023—Government response—Ministerial Statement, 3 December 2024.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Climate change—minister’s annual report

Ministerial statement

MS ORR (Yerrabi—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (11.19): I am pleased to table the *2023-24 Minister’s annual report*, under section 15 of the Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010. As required by that legislation, the report sets out the following three things: the actions taken in 2023-24 by the responsible minister under the act; the effectiveness of the government’s actions taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and, finally, a cost-benefit analysis of government policies and programs implemented to meet climate change targets in the ACT. Although I was not the responsible minister during the reporting period, I am pleased to present this report as the incoming Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water and advise that the 2023-24 was yet another good year in our climate leadership journey.

The ACT is a leader on climate change action and is recognised nationally and internationally for our climate leadership. For the fifth year in a row, the ACT was powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity supplied by 12 projects, including our large-scale feed-in tariffs. In 2023-24, we brought our emissions down to 50 per cent below 1990 levels. Our biggest challenge continues to be reducing emissions from

ground transport and fossil fuel gas, which together account for around 87 per cent of the ACT's remaining emissions.

In 2023-24, we made significant progress in a range of areas, and I would like to briefly mention a few key achievements that show the diversity of our climate response measures. In December 2023, we commenced an Australian-first regulation to prevent new fossil fuel gas network connections in all residential, commercial and community facility land use zones. The regulation restricts new fossil fuel gas or natural gas network connections in certain circumstances, stopping new sources of emissions from fossil fuel gas use. The new regulation places the ACT at the forefront of national electrification efforts and ensures investment in the right infrastructure to support electrification. It will also help Canberrans save on future transition costs and help them save on energy bills over the long term.

In June this year we released the Integrated Energy Plan 2024-2030, which outlines our broad approach to phasing out fossil fuel energy while ensuring an affordable and reliable energy supply. This plan helps to set out the long-term pathway for the transformation of the ACT's energy system to achieve net zero emissions by 2045. It builds on the ACT's success in reaching 100 per cent renewable electricity in 2020 and aims to ensure that all Canberrans benefit from the transition, not just those most able to afford the necessary changes involved.

We are also continuing to make progress in the waste sector, with the release of the ACT Circular Economy Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2030, which was released in August 2023. The strategy and action plan comprises 56 actions across six key themes: food and organics; the built environment; consumer goods; emerging and problematic waste streams; creating space to showcase our commitment to the circular economy; and procurement, skills, innovation and government.

A circular economy will improve the natural environment and community wellbeing and support the transition to a net zero city. A circular economy will also promote opportunities for innovation, economic growth and job creation. Planning is also underway to support an expansion of the food organics and garden organics, FOGO, pilot that is currently underway in Belconnen. The expansion will be an additional 1,150 multi-unit dwellings. It will expand the benefits of the FOGO pilot by increasing the number of households who can recover their excess food waste through the program.

In 2024, the government released the Active Travel Plan, which identifies ways to make walking and riding more safe, accessible, convenient and enjoyable. The plan sets out 13 key actions under five priority areas and includes walking and cycling maps that guide investment and decision-making to support more walking and riding. The accompanying design guide sets a high benchmark on how intersections and streets across the ACT should be designed to safely support all modes of transport and prioritise people who walk and ride.

In the zero emissions vehicle space, our work has continued under the Zero Emissions Vehicles Strategy 2022-30, which sets an ambitious target for 80 per cent to 90 per cent of new light vehicle sales in the ACT to be zero emissions vehicles by 2030 and to phase out light internal combustion engine vehicles from 2035. In 2023-24, the ACT has maintained its position as a national leader in the uptake of electric vehicles. The ACT government is continuing to support electric vehicle affordability through stamp

duty exemptions, the zero-interest loans for cars and charging equipment, and lower registration fees for lower emissions vehicles through the ACT's emissions-based registration. The continued high uptake of electric vehicles will help develop the second-hand market over time. The government is also on track to deliver 180 public chargers by 2025 and is continuing to develop measures to support multi-unit dwellings to install charging infrastructure. At the end of the 2023-24 financial year, there were 162 public electric vehicle charging stations in the ACT.

I will now turn to the effectiveness of the government actions as required by the act. The ACT greenhouse gas inventory measures the impact of our actions. It shows that, in the 2023-24 period, the ACT emitted 1,489 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. This was 50 per cent lower than our 1990 baseline level of emissions. Per capita emissions were 3.1 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2023-24, representing a 71 per cent reduction from 1989-90 levels.

As required by the act, and reflecting community interests, I now turn to the cost-of-living impact statement in the report. The Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme, the Small and Medium Feed-in Tariff and the Large Scale Feed-in Tariff Scheme have impacts on cost of living through their effects on electricity prices. In 2023-24, pass-through costs associated with the administration and operation of the Large Scale Feed-in Tariff Scheme resulted in a payment to ACT electricity consumers of \$23.14 per megawatt hour of electricity consumed. This payment to electricity consumers was due to high wholesale electricity prices experienced in early 2022 as a result of the conflict overseas. As the wholesale cost of electricity exceeded the feed-in tariff rate, renewable electricity generators were required to pay the difference back to the ACT electricity distributor, which was passed back to the electricity consumers. The cost of the administration and operation of the Small and Medium Feed-in Tariff Scheme in 2023-24 was just \$34.97 per year for the average household. Taken together, the cost impact of the large scale and small and medium scale FiT schemes—feed-in tariff schemes—for the average ACT household was a rebate of \$115.44 in 2023-24.

The government recognises that the cost of climate change measures can have a disproportionate impact on low-income households. Specific government policies and programs are in place to help vulnerable households facing financial hardship and to address the cost of climate change measures on lower income households. These include providing financial incentives and support through different programs to improve energy efficiency and sustainability in social and public housing for low-income homeowners and the lowest performing rental properties.

The annual report showcases significant achievements made by the previous ACT government and the ACT community in tackling climate change in 2023-24. As the incoming minister, I am pleased to present this report in the spirit of our continuing commitment to transparency and accountability for the work we do to address climate change. In 2023-24, we brought our emissions down to 50 per cent below 1990 levels. We should all be proud of these achievements, but we must be ready to work even harder to do our share to address this global problem. The report I am tabling shows that the ACT continues to be a leader in responding to climate change. It is an exciting time for Canberra as we take steps to electrify our city, transition away from the use of fossil fuel gas by 2045 and accelerate efforts to reduce transport emissions.

I look forward to undertaking this work and future reports setting out how our community is successfully making the transition to a zero emissions city. I commend the *2023-24 Minister's annual report* under the Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010 to the Assembly.

I present the following papers:

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act, pursuant to subsection 15(3)—

Minister's annual report 2023-24.

Minister's Annual Report 2023-2024—Ministerial statement, 3 December 2024.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Standing orders—suspension

Motion (by **Ms Cheyne**), by leave, agreed to, with the concurrence of an absolute majority:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent this sitting week's adjournment debates being extended to one hour, with 10 minutes speaking time per member.

Committees—standing Establishment

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy) (11.30): I move:

That:

- (1) the following general purpose standing committees be established and be comprised of membership as set out in the table below;
- (2) the purpose of such committees is to enhance the scrutiny of the Executive, to examine and suggest improvements to any bills referred to it, to enable the citizens of the Territory to engage and to participate in law-making and policy review, and to review annual reports of taxpayer-funded agencies;
- (3) the committees so established may inquire and report on matters referred to it by the Assembly or matters that are considered by the committee to be of concern to the community and within the nominated areas of responsibility;
- (4) calendar and financial year annual and financial reports stand referred to the relevant standing committee for inquiry and report by 12 May of the year after the presentation of the report to the Assembly pursuant to the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004*;

- (5) notwithstanding standing order 229, only one standing committee may meet for the consideration of the inquiry into the calendar and financial year annual and financial reports at any given time;
- (6) all reports of the ACT Auditor-General tabled in the Assembly stand referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration for inquiry and report;
- (7) the Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders shall:
 - (a) examine matters related to corruption and integrity in public administration;
 - (b) inquire into and report on matters referred to it by the Assembly or matters that are considered by the Committee to be of concern to the community;
 - (c) perform all functions required of it pursuant to the *Integrity Commission Act 2018*; and
 - (d) monitor, review and report on the performance of the Integrity Commission and the Inspector of the Integrity Commission or the exercise of the powers and functions of the Integrity Commission and the Inspector of the Integrity Commission, including examining the annual reports of the Integrity Commission and the Inspector of the Integrity Commission and any other reports made by the Commission;
- (8) nothing in this resolution authorises the Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders to investigate a matter relating to particular conduct or to reconsider a decision to investigate, not to investigate or to discontinue an investigation of a particular complaint made to the Commission, or to reconsider the findings, recommendations, determinations or other decisions of the Commission or the Inspector in relation to a particular investigation or complaint;
- (9) the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs is also to perform a legislative scrutiny role of bills and subordinate legislation by:
 - (a) considering whether the clauses of bills (and amendments proposed to bills) introduced into the Assembly:
 - (i) unduly trespass on personal rights and liberties;
 - (ii) make rights, liberties and/or obligations unduly dependent upon insufficiently defined administrative powers;
 - (iii) make rights, liberties and/or obligations unduly dependent upon non-reviewable decisions;
 - (iv) inappropriately delegate legislative powers; or
 - (v) insufficiently subject the exercise of legislative power to parliamentary scrutiny; and
 - (vi) consider whether any explanatory statement associated with legislation meets the technical or stylistic standards expected by the Assembly;
 - (b) reporting to the Legislative Assembly about human rights issues raised by bills and subordinate laws presented to the Assembly, pursuant to section 38 of the *Human Rights Act 2004*;

- (c) considering whether any instrument of a legislative nature made under an Act which is subject to disallowance and/or disapproval by the Assembly (including a regulation, rule or by-law):
 - (i) is in accord with the general objects of the Act under which it is made;
 - (ii) unduly trespasses on rights previously established by law;
 - (iii) makes rights, liberties and/or obligations unduly dependent upon non-reviewable decisions; or
 - (iv) contains matter which in the opinion of the Committee should properly be dealt with in an Act of the Legislative Assembly; and
- (d) consider whether any explanatory statement or explanatory memorandum associated with legislation and any regulatory impact statement meets the technical or stylistic standards expected by the Assembly;
- (10) each committee shall have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the relevant standing committee appointed during previous Assemblies;
- (11) each committee be provided with necessary staff, facilities and resources;
- (12) in addition, the membership of the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure, established under standing order 16, be composed of the:
 - (a) Speaker, as Chair;
 - (b) Government whip;
 - (c) Opposition whip; and
 - (d) ACT Greens whip;
- (13) the Independents for Canberra Member and the Fiona Carrick Independent Member may attend and participate (without voting) at meetings of the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure when Assembly and Private Members' business is ordered, and at any other time a majority of Members of the Committee invite those Members;
- (14) a Liberal Member will chair the:
 - (a) Standing Committee on Legal Affairs;
 - (b) Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders; and
 - (c) Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration;
- (15) the Greens Member will chair the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services;
- (16) the Labor Member will chair the Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation;
- (17) the Independents for Canberra Member will chair the Standing Committee on Social Policy;
- (18) nominations for membership of these committees be notified in writing to the Speaker within two hours following conclusion of the debate on the matter; and

(19) the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

Committee	Primary Wellbeing Indicator/s	Areas of Responsibility	Membership
Administration and Procedure	Governance and institutions	As outlined in standing order 16 and (12) and (13) above	
1. Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services	Access and Connectivity, Housing and Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Environment and climate change · Heritage · Water and energy policy and programs · Emissions reductions · Environment and ecological sustainability · Commissioner for the Environment · Environment Protection Agency · Parks and conservation · City Renewal Authority · Suburban Land Agency · Planning · Land management · Transport · City Services 	5 Member committee 2 Liberal Members 1 Labor Member 1 Greens Member Member of Fiona Carrick Independent
2. Economics, Industry and Recreation	Economy, Living Standards and Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Gaming and racing · Gaming and Racing Commission · Arts · Creative industries · Screen Canberra · Tourism · Skills · Sport and Recreation · Building and construction · Business · Access Canberra · ACT Events Fund · Community events · Major events · Night-time economy · Industrial relations and workplace safety · Economy · Economic development and diversification · Infrastructure Canberra · Employment 	4 Member committee 1 Labor Member Member of Independents for Canberra Member of Fiona Carrick Independent 1 Liberal Member

Committee	Primary Wellbeing Indicator/s	Areas of Responsibility	Membership
3. Social Policy	Education and Life-long Learning and Identity and Belonging Health and Social Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Early Childhood Development · Education · Youth Affairs · Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs · Multicultural Affairs · Disability · Women (including the Office for Women) · Seniors · Veterans · LGBTIQ+ · Health and health system · Justice Health · Mental Health · Homelessness and housing services · Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence · Families · Community Services · Social Housing · Intergenerational fairness 	5 Member committee Member of Independents for Canberra 1 Labor Member 2 Liberal Members 1 Greens Member
4. Legal Affairs	Safety and Governance and Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Emergency management and the Emergency Services Agency · Policing and ACT Policing · Corrective Services · Attorney-General · Consumer Affairs · Human Rights · Victims of Crime · Access to justice and restorative practice · Public Trustee and Guardian · Scrutiny of bills and subordinate legislation 	3 Member committee 1 Liberal Member 1 Labor Member 1 Greens Member
5. Public Accounts and Administration	Governance and Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Accounts of the receipts and expenditure of the ACT and its authorities 	3 Member committee 1 Liberal Member 1 Labor Member Member of Fiona Carrick Independent

Committee	Primary Wellbeing Indicator/s	Areas of Responsibility	Membership
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · All reports of the Auditor-General which have been presented to the Assembly · ACT Public Service · Procurement Policy · Insurance Policy · Chief Digital Officer · Digital and Data Strategy · Finance · Treasury (including taxation and revenue) 	
6. Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders	Governance and Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · ACT Auditor-General · ACT Ombudsman · Office of the Legislative Assembly · ACT Electoral Commission · ACT Integrity Commission · Electoral policy 	3 Member committee 1 Liberal Member 1 Labor Member 1 Greens Member

This is a motion which has been the subject of much negotiation in the past few weeks, and, ultimately, as with everything, the outcome will be dependent on the will of the Assembly. We are a new parliament with a very different make-up to what any of us has ever experienced in this place, noting that there have not been independents for more than 20 years. Despite this, I think that we have been working incredibly constructively across our parties.

Certainly, the motion, as on the notice paper—and in Ms Tough’s amendment, that I expect she will move—has really sought to seek consensus across the different parties and the Independents about representation across committees, achieving balance and proportionate representation to the best that we can and presenting like areas of responsibility in terms of how these committees have been crafted, the workload for each of the committees and the membership.

We are largely there, despite what is about to come next with, I think it is, five amendments, maybe it is more. We are largely there, and that really is thanks to the efforts of our whips especially. I particularly want to acknowledge Mr Cocks for his constructive engagement. Ms Tough—speaking as a government whip and a former government whip—you are amazing, and I am very lucky to have you. In particular, I think the negotiations that we have undertaken have been transparent. The ACT Labor government has approached this from a position of good faith, and we are almost there, apart from a few areas where consensus has not been able to be achieved.

I would note one amendment that we will be opposing, which is Mr Emerson's regarding the membership of the administration and procedure committee. This is a committee that is established under standing order 16. We have had a number of conversations—again, very open and constructive—with Mr Emerson and Ms Carrick. We certainly understand what they are seeking to achieve, but the way the motion is currently drafted, in allowing them to not only be present but to participate in the listing of Assembly and private members' business, I think, very much goes to the heart of what they are seeking to achieve—without setting a precedent that I am not sure that they even know if they do want at this stage.

Mr Assistant Speaker, we think this is the fairest approach overall, notwithstanding the amendments that are about to be moved. We do really think we are almost there. And of course, all of this is open to negotiation and to review as the Assembly continues its work, as committees begin to meet, and we understand what makes sense and what might not. There is a willingness and an openness from the Labor government to continue these conversations, perhaps after a year has passed, when we can see how it has all worked. But, for now, we think that we have done a pretty good job, in the circumstances, in what we are presenting through a mix of these amendments.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (11.34): I move:

After paragraph (19), in table 1 at item 2 (Economics, Industry and Recreation), column 4 (Membership), omit:

“4 Member committee

1 Labor Member

Member of Independents for Canberra

Member of Fiona Carrick Independent

1 Liberal Member”,

substitute:

“5 Member committee

1 Labor Member

Member of Independents for Canberra

Member of Fiona Carrick Independent

2 Liberal Members”.

This amendment is fairly straightforward, and what it does is move the composition of the committees back to where we understood agreement had landed less than 24 hours ago. It is a composition that aligns as closely as possible, in our opinion, with the standing orders, particularly standing orders 220 and 221 around the composition of committees. We believe it is quite reasonable to expect that the agreement we believed we had reached less than a day ago could stand.

It is a reasonable composition of the committees, and it recognises that the role of committees is to provide scrutiny over the government's agenda, and its bills, and to explore, in a non-partisan way, many of the issues that are important to the community. I commend the amendment.

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Assistant Speaker, I seek your advice. Miss Nuttall has an amendment on this same section, as does Ms Tough. Do they need to move those before we vote on Mr Cocks's amendment? I want to check you are not going to close the debate on this line at that point.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Are you moving that the debate be adjourned?

Mr Rattenbury: No, I am asking your advice—if I can have the floor again. You are about to make the call on Mr Cocks's amendment, but there are two other amendments that relate to this very section. Will the debate be closed on this section, or will there be an opportunity for those members to move their amendments subsequently?

Mr Hanson: We do not close debate on a motion just because there is a—

Mr Rattenbury: No, just on this line I am worried about. I am worried he is going to rule that you cannot reopen it. I am just not sure. I am genuinely not sure.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you. We are just going to move on to Mr Cocks's amendment and make a vote accordingly. Obviously, it will either fail or succeed, and then we will deal with the repercussions.

Question put:

That **Mr Cocks's** amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 10

Noes 15

Chiaka Barry	Deborah Morris	Andrew Barr	Marisa Paterson
Peter Cain	Mark Parton	Yvette Berry	Michael Pettersson
Leanne Castley		Andrew Braddock	Shane Rattenbury
Ed Cocks		Fiona Carrick	Chris Steel
Thomas Emerson		Tara Cheyne	Rachel Stephen-Smith
Jeremy Hanson		Jo Clay	Caitlin Tough
Elizabeth Lee		Laura Nuttall	Taimus Werner-Gibbings
James Milligan		Suzanne Orr	

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Cocks's amendment negatived.

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (11.41), by leave: I move:

- (1) After paragraph (19), in table 1 at item 1 (Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services), column 4 (Membership), omit:
 - “5 Member committee
 - 2 Liberal Members
 - 1 Labor Member
 - 1 Greens Member
 - Member of Fiona Carrick Independent”,

substitute:

“4 Member committee

1 Liberal Member

1 Labor Member

1 Greens Member

Member of Fiona Carrick Independent”.

