



DEBATES
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DAILY HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

14 May 2025

This is an **EDITED PROOF TRANSCRIPT** of proceedings that is subject to further checking. Members' suggested corrections for the official *Weekly Hansard* should be lodged in writing with the Hansard office no later than **Tuesday, 27 May 2025**.

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MR SPEAKER (Mr Parton) (10.00): Members:

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

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.

Legislative Assembly—points of order

Statement by Speaker

MR SPEAKER: Members, in yesterday's debate on the motion moved by Ms Clay in support of Big Splash, several points of order were made to the Deputy Speaker. In relation to one point of order made by Mr Hanson about unparliamentary language, the matter was resolved by Ms Berry withdrawing. Mr Steel took a point of order asking that the comments made by Mr Cain be reviewed to ascertain whether they were misleading. I have reviewed the comments made by Mr Cain and I cannot find any misleading comments. However, I remind members that standing order 47 is available to allow members to be heard again to explain where some material part of a speech has been misquoted or misunderstood. Also, Ms Berry asked whether Mr Cain's words, "We will be watching you," were unparliamentary. The uncorrected proof transcript shows that Mr Cain said:

Let us keep Big Splash operating. We will be holding the minister to account for the comments he has made this afternoon, where he seemed to suggest that that is their commitment. We will be watching, Minister, to make sure you follow through with that.

Standing orders 54 and 55 state:

Offensive words

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

Personal reflections

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

Also, standing order 57 provides:

When the attention of the Speaker is drawn to words used, the Speaker shall

determine whether ... they are offensive or disorderly.

I do not believe that they are. Having considered the matter, I do not believe that there is any further action that I need to take. Thank you, members. Try to be on your best behaviour.

Petitions

The following petition and e-petition were lodged for presentation:

Canberra High school—air conditioning—petitions 13-25 and 25-25

By **Miss Nuttall**, from 430 and 85 residents, respectively:

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

This petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention of the Assembly that: Canberra High School is far too hot and doesn't have a complete or fully working cooling system.

A member of staff took a thermometer to school, and it showed that the one of the classrooms was 31.3 degrees. This is far too hot for inside a building. Most of the classrooms don't have cooling, or it's broken, or there are ceiling fans in a couple of classrooms but they do little to nothing. One of the teachers said in class that he leaves the window open overnight to try and cool the room but that still isn't always enough. One of the LSAs said that when she was at school before Covid they said that they were working on the aircon but now over 6 years later there still is not sufficient cooling. The sound and lighting booth is also very hot. It is a little room at the back of the hall where the lights, speaker, microphones and projectors are controlled by the student Sound and Lighting Crew for assemblies. It has no airflow, cooling or fan and is extremely hot.

Students have no choice in coming to school therefore it is unfair that our learning environment is unsafe. The week school started in 2025 the temperatures were all mid to high 30s. Because climate change will make it even hotter it is important for the Government to make sure that schools have enough air conditioning so we can learn in a safe temperature.

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to put air conditioning in all the classrooms and other spaces like the sound and lighting booth at Canberra High School before next summer.

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

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petitions, having at least 500 signatories, were referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

Motion to take note of petitions

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

That the petitions so lodged be noted.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (10.04): The state of public school infrastructure right now is not acceptable. There is no way to gloss over it, and anyone saying otherwise is simply not looking at what is actually happening on the ground. One of the best examples of this is the lack of adequate heating and cooling in so many public schools in Canberra.

I thank Rose—the wonderful Canberra High School student and principal petitioner—who is in the chamber today, for putting forward and driving this petition. We need students to be in an environment where they can learn safely and comfortably. All we are hearing is that it is not. Students and teachers alike are about to have to bundle up with layer after layer in winter, and, as this petition has shown us, they have no alternative but to try to survive through the searing temperatures of summer.

Rose's petition speaks about an LSA who took the temperature inside their classroom during summer and found that it was over 30 degrees. She spoke about a couple of her fellow students who were feeling faint in the classroom. How can anyone hear that and think that a student can learn, be comfortable or achieve their potential in that situation? I am wondering how government could have gone for six years without identifying and fixing the problem.

Here is the thing: students cannot just get up and move when they are overheating. We expect them to grin and bear it, and, at the same time, we expect them to be model students who are receptive to education and democratically empowered. Students should not have to advocate for the bare minimum and for government to do its core business, but we have not really left them with a choice.

As it happens, our principal petitioner took it upon herself to spend her lunchtimes rallying for signatures and support, putting together posters and standing outside shopping centres garnering support from the Belco community. It was a herculean effort. I am grateful to Rose that she, and the 515 people who signed these two petitions, had enough faith in this institution to trust us to take action.

We are at a point where so many teachers are leaving the field because of poor conditions. We hear about occupational violence. We hear about hours that are far beyond what is expected in a job. We hear about the lack of pay progressions. But do we hear about the impact on teachers of trying to get a classroom of overheated and cranky students to care about Japanese history, the muscular system or Van Gogh? Do we consider how hard it is to get students to care about *Othello*, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* or the ACT political system—which are all bangers, by the way—if they cannot stop their teeth chattering? This is a work safety issue and it is a question of dignity, because we would not expect any other public servants to work in these conditions.

We know that the Australian Education Union's ACT branch have been vocal advocates for fixing our heating and cooling in public schools for a long time. It was one of their priorities in the pledge they asked candidates to sign in the lead-up to the

last territory election. We know that the ACT Council of P&C Associations have been staunch advocates, too. I note that Ms Lee, who is in the chamber, has been a staunch advocate for heating and cooling in public schools.

This is a problem at Canberra High School, and I certainly hope the government takes prompt action to respond to the issues outlined in this petition. More work needs to be done on ageing school infrastructure across Canberra. Certainly, it is a huge issue in my electorate of Brindabella. It comes up all the time when I am chatting to parents in the community. In fact, it is the first thing that a lot of them bring up. This is a systemic issue. If the government needs us to present them with a separate petition for each and every school where this is an issue, we will do it—straight up, we will do it—but my sincere hope is that this petition will show that not enough is being done and it will spark a more systemic response, not just a case-by-case response.

This petition is an amazing example of young people seeing an issue and taking action on it. They have effectively used a political tool to force us into action. In addition to the calls in this petition, we should also remember how important actively engaging with young people is. Young people are politically active, even without having to vote yet. We need to ensure that we hear their voices and take them seriously when they speak up, as Rose and Canberra High School students have. If not, we will end up with a generation that is disengaged from the political process. If we want politics to matter to young people, issues like those raised in this petition are exactly the kinds of issues on which we need to take action.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.09): I want to add to Miss Nuttall's words and say "well done" to the brilliant 16-year-old young person, Rose, for getting involved in making a difference. I would like to talk for a few minutes about Rose and her petition. Rose is in year 10 in Canberra High School this year. She came home from school on her first day of year 10 this year and said that it was absolutely boiling inside the classrooms. Her mum asked, "How hot is hot?" so she took in a thermometer and measured it. It was over 30 degrees inside. Rose said, "What can I do? We don't have air con and the teachers said they can't do anything about it, and they can't even open the windows because they are all bolted shut."

Rose asked around and discovered that the school was supposed to have had the air conditioning fixed since before COVID, when ventilation was found to be lacking. For context—for us adults, for whom time seems to pass differently than it does for kids—Rose is currently in year 10 and was in year 5 when COVID hit, so she has spent her entire time at high school with known inadequate ventilation that has not yet been fixed. Despite being in year 10 and knowing she was unlikely to see it improve while she was still at high school, Rose decided to do something to make it better for the kids who will come to Canberra High School after she has left. We have at least 19 signatures on this petition from the kids at Macquarie Primary School, some of whom realise that they are heading to Canberra High School and they would quite like air conditioning when they get there.

Rose decided to start a petition. She went through all the MLAs on the website to choose someone she thought could help. She was especially taken by Miss Nuttall because she is also a young person, and she saw that she was the Greens education spokesperson. Gen Z representation really matters. Rose contacted Miss Nuttall's

office and asked for help. She then spent many lunchtimes gathering the signatures of her fellow students and some teachers. She got her friends involved in gathering signatures and she brought them to Miss Nuttall and to me, and we all gathered together at the Jammo shops after school a few weeks ago. She set herself a target of 500 and she has exceeded that. That was so well done.

Climate change is making our climate hotter later in the year. We used to get temperatures in the high 30s in summer. Now the high 30s are lingering until late into autumn, when the kids are back in the classrooms. It is unreasonable to require our young people to learn in an environment without adequate ventilation and without adequate cooling. Perhaps one of the petition calls should have been to make the Legislative Assembly not have functioning air conditioning until Canberra High School does! Kids have no option but to be at school. The least we can do is make it a reasonable temperature inside, and over 30 degrees is not reasonable.

I also point out that Canberra High School does not seem to have solar panels yet. That would also be a valuable addition. This is part of our climate adaptation response and we need to up our game. We need to better coordinate and help our facilities to adapt to the climate changes we already have locked in.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Coronial inquest into the death of Sharyn Kaine

Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (10.12): I rise today to table Coroner Ken Archer's report on the inquest into the death of Sharyn Kaine and present the government response to the Coroner's report. I recognise that members of Sharyn Kaine's family are here with us in the chamber today. I thank them for being here and express my condolences directly to them.

Sharyn Kaine was 73 and a much-loved mother and grandmother who died during her admission to Canberra Hospital in October 2021. I start by acknowledging Sharyn's family and the devastating impact of losing her. On behalf of the ACT government, I extend my sincere condolences to the family and apologise for the shortcomings in care that resulted in Sharyn's death.

Sharyn Kaine's death was referred to the Coroner on the day she died. I recognise it has been a long wait for all involved to hear these findings, including Sharyn's family. In finalising the inquest into Sharyn's death, Coroner Archer found that there were matters of public safety arising from the evidence given at the inquest. Coroner Archer made one recommendation for Canberra Health Services. The government has accepted this recommendation.

After review in the emergency department at the then Calvary public hospital in Bruce, it was clinically decided that Sharyn required transfer to Canberra Hospital to undergo surgery. After successful surgery, Sharyn was provided with the standard dose of paracetamol. The dosage of paracetamol that was administered to Sharyn should have been adjusted for her body weight. This only happened for one dose, and

the subsequent cumulative impact of the administered dosage resulted in her collapsing on 7 October 2021. Despite admission to the intensive care unit and the efforts of the clinical team to stabilise her, Sharyn suffered liver failure and continued to deteriorate. Tragically, Sharyn died on 9 October 2021 of paracetamol-induced liver failure. On behalf of the ACT government, I acknowledge the shortcomings that resulted in Sharyn's death and again sincerely apologise to her family and loved ones.

When handing down his report following the inquest into Sharyn's death, Coroner Archer found the procedures Canberra Health Services had in place at the time were insufficient and that this was a matter of public safety. Sharyn's death and this inquest are a timely reminder that all medications may have serious side effects at the incorrect dosage. As the Coroner highlighted in his report, Canberra Health Services is a different organisation today than it was at the time of Sharyn's death. The Coroner outlined the changes in policies and procedures and the introduction of the Digital Health Record, or DHR. The Coroner outlined:

... the functionality of the DHR, which highlighted, amongst other things, the capacity of the DHR to identify potential overdoses before they occurred.

The Coroner also noted:

The potential of the DHR to address the incidence of overdosing in a hospital setting is acknowledged.

I have previously highlighted the benefits of the DHR and the positive outcomes it has had for the territory. From a medication management perspective, there are dosage limitations built into the system that alert staff to a dose that deviates from the programmed rules. During Sharyn's admission, the dosage for paracetamol was adjusted at one point in time but not carried forward through her admission. If Sharyn were admitted today, her paracetamol order would go through a series of checks in the DHR and alert staff to support clinician decision-making. In Sharyn's case, the built-in weight-dosage check would have alerted staff that the dosage was too high and would have recommended an adjusted dose.

In providing his recommendation to the ACT government, the Coroner asked that Canberra Health Services publish data to demonstrate that the DHR is providing a safer environment for patients. As a part of the continual journey of improving patient safety, Canberra Health Services reports and reviews clinical incidents, including those related to medications, using a system called RiskMan. Rates of medication incidents are monitored through Canberra Health Services governance structures, supporting robust clinical incidents reporting and review.

Canberra Health Services and the ACT Health Directorate have identified an opportunity to strengthen and automate this reporting in future through DHR, with options currently being investigated for implementation. In response to this recommendation, the Canberra Health Services annual report will also include publication of the rate of serious adverse medication incidents—harm score 1 and harm score 2 incidents. This includes non-fatal outcomes and will commence with the Canberra Health Services annual report for 2024-25.

In closing, I once again acknowledge Sharyn's family and the daily grief they experience as a result of her death. The safety mechanisms provided by the DHR are intended to prevent this from happening again. The ACT government will continue to investigate ways to address the healthcare needs of the community by prioritising patient safety. This will ensure we are reducing risk and maintaining the trust of the community.

I present the following papers:

Coroners Act, pursuant to section 57—Report of Coroner—Inquest into the death of Sharyn Kaine—

Report, dated 16 September 2024.

Government response, undated.

Government response—Ministerial statement, 14 May 2025.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

National Volunteer Week

Ministerial statement

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) (10.20): National Volunteer Week is from 19 to 25 May, so today I rise to recognise and acknowledge the enormous impact volunteers have on improving the health and wellbeing of communities, not just in the ACT but in Australia and worldwide.

It is no secret that volunteering is a way of life in Australia, and it has been an entrenched part of Australian culture for decades. In a report released in 2020 by Volunteering Australia, it was estimated that, across Australia, over five million people volunteered through an organisational group. This was almost one-quarter of people aged 15 years and over. As the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, I would like to recognise the volunteers within my ministerial portfolio.

ACT Emergency Services Agency volunteers are approximately 1,500 members strong. These include members from the ACT SES, the Rural Fire Service, the community fire units, Mapping and Planning Support, ESA chaplains, the ACT Fire Brigade Historical Society, and and ESA Pipes and Drums. I would also like to celebrate the 58 Australian Federal Police volunteers who support policing in the ACT. I have had the great pleasure of meeting some on my travels. Some have spent decades volunteering and are often the first person you will meet when you come into one of the ACT stations.

While National Volunteer Week is an opportunity to bring our volunteers into the spotlight, it is important to recognise that each of these volunteer groups provide

critical capabilities that enable the ESA and ACT police to care for and protect the community all year round, making it one of the safest communities in the world. I am always reminded of the diverse and important roles that volunteers undertake. Whether it be helping people in the most vulnerable situations, such as storm or flood damage, braving the extreme heat and challenging conditions during bushfires, or gathering the intelligence and data we need to inform operational responses, our volunteers are always ready and willing to put their community first. The work of our volunteers can never be underestimated. The energy and commitment that our volunteers give during their time away from families and in undertaking training in order to be ready to protect the community are to be commended.

There is no doubt that, in the last few years, there have been difficult times for people in Canberra, as there have been for many across Australia. In the last few years, we have experienced some of the most extreme weather events. All the while, our volunteers have continued to provide the necessary support to our community, sometimes outside their core roles. I am consistently in awe of the commitment and the willingness of our volunteers who take time out of their own lives to come together, day in and day out, no matter the situation. Their support is unwavering and it is a testament to the compassionate and resilient characteristics of the volunteers and the families who support them.

ACT Policing's Volunteers in Policing Program, known as the VIP Program, has a long and esteemed history in operating within the ACT. As with all ESA volunteers, ACT Policing has been lucky to continually welcome fantastic members who have brought a wealth of skills, knowledge and experience to the ACT Policing family since the VIP Program commenced in December 2001. The members of the VIP Program have collected numerous accolades over the years at the ACT Volunteering Awards and continue to positively impact ACT Policing members and the community more broadly.

The volunteers often serve as the face of ACT Policing, providing administrative assistance in the front offices of the ACT's five police stations and assisting in official community events. The volunteers also support police officers behind the scenes with role-playing for police recruitment and detective training and catering for various other training events. This volunteer effort has amounted to approximately 14½ thousand hours during 2024.

All police volunteers are introduced to fingerprint training on their induction course. If interested, volunteers are then provided with further training. The role involves fingerprinting members of the public who require prints for employment checks, visas, immigration or permanent residency applications. Currently, there are nine volunteers actively taking consensual fingerprints on behalf of ACT police.

The VIP Program currently has 54 members who perform the role of justice of the peace, either at the front office of police stations or on the justice of the peace on-call roster for police officers. It is not only the variety of tasks and roles that police volunteers perform that motivates them to turn up day in and day out; the volunteers will tell you that it is the long-lasting friendships they have made with police officer colleagues and with other volunteers that they appreciate the most, together with a shared commitment to providing the best service for those who need it and the

satisfaction of giving back to the community.

The theme for this year's National Volunteer Week is "Connecting Communities". The week is about recognising and celebrating the contributions made by millions of volunteers across our country. We have seen firsthand the connections made by our emergency services volunteers across Australian communities and the sheer selflessness that our volunteers have displayed when assisting during some of the most critical incidents.

I have been privileged to see firsthand the great work of our volunteers and the new ideas and innovation they have brought to their respective services. Since my appointment as Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, I have continued the work of my predecessors in attending regular meetings with the ESA volunteer groups and paying close attention to the diverse matters that they raise. These meetings are a forum for our volunteers to engage in meaningful and transparent consultation in relation to matters that are likely to affect them and have resulted in ongoing positive dealings with the volunteers within my portfolio.