- (2) After paragraph (19), in table 1 at item 2 (Economics, Industry and Recreation), column 4 (Membership), omit:

“4 Member committee

1 Labor Member

Member of Independents for Canberra

Member of Fiona Carrick Independent

1 Liberal Member”.

substitute:

“5 Member committee

1 Labor Member

Member of Independents for Canberra

Member of Fiona Carrick Independent

2 Liberal Members”.

The amendments circulated in my name recognise a compromise position on the different make-up of the committees: for the environment, planning, transport and city services committee; and for the economics, industry and recreation committee. I commend the amendments.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (11.42), by leave: I move the following amendment to Ms Tough’s proposed amendment No 2:

Omit “5 Member committee”, substitute:

“6 Member committee

1 Greens Member”.

I will be brief. It does not seem right to have a representative of every party on the economic committee except the Greens. Our principle is that each Independent and party should be able to be represented on whichever committee they want and be able to make the contributions they wish to make. And the Greens think we should be able to have a say on important issues to the community such as gaming and the economy.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (11.42): On Miss Nuttall’s proposed amendment, I would like to note that this amendment pushes us further away from the ideals of the standing orders in relation to membership of committees. And it is my understanding that a previous Assembly has certainly come to the conclusion that it is not the entitlement of every party to be represented upon every committee. Indeed, as outlined in standing order 221:

Overall membership of committees shall comprise representatives of all groups and parties in the Assembly as nearly as practicable proportional to their representation in the Assembly.

This is the reason that we landed on the original composition of these committees, and I do not believe that we should be departing so drastically from that.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (11.43): I appreciate the points that Mr Cocks has made; however, in endeavouring to reach consensus and meeting the undertakings that we have made to all parties in this place, whilst I do not think this would be absolutely perfect “according to Hoyle”, it does at least provide a pathway forward at this time.

I note, from the benefit of quite a lot of experience in this place, that in this very first sitting day there is a lot of enthusiasm from members to be on lots and lots of committees. I also note from many years of experience that that enthusiasm will wane as the workload becomes clear and the breadth of issues that members will need to be across, in the detail that they will need to be across, becomes apparent to them.

The analogy I would draw would be that a minister seeking to be minister for every single portfolio within the ACT government is the equivalent of seeking to be on every single committee in this place. It would just be humanly impossible to do justice to all of those policy areas and responsibilities.

I think Minister Cheyne has made an astute observation that this is not fixed for four years. There will be the opportunity, once people have got into the rhythm of this place, and the relative workloads of particular committees are apparent, for there to be further adjustments to this. I would say a year’s cycle is probably a reasonable time for that, but it sits in the hands of the Assembly.

I would also observe, after many terms in this place, that the make-up of committees at the beginning of the process and the make-up of committees at the end of the term change every single time. This is not locked in for four years, but it is a start. I know members are keen to get on with the work. We do need the standing committees established in order to progress legislation. That is relevant to the sitting pattern for next year and other points that we will need to put in place over the course of this sitting week.

So, acknowledging it is not absolutely perfect, but it is an endeavour to get as much consensus and representation as possible—and with observation status, as Ms Cheyne has indicated, in relation to administration and procedure—I would endorse it as a way forward, with a review certainly possible, and probable, within 12 months. I commend the amendments to the Assembly.

Miss Nuttall’s amendment to **Ms Tough’s** proposed amendment No 2 agreed to.

Ms Tough’s amendments, as amended, agreed to.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (11.47), by leave: I move the following amendments together:

- (1) After paragraph (12) (d), insert:
 - “(e) The Independents for Canberra Member;
 - (f) The Fiona Carrick Independent Member; and
 - (g) An additional Labor Member.”
- (2) Omit paragraph (13).

The purpose of this amendment is to ensure the membership of the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure includes representatives of all parties. Let me offer my sincere thanks to the party whips for their constructive engagement with me in relation to committee composition. I have appreciated the opportunity to exchange views with all parties on committee matters, and I hope this constructive approach is something that can be sustained throughout the life of this Assembly.

On 19 October 2024, the people of the ACT chose to elect two new members who sit outside the three parties that have occupied this place for some time. This important committee manages a set of significant issues relevant to all members, including but not limited to inquiries into member conduct and parliamentary business. It is the only committee expressly referred to in the standing orders, indicating just how important it is to the successful operation of this Assembly for the benefit of our community.

I fundamentally believe that, as a matter of principle, it is vital for each party in the Assembly to have a representative present in a committee of this kind. The standing committee considers issues such as the conduct of members, a matter central to the integrity of the Assembly, which has been raised with me frequently as a priority for those who voted for me. I believe all parties must be granted voting rights and the opportunity to play a meaningful role in the standing committee’s deliberations.

I also note that there is precedent for such an amendment. In 1998, the last time Independents were elected to the Assembly, the membership of the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure included representatives of the three parties and the Independents. While the make-up of committees may have changed since then, the principles of equity and transparency withstand the test of time.

I do appreciate that the government may require assurances to ensure membership of this standing committee is proportionate to the composition of the Assembly, to the extent that is possible. So, I have suggested that, rather than diminishing the role Independents can play in this Assembly as full members of this important committee, we add an additional government member to the committee. Voting in the affirmative on this amendment, and doing so at the very beginning of this parliamentary term, is an indication that this Assembly will take forward an approach grounded in inclusion, supporting the careful management of our shared duties to the people of the ACT.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (11.49): We will not be supporting this amendment, and I believe it is fairly evident from the wording of this amendment that it is a concerning shift not only in the balance of membership in it but, potentially, in the approach taken

to this committee. The administration and procedure committee has been, for a long time, a collegiate and collaborative committee. It is not a politicised committee, and that is clearly not the intention of it. However, with this amendment, what we see is a shift to try and adjust that balance of power. In particular, I point to the addition of an extra government member. This would be a fairly concerning shift that would both shift the balance of power within the committee and risk its politicisation. We cannot support this amendment.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (11.50): I thank Mr Emerson for raising this. This is something that we have discussed at some length. Minister Cheyne has endeavoured to address the substantive issues Mr Emerson has raised through the inclusion of paragraph 13: to provide attendance and participation for both independent members on the relevant matters before the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure—most pertinently and of greatest interest, I imagine, to Independent members—and on the ordering of Assembly and private members’ business.

Again, consistent with the commitment we have made around examining how this is working after about a year, we will endeavour to do the same in relation to administration and procedure. So, on that basis, we will not support Mr Emerson’s amendment today, but we will endeavour, through the processes of that committee—noting that the Labor Party will have a solitary representative on that committee and the Liberal Party will, in fact, have two—to uphold the principles that Mr Cocks has outlined.

Given the Greens whip will, I guess, in voting terms, represent the crossbench on that committee, I would ask the crossbench collectively, amongst yourselves, to look at ways of ensuring that, beyond attendance and participation, Independent members’ views are conveyed through the Greens whip, or to potentially even to consider rotating the role over the course of the Assembly. That would perhaps be helpful in addressing the issues Mr Emerson has raised.

For now, we will not support the amendment, but we will have the matter under review and consider this again in about a year.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (11.52): In the interest of fairness, the ACT Greens will be supporting Mr Emerson’s amendment today. This is consistent with our position that people should be able to be on the committees that they wish to be on, logistically, and to make sure that the Independents are looped into the discussions that concern them.

We are supportive of the inclusion of Independents and agnostic towards whether or not an additional government member should be required, understanding the workload that goes into it also. Thank you.

Question put:

That **Mr Emerson’s** amendments be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 6

Noes 19

Andrew Braddock
Fiona Carrick
Jo Clay
Thomas Emerson
Laura Nuttall
Shane Rattenbury

Andrew Barr	Deborah Morris
Chiaka Barry	Suzanne Orr
Yvette Berry	Mark Parton
Peter Cain	Marisa Paterson
Leanne Castley	Michael Pettersson
Tara Cheyne	Chris Steel
Ed Cocks	Rachel Stephen-Smith
Jeremy Hanson	Caitlin Tough
Elizabeth Lee	Taimus Werner-Gibbings
James Milligan	

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Emerson's amendments to paragraphs 12 and 13 negatived.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (11.56), by leave: I move the following amendments together:

- (1) After paragraph (19), in table 1 at item 2 (Economics, Industry and Recreation), column 3 (Areas of Responsibility) add: “• Employment”.
- (2) After paragraph (19), in table 1 at item 3 (Social Policy), column 3 (Areas of Responsibility) add:
 - “• Social housing
 - Intergenerational fairness.”.

The amendments make minor additions to the areas of responsibility for two committees. The economics, industry and recreation committee's areas of responsibility are currently drafted to not include “employment”. The ACT continues to enjoy low unemployment relative to other states and territories. With “skills”, “business”, “industrial relations” and “workplace safety” already covered in the areas of committee responsibility, the inclusion of “employment” will ensure that this committee can take a strong, holistic approach in considering how we can make Canberra an even better place to live and work.

I also seek to include the addition of “social housing” and “intergenerational fairness” to the areas of responsibility for the social policy committee. As members no doubt appreciate, adequate social housing is vital to the livability of the ACT. We are experiencing an acute housing crisis in the ACT. Indeed, we have a minister, who is also the Deputy Chief Minister, dedicated to this issue, which I applaud.

Further, many young people with whom I speak are worried about their future. For the first time in living memory, the next generation looks likely to be left worse off than preceding generations. This unprecedented inequity between generations is becoming the most pressing social policy issue of our time. Intergenerational fairness is central to the social contract; it keeps our communities together. This issue is vital to us all, and not only to those disadvantaged by current policy settings.

I believe this issue requires specific attention in this Assembly and specifically in this committee. I thank members for their consideration of these amendments.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy) (11.57): The ACT Labor government will be supporting these amendments, and we thank Mr Emerson for the spirit in which they have been presented. They are sensible. It is, arguably, implied, being already in the motion, but we have absolutely no issue with it being made explicit and specific. We appreciate the clarification as to where social housing sits. I thank Mr Emerson for bringing these amendments forward, and I commend them to the chamber.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (11.58): We will not be opposing these amendments. They are, broadly speaking, in line with where we had landed, in terms of the responsibilities of the committee. We are very comfortable with the motion being explicit about those roles.

Mr Emerson's amendments to table 1 agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

COAG Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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

Title read by Clerk.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade (11.59): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to introduce into the Assembly the COAG Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The bill makes technical amendments to replace outdated references to the Council of Australian Governments—COAG—former COAG ministerial councils and associated bodies in relevant ACT acts and regulations. The bill replaces outdated references with more flexible terminology that will allow for changes to the names of intergovernmental forums, without the need for subsequent legislative amendments.

Members may recall that, in May 2020, the national cabinet agreed that COAG would cease and, in June 2020, it commissioned a review of COAG councils and ministerial forums to reset and somewhat rationalise federal relations architecture. In October 2020, the national cabinet accepted the review's recommendations, including recommendation 30, that the commonwealth, states and territories introduce legislation to amend outdated references to COAG councils and ministerial forums.

Those of you who were here in the Tenth Assembly may recall that I introduced a similar bill in 2021 titled the COAG Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. That bill lapsed at the end of the last term due to delays in the passing of comparable commonwealth

legislation and a desire for timing of bills in this place to align with the commonwealth legislation to ensure their consistency.

I am delighted to advise members that the commonwealth got their act together and their COAG Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 was passed and received royal assent on 5 July 2024. It was, in fact, for those interested in these things, the first bill to receive royal assent by the current Governor-General, Her Excellency Samantha Mostyn.

In light of the passing of the commonwealth's bill, and to ensure that ACT legislation remains current and relevant, I bring this bill back to the Assembly. I commend it to colleagues and look forward to its successful passage in the new year.

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

Standing orders—suspension

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

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Variation in Sex Characteristics (Restricted Medical Treatment) Amendment Bill 2024 being presented, called on and debated in the same sitting period.

Variation in Sex Characteristics (Restricted Medical Treatment) Amendment Bill 2024

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

Title read by Clerk.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (12.04): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I present the Variation in Sex Characteristics (Restricted Medical Treatment) Amendment Bill 2024, which amends the Variation in Sex Characteristics (Restricted Medical Treatment) Act 2023. The act, which largely came into effect on 23 December 2023, gives protections to people with variations in sex characteristics who cannot consent for themselves to deferrable medical treatment. These individuals are known as prescribed persons under the act. The act is consistent with the ACT government's longstanding recognition that all individuals should have autonomy over their own bodies and health.

The Chief Minister introduced this nation-leading legislation to prevent harm to intersex people, and better support them and their families. The act upholds the right not to receive medical treatment without consent, and the right of children to special protection, free of discrimination.

Specifically, it safeguards prescribed persons from the imposition of deferrable medical treatment that would change the person's sex characteristics. It does this by requiring

that restricted medical treatment is undertaken only in accordance with an individual treatment plan or general treatment plan approved by the Restricted Medical Treatment Assessment Board.

While most of the act has been in effect for almost a year, the commencement of section 10 and part 4 were deferred for 12 months to enable necessary structures and processes to be established. Section 10 creates the legal requirement that an approved treatment plan must be in place prior to providing restricted medical treatment to a prescribed person, while part 4 establishes offences and associated penalties.

This means that, from 23 December 2024, criminal penalties will apply to health practitioners if restricted medical treatment is provided for prescribed persons in the absence of an approved treatment plan. This includes treatment that commenced prior to 23 December and is expected to continue.

While it has been possible to submit treatment plans during the implementation period, it was not immediately apparent that existing patients would require approved plans. As a result, this has not been done for the majority of prescribed persons who are currently receiving treatment. Some treatment plans have been assessed and approved by the board. However, the preparation of treatment plans for existing patients is complex and requires sufficient time and resources to support patients, families and health professionals to complete this sensitive and important work.

This bill will amend the act to create a new transitional arrangement for prescribed persons who have commenced treatment for a variation in sex characteristics prior to the commencement of section 10 and part 4 of the act. The bill aims to ensure continuity of care. It allows the affected cohort to continue to receive time-critical and necessary medical care, while ensuring the act operates as intended for new patients.

In the absence of this transitional arrangement, medical practitioners may be required to cease treatment abruptly or risk being in breach of the act. This would place affected individuals at risk of physical and/or psychological harm if they are not legally able to receive treatment within appropriate time frames, or if they are required to discontinue treatment solely because an approved treatment plan has not been able to be put in place in time.

The bill therefore proposes to insert a new part 9 into the act. This new part would create a transitional arrangement for 12 months to permit the ongoing treatment of a prescribed person who is already undergoing treatment, without the need for an approved individual treatment plan or general treatment plan. The transitional arrangements will suspend the application of section 10 and part 4 of the act in respect of restricted medical treatment for this cohort. The rest of the act will continue to apply, as it has since 23 December 2023.

Proposed new section 50(3) clarifies that the treatment a prescribed person has been receiving prior to the commencement of section 10 does not need to have been restricted medical treatment. This means, for example, that a person who may have been relatively recently diagnosed with a variation in sex characteristics and has received any treatment—whether or not that treatment has or would change their sex characteristics—will be covered by the transitional arrangement. At the end of the

transitional period, an approved treatment plan will be required for all prescribed persons before they receive restricted medical treatment.

Canberra Health Services has advised that this 12-month transition provides the necessary time for plans to be developed in the context of a person's therapeutic relationship with their clinician, recognising the complexity and sensitivity of this work.

Without this amendment, it is possible that medical treatments that would be entirely acceptable to the board and consistent with the person's wishes could be prevented from occurring. These treatments may be time-critical, depending on the person's age, onset of puberty and the person's individual variation in sex characteristics.

In every decision made in respect of a child, the best interests of that child must be the primary consideration. Delay, interruption or cessation of medical care would negatively impact the rights of those children in the affected cohort and would undermine the protections of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Fundamentally, it is not in the best interests of the small number of children in the affected cohort to be unable to legally access necessary medical treatment, including restricted medical treatment.

In closing, the Variation in Sex Characteristics (Restricted Medical Treatment) Act 2023 remains critically important to protect people with variations in sex characteristics and support the wider intersex community and their families. This transitional arrangement will ensure that the act meets its objectives without risking unintended harm to existing patients, their families and clinicians.

I thank members for agreeing to the expedited consideration of this bill, in light of the impending commencement of section 10 and part 4. I encourage members to support the bill—and I understand that they will, which is great—which will give reassurance to children and young people with variation in sex characteristics, their families and carers, and health professionals. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Sitting suspended from 12.11 to 2 pm.

Questions without notice

MR SPEAKER: I just want to lay some ground rules ahead of my first question time in the chair as the chief presiding officer of this parliament.

I understand that question time in this parliament is not as robust as the federal question time, or, indeed, as the New South Wales parliament's question time—and nor should it be. I must reflect, from the chair, that I am not entirely happy with the level of interjections and name-calling in this parliament at question time, notwithstanding the fact that I have participated in some of that action in the last eight years.

I would like members to give some thought to exactly who is being influenced by that sort of behaviour. We are a small parliament. Our proceedings, although they are broadcast live on the Assembly's website, do not have an enormous viewership, unlike

the federal parliament. So, if very few people are watching, I would ask the question: what is the point of the histrionics that we sometimes see in this chamber?

Ultimately, it comes down to bullying in the workplace, and this is a workplace that I preside over. So I just want to be clear that I am likely to be quite robust in my rulings over interjections and unruly behaviour in this place.

On the other side of the coin, my message to ministers would be if you cannot answer the question, then take it on notice and do not waste our time with two minutes of a non-answer. I state that I will be considering points of order on relevance and debating in a very robust way. I would like question time to play out with the benefit of actual answers.

Transport Canberra—MyWay+

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Transport and follows last Wednesday's launch of the MyWay+ product, a launch that Ryan Hemsley of the Public Transport Association of Canberra described as "disgraceful". Minister, can you please advise us what features are still not working and when the system will be fully functional?

MR STEEL: I thank the opposition leader for her question. I have outlined that in detail in a statement to the Assembly this morning. I refer the member to that statement, where I have identified the range of issues that have occurred since the MyWay+ system went live and the steps that we have taken to work with NEC, our delivery partner, to address them. Many of those have been addressed. Some have work in progress. The details of that are in the statement.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, will you take responsibility and apologise to the community for the MyWay+ rollout, and give us a date when it will be fully functional?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question, and I reject the premise of it. We do have a system that is functional. It does have some teething issues. These have either been addressed or work is in progress to address them. We will provide an update to the community as those issues are identified and addressed.

There may be issues that are identified in the future, and we will work with NEC to address those, initially on a weekly basis, as I outlined in the statement, and then over a longer timeframe as we continue to deliver the project over the next ten years. We will always be responding to customer feedback on the new ticketing system and making improvements to improve the customer experience.

I acknowledge that it has not been a seamless experience for many Canberrans. However, there have been other Canberrans who have been successfully tapping on and off public transport using their credit and debit cards and also with the more traditional travel cards.

Ms Castley: On a point of order, I asked the minister if he would apologise. I know that the head of the public service—or the person that the minister rolled out—has apologised. I am asking if the minister will apologise.

MR SPEAKER: So your point of order is on relevance?

Ms Castley: Yes, relevance.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Steel, do you have anything else to add?

MR STEEL: I have answered the question.

MR HANSON: Minister, what is the cost to the taxpayer of these delays to the MyWay+ functionality?

MR STEEL: I am advised that the project is currently within the appropriated budget. This is a 10-year contract with NEC. They are contracted to work with us to address issues arising with the new system. We are working very closely with them. We have already addressed a range of issues, and of course others are in progress at the moment.

They are a long-term partner that we have procured to develop this system over 10 years, and we will be responding to community feedback, both during this initial phase and on an ongoing basis as, to make sure that we continue to have a modern ticketing system for Canberra, which is what we went out and procured in the first place.

Transport Canberra—MyWay+

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, when were you first aware that MyWay+ would not be fully functional at launch, and what did you do about it?

MR STEEL: Prior to the public launch, Transport Canberra advised me that they had a high degree of confidence in the system, and that is why we agreed to have a “go live” date of 27 November. Of course, then some issues arose in relation to the geofencing issue—particularly, not allowing people to tap on and off—and a major update was made to address that issue. That has now resulted in 95 per cent of validator functionality on the buses, and there are still some specific improvements being made to particular stops. We have also been working with the workforce around making sure that they fully understand how to use the functionality of the driver console to override that system where necessary, to make sure that people have the ability to tap on and off.

And we have made a major update to the QR code issue that emerged. The first QR code issue that emerged, as I outlined in the ministerial statement, was dealt with on the same day. That was directly related to the number of users on MyWay+ using the QR code, and that was addressed by 9.40 am the same day. A further issue has since been noted in relation to the size of the QR code which made it difficult to scan. That resulted in a fix being put in place to reduce the size of the QR code, and that has been pushed through as an update to the app on the Apple and Google stores, which I understand is now available for people to use. Transport Canberra has been communicating with the public about those issues.

We will continue to look at how we can improve the experience for users, but those immediate major issues have been addressed and more work is in progress.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what advice did your office receive from Transport Canberra about MyWay+ in the days before it launched?

MR STEEL: Prior to the public launch, on 11 November I was briefed that user testing had been completed as planned and that Transport Canberra had a high degree of confidence in the system. The go-live date of 27 November, last Wednesday, was approved on the basis of that advice.

MR COCKS: Minister, why didn't you postpone the launch until you could ensure the system was working properly?

MR STEEL: I refer the member to the answer to the last question, where I said I had received advice from Transport Canberra that they had a high level of confidence in the system, and on that basis the decision was made to go live on 27 November.

City and government services—suburban infrastructure

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is for the Minister for City and Government Services. Minister, with the ACT Labor government making major investments in new community infrastructure across Canberra's suburbs, can you provide an update on upgrades underway at our parks, playgrounds and shopping centres?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for his first question. Suburban renewal continues apace. Construction is continuing on the \$3.2 million Yerrabi Pond upgrade in Gungahlin, including new toilets, amenities and carparking. Work is complete on several bridges, picnic settings and lighting. Construction is complete on the new dog park in Franklin and it will open to the public later this month. Construction has kicked off on the new dog park in the Lanyon Valley, which as you know, your predecessor was very keen on. New and upgraded playgrounds have opened in recent months in Watson, Kaleen, Gordon and Lyons, with work on the inner north playground continuing. We are also continuing to invest in our shopping precincts and work is now complete on the improvements at Macquarie and Monash shops. I have heard from constituents' how pleased they are with the upgrades at Macquarie shops in particular. Construction has commenced on shop upgrades at Lanyon Marketplace, Calwell, Narrabundah and Evatt, which will incorporate a new toilet block. I am pleased to share that the Kippax upgrade is expected to be completed this month, with Hardwick Crescent reopening to traffic.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, what work is underway to improve our active travel routes to make walking and cycling safer and more convenient?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the supplementary. Work is well underway on major active travel projects across Canberra. The first stage of the Lake Ginninderra Park upgrade through John Knight Memorial Park and the eastern foreshore is now complete. The first section of the Garden City Cycleway on Torrens Street in Braddon is now open and a safe crossing of Limestone Avenue is under construction. Construction is also nearing completion on the Sulwood Drive path, with three kilometres of the new path opening this week and the remainder scheduled to open early next year. Planning for enhancing the walking loop at Palmerville Heritage Park

is progressing with construction to commence next year. Design continues on the second stage of the Kingston Cycleway which will connect Kingston Foreshore and the Inner South to the City. The Labor government is also continuing to build and upgrade footpaths across our city to make walking safer and more convenient.

MS TOUGH: Minister, with the Labor government re-elected, what suburban infrastructure projects can Canberrans look forward to over the coming four years?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Tough for her supplementary. We have an ambitious infrastructure agenda over the coming term. We will renew the Belconnen town centre with a major upgrade of Margaret Timpson Park, as well as the Emu Bank foreshore. We will deliver the next stages of shop upgrades at Kippax, Charnwood and Cooleman Court and upgrade Erindale, Chisholm, Mawson and Palmerston shops. We will build upgraded playgrounds in Kambah, Wanniasa, Bonython, Isabella Plains, Gilmore, Conder, Amaroo, McKellar, Umbagog, Charnwood, Dunlop and Florey.

In active travel, we will commence delivery of the West Belconnen bikeway, the Streeton Drive cycleway, a new path to Hall village, and will upgrade active travel in Gungahlin. We will also complete the remaining stages of the Lake Ginninderra path upgrade. Finally, we will establish \$5 million footpath funds for Belconnen, Weston Creek, Woden and Tuggeranong, in addition to funding for footpath renewal right across our city. The ACT Labor government is committed to investing in our suburbs, and that is exactly what we are going to do over the next four years.

Planning—Woden town centre

MR HANSON: My question is to the minister for planning. Minister, we have learnt in recent weeks that Jade, the proposed Geocon development on Melrose Drive and Irving Street, will see more than 700 units added to Woden. This follows the unveiling of WoVa, an 802-unit development at the former Woden Tradies site. This project will come at the expense of the public 50-metre Phillip Pool, which is proposed to be replaced by a 25-metre pool. Minister, when was the government first presented with the proposal that Woden was to lose its 50-metre pool?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. As part of the draft Territory Plan, there was consultation with the community on that, which proposed to change site-specific requirements on the block where the current 50-metre outdoor pool is. That of course went through a committee inquiry process, and the final Territory Plan was approved by the Assembly earlier this year.

MR HANSON: Minister, what have you done to ensure that public facilities and infrastructure will meet the demands of an additional 1,500 units in the Woden Town Centre?

MR STEEL: We are continuing to undertake planning work in this area. Work is underway on the development of a southern gateway planning and design framework. EPSDD is currently progressing that work, which will look at the entire land use planning around the light rail stage 2 corridor, Adelaide Avenue, Yarra Glen and the Woden town centre area. As part of that, of course, we will be considering not only

what the housing opportunities are but also the improvements to the public realm and other facilities along the route and in the Woden town centre. I look forward to that work progressing, which of course will consider the future housing numbers and what might be required to support that.

MR COCKS: Minister, are you aware of how extensive the current pressures on public facilities are in the Woden area?

MR STEEL: We have certainly been continuing to plan for new facilities. Part of the process that we went through in the planning system review of developing a district strategy for the Woden Valley—and, indeed, for each other region in Canberra—was to look at the existing facilities and what might be needed in terms of possible future facilities and upgrades to important community hubs like shopping centres and local and group centres which were identified for renewal as part of that plan.

It is one of the reasons that we have also committed to build a new Woden community centre—funded in the budget last year—which will provide a large meeting space and large multipurpose space that will be available to the community for a range of different purposes, and this will, of course, be auspiced by Woden Community Service. That is in combination with the investments that we are making in CIT—and I note that Minister Pettersson visited CIT and saw the great multifunctional hall that is being built as part of that facility. The government continues to make investments in that area to support the social infrastructure required with a growing population.

Housing ACT—waiting lists

MR RATTENBURY: My question is to the Minister for Homes and New Suburbs. Minister, Canberrans are suffering through this housing crisis. Over 3,000 individuals and families are on our public housing waiting list, some of whom will be waiting more than four years before they have a secure home. Yet, through the election, the Labor party only committed to approximately 1,000 additional public housing properties by 2030.

Why are you and your government failing to invest sufficiently in public housing for the people who most need help?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Rattenbury for his question and acknowledge that he is the spokesperson for the Greens party for homes and homelessness. I would correct him, on the record—the advice I have is that the number of people on the waiting list has, in fact, gone down and is no longer over 3,000. That shows that the work the government is doing in building new homes and renewing older and unsuitable properties is actually having a significant impact and effect on people who are experiencing homelessness in the ACT.

That has all been achieved in a period of time when building homes across the country, including here in the ACT, was challenged by wet weather and wars overseas, which meant there were fewer supplies. It is currently challenged by a workforce shortage in the construction industry. It was challenged, as well, by not having a partnership with the federal Labor government. The federal Labor government is also building more homes across the country. I would say that the commitment that ACT Labor has made

to build at least 1,000 public housing properties by 2030 is a commitment that people can believe and that we will be able to achieve.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, do you think four years is an acceptable waiting time for people who are on the public housing waiting list?

MS BERRY: No, I do not. I do not believe that is a good time for people to be waiting. That is why we have made the commitment we have to build more homes, not just to build more public housing but to increase affordable rentals and to support community housing providers. This means more people will get into homes that suit their needs.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, how many people will be left homeless under your housing program?

MS BERRY: That is a ridiculous question by the Greens in this place. I have already provided, at length, detail on the work the ACT government is doing to overcome that problem and the commitments that ACT Labor has made—realistic, progressive, positive change that we will be able to make, with practical solutions that people will be able to believe.

Planning—Woden town centre

MR CAIN: My question is to the minister for planning. Minister, the *Canberra Times* has reported that the government made changes to the Territory Plan immediately prior to Geocon's acquisition of the Phillip pool site. These changes allow the 50-metre pool to be replaced by a 25-metre pool and proved to be remarkably helpful for the developer. Minister, could you please inform this chamber who requested these changes and why the government agreed to make them?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. There has been a very transparent process around changing the Territory Plan. Of course, there was community consultation, and it went to the standing committee for their consideration. This discussion about the Phillip pool has been going on for decades. I was looking last night at some *Hansard* and committee reports from around 20 years ago, and the issue of the viability of the current 50-metre pool and the need to renew that ageing asset required potential planning changes.

Mr Hanson: A point of order.

MR SPEAKER: On a point of order, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: It is on relevance. The minister is giving us a bit of a history lesson, but the question is: who requested the changes? He has not answered that question.

MR SPEAKER: If it is possible for you to be more relevant as to who requested the changes, that would be beneficial, Minister.

MR STEEL: I am happy to take that on notice, but I understand that there have been discussions in sport and rec about the viability of pools of a certain length. Also, there has been an ongoing discussion for the last 20 years about the need to renew an aging

facility, and what might be required in terms of planning reforms to enable that to happen on a site that is privately owned. It is not owned by the government. That has been a discussion in previous Assemblies, and I am sure that if an inquiry is launched as a result of the motion which we will be discussing in the afternoon, those issues can be fully considered.

MR SPEAKER: Minister, can I be clear: are you taking that part of the question on notice?

MR STEEL: Yes.

MR CAIN: Minister, were there any discussions between Geocon and you, your office or other ministers about these changes?

MR STEEL: I am happy to come back on that question, about when the public service knew about a proposal in relation to the pool. Certainly, in relation to the planning requirements, there has been a very transparent process around the change, for site-specific requirements on the block. I will take that on notice.

MR HANSON: Minister, has Geocon had any special treatment with regard to this development?

MR STEEL: No. There has been, as I mentioned before, an ongoing discussion for around 20 years regarding what the planning requirements should be on the block, and the need to be able to support the renewal of an ageing community asset, in a pool. That was transparently consulted on, discussed and brought to this Assembly, and members had the opportunity to scrutinise that before the Territory Plan was supported in August, I believe.

Housing affordability

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, the prospect of owning a home is getting more and more out of reach for an entire generation of young people. As a young person myself, frankly, it is pretty terrifying. In Canberra, it has become easier for someone to buy their fifth home than their first.

Minister, do you think it is fair that Canberrans who cannot even afford to buy their first home are also unable to access an affordable public rental in this city?

MS BERRY: I thank Miss Nuttall for the question. I note that it was the federal Greens that held up federal Labor's Help to Buy program. It was the federal Greens that held up more build to rents. It was the federal Greens that held up the Housing Australia Future Fund, which will deliver more affordable rentals in the ACT.

I note Miss Nuttall's concern, and I share her concern, which is why ACT Labor and the federal Labor government are working together to build more homes across the spectrum: public housing, community housing, build to rents, affordable rentals and homes to buy. This is all through progressive policies that have been held up at every step of the way by the Greens.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, given that it is easier for an investor to buy their fifth home in this city than it is for a young person to buy their first, do you think the housing market is genuinely working in the interests of young people?

MS BERRY: No, it is not. That is why federal Labor took the chance to put forward policy that will help people get into homes of their own. There are 40,000 people across Australia who will be able to get into homes because of federal Labor's Help to Buy program.

We know it has been difficult for people in this country, particularly with the cost of living. That is why we are making these progressive policies that will make a difference for people.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, how long do you think young people should have to wait in the private rental market before they can buy their own home?

MS BERRY: I think that is a question that the Greens should be asking themselves, given they held up the program in the first place.

Transport Canberra—bus driver safety

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Recently, Canberra's bus drivers have had soft-drink cans thrown at them, they have had fish heads dumped on them, and they have regularly experienced verbal and physical violence. Just last week, I heard about a driver who was assaulted in broad daylight in Fyshwick. Minister, how many instances of abuse and violence have drivers experienced in the last year?

MR STEEL: I am happy to take that question on notice. But let me make it absolutely clear, in response to the Leader of the Opposition, that any form of occupational violence in any setting—regardless of whether it is on our buses or in our hospitals or in our schools or, indeed, in the broader community, such as in retail—is totally unacceptable. The sorts of incidents that we have been hearing about, including those which triggered the industrial action that we saw on Transport Canberra's bus network, are unacceptable. Unfortunately, that is something that we have to tackle as a society but also as a government.

I sat down with the Transport Workers Union—the secretary and delegates—last week, on Thursday, to discuss the issues that had been raised and talk about the implementation of the four agreed actions that we will be working with them on to try to make sure that it is a safer workplace for drivers. That includes the installation of screens on the older bus fleet—they are already provided on the new buses—as well as work that we are doing to deliver on Labor's election commitments to undertake legislative reform around powers for transport officers, introducing a team of transport officers to be deterrents on buses in Canberra. There will also be provision of training on de-escalation to the driver workforce to make sure that they are equipped with the tools that they need to deal with this issue. None of our drivers should have to face this at work, and we will be working on that basis.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, how often do you visit or call a driver who has been assaulted to apologise and hear their concerns?

MR STEEL: I am always open to have discussions with drivers, whether it is at the depots or with their representatives that I met last week to discuss the issues. I am particularly focused on how we address the issues. We have clearly demonstrated that with the agreement that we have struck—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Steel, could you be seated. There is a point of order.

Mr Cocks: A point of order on relevance. The question was about how often the minister meets, not whether he is open to meeting.

MR SPEAKER: Minister, could I direct you be relevant to the question.

MR STEEL: I think I have answered the question.

MS MORRIS: Minister, isn't an essential responsibility of your office to speak to those most affected by your refusal to act on their concerns?

MR STEEL: I reject the premise of the question. We have not refused to act. We have a very clear action plan of four points, as I mentioned in the answer to the earlier question. We will continue to meet with the workforce, both myself as minister and Transport Canberra, at the senior management level, and day to day in the depots to address these issues. We look forward to getting on with the actions that we have identified and have been supported by the Transport Canberra workforce. I note that I had this discussion with all of the drivers in a room at Mitchell in the lead-up to enterprise bargaining negotiations, where we discussed industrial issues but also discussed occupational violence issues. I am prepared to go and speak to the workforce, including having them all in one room, which can be a quite intimidating thing to do, but I think it is important to engage with the workforce, and I will continue to do that as minister.

Transport Canberra—MyWay+

MR COCKS: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, the Google Play Store listing for MyWay+ notes that the app may access a user's photos, videos, files, documents and app activity, and share this data with third parties. It has full network access and can even change settings on the user's phone, such as audio. Why does an ACT government app require each of these intrusive features to enable people to ride the bus?

MR STEEL: I am happy to come back with some detailed technical information, but certainly we have been working closely with NEC and Digital and Data Technology Solutions within the ACT government, in CMTEDD, to continue to look at the security features. Some data sharing will be required through secure APIs with the app, particularly connecting through to the portal and then enabling the QR code functionality to link with the user's account and of course to provide those payment options, including the debit and credit cards using features like Apple Pay which then connect to the user's accounts. There will be a need to have some data shared as part of this but in a way that is secure.

We are continuing to work with NEC to make sure those settings are appropriate for the functionality of the system. Canberrans have the option, if they would like, to simply use an ordinary MyWay+ travel card, which they can purchase from one of the retailers and use without needing to use the app if they wish. They can also use a debit or credit card without necessarily linking it to the account or using the app.

MR COCKS: Minister, why does the app require Play Install Referrer API permissions, given the purpose of this API is for tracking advertising and marketing?

MR STEEL: I will take the technical question on notice and provide some information to the Assembly.

MS BARRY: Minister, how can Canberrans have confidence in the secure handling of their personal data, given this government's track record on data leaks?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. We do take cybersecurity seriously and that has been a major consideration in the design of this app. It is why penetration testing has been occurring in relation to the app, and it is why we are continuing to monitor the system as it has gone live to make sure the security settings are appropriate. If necessary, we will harden those settings to protect user information. We will continue to work with NEC and DDTs to make sure the settings are appropriate and that user data is protected.

Planning—Thoroughbred Park

MS CLAY: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, Labor is currently considering a proposal from the Canberra Racing Club to redevelop a Thoroughbred Park site. There has been very little information about this proposal put out to the Canberra community, so I lodged an FOI request to get a little bit more information. I was surprised to read in the papers that came back that there was advice from Treasury that says that the site is not suitable for affordable housing. Chief Minister, can you please explain to me why that site is suitable for luxury apartments but is not suitable for public or community housing?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Clay for the question. That would be advice from Treasury. I do not necessarily agree with that advice. The government would need to consider the various issues associated with housing typology in any future development in that area. But, at this point, it is not a government priority. That project will go through the usual processes within this place, and the question of housing typology will be considered by this place. Treasury are, of course, welcome to put their frank advice to government, but that does not mean that it is the government's view.

MS CLAY: Chief Minister, how many public and community homes will there be there and how many luxury apartments will there be there?

MR BARR: None of that detail is anywhere near consideration by government at this point. I need to be clear—as I was with Ms Clay over the last few months—that this is a project that will take considerable time. It is not happening at any time in the near future. There will be plenty of opportunity for engagement by this place, and,

ultimately, this Assembly will have to make determinations in relation to what, if any, development will occur on that site.

MR BRADDOCK: Chief Minister, do you think it is fair that this site will deliver luxury apartments but no affordable housing?

MR BARR: I would refer Mr Braddock to my answers to the previous questions. It is yet to be determined by the Assembly whether any development will occur, let alone the nature of that development.