In response to their feedback, the ACT government is committed to improving the experience of our emergency services volunteers through investing in improved facilities, up-to-date vehicles, quality training, appropriate recognition and welfare support at all stages of their volunteering careers. The ACT government continually invests in the personal and professional development of our volunteers. Volunteers have access to nationally accredited training in a broad range of capabilities to support the community, as well as informal workshops and welfare support.

As volunteers are an integral part of the emergency services workforce—over half of the ESA workforce—the ESA has developed a suite of documents to support the commissioner's guidelines which articulate the standard of conduct expected of all ESA volunteers and staff to promote a safe, inclusive and supportive culture in which to carry out all their critical work. This process is aligned with the volunteer standards across all services and provides a consistent framework and policy setting for the management of volunteers. It is anticipated that this work will enable our volunteers to be better supported, no matter which service they belong to or what situation they may encounter.

Being a volunteer with an emergency service is not like any other volunteering role across the ACT. However, like other volunteering roles, the rewards are many. They include learning new skills, a sense of fulfilment, making new friends, making a difference in our community and, importantly, feeling recognised and appreciated. The volunteers of the ACT SES have provided unwavering support to the Canberra community and communities across Australia over past years, culminating in the recent season when we saw tropical cyclones and flooding events impacting much of the east coast of Australia. Despite a busy season, ACT SES volunteers continue to give up their time for training and operational responses all year round. Over the past year, ACT SES volunteers collectively volunteered more than 105,000 hours to ensure the safety of our community. The value of this incredible work is estimated at over \$2.7 million, which represents the cost if paid staff were to undertake the same tasks.

The volunteers from the ACT Rural Fire Service continue to train and provide critical

services to the ACT in preparation for and response to bushfires and grassfires all year round. The Rural Fire Service volunteers stand ready, as always, to defend Canberra residents and their properties against the threat of bushfire and reduce the risks faced by everyone in our community. The ACT Rural Fire Service volunteers also gave up valuable time over the past season to support nationwide efforts with fires, storms and floods, and, during the off-season, they were deployed internationally.

In addition to operational responses and training commitments, the ACT RFS has invested in volunteer development and leadership programs through the establishment of the Women's Network. Being volunteer-led, the Women's Network is a community of practice that supports and connects women across the Rural Fire Service with the aim of building confident leaders by sharing skills, experiences and differences. The Women's Network is inclusive of all members, not just women. Men who are allies of their female colleagues in their volunteering careers are welcome to participate. I would also like to acknowledge the work of the ACT SES Volunteers Association and the Rural Fire Service Volunteer Brigades Association for the work they do in assisting the ESA to prioritise the welfare of our SES and Rural Fire Service volunteers.

The Mapping and Planning Support program, MAPS, began in 2005 with six volunteers, and I am incredibly impressed to see that the idea was not only embraced by the geospatial information profession in Canberra back then but has been sustained and has now grown to become one of the largest registers of volunteer geospatial information specialists and professionals nationally, with approximately 50 volunteers today. ESA MAPS volunteers provide situational awareness support through enhancing the agency's utilisation of mapping and geospatial intelligence technologies across all emergencies. Established over 20 years ago, MAPS is now a key capability enabler for the ESA. The volunteers are spatial information professionals who are experts in the field of mapping and have worked on a volunteer basis to support the Canberra community for a long time.

The Community Fire Unit volunteers continue to train and prepare for the high-risk weather season and raise community awareness of their role in supporting our local neighbourhoods. This is a critical element of the agency's overall program to build community resilience. These activities have included training refreshers with ACT Fire & Rescue operational crews and training exercises with other services, along with community events for Be Emergency Ready campaigns.

While most of the ESA volunteers assist in the prevention, planning, preparedness and response to emergency incidents, there are other volunteer members who are just as dedicated and offer a fantastic extension to ESA volunteering services. These are the ESA chaplains, the ACT Fire Brigade Historical Society volunteers and the ESA Pipes and Drums. The ESA's volunteer chaplains provide denominational and non-denominational support across the whole ESA. The chaplains provide an important and valued support service for frontline workers and are available both during and immediately after significant events or incidents. The chaplains also provide facilitated group activity sessions for workers and their families, such as arts and crafts, yoga, meditation and coffee catch-ups.

The ACT Fire Brigade Historical Society volunteers maintain a fantastic museum of

historical Canberra fire service artefacts and information connected to the history of the ACT. Volunteers, on a rotational basis, attend the museum to enable access, opening to the public each Saturday and on other dates for special events. I encourage everyone in the chamber to visit the museum in Kingston. The museum volunteers maintain and value a close connection to the ESA, primarily ACT Fire & Rescue, hosting several events, courses and functions each year. ESA Pipes and Drums is also a dedicated group of talented individuals who volunteer their services at ESA's ceremonial and protocol events. Their volunteers provide an interactive, accessible and musical environment at ESA events and community engagement activities.

In closing, I reiterate that volunteers are the lifeblood of the Australian community. I say to every one of our volunteers: thank you very much for the work you do for our community. Thank you for the selfless contributions you make to delivering the critical services that keep us all safe. I thank your employers, who release you and allow you to support your community. Mostly, I thank your friends and family, who sacrifice critical time with you and support you to continue volunteering.

I present the following paper:

National Volunteers Week—Ministerial statement, 14 May 2025.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Aged care—Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre—update Statement by minister

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (10.34): I rise to make a statement in response to an Assembly motion from last week and to provide the Assembly with an update on the future of Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre and the ACT government's work with the commonwealth to ensure ongoing availability of respite for older people in the medium term.

To provide the bottom line up front, I have been working with the ACT Health Directorate and my colleagues, and I can advise that the directorate is now preparing the necessary paperwork for the delegate to consider a single select tender for the Salvation Army to continue the delivery of the Burrangiri respite service for a further two years.

As has been canvassed well in this place, the decision to close the Burrangiri facility was not made lightly, and it carefully considered the fact that the 35-year-old facility would need significant refurbishment to extend its useful life and bring it up to modern standards and requirements for the delivery of respite in the medium term. This remains the case. This came together with the scheduled expiry of the Salvation Army's contract on 30 June 2025 and the clear advice from the ACT Health Directorate in December 2024 recommending against further extensions to the service

funding agreement.

In addition, I was conscious that aged-care respite is a commonwealth responsibility and also of the opportunities offered by the Albanese Labor government's significant investment in reform of aged care, which is seeing new residential aged-care homes opening in the ACT for the first time in many years. However, the ACT government recognises the concerns raised by the community around the future availability of respite and the value of the Burrangiri service to those who currently rely on it.

Again, I thank all members of the community who have made representations to me on this issue and shared their experiences. I recognise that caring can be very challenging, and that access to respite is often important for carers to enable them to catch up with other things in their life, visit family members, or simply take a break. I particularly want to thank Peter and Penny for the conversation last week and for being here again today.

I have listened to those voices and heard your concerns, as have my federal Labor colleagues. I was pleased that federal Labor committed during the election campaign to \$10 million in new funding for aged-care respite beds to ensure that the number of respite beds in the ACT would not reduce overall following the closure of Burrangiri. This \$10 million commitment is significant and has clearly affected how I have been considering the issue of Burrangiri and what options are available.

As I said last week, following the election I wrote to the commonwealth Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Mark Butler MP, on Monday, 5 May seeking to expedite delivery of the election commitment to ensure additional residential respite beds would be available as soon as possible. At that time, I sought Minister Butler's consideration of the opportunity to use a portion of the committed funding to address the potential short-term gap in respite availability. I also noted last week that the motion of 5 March in this place was about ensuring respite capacity and encompassed the option of alternative capacity rather than the extension of Burrangiri.

However, members would be aware that the new federal ministry was only sworn in yesterday. Therefore, it has not been possible to receive a formal response from the commonwealth, and I am very conscious of the impact of the ongoing uncertainty, not only on consumers and carers, but particularly on the wonderful Burrangiri staff.

Since our debate in this place in March, I have been working through the very real governance, infrastructure and legal issues regarding Burrangiri, as well as the opportunity to work with the commonwealth on alternatives. Given the timing issues, however, last week I asked the ACT Health Directorate to seek further legal advice about the options available to secure ongoing service provision and provide certainty for the Salvation Army, staff, consumers and carers.

As I noted at the beginning of this statement, following the receipt of advice from the Government Solicitor's office, the directorate is now preparing the necessary paperwork for the delegate to consider a single select tender for the Salvation Army to continue the delivery of the Burrangiri respite service for a further two years. This will provide a short-term solution while the commonwealth works through the delivery of its commitment to replace this respite care capacity.

In addition, I have written again to Minister Butler to seek a commonwealth contribution to the cost of delivering this extension, as well as encouraging the commonwealth government to expedite delivery of its broader commitment. It is important to note that, while the service can continue in the short term, the directorate's advice remains that the facility would require a significant scope of work to be fit for purpose for the delivery of quality aged-care respite services in the medium term. To undertake these works, the facility would need to be vacated.

Further, the future viability of the current model as a standalone 15-bed respite facility remains questionable, particularly given the changing landscape of aged-care reform and funding in Australia and the ACT. These aged-care reforms are seeing significant new investment in the ACT which will result in more residential aged-care beds opening by the end of 2025. It remains important to harness this opportunity to build respite care capacity across the ACT. The two-year extension of Burrangiri would allow us to work with the commonwealth on more sustainable solutions for respite in the ACT and the best use of available funding. The commonwealth's \$10 million commitment is either for a new facility or to extend an existing facility to deliver aged-care respite beds in the ACT, recognising the commonwealth's primary role as the funder and regulator of aged care, including respite services.

In addition to replacing the 15-bed capacity of Burrangiri, we will continue to call on the commonwealth to work with the aged-care sector to facilitate additional capacity for respite for older Canberrans in the short, medium and long term because we know that, if we incentivise respite in aged-care facilities, it can be provided. This is consistent with the ongoing advocacy from all state and territory health ministers for the commonwealth to address the challenges in aged care that are placing pressure on our public hospital systems.

In addition, the ACT government is working with Carers ACT to explore options to identify land for a purpose-built respite centre and the government has started this important work with Carers ACT. The ACT government will also continue to consider options for further investment in care for older people and we will work with the commonwealth government in relation to national aged-care reforms and the future needs of older Canberrans and carers.

I would like to thank ACT Health Directorate officials for their ongoing work on this issue, as well as my Labor colleagues in this place. Both Senator Katy Gallagher and the member for Bean, David Smith, have strongly advocated for a solution, and I have had a number of productive conversations with Senator Gallagher. I thank her for her insights and support.

I also want to thank the Salvation Army for its assistance in getting to this point and for its engagement more broadly. I acknowledge the Salvation Army and its fantastic staff, who have obviously been experiencing considerable uncertainty as a result of this debate. Finally, thank you again to the carers and consumers who have shared their stories and advocated for themselves and their loved ones.

I thank colleagues in this place who have sought briefings and engaged constructively in conversations about options and possibilities. While the Assembly does not have

the power to direct the executive, our conversations have been important in delivering this outcome.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (10.40), by leave: I rise to respond to and thank the minister for extending the Salvation Army contract to deliver respite services at Burrangiri for two years. It is a terrific result, and I am really grateful that she has done that. The acute shortage of dedicated respite beds in Canberra is a critical issue affecting our community. There are more than 50,000 carers providing unpaid care to family members in the ACT and they deserve our unwavering support.

I congratulate the minister on securing \$10 million from the commonwealth to address this pressing need. These funds will be used to invest in the infrastructure needed for our respite community. This provides time for planning the \$10 million facility while the Salvation Army potentially seeks accreditation and investigates the need for a building refurbishment and an alternative funding model to minimise cost to the ACT government.

The best part of this solution is that Burrangiri will continue for a further two years while work is undertaken to increase the number of respite beds to meet the needs of carers. I thank Penny and Peter for their ongoing advocacy—they really take advocacy to the next level—and for the cooperation of the Salvation Army; it is a terrific outcome for their staff. I thank the minister and her team for their willingness to productively discuss the issues with me.

MR RATTENBURY(Kurrajong) (10.42), by leave: I also want to take this opportunity to thank the minister for her statement this morning. I think this is an excellent outcome and provides the space now for a more considered approach.

As I said during the discussion last week, whilst we could see that the minister was working on a range of alternative options, we were not confident that those options were necessarily falling into place and, for a community that is very reliant on this service, delivering 4,500 bed nights a year, we were concerned that we were being invited to step over a precipice that was not clear. I welcome this decision and announcement from the minister today. It gives that time and space for alternative options to be delivered more thoroughly.

I am conscious of some of the remarks that the minister has made. I take on board some of the things she said, as I noted in the debate last week, including ensuring that the commonwealth is paying for the services for which it is responsible, and ensuring patients are accessing the appropriate facilities. I certainly think the service offering being put forward at Burrangiri at the moment is an excellent one.

I thank the Salvation Army for accepting my request to come out and have a look around Burrangiri, to see it for myself. I would also like to acknowledge the community advocates who have been very diligent and very thorough in explaining these issues to us and drawing the attention of members of the Assembly to the potential adverse consequences if this had proceeded as it was originally proposed.

I also want to acknowledge, particularly, Ms Carrick, who has done a lot of advocacy on this, with other members, and the minister for taking the time to meet with us to

discuss this matter.

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) (10.45), by leave: I think this is an excellent outcome—the two-year extension for Burrangiri. I want to thank Minister Stephen-Smith, her office and Health officials for the extensive work they have done over the last few weeks to try and achieve this great outcome. I would like to thank Fiona Carrick for her continued advocacy on this important issue. Peter and Penny have provided outstanding advocacy, and I thank them for being here and for pursuing this issue. I will end by recognising the important role that carers play in our community and the importance of respite care.

MR EMERSON(Kurrajong) (10.45), by leave: Echoing the remarks that have already been made, I think this is an absolutely fantastic outcome and it is exactly how people hope politics will operate. Community voices have been echoed in this place and at the federal level by multiple different representatives. Special credit goes to, of course, Ms Carrick, my fellow Independent. On ABC radio the other day, she was described as like a dog with a bone. That might have been in relation to Phillip pool, but I think it applies here as well, for continuing to pursue this issue and make sure those voices are heard.

I would also like to give a lot of credit to Minister Stephen-Smith for going beyond the politics in what may have felt like giving a political win, so to speak. Obviously, she has looked beyond that and focused on what is best for the community, so huge credit goes to her for doing that today. For all the people who have taken the time away from respite, it is a really great outcome. I thank everyone in the Assembly.

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) (10.48), by leave: I do not want to take up too much time because, as carers, I recognise that people in the chamber have other places to be. I would like to acknowledge, as everyone has said, what an excellent outcome this is.

I want to thank Minister Stephen-Smith. I have some insight into just how many hours and personal effort she has spent contemplating this, working through solutions and engaging with colleagues across all parties and Independents in this chamber. Iteratively, I think I can say—and I know that this has also caused her sleepless nights—it is a true reflection of not just who she is as a leader in this place and as a minister but also her character as a person that we have arrived at this point and that there is some certainty in time for Burrangiri, regarding the respite that is able to be provided, while, as we all recognise, a more permanent and enhanced facility and model of care are worked through with the commonwealth, and I know that our federal colleagues are very keen to engage with that.

I also want to recognise Peter and Penny, who have been here time and time again and sat through all sorts of other debates while waiting for this debate. I hope you see your efforts reflected here in this chamber today and know how much it directly influenced so many of us here. You have been extraordinarily reasonable, thoughtful and contemplative. As Ms Carrick said, it really is an example of advocacy that we so

appreciate, and thank you so much for all the time that you have given.

Ms Carrick, I think your speech just before was incredibly gracious. We all know that you have been spearheading this—and I echo Mr Emerson’s points—and that you have been engaging in such good faith with Minister Stephen-Smith and officials in trying to understand the points of view and to work towards a solution. What you just said was incredibly humble of you.

Finally, this is for Nonna Bev, who has been not far from my thoughts throughout all of this. I know that Nonna Bev enjoys going to work and the contribution she makes at her workplace every time she is there and how much she looks forward to being there. Nonna Bev has been in the chamber many times to listen to the praise given to her workplace as we have tried to get through to a solution. I am sorry that she is not able to be here today, but I hope that these words and these messages can be passed on to her, and to Peter and your family as well, and to all carers and families who will benefit from this decision.

Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services— Standing Committee Reference

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (10.50): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) Fix My Street is an online tool that lets Canberrans report an issue to City Services for attention, and that:
 - (i) in 2023, 51,868 Fix My Street requests were lodged;
 - (ii) in 2024, 46,976 Fix My Street requests were lodged;
 - (iii) for 2025 up until 26 March, there have been 13,375 Fix My Street requests lodged; and
 - (iv) according to the Minister for City and Government Services, Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, the trend is about a thousand cases are lodged each week, and around 750 to 1,000 cases are closed each week;
- (b) the 10th Assembly’s Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services inquiry into annual and financial reports 2020-2021 report recommended greater detail on Fix My Street complaints and service delivery results to be provided. According to the 2023-2024 annual reports, this recommendation still remains in progress;
- (c) complaints raised by Canberrans regarding the online tool, Fix My Street, include, but are not limited to:
 - (i) in order to lodge a request with Fix My Street, an ACT Digital Account needs to be created;
 - (ii) the other option is to call Access Canberra to lodge a request, and the Access Canberra website states that “this may restrict the ability of ACT Government staff to action your request”; and

- (iii) the lack of live updates on Fix My Street requests;
 - (d) Canberrans have been in regular contact with their local Members asking for follow-ups or updates on their Fix My Street requests due to the lack of consistent communication from Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS); and
 - (e) other local government bodies in Australia use alternative city service programs or applications to Fix My Street, like Snap Send Solve, Fix My Street, and My Local Services;
- (2) requests that the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services inquire into and report on the effectiveness of Fix My Street, including:
- (a) whether it is fulfilling the intended purpose of this online tool;
 - (b) how user-friendly is Fix My Street;
 - (c) the responsiveness of TCCS regarding all communication, starting with receiving the request until the case is closed;
 - (d) the effectiveness of the online tool in its current state;
 - (e) the impacts and potential impacts due to the ACT Government's failure to respond appropriately;
 - (f) what aspects of this online tool can be improved through a comparison of alternative city service programs used by local government bodies; and
 - (g) investigating the possibility of transforming Fix My Street into an application form; and
- (3) requests that, should the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services agree to inquire into the matter, the Committee report by the first sitting day of December 2025.

Canberrans want to live in a well-maintained city, one that is safe, accessible for all and surrounded by nature, and a place that they are proud to call home. People live in Canberra for work, study and many other reasons, and expect a high standard of living in the national capital. We should be proud of our city, our suburbs and our streets, but far too often that is not the case.

The ACT is the only jurisdiction in Australia without local government bodies. The ACT government bears the responsibility for both state-level and local-level matters. The Access Canberra website states that "Fix My Street is an online tool that allows residents to report issues to the city services directorate". It covers issues such as cycle paths, footpaths, mowing, trees, parks, roads, vehicles, public spaces, stormwater, and streetlights.

City services are where Canberrans can experience the benefits of their taxes, rates and fees. When these services fall short of Canberrans' expectations, it undermines the trust that the public have in the ACT government. However, it is not solely the residents' responsibility to report issues in their streets or suburbs. It is the government's responsibility to proactively manage and improve local services. While Fix My Street can be a helpful tool, it should complement, not replace, government accountability.

Today, I have moved this motion to inquire into Fix My Street as an online tool for delivering city services effectively. I do this for all Canberrans who are disappointed by delayed or unaddressed Fix My Street requests. Whether it is walking in the dark because of broken lights or suffering injury due to unrepaired footpaths, I say to Canberrans: I hear you. I stand here in this chamber today to advocate for you. Minister Cheyne knows how many emails her office receives from me—and, just quietly, I think she looks forward to those emails coming through!

Ms Cheyne interjecting—

MR MILLIGAN: Well, I can always send a lot more through. To her credit, her office does respond quickly to those matters that we do send through. But every member in this chamber has likely also received complaints from residents about city services and how Fix My Street has failed them. But do not just take my word for it. Here is what constituents are saying, word for word:

If there were Google Reviews on the Fix My Street website, I would give this case a 0/5 rating!

That is from a constituent regarding illegal dumping in Dickson. A Giralang resident who often paints over recurring graffiti stated:

On this occasion, I have contacted Fix My Street to see if it will be removed by the government city services. If it has not been removed in a fortnight, I will do it myself.

Let me share a brief story about why this motion matters. A cyclist was seriously injured after hitting a puddle that concealed a damaged footpath, breaking their hip and wrist. The issue had been reported months earlier via Fix My Street. They later sued the government and settled out of court, highlighting the consequences of inaction. How many Canberrans suffer quietly from neglected broken lights, dangerous trees or unmaintained public land and are just not going public on these issues?

This motion matters, because Fix My Street is clearly not functioning as it should be. It needs to be improved—not just patched over—to truly serve Canberrans. As of 26 March this year, over 13,000 requests had been lodged since 1 January, with an average of 157 requests per day. If this trend continues, we will face more than 57,000 requests this year. That is up from almost 47,000 in 2024 and almost 52,000 in 2023. Are these requests increasing because the online tool itself is not an appropriate program for lodging and requesting these issues? Is Fix My Street meeting its intended purpose?

A Casey resident, who spends most of his workday driving on ACT roads, shared this:

I've spoken to a lot of locals about road issues, and everyone I've spoken to has told me that the Fix My Street initiative is pretty much useless. This process takes too long, requires too many complaints and is frustrating a lot of locals.

That is why I am calling for a formal inquiry by the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services into the effectiveness of the

online tool Fix My Street in its current state. This is not a new issue. In fact, the Standing Committee on Planning and City Services inquiry into the 2020-21 annual and financial reports recommended greater detail on Fix My Street complaints and service delivery results to be provided; yet the 2023-24 annual reports state that the recommendation is “still in progress”. We need transparency on lodged requests—how many are made, how long they take and how many go unanswered.

I am calling on the committee to report on the impacts and potential impacts of the ACT government’s failure to respond appropriately to the issues lodged through the online tool. Common complaints from Canberrans regarding Fix My Street include the need for an ACT digital account to lodge requests or calling up Access Canberra—but this may restrict the ability of the ACT government staff to action your request. The most frequent issue is the lack of live updates on Fix My Street requests.

Many residents have turned to local members for updates because their requests have gone unanswered for weeks or months. One constituent from Ngunnawal said:

I am angry that multiple requests to fix this playground have gone unheard. I am angry that other people have put in “fix my street” requests over many years and it has not been addressed.

That is why I have asked the committee to investigate the responsiveness of TCCS from the moment a Fix My Street request is submitted to when it is resolved, and how user-friendly Fix My Street is for the average Canberran. Starting this process will naturally lead to exploring different solutions. Other local government bodies use alternatives to Fix My Street, including mobile apps with live updates. The ACT government’s ACT Emergency Services incident map could help to improve this system.

If we truly want to improve Fix My Street, no rock should be left unturned. That is why I am asking the committee also to inquire and report back to the Assembly on what aspects of the online tool Fix My Street can be improved through a comparison with alternative city services programs used by local government bodies and investigate the possibility of transforming Fix My Street into an application form.

Canberrans are frustrated and disillusioned by ongoing neglect of basic city services. How many residents need to sue the ACT government before action is taken? How many more Fix My Street requests will residents submit before taking matters into their own hands? How many dangerous trees must fall on homes before we address the slow response to these matters?

Improving Fix My Street means ensuring that it is the most effective tool for helping the government to improve the city that we all love. I ask members today, for the sake of all Canberrans that have emailed each one of our offices with a complaint about Fix My Street, to support this motion in its entirety so that we can start the process of fixing the Fix My Street online tool.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (11.01): Like many other members in this place, as Mr Milligan mentioned, I have heard from community members about their frustrations and drawn-out experiences when dealing with Fix My Street. We know

that the software is old, clunky and not very user-friendly. Without providing the status of jobs, issues lodged through Fix My Street enter a black box for months on end. Without that transparency as to what is going on, it is no surprise that people come to members in this place wanting to know if or when the issues that they have raised through the correct avenue will actually be addressed.

In recognition of the need for improvements to Fix My Street, the Greens will be supporting this motion today. However, I do wish to make a point to this Assembly about the calls made in this motion that request the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services to inquire into Fix My Street. There are three pieces of Assembly business just this week alone seeking referrals to committees—one creating the estimates committee, which is normal, and two more requests for standing committees to inquire into a particular subject. There have also been, or will be, three petitions which have exceeded the 500-signature threshold, which will automatically be referred to committees. And this is just in one sitting week.

Madam Assistant Speaker, given the average length of an inquiry can be six months or more, you can imagine how quickly the number of requests will add up, far beyond the capacity of those committees to fulfil, particularly those committees with wide-ranging policy commitments, such as the environment, planning, transport and city services committee. Therefore, it should be of no surprise to members if the rate at which committees decline to inquire into petitions or requests from the Assembly increases. We as an Assembly will need to apply at least one, if not more, or a combination of, the following options: (1) accept that committees will become more likely to decline to inquire; (2) reduce the number of requests made by this Assembly; or (3) invest more time into committees, either through existing members devoting additional time to their efforts or the creation of additional committees to ensure they have a manageable workload. The answer may vary depending on the individual committee and its members, but I wanted to draw members' attention to this unavoidable question.

There is another pertinent point that I would like to make that would actually have an impact on the services delivered by government to the community. The government must invest in the budget in improving outdated, clunky software and databases. While the Labor government and the Canberra Liberals may make the point about the cost being a reason not to do something, a service where Canberrans' safety is concerned requires genuine attention and urgency to resolve the issue. Budget decisions are reflective of these government priorities. I ask the government to consider the real impacts on the community of decisions made about whether or not to fund something, such as the Fix My Street system. Such investments may actually create considerable savings for the government over the longer term.

Ultimately, the Canberra community deserve user-friendly and responsive online government services. This motion goes some way to acknowledging these issues and takes a step to attempt to address them. I hope my comments on sending many issues to committee inquiries in lieu of tangible investment in improving our services are acknowledged and considered as well.

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) (11.05): Madam Assistant Speaker, you have no idea how long I have waited to talk about Fix My Street! I have had my question time brief ready to go—it is my No 1 question time brief, Fix My Street reform progress—and no-one has asked about it. No-one asked about it until last week—and, honestly, I cannot wait.

I absolutely support this motion and I have no issue with it at all. I have no issue with an inquiry; in fact, I would welcome an inquiry. I would love for the light to be shone finally on the extraordinary efforts that have been undertaken by Access Canberra and in TCCS to improve Fix My Street, particularly over the last 13 or 14 months.

I want to stress that I agree with Mr Braddock entirely. In fact, we went through this existential crisis of our committees in the Ninth Assembly, where things were constantly being referred, and I believe that we ended up at a point where we recognised that committees self-referring inquiries—given that, at least then, there were members from most parties on every committee—was the right way to go, rather than the Assembly directing committees. In that spirit, and in that vein, I want to acknowledge Mr Braddock's comments on the independence of committees and that there is no guarantee that there will be an inquiry.

Given that, I will tell you all the things that I have been waiting to tell you about Fix My Street, in case there is no inquiry. I look forward to repeating this if there is an inquiry. Fix My Street has had significant investment, so let me clear up that myth that has been perpetuated. It is not outdated technology, either. If anyone was listening last week, they would know I said that one of the major issues is that the digital account system or the interface of Fix My Street was not connecting seamlessly with the back end of the system.

Once we were able to understand exactly how workflows were being undertaken or not connecting, we were able to make some big improvements. The first big improvement is that there has been a dedicated response team to attend to Fix My Street requests. This team have been remarkable. The work that they have done is unreal, and I truly cannot wait to tell you all about them and what they have done. They have been working with operational areas to streamline the process of triaging jobs, and Canberrans can now expect faster and improved responses to their Fix My Street requests—and I have the stats to prove it. Having a dedicated Fix My Street response team has also reduced pressure on City Services crews through prioritising jobs, ensuring that jobs are allocated to the correct area and that jobs have enough information for people to action.

One of the major issues that we have had with Fix My Street over the years, especially where they are anonymous, is that there has not been enough information, someone has selected private land or something else, and there has been no way of being able to get in contact with them. They then write to a member's office and they write to the minister. It costs everyone a lot more in time and actual taxpayer cost. That is one of the reasons that anonymous reports were turned off more than a year ago, Mr Milligan. That was pretty public at the time.

Anonymous reports meant there was no ability for those crews to request that further

information from the customer, and it created frustration for both the customer and operational staff. It usually just resulted in a job closure because of that insufficient detail being provided. Requiring people to log into their Fix My Street account now means that staff have the contact details and they can engage with the customer directly. I have had crews call me and say, “What on earth are you on about?” That is great; I want them to ask so that we can resolve an issue and, if I have been vague about what I am talking about, it is much better that they are able to get in touch so that we can resolve the issue.

I also acknowledge that the Fix My Street response team has done an awesome job with improvements right across the system. I recognise Mr Milligan’s comments about whether Snap Send Solve or something like that is a better option. No, it is not. Please do not use Snap Send Solve. I met with them at the beginning of last year, and it turned out they were just forwarding requests that had been put through Snap Send Solve to an email address that was defunct. So anyone who was using Snap Send Solve probably will not get a response, either. How ridiculous! Again, that is just because an external provider decided, “This is what we will do. This is what we will present to people,” without actually engaging with government.

If you use Fix My Street, if you log into Fix My Street, you will at least be able to track your request. And, if you do not like the outcome, you can respond to that and say, “This does not seem to have been rectified in the way that I requested.” I cannot wait to talk more about Snap Send Solve and how inappropriate it is. But, in the meantime, please do not direct your constituents there, because it is a bad outcome for us all.

The City Services website now features a weekly maintenance update for each region in Canberra. This covers regular mowing, street-sweeping and roadworks. It also includes information on streetlight cable faults across Canberra. As many jobs lodged through Fix My Street are about this routine work and programmed work—work that we really should not be directing resources to be reactive to; rather, it should stay on program—it is actually quicker and easier to check this page first rather than to log a job where that routine maintenance is already scheduled.

If you do not want to go to the website, you can go to my Facebook page. I spend a few hours every Sunday putting in all the emojis, bolding and other things to make it accessible on Facebook. I see the stats on my own Facebook page, and the comments that I receive about how welcome it is to understand exactly what is occurring in a proactive way across the city, and the amount of comments I have had about just how much our crews do have been extraordinary and well deserved.

I will now go to the stats. How much time do I have? I cannot wait for the inquiry, when I will have more time. In 2023, the average time to resolve a Fix My Street request was 99 days—not good enough. Around 35 per cent of the jobs, however, were resolved in under 10 days. But, due to the significant improvements that have been made throughout 2024, the average time for resolving a Fix My Street job to date in 2024 was 34 days, with nearly half of job requests resolved within 10 calendar days—much better. I would also note that this is in addition to all of that routine and programmed work that our crews are doing every single day.

A range of system enhancements have also been made to Fix My Street through collaboration with crews on the ground and customer feedback, including from perhaps Fix My Street's No 1 user—me. Automated messages have been updated to the citizen when a job is logged. Substantial changes have been made to better link various operational systems across the ACT government to support a connected response to citizens. This ensures up-to-date, live information is transmitted through to the right areas of City Services as it comes to hand, such as when a customer updates a case.

Previously, jobs were getting lost in the system due to technical areas between different systems. Specifically for streetlights, real-time information is now transmitted through Fix My Street from the system without any involvement needed from crews responding directly to requests regarding streetlight outages. This integration between two different systems, because our streetlights and their repair are managed by a contractor, has never been done before, and we did it seamlessly. There was no break in service; no-one noticed. But what you are noticing is an improvement in the response times, except when it comes to cable faults, which we have talked about at length.

Improvements to the front-end form for Fix My Street include increasing the character limit for logging a job, so that more information can be provided for smoother interaction with the Fix My Street form. There is a new requirement for people to select the location of an issue via a map pin or an address. This was previously resulting in 40 per cent of jobs being incorrectly allocated through the system because of people not using the map correctly. As I said, sometimes people were pinning the location on their house or in the ocean—all things that were not particularly helpful.

The front-end form also helps people to find information before lodging a request and potentially not making a request when their question can already be answered. It also assists people to know what information needs to be provided for a job to be actioned and why. There is a new back-end map function for operational crews so that they can see all relevant jobs in an area. That helps them to determine the best route for addressing jobs by priority, the type of equipment needed and the ability to resolve multiple jobs in the same area, resulting in efficiencies.

A duplicate case management tool, where the system automatically identifies potential requests for the same issue, has been installed. That allows teams to address these simultaneously, reducing duplication and time in case management. There is also a new work program tool that ensures that, when a job has been inspected and allocated to a work program, the customer is informed and the teams have an effective work program tracking tool.

The Fix My Street response team continue to exist. They continue to focus on the customer experience and how to improve the end-to-end design of the system, as well as how to best support our crews on the ground delivering the work. There is a missing piece to all of this work that has been undertaken, and that is the resolution that you get when a case is closed. In fact, I literally got one at 10.27 am that says, "Thank you for letting us know about graffiti. The issue has been rectified." For me, that is not quite enough information—what do you mean "rectified"? Has it been painted? Has it been scrubbed off, or has it been left there because it is meant to be

there?—so I have been working with the directorate and the response team for some time about what information—or a photo, perhaps—we can provide back to the customer when we let them know that we have closed their case, so that they have the information available to them about why that is.

In fact, just this morning, I signed a letter to someone who had gone through the Fix My Street system repeatedly, and they were frustrated with it. But they kept selecting an issue that was on private leased land. We cannot touch that. I appreciate that they were frustrated, but I also appreciate that, in closing their request, they may not have had enough information that this was not actually the government's responsibility and to direct their efforts elsewhere. That has been a missing piece, and I am pleased to say that my office has been engaged, again iteratively, in a briefing process on that. I expect we will have those improvements in place probably before the committee even decides to inquire. With that, I welcome this motion.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (11.16): I rise to speak in support of Mr Milligan's motion, and I thank him very much for bringing it forward. Some might make the mistake of assuming that the state of footpaths is not a big deal, but for an elderly person trying to confront the dangers of cracks that could result in a serious fall, a parent trying to traverse streets with an unwieldy pram, a wheelchair user just trying to get from A to B, or a child riding a bike to school, footpaths are the difference between feeling like your government sees you and acknowledges that it matters whether or not you can move safely and easily through the suburb you call home, or feeling like you and your needs are invisible to people in power.

That is why we all hear so much frustration from our community about the quality of Canberra's footpaths. It is certainly the most common matter that lands in my inbox. One wheelchair user wrote in about her usual footpath to work having been blocked by construction. The footpath across the road was not suitable because of gutters, the lack of kerb ramps and the width of the path itself. This meant she had to use her wheelchair on the road going to work. Her commute went from an easy five-minute journey to a circuitous 20-minute odyssey which involved—and I am not exaggerating—dodging rush-hour traffic, and having to live with the knowledge that her experience of everyday life was completely different to many other people just because she uses a wheelchair.