Transport Canberra—MyWay+

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, the MyWay upgrade has taken eight years so far. It has resulted in one failed procurement and a very expensive, very public launch debacle. What additional costs will be incurred before the system is fully operational?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question, but I reject the premise of the question. Of course, we have been planning for some time for the legacy MyWay system to be replaced with a new ticketing system; that is clear. There has been a series of procurements that led up to NEC being provided with a contract, which is a 10-year contract. It includes requirements on them to work with Transport Canberra to deliver the MyWay+ ticketing system and to make sure it is fully functional in delivering the seamless experience that Canberrans expect.

I acknowledge that it has not been seamless from the go-live date of last week, but they have been working around the clock with Transport Canberra to address the key issues. I have noted that major updates have been made to address those problems. We are continuing to monitor and evaluate those, and we will continue to make tweaks as required to make sure that it is providing the seamless experience that Canberrans expect. While some people have not had a good experience, others have—tapping on with their MyWay travel cards or with their debit and credit cards, which was the additional functionality that the community was asking for and that we are delivering through this contract with NEC.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, can you confirm that part of the contract with NEC covered working around the clock to make sure that functionality could be installed quickly.

MR STEEL: I am happy to come back to the Assembly on notice around that very specific question. But, yes, it requires NEC to work with us to make improvements to the system over time that are in scope of the contract.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, do you believe the community has received value for money from MyWay+?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. There is no doubt there are teething issues with the system. Those have been identified and addressed or are currently being addressed through the major updates we have made to the system. While many features are functional, and some features are still yet to be rolled out which were scheduled and

planned to be done at a later time, we are continuing to work with NEC to deliver the contract. We do think that it will deliver the system we set out to procure and that we contracted with NEC to deliver.

Disability—International Day of People with Disability

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services. Minister, what is different about how the ACT government is celebrating I-Day this year?

MS ORR: I would like to thank the member for her question, and for bringing the celebration of the International Day of People with Disability, commonly known as I-Day, to the attention of the chamber.

I-Day is a United Nations sanctioned day intended to promote community awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability, and support the dignity, rights and wellbeing of people with disability. I-Day is celebrated annually on 3 December, so today is I-Day. The day is observed across the globe, receiving varying degrees of formal and informal support and recognition.

The 2024 theme for I-Day is “amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future”. Appropriately, the ACT government is marking the day as the first jurisdiction in the nation to transition I-Day to community control. As part of the commitment to community control, I-Day will be managed and supported by an organisation whose board has a majority of people with disability, and executed by a steering committee comprising a majority of people with disability, and shared leadership.

Advocacy for Inclusion is the inaugural host organisation and has proposed establishing a charter as part of this year’s celebrations. This charter has been developed to guide observance of I-Day and its control in the ACT by people with disability. Supporters are welcome to sign the charter to show their support; and, to show the ACT government’s support, I will be one of the people signing the charter.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what is the importance of community control and how will the charter deliver this?

MS ORR: Community control of I-Day is important because people with disability are experts in their own lives, and the disability community know best how to celebrate their diversity. The ACT government recognise this, and that is why the ACT Disability Strategy included the commitment to transition I-Day to the community.

The charter that has been developed both enshrined community control and informed planning for future I-Days here in the ACT. The charter outlines the principles that will guide the planning of I-Day celebrations and observances to achieve this. The charter also sets the ambition that I-Day is a day with vision, purpose and collaboration, and a day that creates opportunities for people with disability to discover and claim identity, raise their voices and exercise power, and gain freedom.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, what else has the ACT Labor government committed to in this term that supports people with disability in the Canberra community?

MS ORR: I thank the member for his question. The short answer is quite a lot. The more detailed answer is that we will continue to work with people with disability, their families and carers, advocacy groups and service provider organisations to put in place a range of initiatives, including the development of a neurodiversity strategy, in close consultation with neurodivergent Canberrans, their families and carers, which upholds the social model of disability and human rights principles, and aligns with the range of work that has commenced over this last term.

We will also continue to implement the ACT Disability Strategy, the ACT Disability Health Strategy, the ACT Disability Justice Strategy and the ACT Disability Inclusion Strategy, all of which were co-designed with the community to deliver a more inclusive, accessible Canberra. We have committed to support more inclusive disability services by supporting a peer program for LGBTIQ+ people with a disability and supporting an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation to deliver culturally safe and inclusive services for First Nations people in our community.

We will continue to work on the NDIS reforms, making sure that we are advocating our position to the commonwealth on behalf of our community. We will also be looking at what we need to do under the Disability Inclusion Act to make sure that we are meeting all of our commitments, plus much more. I look forward to undertaking this and working alongside people with disability over the coming years.

Racism

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Australia's history of racism toward its traditional custodians is perhaps our greatest shame. The Productivity Commission published data this year indicating that First Nations people across Australia have experienced a 17 percentage point increase in racial prejudice over a four-year period. Seventy-six per cent of First Nations people in the ACT reported experiencing racial prejudice—the highest rate of any state or territory.

Minister, why do you think that is the case, and, given this alarming statistic, what progressive, practical and proven actions is the government taking to reduce racism in Canberra?

Ms Cheyne: I have a point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek your ruling on whether the question is seeking an expression of opinion.

MR SPEAKER: Indeed, like quite a number of questions that have been delivered in the chamber today, yes, I would suggest it is seeking an opinion. Mr Emerson, can you refresh my memory and give me the last sentence of that question again? I would like to hear it again.

MR EMERSON: Seventy-six per cent of First Nations people in the ACT reported experiencing racial prejudice. Minister, why do you think that is the case, and, given this alarming statistic, what progressive, practical and proven actions is the government taking to reduce racism in Canberra?

MR SPEAKER: Given that it is Mr Emerson's first question time and given that there were a couple of other questions—including Miss Nuttall's, where all three questions required an opinion—I am going to let the question stand. I am just going to ask members to please think about constructing questions without actually asking an opinion of the minister.

I think that this question could easily have been rephrased so that it did not ask for a direct opinion. I ask the relevant minister to respond now, if that is possible.

MS ORR: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Mr Emerson, for your question. I think it is an important topic and one that has, following the most recent Productivity Commission report, drawn some commentary from the community and, I certainly think it is fair to say, some criticism from the community on some pretty important concerns.

I have had these concerns raised with my office, and it is something that we are looking at. We will continue to work with the community on how we can address the wider reforms that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community have expressed that they would like the government to be working on.

I believe the second part of Mr Emerson's question was about the tangible steps we are taking to actually start to address some of these things. I am very happy to arrange a briefing for Mr Emerson, because it is quite an extensive range of items—one that probably will not fit into my two minutes of answers.

But I would draw the member's attention in particular to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and the work that they have put forward for the ACT government to implement and get on with. A lot of the work we have done is around the implementation of Aboriginal controlled organisations, like the work we have done around the *Our Booris our way* report and the steering committee there to implement it.

Regarding a lot of the work that we will be doing, I think I started the job on Wednesday and went to my first meeting on Friday—the joint council ministerial meeting, looking at how we can actually start delivering more of what our community wants. An important part, and one of the topics that came up for conversation quite strongly in that meeting, was maintaining the minimal age of criminal responsibility reforms. That is something the ACT has been very proud to achieve, and we are seeing other states and territories now look back. That is a significant concern of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that was expressed at the joint council meeting.

That is a range of things there, but I am happy to organise a more detailed briefing.

MR EMERSON: Thank you, Minister. I am encouraged to know that this matter is important to you as the new minister in this role. Given that the Indigenous

incarceration gap and the persistent homelessness rate for First Nations people in the ACT are the highest in the country, and both increased in the most recent reporting period, I am curious about what new actions the government will be taking to close the gap in the ACT.

MS ORR: At the risk of announcing new policy in question time, I will take that question on notice and get back to Mr Emerson about new proposals.

Obviously, in his question, he has picked up on the fact that the ACT already has a range of initiatives in place that we continue to work on, including raising the minimal age of criminal responsibility. We will continue to work through those. We are looking, in collaboration and in unison with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, at the other matters that are important to them and how we can start to address those.

Population growth

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Treasurer. In February 2023, the *Canberra Times* reported that the ACT's population is expected to rise from about 463,000 to 784,000 in 2060. The title of the article was, "North Canberra to grow rapidly, southern districts may shrink as ACT government plans for population of almost 800,000". Treasurer, why is the north growing rapidly but the south, particularly Weston Creek and Tuggeranong, is not forecast to increase in population by 2060?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. A range of different factors relate to the population growth and how widely it is distributed across the city in particular areas. We have seen a large amount of growth happening on the north side with the development of Gungahlin over several decades and new suburbs being built there. We are starting to see the final stages of Jacka, for example, being developed. Beyond that, the growth of the city will shift to the west side, in the Molonglo Valley, including close to Weston Creek, where we expect to see large population growth. Under the Planning Strategy, we want to build more homes for Canberrans, and we see that, whilst that new greenfield development will support new housing, there will be more people living within the existing urban footprint of the city. So, as part of the planning system review and the development of district strategies, we have been looking at the opportunities to have more people living in existing areas, like Weston Creek, for example, and other parts of the south side, including Tuggeranong.

We do not accept the population figures as a fait accompli. They are a starting point for potential reforms in the planning system that can support more people to live on the south side, supported by the existing great facilities that we have and, indeed, improvements to the facilities as well. That will be addressed through the planning priorities that I have announced, which include enabling the missing middle in Canberra—that is, well-designed townhouses, duplexes and row houses within existing suburbs that are currently not permitted—as well as looking at more housing along transport corridors and in and around shopping centres.

MS CARRICK: Treasurer, what is the ACT planning to do about the imbalance in population growth, and when will the population forecasts be updated to reflect interventions for the missing middle and community facilities?

MR STEEL: The population figures will be updated by the Treasury on a regular basis to provide us with factual information about where people live across Canberra. The next stage of planning reforms that I have announced—the planning priorities and indeed Labor’s housing policy that we took to the election—will be implemented to support more homes within existing areas of Canberra and, indeed, greenfield areas as well. It will be those reforms that will see increases in population and density within the existing footprint of Canberra, and that is not just on the south side; that is in some existing areas in the north as well.

MS CLAY: Treasurer and Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, are public and community homes on the light rail corridor part of these government priorities?

MR STEEL: Yes.

Transport Canberra—MyWay+

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, live tracking data is not available for the MyWay+ app or for third party apps. In your ministerial statement this morning you mentioned future updates which will make this available. Can you please provide further information on when and how this information will be made available?

MR STEEL: I will be briefed by Transport Canberra, I expect this evening, on where they are at. But I expect an announcement—which I am not intending to make in question time ahead of being briefed—is imminent to make that functionality available. This was a scheduled update to the MyWay+ app. It was not meant to go live on the 27th. It was scheduled to occur at a later time and the benchmark that had been set by Transport Canberra was to have 80 per cent of the bus fleet fitted with the MyWay+ validators, the hardware, and having those functional. I understand that has occurred. So I am now about to receive the advice from Transport Canberra about how we make that information available through an API. We will then also be providing some information and engagement through to the third party app providers who may wish to use that data feed within those third party applications, which may be used as an alternative to the MyWay+ app for journey-planning purposes.

MR BRADDOCK: Why was the decision made to rollout MyWay+ without this basic functionality in place on day one?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. As I described in the answer to my last question, it was because we wanted to make sure there were more validators fitted to the fleet, but the timing on this is imminent. This will be provided very soon to the public. In the interim, since the go live date, the timetabled information has been provided on the screens in the interchanges and on buses. It will then switch over once this new data feed is available to provide the live real-time information.

MS CLAY: Minister, by what date will every bus have the new MyWay+ reader installed on it?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. We made a decision with Transport Canberra not to fit new MyWay+ validator hardware on buses which were going to be retired in the fleet. So they will never be fitted out with the new MyWay+ validators, because they will be retired from the fleet and we did not want to make that investment in something that would have to be removed. I just mentioned we have hit 80 per cent of buses. Generally speaking, the time it is taking for NEC to install the validators on the remaining buses that are not due for retirement soon is around two per cent a day, so we are expecting a matter of weeks before they are all provided with the new hardware.

Economy—credit rating

MR COCKS: My question is to the Treasurer. Last year, S&P Global downgraded the territory's credit rating. This year, they placed the ACT on a negative outlook, meaning a further downgrade was more likely than not. S&P specifically noted that this was driven by the "loosening of expenditure controls". How do you intend to repair the budget and restore the AAA credit rating?

MR STEEL: Of course, by delivering on the budget strategy that we outlined in the budget last year. We will continue to update that based on the economic conditions and the budgetary conditions that are presented to us as we develop the budget for 2025-26. That process has already started. Whilst we were in quite a constrained period after the election, I am currently receiving advice on establishing the timetable for the development of the budget and community consultation associated with that so that we can get underway and, as the new Treasurer, I can start preparing that, including considering the fiscal strategy going forward.

MR COCKS: Treasurer, do you agree with your predecessor that the ACT has a revenue problem, not a spending problem, and needs more tax revenue?

MR STEEL: I reject the premise of the question, Mr Speaker. I think Mr Cocks has verbalised the former Treasurer. We will continue to look at both the expenditure lines and revenue lines to make sure that the fiscal settings are appropriate to manage the budget. We will do that as we start to develop the 2025-26 budget.

MS CASTLEY: Treasurer, will you rule out new taxes or tax hikes while families are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis?

MR STEEL: What we are committed to is delivering on our election commitments, which included quite considerable cost-of-living support. Of course, those proposals, which are election commitments now, will be taken forward and considered in the budget context. We are very mindful of the cost-of-living pressures faced by Canberrans, and that is why we brought forward a range of commitments to the election.

Mr Hanson: Mr Speaker, on a point of order on relevance: the question was about whether there will be new taxes or increased taxes. It was not about a bunch of measures that the government put through at the election. This is about tax and revenue.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson. Mr Steel.

MR STEEL: Matters in relation to expenditure and taxation will, of course, be considered in the budget context. But we were the only party that was actually transparent about our position in relation to things like rates but also expenditure and having fully costed policies that we took forward through the election campaign and that we will implement through the budget.

Mr Barr: Remarkably, Mr Speaker—and taking into account your advice at the beginning—we have got through question time in an hour. I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Supplementary answer to question without notice Housing ACT—waiting lists

MS BERRY: Mr Speaker, I want to provide some more meat in the sandwich, so to speak, regarding information that I provided on housing waitlist numbers in the ACT. It is something that I think you will be interested in, as well.

When Mr Rattenbury asked me whether the housing waitlist was over 3,000, I corrected him and said that it was actually under 3,000. The Housing ACT waitlist has been reduced by 178 over the past 12 months, which shows that the work I have been doing under the growth and renewal program is having an impact. With the number now at 2,996, it is still—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Members, Ms Berry is on her feet.

MS BERRY: It is still unacceptably high. Of those 2,996 applications, which is 178 fewer than it was 12 months ago, 581 are also on the community housing register, which shows how important the Housing Australia Future Fund and the ACT Labor government's \$100 million Affordable Housing Fund are in building more community housing, as well.

Mr Speaker, I wanted to share that information. I know it is something that you would have been interested in, as the previous shadow minister for housing and homelessness. We are starting to have an impact, with 178 people, over the past 12 months, going into their own homes. There is still a lot of work to do, but I wanted to put that on the record so that people can see that we are actually having an impact.

Questions without notice Statement by Speaker

MR SPEAKER: I would re-emphasise, regarding the question from Mr Emerson and the questions from Miss Nuttall, that I probably will not be as generous in considering points of order in the future regarding questions that simply ask the minister for an opinion. The minister's opinion is really of no relevance. We just care about what the

minister does, has not done or might do. If you can draft questions in such a way that they do not ask for a direct opinion from the minister, I think it would be helpful, because you will always be prone to points of order on which you could come unstuck.

Committees—standing Membership

MR SPEAKER: I have been notified in writing of the following nominations for membership of the general purpose standing committees of the Eleventh Assembly:

Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee

Ms Clay
Ms Carrick
Ms Lee
Ms Tough

Economics, Industry and Recreation—Standing Committee

Mr Werner-Gibbings
Ms Carrick
Mr Emerson
Ms Lee
Ms Morris
Mr Rattenbury

Social Policy—Standing Committee

Mr Emerson
Ms Barry
Mr Hanson
Miss Nuttall
Ms Tough

Legal Affairs—Standing Committee

Mr Cain
Mr Rattenbury
Mr Werner-Gibbings

Public Accounts and Administration—Standing Committee

Mr Milligan
Ms Carrick
Ms Tough

Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders—Standing Committee

Ms Lee
Mr Braddock
Mr Werner-Gibbings

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

That the Members so nominated be appointed as members of the general purpose standing committees of the Eleventh Assembly.

Papers

Mr Speaker presented the following papers:

ACT Legislative Assembly—Report on a visit to the New South Wales and Tasmania Parliaments by the Speaker and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory, dated November 2024.

Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee—Tenth Assembly—Report 13—Report on the conduct of Mr Cocks MLA and Mr Hanson MLA—Response to Recommendation 1—Correspondence to the Speaker from Mr Hanson, dated 13 November 2024.

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 15—Annual Reports—2023-2024—

ACT Auditor-General, Report No 8/2024, dated 15 October 2024.

ACT Electoral Commission, dated 11 September 2024.

ACT Integrity Commission, dated September 2024.

ACT Ombudsman, dated 4 October 2024.

Inspector of the ACT Integrity Commission, dated 4 October 2024.

Office of the Legislative Assembly, dated October 2024, together with a corrigendum.

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

No 10/2024—Safer Families Levy, dated 22 November 2024.

No 11/2024—Governing boards of selected ACT Government entities, dated 29 November 2024.

No 9/2024—2023-24 Financial Audits Overview, dated 7 November 2024.

Freedom of Information Act, pursuant to section 67—A report on the operation of the *Freedom of Information Act 2016* for 2023-24—Report No 9/2024, dated October 2024.

Ms Cheyne, pursuant to standing order 211, presented the following papers:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 13—Annual Reports—2023-2024—

ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority, dated 23 September 2024.

ACT Gambling and Racing Commission, dated 9 September 2024.

ACT Health Directorate, dated 30 September 2024.

ACT Human Rights Commission, dated 2 October 2024.

ACT Inspector of Correctional Services, dated October 2024.

ACT Insurance Authority, dated 30 September 2024.

ACT Policing Special Purposes, dated 23 September 2024.

ACT Policing, dated 25 September 2024.

ACT Public Service—State of the Service Report, dated 4 October 2024.

Canberra Health Services, dated 4 October 2024.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (Volumes 1, 2.1 and 2.2), dated 3 October 2024.

City Renewal Authority, dated 25 September 2024.

Community Services Directorate, dated 23 September 2024.

Cultural Facilities Corporation, dated 4 and 19 September 2024.

Director of Public Prosecutions, dated 27 September 2024.

Education Directorate, dated 20 September 2024.

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, dated 30 September 2024.

Icon Water Limited, dated 12 September 2024.

Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission, dated 25 September 2024.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate, dated 27 September 2024.

Legal Aid Commission (ACT), dated 20 September 2024.

Long Service Leave Authority, dated 27 September 2024.

Major Projects Canberra, dated 3 October 2024.

Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, dated 4 October 2024.

Office of the Work Health Safety Commissioner (WorkSafe ACT), dated 9 September 2024.

Official Visitors Scheme, undated.

Public Trustee and Guardian, dated 24 September 2024.

Suburban Land Agency, dated 26 September 2024.

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, dated 4 October 2024.

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to subsection 21(2)—Auditor-General’s Report No 6/2024—Business Transformation Program: ICT renewal activities—Government response, dated December 2024.

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act—

Pursuant to subsection 12(5)—ACT Greenhouse Gas Inventory—2023-24, dated 31 October 2024.

Pursuant to subsection 19(4)—ACT Climate Change Council Annual Report 2023-24, dated September 2024, together with a statement from the Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water responding to the advice given and recommendations made in the report, dated December 2024.

Financial Management Act—

Pursuant to section 25—Consolidated Annual Financial Statements, including audit opinion—2023-24 financial year, dated September 2024.

Pursuant to section 26—Consolidated Financial Report for the financial quarter ending—30 September 2024.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Tenth Assembly—Report 31—Inquiry into Integrity Commission’s confidential report into Operation Kite—Government response, undated.

Planning Act, pursuant to subsection 268(2)—Statement of Leases Granted—1 July to 30 September 2024, dated December 2024.

Water Resources Act, pursuant to subsection 67D(3)—ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group—Annual report 2023-24, undated, together with a statement.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Animal Diseases Act—Animal Diseases (Exotic Disease Quarantine Area) Revocation 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-299 (LR, 31 October 2024).

Road Transport (Alcohol and Drugs) Act—Road Transport (Alcohol and Drugs) Amendment Regulation 2024 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2024-20 (LR, 29 August 2024).

Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act—Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Declaration 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-300 (LR, 7 November 2024).

ACT Integrity Commission—funding

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (3.05): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that the:

- (a) Integrity Commission is undertaking essential work to safeguard the ACT from corruption and misconduct; and
- (b) Commission was established with tripartite support and retains the support of all Members, including newly elected MLAs;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) the Commission does not have sufficient resourcing to properly investigate all matters referred to it in a timely manner;
- (b) these limited resources are further depleted by the cost of defending actions brought by persons of interest, who may seek to delay or obstruct the Commission’s work; and
- (c) the Commission makes recommendations in its annual report but there is currently no mechanism by which the ACT Government publicly responds to these recommendations; and

(3) calls on the Government to:

- (a) provide the Integrity Commission with sufficient funding to investigate potential integrity, misconduct and corruption issues in a timely manner;
- (b) provide the Integrity Commissioner with additional funding, as required, to defend legal actions being brought against the Commission, in relation to its investigations and reports;

- (c) table the Government's response to the Integrity Commission's budget submission, as part of the ACT Budget; and
- (d) commit to tabling a formal response to any recommendations of the Integrity Commission, including those made in its annual report.

The motion I have moved today is about safeguarding the integrity of the ACT public sector. It is about enhancing the Integrity Commission by providing it with the resourcing and the reforms that it needs to be effective. It is about helping the commission to root out issues of misconduct and integrity so that we can be assured of a healthy public sector and a strong democracy.

This motion is symbolic in several ways. First, it is symbolic as it is the first motion for debate in this new term of the Assembly, the Eleventh Assembly. I hope that underscores the importance that I and the Canberra Liberals place on the issue of integrity. Our government here in the territory is based on integrity. It depends on integrity. Without it, our residents will lose faith in us and in the democracy we serve.

Second, it is symbolic because it is an issue and a principle that I believe is shared by members across the chamber. We established the Integrity Commission with support from Labor, Greens and Liberals because we all shared the view that integrity was essential and required safeguarding, and we should be proud of our work in establishing the commission. We should be proud of the work that the commission has done and the work that it is doing for our community. There is still so much to do and so much more that the commission could be doing, but it is making real progress.

I hope that this motion, which seeks to build on that history and enhance the commission, will also prove to be something on which we can all agree, including our new independent members. I believe that we have had many discussions about this over the day. I hope that it will be a symbol to the community of how this Assembly, right from its first meeting, is effectively working together and collaborating, and doing so, in many ways, in a way that we have not done for many years.

Third, it is symbolic because this motion calls on the government to act. It does not require them to do so. They could back the motion but fail to implement it, if they choose, but that is the government's call. I believe it would be a mistake. It would be a mistake because the community knows that there are issues within our public sector. This has been demonstrated by Operation Luna and Operation Kingfisher, the Integrity Commission's bombshell investigations into the CIT corruption scandal and potential misconduct with the modernisation of Campbell primary.

It would also be a mistake because it would undermine, rather than enhance, the reputation of the ACT's public sector. The ACT should be leading the country in the quality and integrity of our public sector, helping to blaze a trail that others can follow. We can be that leader, but we need to ensure that we have our house in order.

A strong Integrity Commission is essential to that, and ignoring this motion would be a mistake. I believe that a majority of members of this place want to see change. I believe that a majority share the view that the Integrity Commission should be properly funded, it should be fully backed by the government against opportunistic legal claims, and it should have the powers it needs to do the job. If the government is unwilling to make

these changes, it should not be surprised if the Assembly makes them, anyway. I note that an amendment is being circulated at the moment. I wonder whether it is the same as the one I saw earlier today, but I will get to that later.

It would, of course, have been extraordinary if the Assembly legislated integrity reforms against the will of the Labor government, but I note that we are willing to work together and also work with the crossbench to use that power to develop and enact these reforms.

I urge the government to support this motion and act on it. It is not just us asking for this. Last year, in estimates, the Integrity Commissioner said:

My approach to resources is that we certainly need more resources. We do not need a very substantial additional number, but we do need a significant number more ...

At the same hearing, the commissioner said that the cost of defending actions came out of the commission's budget, and this occurs when the ACT government is funding the action against the commission.

It is clear that the Integrity Commission does need additional resources, and that is why we have brought this extremely important motion to the Assembly, as the first order of business in this Assembly. I urge the government to work with us in good faith to enhance and safeguard the Integrity Commission. That is what the community expects from us, and it is what the Assembly expects of the government.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (3.10): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this matter forward today. I move:

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

“(2) further notes that:

- (a) provision of increased funding to attract and retain expert staff resourcing will assist the Commission to properly investigate all matters referred to it in a more timely manner;
- (b) the Commission has publicly indicated there are a range of factors that have caused delays in investigating matters, including legislative restrictions on employment eligibility, mandated consultation periods, legal challenges to rulings, and particular resourcing requirements;
- (c) some structural causes of delays were addressed through legislative reform passed by the Assembly in September 2024;
- (d) in the 2023-24 Budget the Government allocated an additional \$940,000 over two years to increase investigative and legal resources to meet its immediate needs;
- (e) the Government has committed to bringing forward legislation this term to appropriately shorten mandated periods of consultation with affected parties, among other changes;
- (f) commission resources have necessarily been redirected to defend legal action brought by persons of interest in investigations;

- (g) the Government is currently legally required to formally respond to Integrity Commission reports in certain circumstances, as set out in sections 191 and 215 of the *Integrity Commission Act 2018*; and
 - (h) the Commission has made recommendations in its annual report but there is currently no mechanism by which the ACT Government is required to publicly respond to all such recommendations; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) provide the Integrity Commission with sufficient funding to investigate potential integrity, misconduct and corruption issues in a timely way;
 - (b) actively consider any Commission proposals submitted to Government via the Speaker for Budget consideration;
 - (c) provide the Integrity Commissioner with additional funding to defend legal actions being brought against the Commission in relation to its investigations and reports, if requested and through proper Budget processes, with appropriate independent oversight established to allow spending beyond budgeted levels;
 - (d) provide a public statement, as part of the Budget tabling process, if the Integrity Commission's Budget funding request differs from the funding granted in that financial year; and
 - (e) commit to publicly responding to and tabling any formal recommendations made by the Integrity Commission, where such a response is not already legislatively required, including any made in its annual report."

From its establishment, the Integrity Commission has been a key part of the territory's integrity and anti-corruption framework. As Ms Castley indicated, this came about after tripartisan agreement to the original legislative structure.

Since the commencement of the commission, it has become evident that some components and restrictions within its legislation—inserted, I might say, with the best intentions, to maintain tripartisan agreement when the original legislation was passed—have affected the commission's capacity to operate efficiently.

A very high-profile example of that was a restriction on employment that the then Canberra Liberals leader insisted on inserting—that former ACT public service officials could not work in the commission, making it very difficult for the commission to recruit experts into certain essential roles. Even though the commission had the budget, it simply could not find any staff to recruit because of some of the restrictions on where it could draw staff from. This necessarily slowed down investigations and inquiries.

We all agreed in this place to that requirement that the then Canberra Liberals leader wanted in the act. It was not an agreement that was reached that was not in good faith. We tried very hard to have tripartisan agreement on every element of establishing the commission. But it would be fair to say that an unintended consequence of that was that it was not a budgetary issue for the commission; it was a legislative restrictive issue that meant it could not employ staff.

This and other provisions within the commission's legislation have affected the timeliness of the commission's operations. Some of these have been addressed already via the government legislation that I introduced in the last term, and I am pleased to see that it maintained unanimous support across the chamber.

I will turn to Ms Castley's motion and my amendment. Appropriate funding for the Integrity Commission is essential for it to meet its functions thoroughly and quickly. The government acknowledges the positive intention of the motion and enters into this debate in good faith, seeking, as always, to maintain, as much as possible, unanimous support in this place for the work of the Integrity Commission.

However, it is important on this first sitting day to provide a preface regarding the discussion of private members' business that seeks specific funding for any matter, whether it is the Integrity Commission or, indeed, any of what I anticipate will be numerous motions that will come forward in this parliamentary term calling for more funding for particular areas of priority. I will note, as a former Treasurer, that there was a lamentable lack of private members' business outlining ways that more funding could be generated to fund the many—

Mr Hanson: Remember the tram? It was \$4 billion, wasn't it?

MR BARR: Thank you, Mr Hanson, for the first interjection of this term. There are lots of calls to spend money, but very few come forward to raise that money to spend. I mention this because the government, of course, has a responsibility to manage finite resources across a range of important competing demands. The way that this is managed, and new policy proposals and new spending proposals are assessed, is through a proper budget consideration process via briefings from Treasury and others to the expenditure review committee, and ultimately cabinet, for a decision on resource allocation in the wider fiscal context.

Ad hoc motions in the Assembly cannot and are not allowed to, under the self-government act, dictate government appropriations. It is very clear in the and in the standing orders that only a minister can appropriate public money for the territory. An appropriation of funding must not be proposed in the Assembly except by a minister. To be clear—

Ms Castley: We can certainly ask, though.

MR BARR: Indeed, and I will come to that. I am just making this fundamental point, at the beginning of this term of the Assembly. To be clear, the government will not support Assembly motions that purport to increase funding towards any activities, no matter how worthy they are, unless amendments are made. It is fine to "call on", which this motion does, but private members cannot seek to appropriate money. Only ministers can, under the self-government act. That is why that clause is written into supply and confidence agreements with non-executive members.

The reason I have brought forward an amendment this afternoon is to provide context regarding the current commission funding levels and recent budget increases, as well as the reasons for some of the delays that the commission has experienced in finalising investigations and inquiries.

Having said that, the government is, of course, open every year, often twice a year, to receiving requests from public sector entities, either to handle one-off or ongoing cost pressures, such as—as is referenced in this motion—unexpected legal matters, as well as inefficiencies in governing legislation. The government's track record in the case of the Integrity Commission is just that—that we will respond to either resourcing or legislative issues that are brought to the Assembly.

We have committed to further reforms, an example being reducing the minimum time frames for consultation with identified individuals, as part of Integrity Commission processes. Should the Assembly choose, in the future, not to accept amendments such as the one I have brought forward, then the government will necessarily have to interpret motions in the context of the requirements of the self-government act, and will consider proposals subject to reasoned requests from agencies and requiring a budget process for their consideration.

Turning specifically to the commission's funding requirements, since its establishment the government has always endeavoured to meet its funding requirements as the commission's workload has grown. We have always given serious consideration to budget funding requests for particular projects or the base workload of the commission. I point to an example in the 2023-24 budget, where the government provided nearly \$1 million of additional funding for the Integrity Commission. This was to increase its investigative and legal resources to meet immediate needs. The funding was provided over two fiscal years, 2023-24 and 2024-25.

On the reporting requirements that Ms Castley touches upon in her motion, my amendment is clear: the government is always open to further reforms to provide greater detail to the Assembly in relation to responding to commission recommendations and funding proposals. However, that comes formally through the Speaker in his role as part of the budget process. Whether it is issues raised by the Integrity Commission in its annual report or, indeed, what we have seen, where, under questioning in budget estimates or annual reports, the Integrity Commissioner has provided a view, we are happy to respond publicly to those matters.

I would point out, as I do in the amendment, that the existing legislation, through sections 191 and 215 of the Integrity Commission Act, provides a framework for the government to formally respond to Integrity Commission reports, in certain circumstances. We do note that the commission has made recommendations in its annual report and that currently there is not a legal mechanism by which the government is required to respond. I am happy, in the context of this debate, to make it clear that we will do so, and that is achieved through the amendment to paragraph (3) of Ms Castley's motion. That includes providing a public statement, as part of the budget tabling process, if the Integrity Commission's budget funding request differs from the funding granted in the financial year. We will commit to responding publicly to and tabling any formal recommendations made by the Integrity Commission where such a response is not already legally required, including any that are made in the Integrity Commission's annual report.

The amendment that I have moved was circulated in advance to colleagues across the chamber, reflecting the fact that we only saw the motion at lunchtime yesterday. Within

24 hours, we have turned around a detailed and comprehensive response to the issues raised. I commend my amendment to Ms Castley's motion to the Assembly. I believe it maintains the intent of Ms Castley's motion, gives further detail in relation to how the government proposes to respond to those issues, outlines where we have already increased funding, and seeks to maintain the unanimity of Assembly support for the work of the Integrity Commission. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (3.22): The Greens support this motion moved by Ms Castley that is supportive of the ACT Integrity Commission. The Greens were the first party to call for an integrity commission during the 2016 election campaign. I am very happy to agree and affirm to this chamber that the ACT Integrity Commission retains the support of all members of the Greens.

Like many in the community, we may have expressed frustration on the time frames with which inquiries have been undertaken and reports issued. It is from this position of support that we acknowledge and agree that the commission does not have sufficient resourcing to properly investigate all matters referred to it, in a timely manner. Not all of the issues relating back to timeliness trace back to resourcing, as the Chief Minister has outlined. There are a number of legislative fixes that can also be made to improve time frames, and I would encourage the government to bring the outstanding ones of those legislative fixes to the Assembly for consideration as soon as practicable.

Additional resourcing does not necessarily speed up an individual case, because there are processes and burdens that take time, no matter how many people or resources you might throw at them. However, additional resources let you run more inquiries concurrently and let you start new inquiries sooner. On the other hand, a lack of resources can slow things down. That goes doubly so when the commission has to defend itself against litigation—meritorious, vexatious or otherwise. I do not want to put words into the commissioner's mouth, but the feeling I have gotten is that the long periods between issues arising and the Integrity Commission reporting on them could be improved on both sides of this resourcing coin.

Over the past few years we have learned a lot about what our Integrity Commission needs to operate effectively and efficiently, and it would be good to see those learnings acted on. Mr Barr's observations about staffing restrictions and structural causes of delays are very valid. They represent a positive lesson learned over recent years, and some improvements have been made accordingly. However, they are far from adequate enough to dust off our hands and declare that the job is done and the Integrity Commission is good to go. I am glad to see that we have cross-parliamentary support for the core of the motion, even if we may have our own distinct reasons for supporting it. I look forward to the government's response, as well as seeing what will happen in the next budget.

I would also like to reflect on the Chief Minister's comments regarding the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act. A motion in itself will not commit or appropriate government funds. I also note that there is an outstanding question on the interpretation and application of section 65 of the Self-Government Act made during the Ninth Assembly, and that was not progressed during the Tenth Assembly. This goes to the financial initiative of the Crown and the ability for us, as private members, to be able to bring forward business in this place. That question remains outstanding and will need to be addressed as part of this new make-up of the Assembly.

I thank Miss Castley for bringing forward this motion, as well as for giving me the advanced notice that I needed to be able to review the motion and provide the Greens support. Thank you.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (3.25): I support this important motion moved by Ms Castley, and I thank members for their eagerness to engage constructively with me and my office regarding this matter. I also thank the government for its considered amendments, particularly regarding how to best operationalise the bid for additional funding in order to give effect to the intent of this motion.

The Integrity Commission is there to provide public confidence in the overall integrity of the ACT government by preventing, investigating and exposing corruption. We know, looking at national studies, such as the Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion Survey, that trust in government remains abysmally low. Members will be aware that the election of community independents, particularly in recent times, has been directly related to strong community sentiment regarding the need for greater transparency and integrity in government decision-making. Indeed, many community members who have spoken to me from outside this chamber want to see more light shone on government processes and decisions.

I recognise at a practical level that investigations undertaken by the Integrity Commission are especially complex and require thorough assessment in order to consider matters appropriately. If we believe in the objectives of the commission, we need to invest in it. It should not take as much as two years for the commission to complete an investigation. I therefore support this motion and hope to see a more appropriately resourced Integrity Commission play its full role in strengthening the integrity of government and, hopefully, with time play its part in restoring public trust in the institutions of government and in our democracy.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (3.26): I rise to speak in support of Ms Castley's motion and thank her for bringing this matter to the Assembly's attention. Integrity in government has arguably been the centrepiece of Australian politics this past decade. The 2020s in Australian politics have been defined by integrity, the need for checks and balances and the desires of the people to hold politicians to account.

The ACT was, in some ways, ahead of its time with the establishment of the ACT Integrity Commission in 2018, with the support of Labor, Greens and the Canberra Liberals. This was a number of years before the National Anticorruption Commission was founded and the Teal wave that swept the 2022 federal election on the back of integrity matters, including here in the ACT. The ACT Integrity Commission is a fantastic and important organisation that undertakes essential work to safeguard the ACT from corruption and misconduct. As evidenced by recent investigations, the ACT Integrity Commission is doing a great job with the resources that it has available to it to hold ACT politicians and public servants to account.

On 27 June 2024, the ACT Integrity Commission provided its Operation Luna Part 1 Special Report to the Speaker of the ACT Assembly. As members will be aware, Operation Luna examined the procurement processes at the Canberra Institute of Technology, focusing on contracts awarded between July 2017 and March 2022, totalling approximately \$8.7 million. This investigation led to the disgraced resignation

of the CIT Chief Executive Officer responsible, Ms Leanne Cover, on 19 June 2024. I want to acknowledge the work of my colleague, the former leader, Ms Lee, and her office, for helping uncover this disastrous use of taxpayers' money and prosecuting it so vigorously for a number of years.

We also look forward to the release of the report of Operation Kingfisher. This is an investigation into whether public officials within the ACT Education Directorate failed to exercise their official functions honestly and/or impartially when making recommendations and decisions regarding the Campbell Primary School Modernisation Project between 2019 and 2020. This investigation led to the retirement of the Education Directorate Director-General, Ms Katy Haire, on 22 November 2024, in anticipation of the commission's findings. We will await to see the breadth of involvement that Minister Berry had in this matter of serious concern.