Bad footpath infrastructure narrows people's lives. I have had so many elderly people talk to me about how, even though they live a five-minute walk from the tram, they still do not use it because the footpaths are too much of a risk for them. A broken hip for someone in their 80s or 90s can be life-threatening. Imagine feeling afraid of a five-minute walk to use an essential service. Consider how much that would limit your ability to participate and feel at home in your community.

We talk a lot about persistent issues like social isolation and poor health, especially for our elderly community members, but when it comes to commonsense measures that would contribute to reducing loneliness and increasing health—like well-connected, well-maintained footpaths—that sentiment often does not seem to translate into action.

When members of our community write in with these, frankly, heartbreaking stories,

it feels heartless to ask back, “Have you reported this to Fix My Street?” knowing full well that many of our community members have already made requests and have had their representative come along and circle the cracks in the footpaths, only to watch the paint fade away without the problem being addressed—or sometime later being patched up temporarily in a way that will probably require further action down the track. We all receive these emails from members of our community and, as Mr Milligan points out, they all ultimately end up in Ms Cheyne’s inbox.

I will acknowledge a recent story. My wife made a Fix My Street request just the other day relating to cracks in the footpath near our home in Dickson, because we have a six-month-old in a pram, and you feel like it is a bit of a war zone moving around, and that she might not stay in the pram. There was someone there the next day to circle the cracks and the next day after to fix them. So, credit where credit is due. It sounds like the work that has been happening is making an improvement—unless they saw the last name, and there was a conflict of interest!

I would say, though, that many of the people who email all of us in here feel that Fix My Street, as it operates currently, is not necessarily reliably fixing our streets. Members of our community should not feel they have to constantly badger the government and their elected representatives for something which should really be an essential service. It is encouraging to hear from the minister about the work that has been happening in this area, and to have already seen the overwhelmingly positive response already expressed in the chamber to Mr Milligan’s motion.

I thank work crews for their efforts as conveyed by Ms Cheyne today in increasing the responsiveness of the system as it stands. Having an accessible cityscape is really the bare minimum and it is one of the things that most directly impacts the wellbeing of Canberrans in their everyday lives.

With that in mind, I thank Mr Milligan for bringing this important motion forward, and I hope this inquiry helps to bring about positive change in how the Fix My Street system works.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (11.21), in reply: In closing, I want to thank all the members that have spoken today on this important matter, and I want to acknowledge Ms Cheyne’s enthusiasm for, hopefully, seeing an inquiry. I think the community will have that same level of enthusiasm, too, because it will give them an opportunity to provide feedback in relation to the online tool Fix My Street. They are frustrated. They are frustrated that they lodge issues, and they seem to go unresolved. There is no ability, either, to see what issues have been lodged, and no doubt that may contribute to the overwhelming number of requests that have been sent through Fix My Street that are repeat requests on the same matter.

There are clearly areas where Fix My Street and online tools could be improved—like online tracking, as well, so that people can see where issues are currently underway. I have to say, Mr Braddock, I agree with your sentiment that, if we do fix the online tool Fix My Street, it could end up saving the government money in the long run. More importantly, I think it could save constituents time in terms of lodging requests.

Mr Emerson, I agree with your sentiment that the government needs to take

responsibility, too, in addressing issues in relation to local services and the community. It is not solely the responsibility of residents to put through these requests. The government need to be proactively out there as well, addressing issues that they see need to be dealt with.

I would like to urge the committee to seriously take this into consideration. I think we owe it to Canberra residents to give them that opportunity to provide feedback. As has already been indicated, there are areas where it can be improved, and I think this is a great way for us to fix the product and potentially provide extra services, which the community wants to see happen.

Once again, I thank all members for their contributions today. It is great to see that this will be passed and that it will be referred to the committee. Hopefully, the committee will decide to inquire into the matter.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Voluntary assisted dying—advance care directives—update Ministerial statement

Debate resumed from 7 May 2025, on motion by **Ms Stephen-Smith**:

That the Assembly take note of the statement.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (11.25): I seek leave to speak a second time as I have now had the opportunity to read the report after its tabling.

Leave granted.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you, members, for granting me the opportunity to speak twice, as I provided only brief comments in my immediate response to the minister's statement before I had the opportunity to read the report after it had been tabled.

As the minister mentioned in her statement, this is an extremely complex policy area in which to legislate, so it is appreciated that we have the opportunity to fully debate this in a mature and thoughtful way in this Assembly. To highlight the challenges presented by this topic matter, I want use just one example from the consultation report:

Some clinicians felt removing the requirement for capacity at administration of the VAD substance increased their risk of moral injury. On the flipside, it was suggested that not being able to fulfil a clear and enduring wish of a patient can cause moral injury.

With the risk of moral injury, no matter what we decide here in the Assembly, this highlights how much we are in a real “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” type of situation.

I again thank everyone involved in developing the consultation report. As I mentioned last week, I concur with the minister that the primary objective for the ACT

government between now and November should be the successful commencement of the ACT's VAD scheme. This is essential to maintain community confidence in the new VAD scheme. I draw the attention of this Assembly to the arguments presented by Go Gentle and Dying with Dignity. Go Gentle said:

People with dementia who wish to access VAD, therefore, face a heartbreaking 'Catch-22': In the early stages of their illness, when they have decision-making ability, they are not sufficiently advanced in their illness to qualify as 'approaching the end of life'. In the later stages, when their dementia is advanced, they are ineligible because they usually lack decision-making ability.

They argue:

Even in the ACT, where there's no set time frame in the VAD law, two medical practitioners must still agree that the person is 'approaching the end of life'. For someone newly diagnosed with dementia, death may be years—sometimes even decades—away.

This "heartbreaking catch 22" situation conflicts with the human rights based principles in the act—namely, respect for an individual's autonomy, including autonomy in relation to end-of-life choices, and that an individual be provided with care to minimise their suffering and maximise their quality of life. I am extremely grateful to see the government's commitment to commence work in examining this question earlier rather than waiting for the scheduled statutory review. This is very much unfinished work from last term and an issue which many members in the community are rightfully urging us as legislators to act on.

I am not as convinced of the requirement for the ACT VAD scheme to be operational for 12 months before the government commences examination of this question. It must be remembered that there are those who are intolerably suffering right now who are waiting for further changes to be able to access VAD. Therefore, any timeframe before the government commences action requires considerable justification in order to balance the suffering of those who have to wait.

I note that the report comments, "It will take a period of implementation to determine whether the lack of a set timeframe to death will impact the issue of late loss of capacity." This needs to be balanced with the fact that, by definition, we are talking about situations that are out of scope of the current legislated VAD scheme; hence they will have limited application to real-world experience. I appreciate this time period does provide practitioners, organisations and the community to be more acquainted with the topic matter and the scheme, and suspect this is more the driving reason for that timeframe.

I would like to draw the ACT government's attention to the arguments presented by Dying with Dignity regarding the possibility of addressing this issue through the VAD guidelines, particularly as they relate to the meaning of "end of life". I would encourage the government to explore whether this is a viable way to address the catch 22 and to report back to the Assembly at the appropriate point in time with its findings.

In terms of some of the more detailed aspects of the report, the feedback, "We heard

from stakeholders that reducing barriers to access will allow people to interact with the VAD process in a way that supports more timely access,” is of interest, particularly where it may help address those who are fearful that they might shortly lose capacity. I think we need to ensure safeguards are appropriate and do not form unscalable barriers which cause people to suffer intolerably.

The report has identified at a high level the challenges, particularly around the main models to address this issue—Canada’s final consent waivers, advance care directives and the VAD attorney model. I, with an acknowledged passionate interest in this topic, would have loved to have seen more detail on the challenges and issues, to enable a path through to be identified, but I guess I need to be satisfied with what we have at this point in time and the commitment to continue working on this.

I am heartened to read the following in the report:

... stakeholders felt that particular elements of each model should be considered in the development of an ACT model, and that this model should be designed with local stakeholders and workforce to adequately reflect our unique and local needs and values.

This quote demonstrates the appetite amongst our local community to work together to develop a model that meets the Canberra community’s needs.

In closing, it is pleasing to see a continuation of work on this complex and challenging issue—an issue that, quite rightly, is of great concern to many in our community. We should remember that the reason we need to continue this work is because, by very definition, until we can solve this catch 22, there will continue to be Canberrans who are condemned to intolerable suffering.

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) (11.31): I rise to speak this morning in support of the statement made by Minister Stephen-Smith last week, and I would firstly like to thank Minister Stephen-Smith and her team in the Health Directorate for all the work that they did on the motion following the passing of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act last year.

I would also like to thank Attorney-General Tara Cheyne for all the human rights work that went into the passing of this bill. It is incredibly important legislation and, with six months until the scheme commences, it is an incredible time to recognise that soon in the ACT there will be an opportunity for people who are suffering intolerably at the end of their lives to choose to die with dignity.

Following the end of last term, I was a member of the committee that looked into the bill, and one of the key aspects that arose out of that inquiry was around the loss of capacity and the serious need to address this, particularly when people are suffering. Before the bill passed, I developed some amendments and proposed a new model, or a model that could potentially address this. Over a two-week period in May last year, I conducted an extensive consultation process with stakeholder organisations, clinicians and the public, to provide input into this model. I received responses from

25 organisations. Of those who responded, 18 were supportive, two did not state a policy position, and five raised concerns.

It was very clear from stakeholders that there was overarching in-principle support to address the issue of access to voluntary assisted dying following the loss of capacity, but there were concerns raised over the short timeframe for consultation and issues identified that still need time to be worked through. Instead of introducing amendments, I moved a motion in the Assembly on 6 June last year calling on the government to begin work on a pathway to see people who lose capacity in their final days continuing to be permitted to access voluntary assisted dying. Again, I thank Minister Stephen-Smith and officials for all the work that they have done to respond to that motion.

The model that I proposed last year makes use of existing power-of-attorney provisions rather than advance care directives. Enduring powers of attorney are well known and frequently used for end-of-life planning. Doctors in the ACT work under this model of decision-making on a daily basis for end-of-life care and health matters. These functions, which are enacted at the end of a person's life, include cessation of treatment, moving the person to palliative care, ending life support, and approvals of administration of medications that may support a person in their last stages of life.

Allowing for voluntary assisted dying to be included in the Powers of Attorney Act as an end-of-life option was proposed through the model, and it was important to ensure that the individual's wishes were fulfilled. However, given the significance of voluntary assisted dying, the model that was proposed clearly sets out the role of the VAD attorney. The VAD attorney would have to comply with the general principles set out in the schedule 1 of the Powers of Attorney Act, which includes human worth and dignity, and quality of life.

The proposed model represented an intersection between two pieces of legislation—the Powers of Attorney Act and the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act. A person eligible for voluntary assisted dying must have gone through all three requests, received their final assessment report and appointed a VAD attorney while having capacity. Following this, if they lose capacity, the VAD attorney can become operative to provide an attorney decision. The VAD attorney must work with the individual's coordinating practitioner and administering practitioner to authorise administration of the substance.

I thank, again, the Health Directorate for the mountain of work that they have done to outline and respond to this model. Their extensive consultation covered clinicians, the international VAD jurisdiction, desktop reviews, law and policy experts, researchers, bioethicists, non-government organisations and representatives of Australian voluntary assisted dying boards.

The ACT Voluntary Assisted Dying Act is the most progressive in Australia. The lack of a time-to-death requirement removes the pressure on practitioners to deliver a specific life expectancy. Instead, our legislation has a more holistic approach, where the suffering of the individual and preserving the autonomy of their decisions in end-of-life care are at its core.

A person's autonomy over decisions about their care, in circumstances where they lose capacity, is a key aspect of any expansions of the VAD scheme. Advance care directives are currently the most used tool in international jurisdictions for people to lay out their wishes about their end-of-life care in the event they can no longer make that decision. The most common are not-to-resuscitate orders and the cessation of being given food. People nearing the end of their lives also often appoint an enduring power of attorney to act as a surrogate decision-maker. During the discussions that are had while appointing an enduring power of attorney, the person will lay out how they wish to be cared for, and the treatment that they do or do not wish to receive. Both these systems allow for a person to have their autonomy over care preserved, even if they themselves can no longer make decisions. Both these models could play a role in allowing people who commence the voluntary assisted dying process to continue to be eligible should they lose capacity.

When I consulted with stakeholder groups in the community on some proposed amendments to address this, the response was overwhelming. People in the ACT feel very strongly about allowing people who lose capacity to continue to access voluntary assisted dying. The sentiment from the community largely revolves around the fear of missing the boat, where people fear losing capacity before they can access voluntary assisted dying. This leads to people either rushing the process and dying too soon or losing the ability to access VAD and experiencing a more distressing death for both the person and their family.

Practitioners that I spoke to from other jurisdictions also see this play out. It is particularly noticeable in conditions where the end of life comes very quickly. This leads to decisions needing to be made quickly, particularly if the person is seeking to access voluntary assisted dying. In this case, an advance care directive could assist in that decision-making process. As the discussion paper notes, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. This question is complex and may require several solutions to suit individual cases; however, it is a question that should be explored, and I welcome Minister Stephen-Smith's moves to continue this conversation.

When the ACT voluntary assisted dying scheme commences on 3 November this year, it will be a historic day for the territory. Citizens of the ACT who are suffering intolerably will, for the first time, have the opportunity to make decisions over how they die.

I want to end today by again thanking everyone for their involvement—those here in the Assembly, and stakeholder and advocacy groups, particularly Dying with Dignity ACT and Go Gentle, who work tirelessly to progress voluntary assisted dying schemes across Australia. I would also like to acknowledge Roy Harvey for his continued advocacy in this area. We should all be very proud of our voluntary assisted dying scheme, and I look forward to continuing this work.

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

Heritage and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Debate resumed from 20 March 2025, on motion by **Mr Steel**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (11.39): The Canberra Liberals will be supporting this bill, which is an omnibus bill introduced to make minor legislative amendments across key heritage and planning laws in the ACT. The bill focuses primarily on technical corrections, clarifications and updates to ensure consistency within the Heritage Act 2004, the Planning Act 2023 and the Planning (General) Regulation 2003. The bill includes amendments related to greenhouse gas emission thresholds for development assessments, ensuring that regulatory provisions align with government policies on sustainable development.

The purpose and intent of the reforms in this bill are to update the terminology in the Heritage Act 2004, replacing outdated terms such as “public authority” with “public sector body” for consistency with modern legislative language, and to reflect changes made by the Public Sector Management Amendment Act 2016, correcting minor drafting errors and typographical mistakes in the Planning Act 2023 to improve clarity and ensure legislative accuracy, clarifying the expiry provisions relating to the University of New South Wales lease to align with the original intent, and refining technical details in the Planning (General) Regulation 2023, particularly around greenhouse gas emissions thresholds for different types of development.

The bill, in my opinion, does not introduce significant policy changes; it ensures that the legislative framework is accurate, up to date and free from error. I note that the scrutiny committee reviewed this bill in scrutiny report No 4, published on 3 April, and the scrutiny committee provided no comment on the bill.

I want to thank the minister for a briefing from his directorate and his office that I received on 28 March. As I said, the Canberra Liberals will be supporting this omnibus bill.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.43): The Greens are happy to support this bill. We were pleased to have a briefing and the opportunity to ask some questions about this bill. Mr Cain has outlined that it makes technical amendments and corrections. We had a good check of the changes to the greenhouse gas thresholds. We went back through the old records, and it does seem that a drafting error was made that is now being corrected in this package of legislation, so the Greens will be supporting it.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (11.44), in reply: This bill ensures that the ACT statute book remains up to date for the effective and efficient operation of the territory’s legislation. I thank members for their support and commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 11.45 am to 2 pm.

Questions without notice

Canberra Health Services—Canberra Hospital operations centre

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Are specialist surgeons being asked or expected to operate on elective surgery patients whom they have not had the opportunity to meet, let alone assess clinically?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take that question on notice. But it is standard practice across other jurisdictions that patients who are on the public elective surgery waiting list might be assessed by one specialist and might have their surgery with another specialist. It is very clear on other jurisdictions' websites that, if you are a public patient in the public hospital system, you do not have a choice of specialist. I recognise that moving in this direction in the ACT, towards a pooled waiting list, is a change for the ACT, but it is a change that will improve the timeliness of care for many patients and will certainly improve the efficiency of our system. I will take on notice the specifics of Ms Castley's question about whether surgeons have no opportunity to review.

MS CASTLEY: This question will possibly be taken on notice as well. Minister, why have specialist surgeons been prevented from clinically assessing patients? Is it by the Operations Centre?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I do not think it is a question of surgeons being prevented from assessing patients. I think it is in relation to the process of not having a choice of surgeon and potentially having one person doing the assessment and another person undertaking the surgery. What we are attempting to do is align with the practice of other jurisdictions—the way that the public health system works across the country.

MS BARRY: Minister, if specialist surgeons have been prevented from clinically assessing patients, how is this the best in-patient care?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I refer Ms Barry to my previous answers.

Canberra Health Services—surgeons

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, should patients in the public health system have the right to know the identity and clinical experience of the surgeon that will be undertaking an operation on them, as is in the case in the private system?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: The public system is different to the private system. In the private system, clearly people do identify, choose and consult a specific surgeon and then have surgery with a specific surgeon. The way the public system works in other jurisdictions, and it is very, very clear on their websites—I would refer Ms Castley in particular to the Queensland Health website, which is very clear that if you are a public patient getting planned care in the public hospital system, you do not have the opportunity to choose your surgeon.

Ms Castley: Point of order on relevance. I asked if—

MR SPEAKER: I have it! I think the point of order is valid in terms of, I think Ms Castley is aware of the differences between private and public—

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: It did not sound like it from the question.

Ms Castley: I can repeat the question.