Unfortunately, as Ms Castley's motion points out, the commission is not sufficiently resourced to properly investigate all matters referred to it, in a timely manner. Every member in this place should be in absolute agreement that integrity in government is of the utmost importance to Canberrans, which is why I call on all of us to support Ms Castley's motion to appropriately resource the Integrity Commission to ensure that it can perform its duties, and committing to the government responding to the Integrity Commission recommendations.

After 23 years of ACT Labor and another four years ahead of us, there has never been a more important time to protect against complacency, cronyism and corruption. Canberrans are experiencing a significant cost-of-living crisis and the ACT government is in the midst of an unprecedented debt crisis. Now is the time to beef up the ACT Integrity Commission. Now is the time to protect Canberrans' services and money from public corruption and misconduct. Now is the time to get serious about integrity and to hold those in power to account. I commend Ms Castley's motion to the Assembly.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (3.31): I rise briefly to add my voice of gratitude to Ms Castley. The motion to establish the Integrity Commission was passed well before I was a member of this place. As a relatively new member and someone who was not here at that time, I am grateful for the opportunity to voice my support for this commission.

We all know that anticorruption commissions and integrity commissions around the country have been in place for a long time. In 1988, New South Wales saw its anticorruption commission introduced under a Liberal government. It is something that I have personally been advocating for, and had advocated for, for a long time for the ACT and on a federal basis. These commissions are not always comfortable, but they are absolutely critical to the functioning of an effective government, effective bureaucracy and effective community. We must be able to have faith that the government is doing the right thing and that we do not have corruption in our institutions. Sadly, that is not always the case. No matter how much we wish that there was not any problem within either a federal public service or an ACT public service, if you take your eye off the ball, that is when problems emerge. By the same token, I would say that, if we have a weak integrity commission that is under resourced, that is when we provide the opportunity for problems to emerge.

Ms Castley's motion today is also a very impressive step in this parliament's history, because it sounds like today we are going to move from tripartite support to, hopefully, 'quintipartite' support, if I can call it that. It is really heartening that everyone in this place seems to be on the same page on this matter. The integrity of this Assembly, of the government, of our public service and all of our officials must be beyond reproach, and this motion brings us strongly in that direction.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (3.33), in reply: It is a special day, indeed. I think this is the first motion I have moved in this place that we are not dividing on and that I am not going to lose.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Just stay away from health and you are all good.

MS CASTLEY: Stay away from health, okay—thank you. I appreciate the health minister's advice there. We are going to accept the Chief Minister's amendment. I do appreciate that ministers are the only ones that can call for additional funding. That is why we did not put specific amounts in this one. I just wanted to raise that we need that sufficient funding. And, you know what? It does not hurt to ask—just put it out there and see how we go. I do appreciate being schooled in the way of the force with regard to process.

I am very happy to say that every one of us in this place obviously is interested in safeguarding our Integrity Commission. It is something that we all want to see, and I am very grateful to everybody who has spoken in favour of this motion and the amendment. It is an important day.

I do hear that, if the commission does need additional funds, it will be requested of the government. I will be watching with keen interest to see how that goes. You heard it here first, folks, that the government is open to it. So I am very excited to say that the first order of business is that we are all on the same page in making sure that our Integrity Commission does have those sufficient resources. So we will be accepting Mr Barr's amendment to my motion today.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Woden town centre—Phillip Swimming and Ice Skating Centre

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (3.36): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that the development assessment requirements (zoning) in the draft Territory Plan 2023 for the Phillip Swimming & Ice Skating Centre were changed less than two weeks before it was released for consultation, from 1 November 2022 to 3 March 2023;
- (b) the zoning changes allowed for residential development and the removal of the ice rink and the 50 metre pool, to be replaced with an indoor

- 25 metre pool, warm water pool, toddlers splash area and a transition to the outdoors with gardens, deck and eating areas;
- (c) Geocon bought the site in December 2022, before the consultation period was closed. Until the outcomes of the consultation were known, there should have been uncertainty about the final zoning, this would normally impact the sale price of the site;
 - (d) Geocon's proposal (starting with Development Application DA 202443325) is a staged process for construction of five residential towers and the pool facilities; and
 - (e) there is no provision that protects the community's right to the benefits of a public pool; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) provide the evidence that shows:
 - (i) how a 25 metre pool best meets the demand of the future population that is forecast to live in the five kilometre catchment surrounding the Woden Town Centre; and
 - (ii) the community's views on the size of the pool;
 - (b) provide written reasons why the pool in Batemans Bay (2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics SA2 population was 8,581) was used as a benchmark when the population of the Woden Town Centre's five kilometre catchment was over 65,000 people in 2021;
 - (c) provide transparency by clarifying in writing for the pools and outdoor areas:
 - (i) the funding model and who will pay for maintenance and any operating losses;
 - (ii) the operating model and what involvement the ACT Government will have;
 - (iii) how access (opening times and charges) is assured in the long-term;
 - (iv) how the interests of the wider community will be represented in the ongoing management of the private pool and grounds; and
 - (v) who is responsible and accountable for ensuring the pool is professionally managed and maintained and delivers the programs and services typical of a public pool, ensuring people can have a sense of belonging to the pool community;
 - (d) extend the date for comments to be received for the DA until four weeks after the above information is received so the community is informed about the characteristics of the development and can determine whether it will meet their needs;
 - (e) refer the DA to the appropriate standing committee to review the outcome in the context of the *Planning Act 2023*;
 - (f) in the absence of evidence that a 25 metre pool meets community needs, provide a list of other sites that have been identified in central Woden that are suitable for an aquatic centre, including a 50 metre pool; and
 - (g) report back to the Assembly by the first sitting week in 2025.

My motion is about the outcomes we want for our community. It is about the consultation, the process and transparency.

In December 2022, the Phillip pool and ice rink were sold to Geocon—high-yield developers. They have now lodged a development application for the first two of five towers, which will include a 25-metre pool and another small pool for warm-water programs and swimming lessons. It will be integrated with an outdoor area that will be in the middle of the five towers and significantly overshadowed.

The five towers will deliver 700 apartments—approximately 1,400 residents. Many residents, including the Save Phillip Pool group, are objecting to the 50-metre outdoor pool being diminished to a 25-metre pool in a Geocon tower, and consider that this is a poor outcome for the community.

According to Royal Life Saving Australia, the ACT has the highest number of people per aquatic facility. The question is: why can't the Woden town centre have a 50-metre pool for its large catchment? Public pools and aquatic centres are valuable assets that contribute significantly to the health, wellbeing and social fabric of communities. They provide a safe and inclusive environment for physical activity and social interaction. They are great for our physical and mental health.

The Phillip pool is in a central location with a public transport hub, so it is accessible to its large catchment. Unfortunately, the Stromlo Leisure Centre is difficult to access by public transport. We need an aquatic centre that has the capacity for a range of users, including lap swimmers, squad training, swimming lessons, scuba diving, aqua aerobics, water polo, and kids just wanting to have fun.

Privately owned pools face several challenges that can affect their ability to fully serve the community's needs. We have already seen the Phillip pool suffer from reduced operating hours, higher access charges, a lack of community programs, a lack of maintenance and a lack of transparency. We have also lost the 50-metre Oasis swimming pool in Deakin, which was reduced to a small, four-lane, 25-metre pool that is available only for swimming lessons.

Considering these difficult issues, the government and the private sector should be transparent and discuss the issues with the community so that there is a clear understanding of the challenges, and so that we can make an informed decision about whether this is the best outcome for the community.

The residential development on the site is likely to be home to around 1,400 residents. These residents will form their own community, and it is a big undertaking to share your home with around 65,000 people that live in the town centre's catchment. People will move in and out of the 700 apartments, and it is impossible to guarantee that all future residents will be happy with their privately owned pool and grounds being open to the public.

It is conceivable that residents could act to minimise the use of the pool by the broader community, so that they do not have to share the pool. They can do this by making

people feel unwelcome, reducing the programs available so that there are few activities to attract the community, limiting the types of user groups who can use the pool, limiting the hours of access to the pool, reducing maintenance so that the facility becomes run down and unattractive to the community, cutting the community out of any decisions, and reducing transparency.

During the consultation on the new Territory Plan, the retention of aquatic facilities was consistently mentioned. I have received many emails regarding how upset people are about the loss of the pool. Minister Paterson undertook a survey about the Phillip pool. The survey found that users of the pool overwhelmingly wanted to retain the current 50-metre swimming length.

Feedback in the 2022 ACT planning system consultation report included concerns about the loss of the 50-metre pool and its replacement with a 25-metre pool as well as that there is a huge demand for a centrally located aquatic centre in Woden. The government's response was that a sport and recreational needs analysis had determined that a 25-metre pool and associated aquatic facilities would meet the requirements of the Woden community. A member of our community did an FOI, seeking access to the sport and recreational needs analysis, but neither the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate nor the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate were able to find the needs analysis or any documents about how the community's aquatic needs were determined.

The response to another FOI provides some insight into the process. Thirteen days before the Territory Plan was released for consultation, email conversations between the planning directorate and the sports section of the Chief Minister's directorate stated that there might be a small window to amend the requirements for the Phillip pool in the draft Territory Plan. A 25-metre pool option was preferred by the ACT government because it justified the inclusion of other pool facilities and provided a better all-round outcome in relation to the capital cost, ongoing financial viability and future maintenance upgrade requirements.

After the requirements of the pool were changed to 25 metres, on 1 November 2022, the draft Territory Plan was released for comment, for four months. Around six weeks after its release, in mid-December 2022, Geocon bought the site. Consultation closed 2½ months after Geocon bought the site, on 3 March 2023. Geocon took a risk in buying the site because, in theory, the requirements for the pool and the site were open to amendment after the ACT government's consideration of the community's feedback.

The FOI requests have not provided an evidence base about future population growth and demand to inform the decision about the size of the pool required into the future. The 25-metre pool at Batemans Bay was looked at—a strange benchmark, due to the significant difference in population and demand. My understanding is that the current ACT government population forecasts extrapolate previous growth across Canberra. This leads to a huge growth forecast in the north and smaller growth in the south, apart from Molonglo, which is a greenfield high-growth area.

We need a new strategic plan for Canberra that considers the needs of people living in all of our districts and forecasts the population growth based on a more equitable distribution of assets and activity. We need transparency. Information needs to be

provided to the community so that they are informed about the issues relating to a private pool being made available to the public, and how the government will ensure that the management of it meets the needs of the local community.

It is difficult to understand where the checks and balances are that ensure we get a great outcome. That is important. There is no mechanism to go to ACAT, because proposals in the town centres do not have third-party review rights. It is interesting that the Dickson pool was added to the urban renewal precinct administered by the City Renewal Authority, the authority established to deliver good design governance and collaboration. At around the same time, the Phillip pool was zoned to make it more attractive to developers. We have a poor outcome for the community—an outcome which is based on a planning framework that does not require any evidence of community needs and is basically a captain's pick.

The motion calls on the government to provide the evidence that shows how a 25-metre pool best meets the demand of a growing catchment surrounding the Phillip pool. It asks for information and transparency around the funding and operating model and how community access is assured in the long term. It asks for information about how the interests of the wider community will be represented in the ongoing management of the private pool and grounds, and who is responsible and accountable for ensuring that the pool is professionally managed and maintained.

This motion seeks an extension of the date for the DA comments until four weeks after the information I have referred to is received, so that the community is informed about the characteristics of the development and can determine whether it will meet their needs. In the absence of evidence that a 25-metre pool meets community needs, this motion requests a list of other sites that have been identified in central Woden that are suitable for an aquatic centre, including a 50-metre pool.

The community are trying to tell the government that they care about community facilities and they want a 50-metre pool. I received more first preference votes than any of the Labor candidates in the Murrumbidgee electorate. My message has resonated with the community and they have given me the privilege of representing them. They are relying on the government and the Assembly to listen to them and do the right thing for the people that use the Woden town centre.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (3.46): I am pleased to rise today to respond to the motion from Ms Carrick relating to the Phillip pool redevelopment project.

The government recognises the need for community facilities and recreational infrastructure across the territory. That is why the previous government put in place the requirement in the Territory Plan to ensure that the Woden community maintains access to a public pool on that site in Phillip, should the existing pool site be redeveloped. It is why similar requirements continue to exist in the new Territory Plan.

Our government recognises the need to plan for our growing city. That is why there has been substantial investment in the Woden Valley district in community and recreational infrastructure. This includes the new Woden community centre, investment in

community facilities through the CIT, and ongoing work to invest in our community sports infrastructure in the Woden area, including the work that is happening on Garran oval at the moment, as well as in the Weston Creek district.

As part of the Territory Plan review, the government made sure that the Territory Plan continued to include requirements for replacement pools and infrastructure to ensure that the aging pool in Phillip would be replaced if the privately owned site was redeveloped. This discussion has been had for about the last 20 years. I have spent some time looking through some old committee reports where the Assembly's previous iteration of the planning committee was considering previous amendments to the Territory Plan, looking at how the planning requirements would not only make provision for a new pool but also incentivise the renewal of the existing pool at that Phillip site. This has been a discussion for some time.

After careful consideration, the ACT government decided to amend the requirement that we had put into the Territory Plan some time ago for a 50-metre outdoor pool to an indoor 25-metre pool with associated infrastructure. That ensures that the aging pool will be replaced by an indoor pool that can be accessed by the public all year round, regardless of weather.

This change was included in the final iteration of the Territory Plan, which had been subject, prior to that, to the largest community consultation since self-government, which was the review of the planning system and the new Territory Plan. It included an extensive committee inquiry and, of course, a vote by the Tenth Legislative Assembly on the final Territory Plan.

The government acknowledges that the Phillip pool was a well-loved destination in the community for many years. However, the asset is aging and remains underutilised, particularly during the colder months, when it is unavailable to members of the public. With further plans for a new skating facility in Tuggeranong, in your electorate, Mr Assistant Speaker, the changes to the Territory Plan also removed the ongoing requirement for a skating rink to be provided once that new skating facility opens.

Members will recall that, in January 2023, Geocon confirmed that it had purchased the Phillip pool and ice skating rink. That was part of a private transaction between private entities. The new Territory Plan was then finalised in November 2023, providing updated specific requirements should the site be developed. This includes that a publicly available indoor facility be provided, including, at a minimum, a 25- by 20-metre eight-lane swimming pool, a 20-metre by 10-metre warm water pool, a 500-metre-square toddlers or learn-to-swim pool, and a transition to outdoor gardens, as well as decks and eating areas. This provided more explicit requirements for the pool redevelopment to ensure a better outcome for the community, with a broader range of swimming infrastructure that would have to be included as part of any redevelopment of the site.

Geocon has since proposed a new pool as part of a staged residential development, which, as I understand it, has been reviewed by the National Capital Design Review Panel, the NCDRP. Members will be aware that the NCDRP is a panel made up of experts who provide advice on significant development proposals in the territory. I understand that the proponent had three meetings with the NCDRP between October

2023 and March 2024. The proponent addressed recommendations and issues raised by the NCDRP in their final plans for the submission of the DA. The DA plans for the pool site that are currently out for public comment are the final plans submitted to the Territory Planning Authority. The Territory Planning Authority must consider the NCDRP comments as part of their assessment process.

The DA will be assessed independently by the Territory Planning Authority against the requirements of the new Planning Act 2023 and the final Territory Plan 2023. The development is currently out for public consultation. It is on notification, which closes on 18 December.

I note that the Territory Planning Authority can consider extending the timeframe for the notification period for public consultation if there is significant interest in the community. Whilst I cannot make a decision for them, as a result of this motion and the particular “calls on” to extend the consultation period, I will ensure that the independent planning authority notes the motion today, and they can consider whether they want to make a decision to extend. I am sure that any representations received from the community as part of the notification process will be considered as part of the assessment by the Territory Planning Authority.

Given that this proposal is from a private developer and the approval will be a decision of the independent Territory Planning Authority, it is not appropriate for the government to intervene in this process or for the DA to be referred to a committee. Committees and Assembly members do not make decisions on individual development applications. However, the government supports the proposal in the motion to refer the general matter of swimming pools in the Woden Valley district to the relevant standing committee for consideration—hopefully, meeting the intent of the mover of the motion.

Significant development in the ACT often attracts community interest, and the government welcomes any discussion and feedback from the community. That is why we had the largest consultation since self-government on the new Territory Plan and the development of district strategies, including a district strategy for the Woden Valley. Of course, it is why we also have consultation built into the independent development assessment process, which is currently open. I encourage community members to provide their feedback as part of that process, which is currently open until 18 December.

I would like to thank Ms Carrick for her interest in development in the Woden area and for bringing forward the motion today, which the government will be supporting. I move the following amendment to Ms Carrick’s motion that has been circulated in my name:

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

“(1) notes that:

- (a) the draft territory plan was released for consultation for 16 months between 1 November 2022 to 3 March 2023 which included the zoning changes for the Phillip Swimming & Ice Skating Centre;
- (b) the Standing Committee on Planning Transport and City Services undertook an inquiry into the Draft Territory Plan from 14 September 2023 to 13 March 2024. The final Territory Plan was presented to the

Legislative Assembly on 8 July 2024 and approved by the Legislative Assembly on 28 August 2024;

- (c) the zoning changes allowed for residential development and the removal of the ice rink and the 50 metre outdoor pool, to be replaced with an indoor 25 metre pool, warm water pool, toddlers splash area and a transition to the outdoors with gardens, deck and eating areas;
 - (d) Geocon bought the site in December 2022, before the consultation period was closed;
 - (e) Geocon's proposal (starting with Development Application DA 202443325) is a staged process for construction of five residential towers and the pool facilities; and
 - (f) the Batemans Bay Aquatic Centre, which was used as a benchmark pool development, services the region around Batemans Bay, villages and towns north of the Clyde River and the surrounding hinterland; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) provide the evidence that shows:
 - (i) how a 25 metre pool best meets the demand of the future population that is forecast to live in the five kilometre catchment surrounding the Woden Town Centre; and
 - (ii) the community's views on the size of the pool;
 - (b) provide written reasons why the pool in Batemans Bay was used as a benchmark when the population of the Woden Town Centre's five kilometre catchment was over 65,000 people in 2021;
 - (c) provide transparency by clarifying in writing for the pools and outdoor areas:
 - (i) the funding model and who will pay for maintenance and any operating losses;
 - (ii) the operating model and what involvement the ACT Government will have;
 - (iii) how access (opening times and charges) is assured in the long-term;
 - (iv) how the interests of the wider community will be represented in the ongoing management of the private pool and grounds; and
 - (v) who is responsible and accountable for ensuring the pool is professionally managed and maintained and delivers the programs and services typical of a public pool, ensuring people can have a sense of belonging to the pool community;
 - (d) extend the date for comments to be received for the DA until four weeks after the above information is received so the community is informed about the characteristics of the development and can determine whether it will meet their needs;
 - (e) refers 'swimming pools in the Woden Valley District' to the relevant Assembly Standing Committee for it to consider undertaking an inquiry;
 - (f) provide a list of other sites that have been identified in central Woden that are suitable for an aquatic centre, including a 50 metre pool; and
 - (g) report back to the Assembly by the first sitting week in 2025."

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (3.53): I rise to speak to Ms Carrick's motion, which the Canberra Liberals will be supporting. I speak particularly in my capacity as shadow minister for planning and environment. Firstly, I would like to congratulate Ms Carrick on moving her first motion in this place—how apt it is that it is a topic for which she has been such a fierce advocate over many years.

The Phillip pool was opened on 16 October 1971 by the NCDC, with the accompanying ice skating centre opening to the public in October 1980. It was sold in 2022 to Geocon, local developers who have benefited greatly during Mr Barr's tenure as Chief Minister. Imagine the surprise, or lack thereof, that Woden residents and Canberrans everywhere experienced when DA 202443325 was submitted for 135 Irving Street, Phillip. This DA would see two 13-storey residential towers built, with a total of 286 units.

As we are in the middle of a terrible housing affordability and supply crisis, it is valuable for units to be constructed in our town centres. However, the Canberra Liberals are also hugely supportive of good planning and social and community infrastructure. It is not unfair for Woden Valley residents to expect that their town centre would have an Olympic-size public swimming pool, as it has had since the 1970s.

At the most recent election, the Canberra Liberals pledged to build a new multipurpose sporting precinct with an Olympic-size public swimming pool in Woden, if elected. I note that Ms Carrick very generously welcomed our announcement. However, Mr Barr was critical of our plan because of an alleged lack of detail. Mr Barr was quoted as saying, "Where is it going to go? How much is it going to cost? What are you building?"

Well, Mr Barr, I ask the very same questions of you and Mr Steel: where will the new public 50-metre swimming pool go in Woden? If the answer is, "Nowhere, because 25 metres is enough," then you are failing Woden residents. How much will this new 50-metre public swimming pool in Woden cost? If the answer is, "Nothing, because the Geocon pool won't be public," then you are failing Woden residents. Finally, Mr Barr, what are you building? If the answer is, "A 25-metre pool," then you are failing Woden residents.

In the midst of this terrible housing affordability and supply crisis, we must do better to find the right balance between accommodating more residences within our urban footprint and ensuring the availability of important social and community infrastructure.

For too long, the people of Woden, Weston Creek and Molonglo Valley have been treated as second-class citizens by this ACT Labor government. The Phillip pool is a long-running instance of this, which is now reaching its culmination. Shame on Mr Steel for allowing the removal of the 50-metre swimming pool requirement from the Territory Plan. Shame on Mr Barr for overseeing the total destruction of substantive social infrastructure in Phillip.

The Canberra Liberals will always seek to ensure that the right balance is struck for both residential development opportunities and residents' accessibility to important social and community infrastructure. The Canberra Liberals will be supporting Ms Carrick's important motion.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (3.57): Like Ms Carrick, I am a proud south-sider, and I deeply understand the frustration that has led to this motion. It often feels like nothing south of the lake, outside the parliamentary triangle, receives the funding or support that it deserves from this government. I have had innumerable conversations on the campaign trail asking me what is happening in regard to infrastructure projects that have been suggested, promised or even started but then delayed. Improved south-side infrastructure is something that I think everyone acknowledges is needed, but it feels right now like quite little is actually done, and the community concern about Phillip pool is clearly an example of that.

The ACT Greens will be supporting the amendment to this motion. One of the election promises we made was that, if elected, we would advocate for all Canberrans to have access to adequate aquatic facilities that meet their social and sporting needs, and for the design and construction of those facilities to be done in consultation with the local community. The idea that infrastructure of any kind can be done without significant community consultation is one that, surely, everyone here can acknowledge is a bad one.

This motion simply asks for clarification as to whether the aquatic facility that is currently planned for Woden will fill its designated purpose. If the 25-metre pool will meet the needs of the people living in the five-kilometre catchment, evidence should be fairly easy to produce, and it should point overwhelmingly towards the current plan being the best option for the community. This motion is a step towards improved clarity for the south-side community and has our support in that regard.

I am particularly interested to learn why the Batemans Bay pool was used as a benchmark for designing Phillip pool, given the obvious difference between the two places. I know I am not the only one who thought it sounded like a strange comparison to make, when I was first told, and it was interesting that Mr Steel's amendment shed a little bit of light on that. I look forward to learning exactly how the Batemans Bay pool factored into the planning for Phillip pool and how it was deemed to be an appropriate comparison.

Ms Carrick has requested specific details on how the facility will operate and will be made available to the community, and I think these are very reasonable requests. Similarly, I support the topic of swimming pools in Woden being offered to a standing committee for a possible inquiry. As someone who has been advocating for better long-term planning for community sports infrastructure, I believe that could provide some valuable insight that would lead to better outcomes for the south side. The ACT government's own aquatic facilities planning framework from 2013-33 might be a good place to start.

Once again, if the government has done due diligence when it comes to community consultation about the pool, this should be a relatively simple process. Relying on private companies to provide public services is simply not sustainable. As Ms Carrick has pointed out, the incentive to cut down on what serves the public in order to focus on what makes a profit will always be present. The long and the short of it is that some infrastructure fundamentally must be run by government, especially infrastructure that is not likely to turn a profit if it is run responsibly. In a lot of ways, swimming pools are a perfect example. Until the ACT government takes responsibility for running a

publicly owned swimming pool in Woden, it is hard to see that the issues that prompted this motion will resolve themselves.

Finally, while the ACT Greens are happy to support Ms Carrick's motion, I would like to draw attention to a broader issue, which is the issue of the specific lack of community sporting facilities in the Woden area. Members will not be surprised by this. Ensuring that Phillip pool serves the needs of the Woden community is a good first step, but there is obviously more that needs to be done. The ACT Greens have gone to two elections now, calling for a Woden multi-sports facility. That is because the lack of facilities is something we have heard frequently from all around the south side.

We hope that this motion can start some serious discussions about the public sports facilities that Woden, and the south side more broadly, if I might be so bold, sorely need.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (4.02): I could not not speak today. Ms Carrick and I have had a long-running discussion around the need for good community and sporting infrastructure around Woden—for Woden in particular—and especially around the swimming pool. The first conversation we had about how valuable a good 50-metre, Olympic-size swimming pool would be—the sort that the community continually asks for—was all the way back in about 2018, well before either of us were even looking at running for the electorate of Murrumbidgee. Indeed, my connection with the facility in Woden goes a long way back. Woden swimming pool—and this is clearly a matter on the public record—is where I won a third-place ribbon in my one and only swimming carnival. I think it was in year 8. The ice rink in Woden definitely has a good collection of my blood in it somewhere from my short-lived ice hockey career.

I have to say that there is a deep sense of unease around Woden about how the deal for the purchase of the pool came about. People do not have confidence that everything was above board in this case, because of the timing of when things happened. The very short timeframe, from the announcement of the potential to reduce the lease requirements on the leaseholder until the sale to a developer was announced, is met by the community with some suspicion, and I do not think it is entirely unreasonable.

The government have spoken on a number of occasions about how important it is for the government to get their share, through lease variation charges, of the uplift value when a developer decides to change the lease conditions and increase the yield on a site. That is something that we on this side have not been entirely in favour of, but it is something that the government have been very consistent on. They want their piece of the pie. That does not appear to happen when the government are the ones changing the lease terms and the developer is the one who benefits. There are definitely questions in the community around exactly what is happening here. I thank Ms Carrick for bringing forward a motion which starts to bring some attention to that as well.

When I received my first briefing around the condition of the swimming pool, which was around the time all of this was happening, one of the things that representatives of the minister's office told me was that the government had been reluctant to enforce lease conditions on the previous owner of the swimming pool because it was a business without deep pockets. They were worried in some way about the feasibility of actually enforcing that and whether it was sustainable. There has been a long history of

uncertainty around exactly what this government is trying to achieve on that site. I think that goes to the heart of why questions are being asked in the community.

It would be remiss of me to not touch on Mr Steel's speech when he was speaking about the supposed investment in community and recreational infrastructure in the Woden Valley as well. As Treasurer, he is already embarking on some interesting and creative interpretations of how the government is spending its money. To badge the investment in the Garran oval as a new investment to improve and increase recreational facilities in Woden is an interesting choice. The reason that it is necessary for the government to invest in it is that it was the site of the Garran Surge Centre. What the government is investing in there is simply the required money to restore it to, essentially, its original status. It is very important to understand that this is not extra special money. It is not improving things; it is giving us back what we already had. Then there was the minister's reference to the so-called Woden Community Centre, which, as I understand it, amounts to a couple of meeting rooms. They are certainly not what I would call recreational facilities or particularly significant community facilities.

It is important to take the minister's comments around those investments with a grain of salt because, around Woden, in the Woden catchment area, through to Weston Creek and into Tuggeranong, the lived experience of people is that the government has not invested in recreational and community facilities—the infrastructure that the community has deserved for a very long time.

That is why I was so proud during the election campaign to bring our commitment forward to establish a south-side arena, because we need more than just the bare minimum. I believe we need more than just a 25-metre pool at the bottom of a multistorey tower that looks like it is part of the facilities just for the residents in the building. It is very important that we can actually look at this from a holistic perspective and deliver the type of recreational and community infrastructure that the community needs and deserves. The promise that we brought to Canberra would have not only delivered that 50-metre pool; it would have also delivered an indoor multisports centre, hydrotherapy and family-focused recreational facilities.

It is very important that we do not just look at: "What did the lease used to look like and what does the lease look like now?" And: "Did the government go through each step of the consultation process and tick each of the required boxes?" We have to also look at the actual value delivered to the community. I think that is the direction that Ms Carrick's motion moves in, and I thank her for bringing it forward today.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform) (4.09): Thank you, Ms Carrick, for bringing this motion to the Assembly, and congratulations on your first motion. I am passionate about the importance of swimming pools and the benefit that they bring to our community. I am also a swimmer—even though it is a bit disingenuous for me to claim that at the moment, seeing as I have been a bit preoccupied over the last few months and have not done much swimming—and I use both the Stromlo pool and the CISAC pool. As we move into the summer months, particularly around the school holidays, pools around Canberra will be highly frequented by Canberra families.

The fact is that Phillip pool is at the end of its life and has been for a while, and that is no surprise to anyone. I do think that we need to talk about this pool site in the frame of reality—that is, firstly, the ACT government does not own the site and has never owned the site. The pool was opened in 1971 and was leased to Glencora in 1979 in exchange for the build of the ice rink.

I did a stall at the pool on one of the hottest days last summer, on 3 February, on a stinking hot Saturday afternoon, with a view to talking to people about their views on the pool. Unfortunately, the only person I had an hour-long conversation—even though it was a great conversation—around the history of the pool was with the previous manager. We were interrupted about three times by people going through. But, despite the heat of the hot summer day and despite the pool being open for business, little more than a handful of people attended. Even just two weeks ago, on a Friday afternoon—it was a really hot afternoon—I drove past Phillip pool and, again, only a handful of people were at the pool, whereas Stromlo pool was posting on their Facebook that their centre was at capacity and it was one person in and one person out.

I greatly appreciate the nostalgia for the pool and I greatly appreciate that Woden residents want to see a pool facility. But I do not believe that saving Phillip pool is necessarily a good community outcome. I also have never believed that a public pool at the bottom of a Geocon tower is necessarily a good community outcome. But I do very much believe that public pool facilities are very important for Woden residents. I conducted a community survey at the beginning of 2023. For a few weeks, I had a survey open inviting residents to provide their thoughts around a Woden pool. I received 127 responses and provided some of those responses in a submission to the ACT planning review consultation process. What was really clear through that consultation is just how important a pool is for Woden residents, with many writing to me with very fond memories of the site but also concerns for the site's redevelopment and what it would mean for the future of a pool facility in Woden.

Many people also provided some fantastic and creative recommendations. One response that I thought was particularly noteworthy and particularly important, and I put it on the record today:

Canberra would benefit from a large indoor all-year-round recreational aquatic centre with the emphasis on waterslides, wave pools, lagoon, pool cinema and bar, water play areas, spas and hot springs and themed pools.

Residents gave reasons why a public pool is essential to the community. I heard that people see a public pool as being a space for community-building. One person stated:

This pool is a great asset to the community, encouraging exercise and active lifestyles, learning opportunity for water safety and swimming, and fosters relationships and friendships through common interests.

Among community concerns provided to any development on the site was access to free and adequate parking and learn-to-swim facilities, as well as the inclusion of modern shower and changing facilities, the retention of green space, hydrotherapy facilities, children's pools, spa and sauna facilities.

Last week Geocon released their development application. It looks to me that Geocon have taken their lease conditions seriously, and that is a starting point. Now that the application process is open, I strongly encourage residents to provide a submission to this process. As I said, I see the true value of public swimming pools. Just about any time of day or night at CISAC in Belconnen it is a hive of activity of a vast range of activities. It is a true community facility, and I definitely want to see that type of centre accessible to people from Woden.

One of ACT Labor's election commitments was to see a new aquatic centre at Commonwealth Park. Ultimately, this pool will be a handful of light rail stops away from Woden, which will add to the options for Woden residents. I see Geocon's pool as a part of the pool story for Woden but not the full story. I welcome Ms Carrick's motion and Mr Steel's amendment.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Minister for Homes and New Suburbs and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (4.15): I am speaking in support of Minister Steel's amendment to Ms Carrick's motion this afternoon. I also commend Ms Carrick for her first motion in the Assembly, on the first sitting week of this government.

I have been chatting to a few people, including Marisa and others, that come from the Woden area about sports facilities, particularly the Woden pool and the ice rink, and the new commitment that has been made by Geocon through their development application. While this facility provides recreation and exercise for the community in the summer, the facility that is currently in place at Woden is only open for parts of summer, spring and autumn. The proposed development provides an indoor 25-metre pool and a mix of other facilities. What I loved as a parent when my children were younger were facilities just like that, where you did not have to paddle around in a 50-metre pool that was not suitable for families and young people.

The Woden area is growing and evolving, and families with young children are moving into the space. Having a facility like this is really important to them. Whether or not I have any kind of relationship at all with Geocon, they have said that they are going to build this pool and they have committed to keeping the ice rink open until we build another one. I will take them at their word, but they can defend themselves through this development application process and their communication with the community. As part of this modern facility, though, the provision of a lap swimming pool is only part of the mix, which is why I talked about my own experiences as a parent with younger children.

There is an assumption through this work that a recreational pool will not be considered at all in Woden's future. The Chief Minister said on 25 November in a Riotact article:

But, of course, Canberra will need a network of outdoor pools. There is one in Manuka and there is one in Dickson, there's Big Splash in Belconnen, so whether the south side may need an outdoor pool is something that we will look at.

And certainly we will look at that, including other recreational facilities, for the Woden area, a growth area in our city.

The existing requirement for the provision of a publicly accessible aquatic facility in Phillip in the Territory Plan is an important part of identifying a site in central Woden that would be suitable for an additional aquatic pool, including a 50-metre pool. I am happy to provide information that the motion calls for in writing with regard to the request that Ms Carrick has made. To sum up, Territory Plan requirements provide for aquatic facilities in the Woden area. While these requirements may have changed through reforms passed by the Tenth Legislative Assembly, they now provide for varied and accessible facilities for swimming, learning to swim, other pool programs and general recreation.

I commend Mr Steel's amendment to Ms Carrick's motion. I commit to responding to my parts of her motion that are of interest to me and to continue the conversation with Ms Carrick and other members from the south side.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (4.18): I will just make a few comments. I do want to work collaboratively with the government. Mr Steel does refer to the viability of a private sector pool. It is not clear to me why the Woden Town Centre cannot have a publicly funded pool. I do note that Mr Steel's amendment removes the timeframes around consultation and Geocon's purchase of the site. I am interested to know the role of the NCRDP. It looks at development. Is it its role to determine whether a pool provided to a community is privately funded or publicly funded?

Miss Nuttall, I support a multipurpose sports stadium—and I would go further and say an arts centre as well in Woden. Each town centre services big catchments and each one should have a 50-metre pool, an indoor sports stadium and an arts centre to service their communities.

Mr Cocks spoke about the use of the lease variation charge with up to 40 residential towers either built or in planning. There is a lot of lease variation charge there that could go towards a public pool. I do like Mr Steel's change that, rather than the DA, the government:

- (e) refers 'swimming pools in the Woden Valley District' to the relevant Assembly Standing Committee for it to consider undertaking an inquiry;

I look forward to starting this inquiry. I thank Mr Steel for his support and I accept his amendment to my motion.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Motion to take note of papers

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

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

Statements by members

Legal affairs and human rights

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.22): As we all experienced in the last election, there are significant winds for change blowing in the ACT, and nowhere is more keenly felt than in the law and justice space. For the sake of better law and justice outcomes to improve community safety for Canberrans, it is my honour and privilege to continue as shadow Attorney-General for the ACT. I will continue to engage with stakeholders and the community to ensure that the ACT's justice system is properly resourced and attentive to the needs of Canberrans and so that the Canberrans feel safe in their own homes.

I want to thank the opposition leader, Ms Castley, and deputy opposition leader Mr Hanson for their trust and confidence in me to continue to work towards better outcomes for Canberrans in the law, justice and human rights arenas. I want to also acknowledge the service of the former Attorney-General, Mr Rattenbury. I look forward to holding the new Attorney-General, Ms Cheyne, to account and engaging where possible on productive law reform. Hopefully, we can find some common ground.

World AIDS Day

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (4.23): I wish to speak today to World AIDS Day, which has been commemorated every 1 December since 1988. I do not believe I need to educate anyone here on how truly devastating the impact of HIV and AIDS has been and continues to be on many folks, including a range of marginalised communities and most notably, but certainly not limited to, queer communities around the world. The theme of this year is "Take the Rights Path," highlighting how the denial of basic human rights for queer people is preventing so many people from receiving the life-saving medical care they need and should be entitled to. It is an important reminder that the fight against bigotry and queerphobia is not just a social issue. The ability for people to live as their authentic selves is a fundamental human right and has a clear and evident impact on the health outcomes of both individuals and communities around the world.

Thank you to everyone who took time out of their weekend to come to the World AIDS Day memorial event at the National Arboretum. Thank you to Mr Andrew Robinson for a poignant and heartfelt speech about the role of the individual and the importance of showing support for people living with HIV, raising awareness about prevention, treatment and care, eliminating stigma, and mourning those we have lost from AIDS-related illness, and thank you to Mr Joshua Anlezark for a warm welcome.

Social policy and youth

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (4.24): I am tempted to use this time to reflect on the Speaker's remarks this morning regarding my choice of attire. Far from seeing myself as somehow bigger than this Assembly, as implied earlier today, my hope is that this Assembly can be bigger than issues of attire. I do thank the Speaker for permitting me to participate in debate, and I thank members for voting this morning, on the establishment of a social policy committee with intergenerational fairness included within its remit. I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to chair this important committee.

Too many young people in our community do not see a vibrant future for themselves. Some do not see a future for themselves at all. Many of our youth find themselves working multiple jobs, foregoing further studies, choosing not to start a family and leaving aside long-term aspirations to dedicate their efforts solely to securing for themselves a safe place to sleep. I believe it is incumbent upon people in power to do what is required to give young people a future they can feel excited about. Disagreements regarding attire aside, I hope that this is something that we can agree on in this place. Thank you.