MR SPEAKER: No, no. The question was: do patients have the right to know as is the case in the private system. That was the question. Do patients have the right to know the surgeon and the experience of the person?

Mr Hanson: Can we stop the clock while this is going on?

MR SPEAKER: It might be handy to stop the clock.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Mr Speaker, it is not a useful comparator. I would certainly expect for anyone who is receiving surgery, that at the point they are going in to receive their surgery, their surgeon will have a conversation with them. Their surgeon will be part of the consenting process, and they will know who their surgeon is at the time they go to receive their surgery. But it is a completely different system to the private system and so the distinction you are making in responding to this point of order is not a valid distinction, with all due respect, Mr Speaker.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Let us move on to the supplementary Ms Castley.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, do public hospital patients not deserve the same rights and quality of care as patients in the private sector by knowing the identity and clinical experience of the surgeon performing the surgery?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Certainly all patients in the public system deserve to receive exceptional care and that is what Canberra Health Services aims every day to deliver. Again, Ms Castley's casting of wide aspersions about the quality of the surgeons in our public system is pretty unacceptable. What she is really saying is that people who have their surgery—

MR SPEAKER: On a point of order; if we can just stop the clock.

Ms Castley: I believe she is debating the question, Mr Speaker. I am asking if the

patients should be allowed to know the identity and clinical experience of the surgeon, not disparaging the surgeons in any way.

Mr Pettersson: Point of order. Mr Speaker, the question is asking for an expression of opinion.

MR SPEAKER: No, Mr Pettersson, I am not sure that it is asking for an opinion. I do not know that it is. Mr Cocks, what do you have for us?

Mr Cocks: On that point of order, I would take the same position as you, that the right of someone to know, and what they deserve, is not the same as an opinion.

Mr Pettersson: Asking should they have it though?

MR SPEAKER: I think we are playing with the pedantries of language. We have a minute 30 on the clock. Because we have been chatting for a while on other things, do you want the question re-stated or are you fully across it?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I think I have answered the question as well as I can with reference to previous answers as well, so I will refer Ms Castley to my statements in response to that question and previous ones.

MS BARRY: Minister, why are your decisions about ACT health and hospitals leading to an ideological model of patient treatment?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: No they are not.

Canberra Health Services—visiting medical officers

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, noting the number of resignations of orthopaedic surgeons—some later rescinded—there are still fewer orthopaedic surgeons working in Canberra since October. Meanwhile, the number of elective surgery patients waiting over 30 days has more than doubled, from 10 in October 2024 to 26 in May 2025. Is this blowout because of resignations and other staffing issues resulting from your mismanagement?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: No. In fact, as of May, those surgeons who had tendered their resignations were all still working anyway. I have been really clear in this place multiple times with Ms Castley: each of those surgeons who had tendered their resignations were working through their period of resignation. One of those surgeons pretty much did no elective surgery in the public system anyway. Ms Castley should be aware of that, given the multiple conversations she has clearly had with these particular individuals.

Ms Castley has referred to a point in time that includes the summer period. As I have pointed out to her before, over that summer period of Christmas and New Year there is sometimes a reduction in surgery because surgeons take leave. Sometimes there is a reduction in elective surgery throughput because particular surgeons are away at conferences. There are a whole range of different reasons for this occurring.

What I can assure the Assembly is that the orthopaedic team has been collaborating with Canberra Health Services to ensure that some of the longest wait patients—including patients who were waiting for very long periods on the waiting list of one of those surgeons who has resigned—are, in fact, getting their surgery in a timely way, now that these issues have been resolved. Actually, the orthopaedic team is pulling together to ensure that they are getting through those surgeries.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what effect is your decision to phase out the VMO contracts for medical specialists and surgeons having on your ability to attract orthopaedic surgeons to replace the experienced ones who have resigned?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: None, I believe. Again, I will correct Ms Castley. What we have been saying to the orthopaedic surgeons was that we want to phase out fee-for-service visiting medical officer contracts. We do want to recruit more staff specialists, and it is my understanding that the orthopaedic team has now had productive conversations with Canberra Health Services about actually recruiting staff specialist orthopaedic surgeons. This would be fantastic, because this service has been a 100 per cent visiting medical officer consultant service, in my understanding. This is a service whose accreditation for supporting the most junior medical officers—those interns and residents, who were in their first two years out of university—was withdrawn last year because of a lack of supervision capacity within that orthopaedic team. And that was because of the model that it adopted: a fully visiting medical officer model.

The productive conversations that Canberra Health Services have had with the orthopaedic team are also resolving those issues and the concerns that have been raised repeatedly over a number of years by the Canberra Region Medical Education Council. We are seeing a commitment to junior doctor training in this team and this group—as we are in our other surgical groups—that was hard to achieve with an entirely visiting medical officer model. But our current visiting medical officers are leaning in. They are recognising the challenges, and they are doing this work.

MR HANSON: Minister, do you actually care about the clinicians who are so affected by your decisions that have caused so much concern and distress to them?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I absolutely care about the clinicians. I care about all of our clinicians across the public health system. That is why it is always so distressing when Ms Castley gets in here and denigrates a range of surgeons who are not the ones that she is particularly talking to.

Mr Hanson: Mr Speaker, on a point of order, the question was about the minister's actions and the concern and distress caused as a result. She is creating imputations. If you look at standing order 118 (d)—

MR SPEAKER: Stop the clock.

Mr Hanson: She is trying to impugn that the question that I am asking—or Ms Castley is asking—is somehow to denigrate the surgeons. It clearly is not.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I have a point of order, Mr Speaker. If my comments were impugning, so was the question, and it would also be out of order.

MR SPEAKER: Minister for Health, I am not sure that your point of order applies. I can understand why you have gone to that example, but can we just get back to the question and could we just try to be nice. Can we address the actual question, please. Minister.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I think I have addressed the question, Mr Speaker. I do care about our clinicians. What I want to do is ensure that Canberra Health Services provides a supportive work environment for all of our clinicians, our nurses and our junior doctors as well as for our consultants.

Roads—pedestrians—Belconnen markets

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, in February, I asked you a question on notice about the poorly designed crossing at the Belconnen markets. In your answer, dated 24 February, you said:

TCCS has recently completed a design for a new raised pedestrian crossing in that location, which includes relocation of the ramps. Construction of the crossing is to be completed within the next three months.

This crossing is particularly difficult for people in wheelchairs, pushing prams or using mobility aids, because you have to leave the crossing and walk on the road to use the ramp. If you follow the crossing, it goes to tarmac. The date of 24 May is fast approaching. Will you meet this three-month deadline?

MS CHEYNE: For construction to begin, yes. In fact, on the City Services website news page, there was an article released in April, headed: “New raised pedestrian crossing on Ibbott Lane, Belconnen”. At the same time, we contacted the businesses in the area. The design has been finalised, the construction procurement is underway and it is expected that the contractor will be on board to deliver the upgrade very soon. Works are still expected to commence in May.

MS CLAY: Given the commitment was that construction of the crossing is to be completed within the next three months, when will construction be completed?

MS CHEYNE: Works will take around eight weeks to complete.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, when you build crossings and consider roads, how are you making sure to include the needs of all Canberrans, including those who use wheelchairs or mobility aids or are pushing prams?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Braddock for the question. Again, I would probably point to this crossing as being a great example of what is being taken into account. Obviously, the crossing that has existed there was in place for how the markets were constructed at the time, and that has changed since Capital Food Market has opened. For this new raised pedestrian crossing, the works will include the removal of existing speedhumps, extending some of the kerbing, new kerb ramps, removal of existing

bike racks and installation of bike racks closer to the new crossing—which is also expected to help deter vehicles from parking on the verge—shifting the location of the accessible car park by one space to accommodate the new crossing and some new lighting. I trust that answers Mr Braddock’s question.

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for Children, Youth and Families. The Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People has expressed deep concerns about the treatment of Aboriginal children in the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. The Children and Young People Act prescribes that the commissioner may at any reasonable time enter a detention place for the purpose of exercising her function. The act says that an example of a time that would not be reasonable would be when an emergency declaration is in force; however, the commissioner has been told she may only attend Bimberi during certain pre-approved times.

Minister, why is the commissioner’s legislative power to attend at any reasonable time being denied?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mr Emerson for the question. As Mr Emerson has made members of the chamber aware through his question—as well as media reporting—there have been challenges recently for certain oversights to maintain the access that they believe is reasonable in providing oversight to Bimberi.

I am aware of ongoing conversations that have taken place, since some of this earlier media reporting, to ensure that oversights are able to maintain what they believe is an appropriate level of oversight in line with what is legislated.

I understand that the legal question has been pursued by interested parties in this matter. I am also aware there are current arrangements in place that I believe are satisfactory to meet the requirements of oversight bodies in line with their legal responsibilities.

MR EMERSON: Minister, will the government increase resourcing so that Bimberi has sufficient staffing to facilitate ad hoc visits, or otherwise commit to training these oversight entities so that they can visit the centre unescorted, given I heard this morning from the commissioner that she is not satisfied with the resolution that has been reached?

MR PETTERSSON: I would like to thank the member for the question. Yes, the ACT government is committed to improving and increasing staffing at Bimberi. The question of staffing is one of available human resources, not of government intent to staff the facility. The government is currently undertaking a recruitment college and providing appropriate training to staff a new cohort of workers for the centre. At the moment, Bimberi is experiencing an unusually high number of young people within the centre. This is presenting staffing challenges which have led to some of these conversations about appropriate access and timing of access.

I appreciate the frustration that is experienced on every side of this situation. I do,

however, acknowledge that all sides are committed to working together to reach a good outcome, not just for the relevant parties but for the young people involved.

MS BARRY: Minister, what have you practically done to ensure that the commissioner's ability to effectively carry out their functions is not being limited?

MR PETTERSSON: I would like to thank the member for the question. I have sought proactively to meet with relevant parties in this matter to discuss and understand their issues and what they hope to achieve at the end of this discussion. I am confident that we will be able to reach a sustainable place, where all relevant parties are comfortable and happy with the outcome.

I will re-emphasise that this is in response to an unexpected number of young people within Bimberi while it is simultaneously experiencing a shortage of available workforce. That being said, I understand that arrangements are in place that have been facilitating appropriate and relevant access, regardless of an individual's claimed legal rights.

Canberra Health Services—visiting medical officers

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, are you aware that, due to your decision to phase out VMO contracts, the pay and conditions of senior specialists at Canberra Hospital are such that no appropriately qualified Australian specialist applies for these posts and that these posts are now being filled by overseas specialists?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I cannot possibly answer that question without Ms Castley providing a bit more detail about what type of posts she is talking about. Canberra Health Services advertises for both visiting medical officers and staff specialists. My understanding is that a number of staff specialists have been appointed over the last few months. In fact, Canberra Health Services, as I have previously provided information on in this place, has been very successful in recruitment. That includes recruiting some highly qualified clinicians from overseas. Again, Ms Castley's suggestion that because a doctor comes from overseas they will not be as qualified as someone who is moving from a different jurisdiction in Australia, and who may have previously come from overseas, is not an accurate reflection of the make-up of our health workforce.

MS CASTLEY: Can the minister confirm that this is the case for important senior roles, such as the Director of Cardiology at Canberra Hospital?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take that question on notice.

MR HANSON: Minister, what other "craft groups"—that is, surgeons and medical professionals—have been affected by your decisions that are deterring Australian specialists from applying for roles such as directors of cardiology?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I absolutely reject the premise of the opposition's question. If Ms Castley has specific questions that she would like to put on notice or send to me, we are happy to look into it. But the vagueness of these questions makes it

impossible for me to answer in question time.

Waste—syringes

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Health. Local businesses and constituents have expressed concerns about used syringes being dumped in public areas, including parks and playgrounds. Minister, what are some of the health risks associated with being accidentally jabbed by a used syringe?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am the Minister for Health; I am not a clinician or a qualified specialist. My response to Ms Morris would probably be by saying, “Google it.” You will get as good an answer from that, in terms of the health risks, as you would from me googling it and answering your question in relation to the health risks. If what Ms Morris is concerned about is, in fact, a matter of littering and syringes being in public places, the responsibility for that does not sit with the health minister.

MS MORRIS: I take it from the answer you just gave that the answer would be no, but, Minister, are you concerned at the health risk discarded syringes present to young children and families playing in public areas where there are discarded syringes?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I feel that this is very much asking for an expression of opinion, but, of course, like any member of the community, I am concerned when I hear about syringes being discarded in public places. As a local member, I have had those conversations with people in my community as well.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, has the number of syringes dumped in public places increased since your government decriminalised hard drugs like heroin, ice and cocaine?

MS CHEYNE: That definitely is a question for me. No; I do not believe so. I am happy to take that on notice. What I would say is that needles and sharps of any kind should be reported to Access Canberra on 132281 or via the website. There are response times for picking those up. I think it is two hours, or something like that—it is very short—so that any harm that is possible to the community is rectified. There are also numerous syringe disposal bins around the city, including within our public health facilities.

I would note that there are many reasons someone might be using a syringe. It could be Ozempic or Wegovy. It could be diabetes; it could be anything.

Mr Hanson: So you can give medical advice?

MS CHEYNE: Suggesting that there is an immediate risk relating to drug use—

Ms Stephen-Smith: It’s not medical advice; it’s just—

Mr Hanson: She’s giving a list of conditions. You said that was not appropriate.

MS CHEYNE: It is not appropriate. I do not believe it is appropriate. I would say that stirring up sentiment that there is a risk when there is a very clear way of reporting

this and getting City Services to attend to any issue that someone sees, whether it is in a playground or whatever it may be—that is where I would focus Ms Morris’s and Ms Castley’s efforts.

South Tuggeranong health centre

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Health. In May last year, your government announced a timeline for a South Tuggeranong health centre and you promised construction would be completed by the end of this year. This has since been pushed back to August next year. Minister, what are the reasons for these delays?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Morris for the question. The main reason for the delay was working through the detailed design and development application process is my understanding. If that is not correct, I will come back and correct the record with the Assembly.

MS MORRIS: Minister, what impact has the delays had on the health centre’s estimated cost to taxpayers?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: None as far as I am aware.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, given the delays, what is the plan to ensure access to quality health care for Tuggeranong residents?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Well, our plan continues to be to build a new health centre in South Tuggeranong, something that those opposite never committed to do.

Planning and development—Manuka Oval

MR RATTENBURY: My question is for the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, last week I asked you about the planning proposal by the Canberra Services Club for a site at Manuka Oval. You answered that Minister Steel has recused himself due a possible perception of conflict of interest, and that you had decided it was in the public interest for this proposal to proceed. What was the potential conflict of interest for Minister Steel that was the basis for him recusing himself?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Rattenbury for the question. The minister had previously worked at the Australian Federal Police Association. I understand that his boss at that time now has a role with the impacted club.

MR RATTENBURY: What were the factors that you took into account in deciding it was in the public interest for a development application to be considered?

MR BARR: The briefing material provided to me as the decision-maker.

MISS NUTTALL: Chief Minister, what is the status of the Manuka Oval precinct plan that in 2016 you undertook to develop?

MR BARR: That project was abandoned as a result of the COVID period. There was

no funding source for it.

City and government services—mowing

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the ACT's annual mowing program for 2025?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the question. This year we finally had a relatively normal year when it came to the mowing program. It ran from 2 September until 4 April, with much more favourable conditions compared to last year or many years previously. It was much more like a usual summer for us. Crews were able to carry out 124 service days with only 26 days impacted by rain or unserviceable weather conditions—such as, it might be a sunny day after a rain period but the ground is exceptionally damp.

Resources available for the delivery of this year's program included our hardworking in-house crews supported by procured mowing contractor services, which are annually adjusted to meet seasonal demand. It is fantastic to report that around 90 per cent of mowing activity continues to be delivered in-house, which is an ongoing commitment. That is even with the growth in responsibilities that our crews face season after season. Those 124 available servicing days correlated to the completion of seven passes of suburban mowing and five passes of arterial road mowing.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, how does the mowing program support broader government objectives?

MS CHEYNE: The mowing program is about much more than simply keeping the grass down in our parks and along our roadsides; it is central to how we maintain a safe, accessible and sustainable city. Regular mowing supports road safety by maintaining clear sight lines for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. It supports bushfire preparedness, helping reduce fuel loads and creating defensible space near homes, nature reserves and key public infrastructure. It is why TCCS is such an important stakeholder in the Bushfire Operations Plan, and I note that that plan is out for consultation at this moment. Our mowing schedule complements the government's investment in active travel by ensuring parts remain usable and safe throughout the year. The program is also designed to enhance the amenity of our urban spaces, making them more attractive and usable for recreation, sport and simply social connection.

Importantly, our mowing efforts are aligned with the government's ecological and environmental objectives. Special mowing guidelines apply to areas of high conservation value, such as grasslands and nature reserves, to protect native species and ecological processes. This includes managing weeds, encouraging the growth of native grasses and maintaining habitat for endangered species like the golden sun moth and the striped legless lizard.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what is the ACT government doing to support our city presentation crews in preparation for the next mowing season?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Tough for the supplementary. The ACT government supports our city presentation crews year after year through a strategically planned and reviewed program, the ongoing maintenance and expansion of our fleet as well as staff upskilling and training. We have a mowing program coordinator, Miss Jody Friend, who does an exceptional job in programming the year but also, in this off-season, reviewing all of the maintenance, the standard operating procedures and the training. With this year's program, additional weeks are now being spent conducting mechanical inspections, maintenance and repairs of machines and equipment. That will ensure that our fleet is primed, ready and fit for the next season, which will start in September 2025.