Endometriosis—Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (4.25): I rise today to acknowledge the work that the federal government has done this week in listing the endometriosis drug Visanne on the Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme. Visanne is the first drug in 30 years for endometriosis to be listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme. I am only 31 years old, so that has been a huge time with no new treatments. Endometriosis is a disease that affects the lives of one in seven women in Australia. It is where tissue similar to the lining of the uterus is found in other organs throughout the body.

I myself have suffered with endometriosis for 20 years, so it is really wonderful to see this drug listed on the PBS. When I used to be on this, it would cost me \$80 a month for this drug. You have to take it every single day. You cannot stop taking it. Being listed on the PBS is going to save sufferers hundreds of dollars every year. I think this is a really great step forward in endo treatment. I really hope it is the start of something more with more treatment and research in the future and more government assistance into how we can make lives better for the sufferers of endo in Canberra and Australia.

Domestic and family violence—16 days of activism

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform) (4.27): I would like to speak today to mark the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. These 16 days started last week with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. I want to let the Canberra community know that this term my vision is very squarely focused on this violence, whether it is sexual violence, domestic and family violence or child abuse, and the many, many more circumstances and experiences of gender-based violence and discrimination in our community that perhaps do not fit those descriptions. I strongly encourage all members to take a stand against discrimination and violence and create a safer and more equitable Canberra.

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Genius Childcare

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.28): In the weeks leading up to this sitting week, I had always planned to make an adjournment speech on the first day of the sitting week around the deteriorating situation that surrounds Genius Childcare in the ACT. I have been engaging with parents and staff who are attached to those facilities for some months, certainly prior to the election. I am dismayed with what we are seeing unfold. I note the ABC media coverage of this story in the last 36 hours and, additionally, the motion coming from Ms Tough tomorrow, which I certainly welcome, but I still feel it is important to get some things on the record from me as a local member.

This is an extraordinary situation. Parents and staff have been communicating with me for weeks. They have raised the issue of non-payment of staff. They have raised the issue of non-payment of contractors, and they have raised many, many more issues. I have met with staff. I have had conversations with parents.

Genius took control of five centres in the ACT earlier in this calendar year when the change occurred from G8 to Genius. My understanding is that the entire workforce had to sign resignation letters to the previous owners before commencing under the new regime. The ACT centres are in Bonython, Symonston, Gungahlin, Conder and Gowrie. I would say that most of the communication I have had has come out of the Gowrie centre. Anecdotal evidence leads me to believe that the situation is similar at the other four centres, and certainly that anecdotal evidence includes the closure of the Symonston centre yesterday, but I would concede that I do not have serious intel from the other centres.

When the pays changed from weekly to fortnightly at Gowrie, I know that it took almost four weeks for the pays to land in accounts, with little or no communication. We are talking about a number of workers who we would classify as base salary workers, and to have a situation where you are four weeks without money going into your account is disastrous. This situation has happened on a number of occasions. I want to quote if I can, from a communication that I received from a staff member. Anne says, “We supported each other in the team by offering lifts for our educators who take buses and Ubers, and we offered food for our team who were struggling.” This is staff members supporting other staff members with the basic necessities of life. “We had team members who had to cancel medical appointments as they could not afford to go to them. This also included not being able to afford their medications.” The same staff member communicated to me soon after that the majority of the staff at the Gowrie centre had tendered resignations effective this coming Friday. So I do not know what happens after that. I am not sure.

During this period of engagement, I have written to the minister responsible for education in the ACT, and I have had a conversation with Ms Berry to raise my concerns. I have written to the national management of Genius Education Holdings, and in no uncertain terms called upon that company to pay their staff and their contractors on time, and to get back to the business of being a good employer. I have not received a response. I have met with Mr Smith, the federal member for Bean to discuss this matter, and indeed that happened to be the day that Mr Smith chose to make a 90 second statement on this issue in the federal parliament, which I certainly welcome. I have reached out to the national headquarters of United Workers Union who have

been doing what unions do in this space, and that is doing their best to support workers. I have also written to the Fair Work Commission to highlight a number of concerns.

I am speaking today as a local member about an issue that is having a profound effect on many of my constituents. At the briefing with the regulator, I did express my frustration that the regulator, the Fair Work Commission, the Tax Office and the relevant ministers all seem to be sitting up in the air traffic control watching this plane fly into a mountain. I just wish that more could be done. I look forward to further discussion tomorrow.

Multicultural affairs

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.32): I rise today to reflect on the tremendous privilege last term of being shadow minister for multicultural affairs. This portfolio was an absolute pleasure to hold, and I am so grateful for the inclusive, supportive and collaborative manner with which the many multicultural communities engaged me.

The many new friends and connections I have made, not just in my electorate of Ginninderra but across the ACT, within multicultural communities is incredible. As a practising Christian, I chose the opportunities to engage with other communities of faith and attend places of worship. I will continue to keep Canberra's Islamic, Hindu, Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist and other communities of faith in my thoughts and prayers as I did when I was shadow minister.

As many of you know, I am very happy to attend community events, and there is no sector that hosts community events like our multicultural community. From larger communities such as the Chinese, Indian, Nepalese and African communities to small communities such as the Anglo-Indian, Armenian, Afghan, Fijian and Jewish communities, and others, it was my pleasure to engage with so many welcoming communities across the ACT. I estimate that I attended hundreds of multicultural community events in the ACT over the course of my tenure as shadow minister.

The ACT multicultural community is kind, inclusive, compassionate and sharing. It is important that the government of the day truly recognises this and ensures these wonderful traits are reciprocated. I remain very proud of the policy package on multicultural affairs that the Canberra Liberals took to the recent election. Having conducted extensive rounds of consultation with community leaders and members, the Canberra Liberals sought to empower Canberra's multicultural community groups. We sought to better celebrate them and appreciate the positive impact they have on all of Canberra. The Canberra Liberals will continue to seek to empower, celebrate and appreciate the ACT's multicultural community.

It is with great pride that I am a member of the only party in this Assembly with any culturally and linguistically diverse members. I acknowledge my amazing colleagues and friends Elizabeth Lee MLA, Member for Kurrajong, and Chiaka Barry, newly elected member for Ginninderra, who represent their communities and stand for Liberal values. I acknowledge the campaigns of the many culturally and linguistically diverse Liberal candidates who stood at the recent election. It was so wonderful to work with them when I was able.

This Assembly is supportive. It is supposed to be representative of the ACT community, which includes an increasing number of culturally and linguistically diverse Canberrans. While I no longer hold the role of shadow minister, my deep respect and commitment for multicultural communities will remain, and I know that my successor, the wonderful Ms Barry, will do an outstanding job as the new shadow minister for multicultural affairs. Ms Barry, as many would know, is a community leader in her own right within the African community here in Canberra. I encourage all multicultural community members and stakeholders to reach out to her and connect. I am sure they will get a great welcome. I would also wish Mr Pettersson well in his role as the new Minister for Multicultural Affairs. I acknowledge the service of Ms Cheyne and Mr Gentleman, who each previously held the role during the last term. When the government serves the multicultural community well, all Canberrans will benefit.

In closing, thank you, thank you, thank you to all our wonderful Canberrans who make up our multicultural communities. Thank you for opening the doors of your culture and your faith and helping us to understand you better and being open to understand the non-multicultural communities better as well. We are one society.

Brindabella electorate—tributes

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS (Brindabella) (4.37): I wish to express my personal gratitude, and that of many of the people of Brindabella, for the exemplary work and strong legacies left by Joy Burch and Mick Gentleman as Labor members for the electorate.

Mick Gentleman represented Brindabella from 2004 to 2008, and again from 2012 to 2024. To say that he made a significant, positive contribution to Brindabella and the ACT as a representative and a minister would not be gilding the lily. His legacy and extensive ministerial portfolio is one of integrity and dedication to public service. If he were standing here, I am sure Mick would have me highlight achievements that I might be missing; but, for me, his work with and for the ACT's first responders, particularly his leadership during the Black Summer fires of 2019, was tireless and outstanding. If there was nothing else, that would be enough.

Joy Burch leaves a legacy for Brindabella and the ACT Legislative Assembly defined by unwavering commitment and transformative leadership. Joy represented Brindabella from 2008 to 2024. She finished her time in this building as the longest-serving Speaker in its history, a role she embraced with grace, dedication and steel. As a minister, she delivered significant achievements in education, health care and social justice. As a representative, her commitment to public service and unwavering dedication to the people of Brindabella have set the standard for Caitlin and me. She has been a massive source of moral and political support for me over the past 18 months, and I hope she understands how much I value her.

I would also like to acknowledge Nicole Lawder, a neighbour of mine, who, hopefully, was happy to hand over the weighty yet unofficial role of member for Fadden. For the record, I doorknocked many people in Fadden who did not want her to give it up. I look forward to continuing her regular "clean up Fadden Pond" events, using the skimmer that she has offered me, and I hope she comes along to one or two as a guest of honour.

I will take the moments left to me this afternoon to give a big valet and thank you to 2024, as its days run away from us like wild horses over the hills. I have had many good years in my life; 2024 is right up there. I will remember it fondly until the end of recorded history. In April, our family went on the two-week trip of our children's lifetimes to southern Africa. That, in itself, makes 2024 a good year.

At its beginning, I got to direct and not quite star in *Shakespeare by the Lakes V: Henry V*, staging it as I have imagined it since 2001. Far be it from me to blow a Mulga-Bill-type horn, but Arne Fealing in *CityNews* suggested that it was “fabulously told by a cast bursting with energy and passion” and “quite the directorial debut for director Taimus Werner-Gibbings”. I had a bit of a blub with happiness, creative exhaustion and sadness at the end of that. Lesson learnt: never achieve more than a half-lifelong dream—which is good, because I have only been chasing election for a decade.

To make the people of Brindabella's cut as one of their representatives is a humbling and motivating feeling. To its residents, thank you for handing me the baton of public service. I spoke this morning in my first speech about why doing my best to help Brindabella to be the best it can be is the reason I am in this building for the next four years, but I did not speak about all the supportive or at least thought-provoking conversations I have had with my now constituents over the past three election campaigns.

The best bit about knocking on doors is meeting lovely people, like the couple in Fadden who invited me in for some wine and chocolate—my blood sugar was a bit low—and who told me that she had taught with my father at Lake Tuggeranong College and he had been a patient of my Mum's; or Timothy, who lives 70 metres up the road from me and is a manager of Ambrosia Distillery—a very good person to meet at his door and start a relationship with; or Imogen. Thirty years ago, we lived on the same street in Weston, where I used to play street cricket with her brothers all summer, every summer, and now we live in the same suburb. There was Michael, who was my best friend in Weston Primary School, and now his kids and my daughter are at Fadden Primary School together. And that is just Fadden. There are brilliant people in Wanniasa, Gordon, Calwell, Kambah, Bonython, Monash, Gilmore and Gowrie—in every suburb in Tuggeranong.

The reason I know there are so many wonderful people is because either I or one of my team have probably had a conversation with them. What a team! Cathy, Ben, Jacob and Chris won this campaign. They were immense, and I am very excited that they are joining me in the office for the next few years. We will pull up trees and shake them. If Glenn was his own campaign, he would have been sixth in all ACT Labor campaigns with doors knocked. Brett, who I doorknocked in 2016, joined me in that campaign, has volunteered at every *Shakespeare by the Lakes* and is and was the rock of 2020 and 2024.

Michael and Lynette, Cerri, Karen and the Johnstones, the Sergis, Frank and Gonnie, Alan, Joann, Trevor, Michael, Darcy, Uncle Tim, Will, Bruce, Kerry, Liz, Vivienne: all are the reasons I have been elected. Margaret—and Ian—has supported me from the start and has been setting up my office to work effectively for the past four weeks. Tim W, David, Andrew, Mum and Dad, Keagan, Roland, Anton and Tim C have been donors since 2016. David is a very intelligent, unabashedly reactionary bloke that I love to death.

He nominated me for Wesley College Senior Student in 2001, which was a bit of a moment. If people who do not agree with me think I am still worth being a part of the decision-making process, maybe I could involve myself in the decision-making process.

Due to various reasons, I was behind in my fundraising for this campaign, until I had a conversation with Tim; then I was in front. He is a member of the National Party on the mid-north coast of New South Wales. He has been a friend of mine since the year 2000, and I am very glad he came to my swearing-in.

Tony Burke, Andrew Leigh and Lisa Singh are my models and inspiration. This Labor team, led by Andrew Barr, are my tutors and support. I have landed in a brilliant team of thoughtful and dedicated people. I will do everything I can to help them make the best decisions they can for Canberra. I send my gratitude to the entire Labor Party office—Ash, Toby and Sandra—who organised, fielded requests and worked tirelessly to ensure a Labor government.

To my co-candidates Brendan and Louise, I commend you both for your campaigns. It was an honour to get sunburnt with you all at pre-poll. To the Assembly's staff, to everyone in this building, I look forward to working with you and alongside you all. To my colleagues in this nice room, I am looking forward to agreeing with some of you some of the time, disagreeing agreeably with some of you at other times, and working with all of you to ensure Canberrans can enjoy the best possible outcomes from their local government.

I say to the extended Gibbings rels: you are a wonderful family. Thank you for being fabulous, interesting and all over the place so that we can travel to visit you. I will see you all on Saturday. I say to my colleagues in the Southeast Asia Branch at International Policy Division in Defence and the champions in the Critical Technology Section at Industry: dedicated public servants like you are the essence of good government. It was my honour and pleasure to be your teammate.

Finally, I want to mention Epicurus. He is my favourite philosopher. He knew what was important. Friendship is what is important. "Of all the things which wisdom provides to make us entirely happy," he said, "much the greatest is the possession of friendship."

The second-best thing about my life after Libby, and Cesc, Henson and Octavia—okay, the third-best thing about my life—is all the friends we have. Ryan and Enita from Lake Tuggeranong College have been there since I rocked up to their table and asked to sit next to them in April 1998. They have helped me on each campaign. Neil, Chris, Danny, Tim and Duan from Wesley College: see you on the beach this time next year.

To all my mates from Sydney Uni Footy Club, but especially the Squinters: forever and always. We might not catch up in person too soon—although Roland's wedding in South Africa was probably enough—but the Giants are playing in just a few months time and the Facebook thread will start again.

The MacFadden crew: I never imagined having such a wonderful, funny, fun-loving bunch of people as neighbours who we get to spend an evening or a weekend laughing with at least once a month. We are so lucky. No pressure, Amber, but it has been nearly a week since our last dinner. Judith and Eric are my best fans. Keagan is my best friend.

Cesc, Henson and Octavia are the best of me. Libby is the best. Thank you one, thank you all. I wish everyone, everywhere, happy everything.

Domestic and family violence—16 days of activism
International Day of People with Disability—inclusion awards

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (4.46): I rise this evening to speak on two topics. The first, as Dr Paterson discussed during 90-second statements, is the annual 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, which commenced on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and which runs through to 10 December, Human Rights Day. It is an annual excuse to get my nails painted orange; but, of course, it is much more serious than that.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the UN General Assembly’s designation of 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women; yet we are still living in a world where, every 10 minutes, a woman or girl is intentionally killed by a partner, former partner or family member. As UN Women says, “The crisis of gender-based violence is urgent,” around the world, around our nation and in our own community.

We know there is more to do, and we all have a role to play, which is perhaps a segue to acknowledge that today is also the International Day of People with Disability, or I-Day. It is an uncomfortable segue because, sadly, women with disability are even more likely to experience violence and abuse in their lifetime than other women—a reminder that our solutions must be inclusive and built on the diversity of lived experience. They must be, as the I-Day theme proclaims, “transformative solutions”.

The segue is also because the international day, or I-Day, is another UN-sanctioned day, marked each year on 3 December. The full theme in 2022 was “transformative solutions for inclusive development—the role of innovation in fuelling an accessible and equitable world”. I thought that was very apropos when we looked at the winners of this year’s Chief Minister’s Inclusion Awards, so many of whom have been fuelling transformative solutions in our own communities.

A lot of people were nominated for the awards this year, and I will not read out the full list of nominees, but I do encourage people to check out the Chief Minister’s Inclusion Awards website to see all of the incredible people who were nominated for their contributions to the ACT community.

I want particularly to recognise the winners of the awards. The Leader in Inclusion, Ravi Krishnamurthy, has been a relentless force for change in the Canberra community for more than 20 years and has actively advocated across legislative reform, improvement in equality in health services and creating meaningful change in his community.

The winner of the Excellence in Inclusive and Innovative Employment Practices was the Apollo Neurodiversity Program, which offers neurodivergent individuals a career in ICT within the Australian public service. It provides professional development, support and coaching for a year, fostering a diverse workforce dedicated to Australia’s prosperity and security.

The Safer Me Safer You Project Advisory Group won the Excellence in Collaborating with People with Disability Award. This is very much related to the earlier conversation. The Safer Me Safer You Advisory Group, by Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT, has set a benchmark for inclusive co-design. All with lived experience of disability, the group is helping to co-design a future where people with disability, inclusive of all identities, experience social and sexual safety.

The winner of the Excellence in Access and Inclusion Award was Netball ACT. Many of us will be familiar with Netball ACT's All Abilities Netball program. In 2024 the program enabled people with disability to play netball in a mainstream competition and enjoy the physical, psychological and social benefits of the game. From weekly competition to competing in the Marie Little Shield championship, the organisation really exemplifies inclusivity in sport.

The winner of the Excellence in Innovation and Impact Award was Derek Brewer. Derek is the founder of the Panache Special Needs Driver Training Program, which supports neurodivergent learner drivers and other learner drivers with disability, and the program is really tailored to the individual.

I want to pay a particular tribute to the winner of the Sue Salthouse Award for Championing Human Rights and Equality—going back to where we started. I was absolutely thrilled to see Renée Heaton win this award this year, being recognised within a group of incredible finalists, and being recognised by her community for, as the acknowledgement says, being a powerful, impactful advocate and leader, who has led the ACT Disability Reference Group for almost four years. Her strategic advice guided the government in responding to the needs of people with disability during COVID-19, in an effort to ensure vital information services and supports were accessible to all.

Renée has also been instrumental in helping to develop the ACT Disability Strategy, the ACT Disability Health Strategy, the Inclusive Education Strategy, the next iteration of the Disability Justice Strategy action plan, and in the work that has been so vital over the last few years to deliver NDIS, to manage the process of NDIS reforms and the development and implementation of Australia's Disability Strategy.

Finally, in relation to I-Day, I want to recognise, as Ms Orr talked about in question time, that this is the first year that I-Day will be and is community controlled. I was a small part of that transition. I want to recognise that the transition of I-Day to community control commenced under the former Minister for Disability. Emma played a big role in this, and it is now Ms Orr who is finalising that transition of I-Day to community control. I want to recognise Advocacy for Inclusion, Women with Disabilities and others who have taken that opportunity and are now running with it, to deliver a community-controlled event that will uplift the voice of people with disability in I-Day and deliver for the community, in line with all our aspirations for the day.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.54 pm.