Our City Services staff undergo training this month and in August and go through a debriefing process as well. That supports staff in becoming more comfortable in carrying out daily tasks using a range of different machinery and equipment. That all increases efficiency. On top of that, there is an enhanced ecological map that has been developed in partnership with EPSDD, and that assists our mowing crews as well as our tree planting teams. I look forward, especially with the machinery of government changes, to seeing even greater alignment between our ecological objectives and our objectives regarding amenity and safety.

City and government services—cycleways

MS CARRICK: My question for the Minister for City Services is about the cycle paths in Coombs Peninsula. ACT Labor made a commitment before the last election to complete the missing link in the path network, making it easier for locals and visitors to explore and enjoy the area. When will this missing link/path be completed?

MS CHEYNE: I believe it will be subject to budget funding. We are going through a budget process right now. It is an election commitment, and we will deliver it this term.

MS CARRICK: When will work be completed on the seven-kilometre off-road shared path for walking and cycling along John Gorton Drive, including an underpass connecting the future town centre to Denman Prospect that ACT Labor said work was already underway on before the last election?

MS CHEYNE: I will take it on notice, Mr Speaker.

MR COCKS: Minister, when will construction commence on the new pedestrian and cyclist bridge near the RSPCA in Coombs, which ACT Labor also committed to before the last election?

MS CHEYNE: There are two different roads or cycle pathways there, so I am going to take that on notice. One is being delivered by the SLA and one by TCCS. So that I do not mix it up, let me take it on notice, and I will come back.

City and government services—Access Canberra

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services. Businesses that operate both in Canberra and in other jurisdictions often say that

working with the ACT government is harder and more expensive than in other states. Minister, why does it take five days to process used car registrations lodged by car dealers online?

MS CHEYNE: I will double-check, but I am pretty sure that this is an issue that has been resolved. It is something, if I am exactly recalling this issue, that has been raised with us, and Access Canberra did implement a solution some months ago. I do not believe that it is still a problem, but if I am conflating something else, I will come back and correct the record.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why are Canberra businesses paying more than twice as much in commercial rates compared to other businesses just over the border?

MS CHEYNE: Commercial rates are not a decision for me. In fact, it is the Revenue Office that assesses the value of the land. I would note that all of that information is publicly available, and Mr Milligan may wish to read more about it.

MR COCKS: Minister, why does the ACT government make it so hard and so expensive to do business in Canberra?

MS CHEYNE: We do not.

Light rail—construction impacts

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, you have previously stated in this chamber, very clearly, that any support for businesses on London Circuit would not be financial. This week, the government backflipped and finally acknowledged the impact of light rail construction and announced business support measures, months after construction had already had a devastating effect on businesses. Minister, why is free parking limited to after 5.30 pm and only on selected days of the week?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. This corresponds with the activity of hospitality businesses. We were very pleased to put that in place from this week to make sure that there is an incentive for Canberrans to support businesses during that time. That is the focus of the package that we have announced this week, to encourage Canberrans to get out and support businesses during the construction period where it is affecting them. Of course, the other measures that we have announced will do the same thing, like an advertising campaign, for example. The period Wednesday through to Sunday corresponds with a higher level of activity for hospitality businesses, which we know will be the businesses that are most affected in the area around London Circuit. There is a mix of businesses around the area, but some of them will be more affected than others. We certainly note that hospitality was affected. When we consulted with them through the City Construction Information Group, the discussion that they had with Infrastructure Canberra focused primarily on parking. It was something that the businesses themselves raised with the government, and we were pleased to be able to support that measure. It is practical and agreed to by the government.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, given that the impact of construction has been affecting

businesses since February this year, why is the outdoor permit waiver not implemented immediately or even backdated to the start of construction?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Of course, we have budget processes in government that we need to go through when considering these matters. We set out a range of supports that we would provide to the businesses affected in this area through the Business Partnership Plan before the project really ramped up, in terms of construction of the light rail stage 2A line. Of course, as construction has been occurring, businesses have raised other matters that they would like to see addressed, and we have been able to address some of those through the package that we announced this week. We will continue listening to the businesses about other supports and practical measures that can be taken that the government can agree to as the construction program continues.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, why are you not doing more to account for the devastating impact your construction is having on local businesses, noting they are not all hospitality businesses?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I think the package this week shows that we are.

Schools—corporate sponsorships

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, in question time yesterday, as well as in some other communication, you have indicated that you are undertaking a consultation process about fossil fuel sponsorships in schools. Can I confirm that this is the same process that was undertaken for the other industries that are not permitted to be involved in school sponsorships under the Education Directorate's corporate sponsorship policy?

MS BERRY: Thank you for the question Miss Nuttall. Yes, I indicated in my response to a motion brought to the Assembly with regards to corporate sponsorship of schools, including gas, fuel and gaming, that the ACT government's Education Directorate was already conducting a review into that corporate sponsorship. This is that.

Miss Nuttall: Point of order on relevance, Mr Speaker. The question was about whether the process that was undertaken right now for fossil fuel sponsorships is the same process that was undertaken for other things that are currently banned, like armaments and pornography.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Berry?

MS BERRY: This is a review of the corporate sponsorship policy, which includes the fuel and gambling corporate sponsorship that your motion in a previous sitting called for and I confirmed that we were conducting a review of that policy. That is what this is. That is what I answered when you asked the question this week.

MISS NUTTALL: Have you opted to undertake a different process for fossil fuels compared to something like tobacco or armaments?

MS BERRY: No. The review is occurring because it needs to occur. It has been some time since the policy was looked at. There are a number of policies that are reviewed as a regular business as usual process. So this review was already happening and it was timely that it happened at the same time as your motion.

MS CLAY: Minister, will the review include a review of curriculum materials sponsored by fossil fuel companies?

MS BERRY: No, it is a review of corporate sponsorship.

Reconciliation Day—grants

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Minister, what grant programs are available to support Reconciliation Day and the local community?

MS ORR: I thank the member for their question. I am pleased to say that the ACT government has a range of grant programs that support reconciliation and the community. The ACT Reconciliation Day Grants and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural, Leadership and Scholarship Grants are two examples of these, and both have recently concluded grant rounds.

The ACT Reconciliation Day Grants program funds meaningful initiatives in the lead-up to Reconciliation Week, with events that support Reconciliation Day. These grants give priority to projects that demonstrate that: they integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities into their organisation's structures; they work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a culturally appropriate way; and that they recognise the need to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in service design and delivery. This year there were seven applicants who were offered a Reconciliation Day Grant to support work relevant to community-organised events during Reconciliation Week.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural, Leadership and Scholarship Grants, as the name suggests, have three components: culture, leadership and scholarships. All of these are focused in their own way on supporting initiatives to increase cultural integrity and excellence within the community. This year, 31 applicants across the three streams were offered a grant.

The ACT government also offers relevant grant programs throughout the year, for instance the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation Establishment and Expansion Fund is there to support new and existing ACT ACCOs build organisational capacity and capability through the provision of culturally appropriate human services to the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community. Applications for that particular program are open and ongoing. However, we do encourage people to get in before 30 June.

All these programs improve outcomes across the territory, and I would like to thank everyone for their participation. I look forward to seeing a lot of these projects as they get implemented.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what kind of community-driven activities will we see this year through the 2025 ACT Reconciliation Day Grants?

MS ORR: Again, I thank the member for her question. This year's successful applicants reflect a wide diversity within the Canberra community, with six applicants receiving grants. The YWCA of Canberra's Curious Kids reconciliation program is one of those. They will share stories and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices with children through fun activities. The ACT Council of Social Services is convening a panel session on how cultural safety and reconciliation practices today lay the groundwork for inclusive and equitable workplaces in the future. Beseda, the Czechoslovak Australian Association of Canberra, is running an art workshop and a group discussion on relationships, respect and trust. Gilmore Church will host a holistic Reconciliation Day event. The Celebration of African Australians will host an African drumming workshop to promote Reconciliation Day, and Corroboree Empire is holding a week of activities for local Aboriginal groups and children to celebrate Reconciliation Week.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, how does the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural, Leadership and Scholarship Grant program build cultural integrity and community leadership?

MS ORR: I thank the member for his question. The grants, as I mentioned, have three streams, all focused on building a range of capabilities. The cultural grants support cultural integrity and the aspirations of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and contribute to the building of respectful, fair and sustainable communities. This year's successful grant recipients and activities included the ACT Torres Strait Islanders Corporation bringing the Torres Strait Islander dance group Gerib Sik to Canberra for cultural performances and workshops.

Our Canberra Writers Festival's First Nations Stories and Strengths program highlights First Nations authors and strengthens storytelling traditions that keep culture alive within the community. The Canberra High School P&C got a grant to support the Community Indigenous Garden project, an outdoor classroom and learning space that honours Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and knowledge. Basketball ACT received a grant for their Indigenous Game Development Program.

The leadership grants are there to support community leadership, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a strong voice and are decision-makers on issues that impact them and lead through the achievement of positive life outcomes. There were a range of successful grant recipients and activities, which included leadership and development activities. Some of the groups include the Canberra and District NAIDOC Aboriginal Corporation; the Yeddung Mura, or 'good pathways', Aboriginal Corporation; and the Australian Outward Bound Development Fund. There were also five individuals who received leadership development grants to support participation in training and professional development programs.

The scholarship grants support lifelong learning, empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to engage in that lifelong learning journey. Scholarship grants

are open to individuals only. This year, 10 successful grant recipients were provided with scholarship grants to provide career opportunities within midwifery, medical radiation science, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, and psychology. It is certainly quite a diverse and very broad range of recipients and projects, and I commend all successful applicants.

City and government services—cycleways

MR BRADDOCK: My question is for the Minister for City Services. Minister, on the TCCS page on the Sherbrooke Street active travel street trial in Ainslie, it says:

At this stage, funding has been allocated for the design phase only. Construction of the Active Travel Street is subject to future funding.

Minister, is there a possibility that the residents of Ainslie and the students of Ainslie primary school may not, after all, get an active travel street/bicycle boulevard along Sherbrooke Street?

MS CHEYNE: The answer is exactly as Mr Braddock read out: it is subject to future funding.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, can you reassure the community that segments 5 to 7 of the garden city cycle route will be constructed now that the 2023-24 budget funding for segments 1 to 4 is complete?

MS CHEYNE: I will have to take that on notice. Asking about specific sections of roads is really not a good use of time, but I am happy to take it on notice.

MS CLAY: Minister, if funding is only allocated in a piecemeal way for active travel network infrastructure instead of being forecast, how can we know how long it will take for there to be a dedicated safe cycling network all around Canberra?

MS CHEYNE: I would point Ms Clay to our election commitments, which are comprehensive and do point to a four-year program of uplift to the existing path network as well as the construction of new paths and, in particular, the expansion around Lake Ginninderra and the widening of the path there.

I would also note that the Labor federal government greatly value active travel and they do seek to partner with the ACT government. So, in some instances, it may be best for us, whether it is due to that funding or due to market conditions or whatever it may be, that we stage things and go to market in that way. In others, we can make a clear investment with a contract for multiple areas. So I think the community can have confidence. We have detailed design work underway right across the city, in addition to construction in what feels like everywhere. So I reject any sense that we are not investing in this crucial infrastructure.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice

Waste—syringes

MS CHEYNE: In relation to Ms Morris's questions about needle and sharp disposal, yes, serious risk can be posed if there is inappropriate disposal of sharps. That particularly relates to bloodborne infections, but the risk of contracting one of these bloodborne infections from a needlestick injury is very low. Nevertheless, we strongly encourage everyone in the community, no matter what they are using a sharp for, to dispose of those safely. There is a 24-hour sharps hotline, so if people notice sharps anywhere, we would ask them to please report it so that they can be removed.

As soon as a needle, syringe or any clinical waste is found in an area under the management of TCCS, either by an employee on a routine inspection or by a member of the public, it is reported and removed by a trained employee. Contractors regularly inspect open space for sharps and clinical waste, including inspecting public toilet blocks in public places, at shopping centres, daily. All of our public toilets have safe sharps disposal available in them. Playgrounds and barbecue sites are inspected weekly and parks are inspected during routine maintenance work.

In addition to that, as I mentioned, there are sharps disposal bins throughout ACT government facilities, including, and especially, health facilities.

Government and city services—cycleways

MS CHEYNE: On cycle paths, in a question asked by Mr Braddock yesterday, the response to question on notice 118 identified the total forecast expenditure for active travel infrastructure in the 2024-25 budget. This year's budget will likely result in amendments to that total forecast over the next four years. The missing portion of C2 is known to TCCS and it has been identified amongst other competing priorities for active travel infrastructure.

At this stage the mentioned missing section of the C2 cycle route near Oaks Estate will be considered through the budget process, together with other priorities. The ACT is delivering a portion of the C2 route from Kings Avenue Bridge to Cunningham Street to improve cyclist safety and encourage the uptake of active travel in south Canberra. Further details are available on the City Services website. Indeed, that is a particular project on which the commonwealth has partnered with us.

In relation to the path repair crew, recruitment activities remain ongoing for the establishment of the concrete replacement team. Some positions have not been able to be filled in the most recent round of recruitment. However, three successful candidates have commenced, four are being onboarded later this month, one will commence later in the year, and the remaining unfilled positions will be readvertised.

Government and city services—Access Canberra

MS CHEYNE: Further to Mr Milligan's question regarding motor vehicle dealers, there were some operational pressures last year; there were periods when timeframes for processing transactions did not meet the expectations of the industry—or government, for that matter. As a result of that feedback, Access Canberra has reviewed its processes, and a different service model has been trialled and, I believe,

is now permanently in place. That has been with the aim of reducing the service timeframes and improving communication to support dealers.

With respect to the stats for the business days to process dealer transactions, in November 2024, the average time in that month was 4.4 days, in December, it was 2.9 days, in January, it was less than one day, in February, it was 1.5 days, in March, it was 1.3 days and, in April, to date, or when I had that information, it was 1.2 days.

Given that line of questioning was about what the government was doing to support businesses and why it was slow, I think that shows that we heard about an issue. Somehow Mr Milligan has only become aware of it four months after we rectified it, but it is rectified. The ACT government does respond to feedback that we hear from the community, and this is a perfect example of that, and of how we are focused on making it easier to work with government in doing business in this city.

Government and city services—cycleways

MS BERRY: I want to add to Minister Cheyne's response with regard to pedestrian pathways. The SLA has committed to fund the design and construction of the missing section of the main community path along the Molonglo River. The project will include construction of 400 metres of new path and a pedestrian cycle bridge over Weston Creek. SLA have already consulted with Pedal Power, TCCS, Icon Water, PCS, the conservator and the Molonglo Valley Community Forum. Once the project design approvals have been obtained, it will then be tendered for construction.

Planning and development—Fadden telecommunications tower site options

MS MORRIS (Brindabella) (2.58): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) on 11 March 2025, Indara Group lodged a development application for a 25-meter tall Optus telecommunications tower on the corner of Bugden Avenue and Nicklin Crescent in Fadden;
- (b) the objective of the proposed tower is to improve mobile telecommunication services, including coverage and network capacity in the Fadden area;
- (c) the proposed site is located in the heart of Fadden directly adjacent to a local tennis court, across the road from a children's playground and Fadden Pond;
- (d) a community survey conducted by Liberal Member for Brindabella, Deborah Morris MLA, sought the views of Fadden residents on the proposed development; and
- (e) the survey generated 167 responses from Fadden residents which found that:
 - (i) 79 percent of residents do not support the proposed location;
 - (ii) 28 percent of residents are not satisfied with their mobile

- reception; and
- (iii) 51 percent of residents preferred alternative locations for the tower in Fadden;
- (2) further notes that:
 - (a) the development application cited alternate locations that would achieve mobile coverage objectives including:
 - (i) Candidate B: Wanniasa Hills Nature Reserve, north of Appel Crescent and east of Erindale Drive;
 - (ii) Candidate C: Fadden Hills Pond Public Reserve; and
 - (iii) Candidate D: Wanniasa Hills Nature Reserve, 35-39 Nicklin Crescent;
 - (b) according to the development application, Candidates B and D were not pursued because “Whilst the elevated nature of this candidate achieved the coverage objectives, an agreement could not be reached with the land custodian”. The land in both cases is managed by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD);
 - (c) Candidate C, which is directly adjacent to the chosen site, was not pursued due to the scenic nature of the reserve and the high environmental and visual amenity impact;
 - (d) the community survey found 41 percent of respondents selected Candidate B: Wanniasa Hills Nature Reserve, north of Appel Crescent and east of Erindale Drive as their preferred location for the development; and
 - (e) public submissions on the development application closed on 9 April 2025, and the development application is currently being assessed; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
 - (a) acknowledge the significant community disapproval to the chosen site, as demonstrated by the community survey;
 - (b) acknowledge that the majority of residents surveyed preferred alternative locations in Fadden for the development, with 41 percent supporting Candidate B as the preferred site;
 - (c) publish the evaluation of the EPSDD that prevented Indara Group from proceeding with Candidates B and D to the development application stage;
 - (d) direct the EPSDD to re-evaluate the suitability of Candidates B and D to enable Indara Group to proceed with a development application for Candidates B and D for assessment; and
 - (e) report back to the Assembly on progress by the last sitting day of May 2025.

I rise today on behalf of hundreds of Fadden residents who love their local neighbourhood and want the best for their community. Many of these residents contacted my office after a development application was lodged in March by the Indara group for a 25-metre-tall Optus phone tower to be erected on the corner of Bugden Avenue and Nicklin Crescent in Fadden. I know that my Brindabella

colleague across the chamber, Mr Werner-Gibbings, is very familiar with this site and has a love for it himself, being a Fadden resident.

For anyone who is unfamiliar with this piece of land, Mr Assistant Speaker, I will try to describe it. Imagine, in your own home suburb, the most beloved outdoor community space there is—a beautiful piece of scenic nature where you take your baby for a walk in their pram, or where you take your young children to play in the playground and to watch the ducks, while you take a moment for yourself, or while you catch up with other mums and dads who are there doing the same thing. It is a place where your children get a small taste of independence as they meet their friends to play, and maybe even do a little bit of fishing. It is a place where older residents enjoy walks and talks, peaceful moments, surrounded by nature and bird life. It is a place where locals can let off steam and play some tennis, enjoying the precious outdoor recreation. That is what this parcel of green space is for so many Fadden residents.

Imagine, in that most beloved piece of outdoor community space in your home suburb, plonking a 25-metre-tall tower with supporting infrastructure, a concrete pad, a gravel driveway for access vehicles, utility boxes for maintenance, and fencing to enclose the structure. I bet that thought is quite abrupt, intrusive and even offensive—that something so out of character could possibly be erected in one of the most beloved outdoor spaces in the community.

That is what has upset so many residents who contacted my office when the purple sign notifying the community of the development application was hammered into the ground on the corner of Bugden Avenue and Nicklin Crescent earlier this year. When my office became aware of the development application, I wanted to know what the broader Fadden community thought about it, not just a handful of residents who happened to come across the purple sign on their walk that afternoon. That is why I conducted a survey seeking the views of every resident who was willing to share them.

At the outset, I want sincerely to thank every resident who engaged with my survey and who took the time to share with me their thoughts about the proposed plan and about the quality of their mobile reception. I would like also to acknowledge the presence of some of those residents who have joined us in the gallery here today. Welcome, and thank you very much for being here.

My survey generated 167 responses from Fadden residents, and it is my honour and privilege to give a voice to those views by sharing the results of those 167 responses with the ACT Assembly today. My survey asked a range of questions. It asked, “Are you satisfied with the proposed location?” “Are you satisfied with your mobile reception?” “How would you rate your phone coverage?” and “Which site identified by the developer would be the most suitable for a phone tower?” It asked for feedback on why they did or did not support the proposal.

The results are compelling, and part of my motion today calls on the ACT government to acknowledge them, as they capture the views of so many families in the community. According to my survey, 79 per cent of Fadden residents do not support the proposed location for the tower. Respondents provided a range of reasons for not supporting the

chosen location, citing the negative impact it would have on the scenic nature of the area, the wildlife and the bird life, and the negative impact it would have on the community's recreational assets, including the tennis court, playground and nearby pond. With respect to close proximity to homes, this tower would literally be on the front doorstep of so many homes.

Another reason given was the negative impact on home values and the potential creation of blind spots for cars turning the corner on Bugden Avenue and Nicklin Crescent. One resident said that the tower would “epically ruin what is a beautiful location in the surrounding area”. Another resident said, “It will have a significant impact visually on the nature and landscape of the area.” Another said, “It will detract from the lovely family feel of that area.” Another resident said, “This is also green space in the middle of a suburb and should not be destroyed by a large compound.” One resident said:

This proposal will ruin the natural aesthetic of the entrance to Fadden Hills, which is currently a lovely green space with native trees and grasses. Why do we as residents have to have our natural environment ruined? Find a better way.

Another resident said:

This is a recreation area for families and has been developed to promote community interaction, with a pond and tennis courts. The tower would not only detract from this recreational area aesthetically; it would potentially reduce the ability for locals to use the area.

Another resident said, “Many of us use that area for recreation, walking, playing and gathering.” There are so many more quotes that I could share, but I am conscious of the time. Here is a rapid-fire version of residents describing the tower: eyesore, intrusive, imposing, bad, extremely unattractive, inconsistent with the neighbourhood, obnoxious—and I could go on. These are not my words; these are the words of so many Fadden residents.

It is also very important to highlight that a sizeable proportion of the residents who responded to my survey said they needed better mobile reception. Twenty-eight per cent of the residents said they were not satisfied with their phone reception. In today's day and age, that is an unacceptably high proportion of residents who cannot get decent reception.

All of us in this chamber rely on our phones for just about every aspect of our lives—to communicate and manage our work, family, friends, community involvement, banking, and all manner of communications. One resident described their phone reception as “terrible”. Another said, “Mobile reception is a problem for us in Fadden, to the point that we are unable to make and receive phone calls from our home.” Likewise, another resident said, “We have no coverage at home.” Another said, “Our coverage is the worst.” Again, these are not my words; rather, these are the words and the shared sentiments of so many in the Fadden community.

It is very clear that Fadden does need improved mobile services, and it is important that residents with poor mobile phone reception have better access to telecommunication networks so that they can get on with their lives, just like

everyone else. My survey found that the majority of Fadden residents are not against having a phone tower in Fadden. They are not against better phone reception for their neighbours who need it; rather, they are firmly of the view that there are better sites in Fadden that could be developed and that would achieve the same reception objectives that the corner of Bugden Avenue and Nicklin Crescent would, as the development application itself has pointed out.

More than half of survey respondents, 51 per cent, preferred alternative locations in Fadden for the tower. The development application cited at least three alternative locations that would achieve the same mobile coverage objectives as the current site. They are: candidate B, Wanniasa Hills Nature Reserve, north of Appel Crescent and east of Erindale Drive; candidate C, Fadden Hills Pond public reserve; and candidate D, Wanniasa Hills Nature Reserve, 35-39 Nicklin Crescent.

Forty-one per cent of respondents said their preference for an alternative site was candidate B, Wanniasa Hills, north of Appel Crescent and east of Erindale Drive. This compares to only 32 per cent who said they were not satisfied with any of the alternative locations.

It is clear that the majority of residents surveyed are not against a phone tower and better reception in Fadden; rather, 51 per cent of them preferred alternative locations in Fadden, and 41 per cent agreed that candidate B was the most suitable option.

This is where we run into another problem that my motion seeks to address. According to the development application, candidates B and D in Wanniasa Hills were not allowed to be investigated as an option by the developer because the ACT government's Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate prohibited them from progressing to the development application stage.

The development application notes that, while the elevated nature of these candidates achieved the coverage objectives, an agreement could not be reached with the land custodian, which is the EPSDD. The ACT government has closed off any alternative windows of opportunity for better phone coverage without ever allowing them to be assessed by the Territory Planning Authority for their suitability.

That is why I am calling on the ACT government to publish the evaluation that they have used to justify that position, and to direct the EPSDD to go back and have another look at the proposal, so that the developer can, at the very least, progress to a development application stage for those sites.

If the reasons underpinning the EPSDD's initial assessment are legitimate and worthy, maybe it is the case that the Planning Authority would not approve the DA, anyway. But the point is that we will never know, because that evaluation has not been made public, and the ACT government has proactively blocked both the developer and the Planning Authority from ever investigating and assessing those options.

The only pathway forward that the ACT government has currently given the developer is to build a 25-metre-tall tower on the most prized recreational community asset in Fadden. What other options are there for better phone coverage in Fadden? Candidate C, which is practically on top of the Fadden Pond, was rightly rejected

because of the negative impact it would have on the scenic nature of the reserve and the high environmental and visual amenity impact; yet Fadden Pond is barely a stone's throw away from the chosen site on the corner of Bugden Avenue and Nicklin Crescent.

I should note that the current development application for the corner of Bugden Avenue and Nicklin Crescent is currently under assessment and 134 submissions were lodged with the Territory Planning Authority. We shall all be watching and waiting to see the outcome of that development application. But whatever that outcome is, it will leave at least one issue unresolved. That is why I again urge the Assembly to support my motion today, so that we can come to a resolution.

As it stands, if the application is supported by the Planning Authority, by not allowing alternative sites to be assessed, the government would be giving a green light to the development of a site that the community has very clearly rejected. If the application is rejected by the Planning Authority, the government would be blocking Fadden residents from gaining access to better phone reception—which is something many of them desperately need—by not allowing alternative sites to be assessed.

My motion has sought to find the middle road, a road that seeks to, firstly, protect an outdoor native green space widely used by the community for family and recreational activities and, secondly, ensure that Fadden residents who have effectively been unable to use their phones at home will have access to better phone reception.

Again, I would like to thank all members of the Fadden community who completed my survey, and I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (3.12): I rise today to speak to Ms Morris's motion on Fadden tower. Community consultation is important, and I am glad that Ms Morris has brought this motion to the Assembly's attention. I have certainly received a few representations from Fadden and Tuggeranong residents who are concerned about the current proposed site for the tower on the corner of Bugden Avenue and Nicklin Crescent.

The concerns that they have raised with me are like those outlined by Ms Morris, around its proximity to the Fadden Hills Pond and playground. It is a beautiful area and a really valued play, recreation and fishing spot. They have expressed concerns about the removal of four small trees and about the construction deterring native birdlife. The people who have reached out to me indicated that they had made submissions regarding Indara's development application, so I am reassured that they have all engaged appropriately in the DA process.

As this was of concern to my constituents, I wrote a letter to Minister Steel, advising him that multiple people who had reached out to me were concerned about the current location. In the letter, I acknowledged that the ACT Planning Authority would make a decision on the DA as an independent agency and that I did not seek to interfere with the outcome of that proposal. The minister's response, unsurprisingly, was that, as applications were assessed independent of government, the minister was unable to be involved whilst the DA was under assessment.

Where I have been stuck a bit more is that alternative sites B, C and D, as identified by Ms Morris, are all within nature reserves, whereas the current proposed site A is zoned for urban open space. The view of the Greens is that urban open space is much more appropriate zoning for a phone tower than land zoned as a nature reserve.

Here is what I really like about Ms Morris's motion: she asks the government to publish the evaluation of EPSDD that prevented Indara group from proceeding with candidates B and D to the development application stage. I agree. The community absolutely deserves to know the basis on which the Planning Authority makes decisions about our community space. I wonder whether they will find, when this information is published, that sites B, C and D were ruled out because they were in fact nature reserves, and because the construction's potential demolition of trees and habitat would have had significant adverse ecological consequences. If so, it seems to me that that is why we would not want sites B, C or D. Once you start eroding the ecological value of a site, it is really hard to get it back.

Unfortunately, the government has frequently demonstrated its reticence when it comes to rehabilitating land that has lost ecological value under the government's watch. We saw this with the Ainslie volcanics grassland; we have seen it in numerous environmental offsets. I have to wonder if we might actually have seen a different outcome in Ms Morris's community survey if that ecological evidence had been available to the community when indicating their preferred site for the tower.

Because sites B, C and D are in nature reserves, and because we have yet to see an assessment of the ecological impact of development on a site, we will be supporting the government's forthcoming amendment to remove call (3)(d), which is to re-evaluate the suitability of candidates B and D. We believe that a call to re-evaluate is premature, especially when the community and the Assembly have yet to see the evidence for why they were not pursued.

Before I wind up, I am interested in the results of Ms Morris's community survey. Forgive me; she probably shed some light on her findings, but I missed it in the conversation, and I am keen to read the *Hansard*. When we spoke earlier, Ms Morris was kind enough to clarify some of the data, so I will walk members through what I initially read from the community survey results, as reported, and what I understand to be the case since then.

Reading through the questions on the Google form, there appear to be two questions directly related to the placement of Fadden tower. The first simply asks, "Are you satisfied with the proposed location of the tower?" and provides for a "yes" or "no" answer. The second—it is in greater detail; I really like it—shows a map indicating the proposed sites, asks which of the four proposed sites residents would support and provides the four options, including the current proposal at the corner of Bugden Avenue and Nicklin Crescent. It also includes a fifth "none of the above" option. There were also free-text boxes asking for the reasons why residents did or did not support the current proposed location, but these would give you multiple choice data.

Ms Morris's motion also presented the following two statistics—namely, that 79 per cent of Fadden residents do not support the proposed location, and 51 per cent of residents preferred alternative locations for the tower, with 41 per cent preferring

candidate B, identified in the DA as Wanniasa Hills Nature Reserve. I am assuming that the 79 per cent unsupported statistic refers to that first yes or no question, which is pretty conclusive.

However, that leads us to assume that the 51 per cent statistic of preferring alternative locations to the tower refers to that second multiple-choice question. I was initially unsure whether that referred to the cumulative total of sites B, C and D or B, C, D and none of the above. It was not clear to me, from working off the statistic presented in the motion, but I understand now—thank you to Ms Morris—that 51 per cent refers to the sum of B, C, and D only.

Percentage-wise, we can reasonably assume that the remaining 49 per cent of respondents responded that they preferred A, the current location, plus none of the above. Since Ms Morris has kindly shared with me that 32 per cent of respondents did not want any of the proposed sites, that means that around 17 per cent of multiple-choice respondents favoured the existing site A. I can see the vision, but it has given me pause because 17 per cent is not nothing. Technically, it puts the proposed site A as the second most preferred site out of the four.

I would genuinely like to thank Ms Morris for speaking to me about this data. A percentage breakdown of that multiple choice question has been really valuable in deliberations. We may not be completely aligned on its interpretation. To be honest, I read from this breakdown that the community is more divided on potential options and has not completely ruled out the current site. Regardless, the information certainly helps us as an Assembly to better understand where the community is coming from, so it is really valuable in that regard.

In conclusion, once again I thank Ms Morris for bringing forward this motion. I think it has genuinely moved the conversation along, for community and for government. It could well be, as we go through the investigation, that the current proposed site A is the least-worst option, especially from an environmental perspective, and perhaps also in terms of community amenity. We would love to see the basis on which those planning decisions were made, so that we can say for sure.

I confirm that the Greens will also be supporting Mr Emerson's amendments. The idea of future-proofing our systems is always good; I am looking at the second amendment. In fact, with the first amendment, which notes that there have been multiple instances of telecommunications towers being proposed in locations that do not meet community expectations, I believe it is factual and that it is something that the Assembly should consider.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (3.20): I want to stand briefly in order to say that I am really impressed by the work of Ms Morris. I can distinctly remember the moment that Ms Morris and I spoke about the prospect of her putting her hand up to contest the seat of Brindabella at the election in 2024, and I was absolutely over the moon because she understands the valley.

We have worked together for a period of time in this building, when Ms Morris was working here, so I was genuinely over the moon, because she understands the valley. She understands communicating with people. She gets community. What we are

seeing here today is a local member listening to the concerns of constituents, getting their feedback in quite a structured way, and taking those concerns to this place in order to do something about it. If that is not what we should be doing here, can someone please explain to me why we are here?

I want to commend Ms Morris for the work that she has done on this. I was contacted by a number of people about it. When we saw the work that my fellow Liberal in Brindabella was doing on it, we hand-passed them over to Ms Morris, because I think she has done an exceptional job.

If this is indicative of the work that people in my electorate will get from Ms Morris, I am a little bit concerned about where I sit in the pecking order in Brindabella, to be honest. But it is a beautiful thing, and I want to thank her for the hard work that she has done in this space and for bringing this forward in this fashion. I absolutely support what she is doing here.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS (Brindabella) (3.22): I thank Ms Morris for bringing forward this motion and for giving me another opportunity to talk about this localised but important matter. I also thank Mr Parton for his contribution. He has put the pressure on my colleague Ms Tough to talk about me like that!

I am a very happy Fadden resident, so I am very personally invested in this issue, as are many of my neighbours who live on and around Nicklin Crescent and Bugden Avenue—neighbours who I have spoken and listened to while doorknocking their houses, at the community meeting on the site that I organised and hosted last month, who have contacted my office and filled out Ms Morris's survey, or who have been in touch with Ms Tough, Mr Parton or Miss Nuttall. I sincerely thank all of our community who have been activated about this issue and have been engaged upon it, and those who are still working with me.

I am also grateful to the Chief Minister, the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development and the Minister for Government and City Services for their advice and for being so responsive to my persistent, and I suspect tiresome, sleeve-plucking and letter-writing on behalf of my constituents.

Since 11 March, all of us in Fadden and around Fadden Hills have been following the progress of the shockingly intrusive and inappropriate development application lodged by Downer Group on behalf of Indara Digital Infrastructure, seeking permission to build a mobile phone tower in Fadden on land that is currently leased to Transport Canberra and City Services. The tower is proposed to host Optus equipment.

For the Assembly's awareness, I am an Optus customer. I live 170 metres away from the DA site. I do not suffer from bad mobile service where I live. Notwithstanding my remarks that will follow, I have constituents in Fadden and Gowrie who have told me that they support the installation of a phone tower if it improves their poor Optus service and that they are not bothered by the location.

Even so, while my community is not unanimous in its opposition to this development application, the vast majority of residents who are engaging with this issue through their representatives in the Assembly and/or with the Territory Planning Authority are

against it.

It is also fair to say that these residents are not opposed to this application because they disagree with the goal of improved mobile phone coverage in the area. They are opposed to the application because of where it is proposed to be built. With respect to a description of that location, I completely concur with Ms Morris's lovely explanation of where it is and how it is used. I have nothing further to add in that respect.

On a Monday evening last month, I organised and hosted a community meeting at the site to share information about the development application, its implications and how to make a submission to the Territory Planning Authority. More than 80 of my neighbours came to the meeting and, while doorknocking the surrounding streets, I have spoken with another 20 who could not be there. All of them made a submission.

In the end, as Ms Morris noted, the TPA has received 134 submissions, including mine, of which 131, including mine, oppose this development application because it will seriously damage the lovely and used-every-day recreational and aesthetic values of the area for local residents.

If the Territory Planning Authority approves Indara's application unconditionally, Indara will construct a 25-metre-high telecommunications monopole, install a headframe with antennas, install ancillary equipment and plant on a concrete pad, remove existing trees that were planted by residents, and install necessary associated works. The compound will be almost 10 metres by eight metres in area. It will be enclosed by 2.5-metre-high chain-link security fences, and it will be accessed by a new seven-metre gravel track.

As you can imagine, Mr Assistant Speaker, that is quite a significant piece of light industrial infrastructure. Indara is seeking to build it right on the corner of Nicklin Crescent and Bugden Avenue, in the middle of the most important and well-utilised green space in Fadden. The site is five metres from the Fadden Hills tennis courts. It is less than 40 metres from the nearest front door. It is only 50 metres from the Fadden Pond park and playground.

The montages, if anyone has looked at them, provided in the development application are very deceptive. They are staged to show the monopole only, without its significant support infrastructure and compound, viewed through a large number of mature trees. In reality, the location is utterly exposed and unshielded.

I will quote almost word for word my neighbour John, who lives 40 metres from the site and with whom fellow neighbours Sallie, Sergio, Graham, Leigh and I were chatting today about this motion and the Territory Planning Authority's decision on Friday:

This development would seriously impact safety and sight lines of, and for, pedestrians, particularly children, who are always crossing either road to and from the playground and the pond, as well as cars turning right onto Bugden Avenue, or left into Nicklin Crescent.

As John said, the site is one of the favourite playgrounds of the Fadden Pond duck family, as well as a regular haunt of the Wanniasa ridge kangaroo mob. Both families would leave as a result of this development or be forced onto nearby busy roads.

The fact is that all of us at the meeting I hosted last month were utterly dismayed by Indara's choice of this site for this infrastructure. We discussed a Telstra facility that was proposed for this exact site in 2006 and 2007. Telstra held some community consultation before they put in the application. The community was not supportive. Telstra found a more suitable site.

As this motion notes, there are other sites that were considered and, it seems, rejected by Indara. However, as we all furiously agreed at the meeting, there are obvious, far more appropriate sites in and around Fadden that Indara did not consider. I am happy to suggest them to Indara, should they be bothered to contact us.

Because Indara did not do any community consultation prior to their development application sign appearing beside Bugden Avenue, I invited them, Downer and Optus to the community meeting so that they could show their workings and discuss their rationale. A representative was not sent by any of those organisations to the meeting. Instead, I received some standard words pabulum that community consultation was important, and that they supported my efforts to involve my constituents in the process.

In the absence of anything useful or serious from Indara, it is left for me to speculate that they have made a business-first decision to develop this site, not a community-first decision. It is an appalling decision.

I suspect that they chose this site because it is easy to access and cheaper to build upon. It is easier because it is right in the middle of the suburb, next to the suburb's main road. They did not test the site suitability with the community before they made the application. They did not attend the community meeting. They did not make a genuine effort to identify other sites in or around Fadden that the community would not oppose but indeed potentially support.

As far as this motion goes, I wrote to the minister when this application was lodged and requested advice on candidate sites B and D. Personally, I am satisfied with the Office of the Conservator of Flora and Fauna's assessment that those sites in the Wanniasa Hills Nature Reserve are unsuitable for this development. It is because they are both, obviously and inherently, sites that provide important habitat for the conservation of the territory's flora and fauna, along with recreational and aesthetic values for local residents.

One need only look out from Wanniasa Hills Nature Reserve to the radio mast atop Tuggeranong Hill to accept that that is not an outcome anyone would want for Wanniasa Hills. However, if the Wanniasa Hills Nature Reserve candidate sites are inappropriate for this infrastructure because they hold recreational and aesthetic value for local residents, the Bugden Avenue-Nicklin Crescent site in the middle of Fadden is even more inappropriate.

Be that as it may, while the decision about this development application will be made

by the independent Territory Planning Authority—and I expect that the Planning Authority is taking very serious account of the more than 130 submissions that oppose this site for this development—the choice of the site was Indara’s. The onus was, and is, on Indara to fix this issue.

While my neighbours and I request that the Territory Planning Authority reject this application, we call on Indara to properly consult with our community and to do the work that is required to find a site that works for everyone. If Indara, Downer or Optus would like to meet with us, we are standing by.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (3.32): I rise to support Ms Morris’s motion. I have often been to the park, with the pond in the playground, to go for a walk around the Wanniasa Hills Nature Reserve with a friend. My view is that the Optus telecommunications tower should not be built in this park that is a great meeting place for the community. I agree with Mr Werner-Gibblings; it is an appalling decision.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (3.32): I thank Ms Morris for bringing this motion forward and certainly note the views of members of the Assembly and members for Brindabella in raising community views in relation to the proposed telecommunications tower in Fadden.

I am aware of and acknowledge the community views raised through the development application process and, indeed, in the chamber today. That is about as far as I will go in terms of talking about those views, and that is simply for reasons of integrity and probity during a time when this development application is still currently under assessment and has not been approved. These are matters that the independent Territory Planning Authority will consider through the development application process, but today I can provide some background on the process and some of the information requested in the motion.

There are strong views, of course, on infrastructure and development applications of all kinds in the ACT. It is important that those views are considered in the planning process. It is important, though, that we have an independent assessment against planning law; and, of course, that is undertaken at arm’s length from government through a statutory process through the independent Territory Planning Authority. It is an important feature of our planning system that it is independent, and the amendment that I will be moving today reflects the value that our government places on the independent, transparent planning process and the decisions that are made through it.

On 11 March 2025, a development application was lodged with the independent Territory Planning Authority relating to block 14 section 401, Fadden. The development is proposed by a private proponent. It is not being proposed by the government. It is for a 25-metre-high telecommunications monopole and associated works. The application was publicly notified by the authority from 20 March to 9 April 2025 and 135 representations were received, according to the Territory Planning Authority advice to me.

I have been advised by the Territory Planning Authority that representations have raised the need for consideration of other sites and whether the facility is required.

These are matters which the Territory Planning Authority has also advised me were addressed by the proponent prior to lodging the application in terms of alternative locations, and they are referenced in the motion brought forward by Ms Morris.

As noted in the motion, advice was provided to the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate on potential environmental values and assessment pathways. Two of the alternative sites that were initially proposed by the proponent for this development, sites B and D, are located within the Wanniasa Hills Nature Reserve. We know that the Wanniasa Hills Nature Reserve provides important habitat for the conservation of the territory's flora and fauna and, as such, there are environmental considerations that would need to be undertaken to understand the impacts of any alternative development proposal within the nature reserve.

Impacts on a reserve are considered by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna and also by ACT Parks and Conservation in relation to ongoing management of the reserve. They are referral entities through to the independent planning process, and I understand that EPSDD advised that sites B and D were not preferred. Significant environmental consideration would be needed prior to proceeding with a development proposal or an alternative proposal on those sites. In line with this motion, and with the amendment that I am proposing, I am happy to publish the advice that EPSDD gave online.

Sites B and D are situated on designated land under the jurisdiction of the National Capital Authority and, whilst ACT Parks and Conservation assist with the management of the Wanniasa Hills Nature Reserve, any application to develop on those sites would also require a works approval from the National Capital Authority of the federal government.

I have been further advised by EPSDD that they are not aware of any further progression of the proponent or of any works approval application for either of those sites and, as such, no additional environmental assessment for these sites has been undertaken by the ACT government. The alternative sites that were referenced in the development application provide background for the types of considerations the proponent undertook in deciding on a proposed location, which will be assessed. However, the Territory Planning Authority must assess the application, as proposed, in accordance with the provisions of the Territory Plan and the Planning Act 2023. It is important to note that the authority cannot determine or assess alternative locations, including those situated on designated land; they have to assess what is before them.

It is important to remember that consideration of this application is currently underway. The authority must now weigh up all of the concerns raised during the public notification process and all advice provided by relevant entities prior to making a decision.

As I advised the Assembly last week in response to a question by Mr Werner-Gibbings, the legislative timeframe for the authority to consider the application is 45 working days. Based on the lodgement date, the due date for the DA is currently 16 May. However, it should be noted that the Planning Act 2023 includes provisions that could extend this time, and it also allows the authority to make a

decision beyond the timeframe. That is a decision for the authority to make.

Given the authority is independently considering the application, I am not in a position to provide any further information on the possible outcome of the process or otherwise to provide advice to the Assembly about the merits of arguments put by a range of different parties in the process. We have an independent statutory planning process, and it is up to the Territory Planning Authority to consider all relevant matters raised.

The amendment that I will move preserves the call for publishing the advice of EPSDD on alternative sites but also reflects the importance of the independent advice and decision-making under the planning system. It is important that members, when bringing motions forward, consider who in the ACT government they are asking to undertake the actions that they are calling for. There are often independent statutory authorities and entities that undertake their work in accordance with statute, and they do need to undertake that assessment. Of course, there are also entities that are standard directorates and agencies in government that are not necessarily held to a particular statutory process.

This clears that up. I would like to thank Miss Nuttall, as well, for her engagement on this matter, and Mr Werner-Gibbings and other members of the Assembly for bringing forward the concerns of the community and others. The government will be supporting the amended motion.

I move:

Omit all text after paragraph (3)(b), substitute:

“(c) publish the evaluation undertaken by EPSDD that prevented Indara Group from proceeding with Candidates B and D to the development application stage by the end of May 2025.”.

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (3.40): It is great to see two Tuggeranong-focused motions being brought forward this week in the Assembly. As a member for Brindabella, it would be remiss of me not to speak on a Tuggeranong-specific issue like this phone tower, but I will be brief, like Mr Parton.

Firstly, I thank Ms Morris for bringing this motion and bringing the matter to the attention of the Assembly. I also want to acknowledge the work of my colleague Mr Werner-Gibbings, who, as a resident of Fadden, was inundated when this DA went in. He spoke to me, I think, the next morning and said that he was getting all these emails and neighbours talking to him, and he asked whether I had received any, and I said, “Yes, I have had a few.” By the sound of it, it was nowhere near as many as Mr Werner-Gibbings received, as a resident of Fadden. It was wonderful that he had 80-plus people turn up on a Monday evening at the site to talk about it. I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings and Ms Morris for the work they have done for the residents of Fadden.

I want to acknowledge all the residents who have reached out to my office as well, who have let me know their thoughts on it. Most people would agree that it is a bit of an odd site for a phone tower, to put it politely. In saying that, the conservator has

talked about some of the other sites, and it is also important that we do not lose environmentally important sites in order to build a phone tower.

The planning system is independent of government. It is taking into consideration many factors in this development and in all development applications that come forward, so it will be good to see what comes of the decision. I am looking forward also to seeing, like my colleague Miss Nuttall, the evaluation that was undertaken on some of the other proposed sites to see why Indara picked this one. I am waiting with bated breath to see the outcome of this development application, and to see what happens for the residents of Fadden and the residents of Tuggeranong.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (3.43): I had not intended to speak today, but I was inspired by the passion of members in their contributions to this debate today. Of course, members will recall that not too many weeks ago, we were talking about a 25-metre-high monopole tower to be constructed by Indara in the location of Ainslie. Members will recall that the, admittedly, slightly inelegant but nonetheless effective solution I put forward was not supported by the majority in this place. I therefore wish my colleagues in the seat of Brindabella all the best.

Mr Werner-Gibbings gave an impassioned speech hoping that Indara will actually come and speak to the community. I wish him luck. Indara did not show that interest, as I outlined clearly, when I spoke to this place a few weeks ago. I outlined the efforts I had gone to, to seek engagement with Indara. I contacted the chair of the board; I contacted a range of people; I offered to help facilitate discussion with the community. I know Mr Emerson also reached out to Indara and, if my memory serves me correctly, did not get much further, if any further, than I did. There was no engagement. There was no sense of wanting to have a discussion with the community about alternative sites.

Mr Werner-Gibbings, when he talked about business first, not community first, probably nailed it. And I fear that our neighbours in Tuggeranong are about to experience the same outcomes that our neighbours in Ainslie did. He talked about “John” being 40 metres from the site. When we talked about that in Ainslie, that was “NIMBYs”. The residents at Ainslie said “no”, and they were labelled “NIMBYs”, but I do not share that characterisation. I think if something is 40 to 50 metres from your residence, you have a right to have a say, and you have a right to hope that the telecommunications tower companies will actually try and come up with better options.

Mr Steel has just given us a similar dissertation on the role of the independent Planning Authority and how they will consider it. Having listened to this debate, I do not see any different outcome coming through, because the factors read out by various members—the impact on the resident kangaroos and the resident ducks—are unlikely to be judged by the Planning Authority, in my experience, as being relevant factors. They are important community considerations. They are deeply relevant to the values of our community, but the factors that have just been identified in this chamber this afternoon are no different to what went down in Ainslie, and we know the outcome of that process,

This is the very point I sought to make when we had this discussion the other week—that we need to think hard about how we want to shape this, because we need to

overcome the passivity that says we are going to leave it to the independent Planning Authority. That either means we have to get in and reconsider the rules, or we need to take some other approach; otherwise, we are just going to get the same outcome.

I appreciate Mr Werner-Gibbings' observations that it is up to Indara to fix this issue. As I said, they have not demonstrated an inclination to want to do that. The lack of engagement has been disappointing. They will stand here and say, "Yes, we ran through the formal consultation processes," but that is wildly different to an organisation that actually wants to get good outcomes for its community. The experience with Indara is that they just want to get their towers up as quickly as they can, as cheaply as they can, and the impact on the local community is a secondary consideration.

I did note Minister Steel's comments about this being a private proponent, not the government. He is technically correct. It felt like a handwashing exercise, just to be very clear, about the role that the government may or may not take in this. But I think our constituents actually are looking to the Assembly to be innovative and to find ways to get better outcomes. I wish my colleagues in Brindabella all the best in working their way through this. I hope they are able to get Indara to engage better, but, so far, they have not demonstrated a desire to do so.

Question put:

That Mr Steel's amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted —

Ayes 15

Noes 8

Yvette Berry	Marisa Paterson
Andrew Braddock	Michael Pettersson
Fiona Carrick	Shane Rattenbury
Tara Cheyne	Chris Steel
Jo Clay	Rachel Stephen-Smith
Thomas Emerson	Caitlin Tough
Laura Nuttall	Taimus Werner-Gibbings
Suzanne Orr	

Chiaka Barry
Peter Cain
Leanne Castley
Ed Cocks
Jeremy Hanson
James Milligan
Deborah Morris
Mark Parton

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Steel's amendment agreed to.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (3.52), by leave: I move the following amendments together:

1. After paragraph (2)(e) insert:
 "(f) there have now been multiple instances of telecommunications towers being proposed in locations that do not meet community expectations."
2. After paragraph (3)(c) insert:
 "(d) consider options for the Government to forward-plan, in consultation

with local community members, for the construction of optimally located telecommunications towers and other necessary infrastructure, to ensure that development decisions prioritise community preferences and environmental considerations ahead of convenience for telecommunications companies.”.

I want to speak in support of Ms Morris’s motion with respect to building a massive telecommunications tower in the heart of Fadden. I applaud Ms Morris, as did Mr Parton, for her grassroots efforts in advocating on this matter, collating community feedback and ensuring that that was heard in this place. I also thank Ms Morris for moving this motion.

My two amendments go to the broader policy issue that this motion helps to illuminate. We find ourselves at the height of a digital revolution, yet our approach to critical digital infrastructure like telecommunications towers remains, it seems, reactive and piecemeal. The growing trend in the ACT that we are seeing is that companies lodge development applications that drive where and when this infrastructure is delivered, leaving communities frustrated. Surely, it runs contrary to the fundamental principles of good long-term planning.

We have already seen how this approach has allowed one part of government to approve a grant to fund a group of volunteers to restore, preserve, tend to and toil on a plot of land, only for a development application to be approved by another arm of government for construction of a 25-metre-tall tower right on top of their efforts.

The current approach seems to be putting the cart before the horse. Governments should be setting the strategy, playing a role in identifying where infrastructure will be needed, planning for it in a coordinated way, and not working within these narrow constraints that are created when a development application comes in, as we have seen here.

Crucially, we need genuine community consultation that is up-front, transparent and meaningful. Communities deserve a say in the future of their neighbourhoods, not at best a leaflet in their letterbox. It is a credit to Ms Morris that she has sought to step in and provide greater community consultation in this instance.

Improved access to a telecommunications network will no doubt be very welcome for residents of Fadden and Tuggeranong more broadly. Yet, as we saw in the Ainslie telecommunications tower matter, there seems to have been little government involvement in the consideration of alternative locations and, in this case, in providing an explanation of the rationale for the selection of a site next to a duck pond.

As such, the amendments that I have circulated call on the government to play a role in forward planning for the construction of telecommunications towers and other necessary infrastructure that we know we need. Some proactive planning in this space would ensure that development decisions prioritise community preferences and environmental considerations ahead of what is most convenient for telecommunications companies.

I do not think it should be incumbent upon community members to advocate for reconsideration of the optimal location of new phone towers in their suburb. Frankly,

it should not be incumbent on telecommunications companies to select a site in the vague hope that it might receive community support, only to see the matter debated in this Assembly, as has now happened twice this year with Indara's towers.

Going to Mr Rattenbury's comments, I did not get much engagement from Indara when I wrote to them about the matter in Ainslie. I did get an extensive letter when Mr Rattenbury's bill was before the Assembly, asking me not to support it, but they were not inclined to come to the table, negotiate and engage in good faith with community members. This is where we have a role for government. The government's responsibility is to navigate the space between corporations and communities.

We know that our territory has black spots, and that we will need new telecommunications infrastructure. Surely, a better approach to ensure that the infrastructure is situated in accordance with community preferences would be to plan ahead. The government should map out where existing towers are located and where future towers should be located so as not to become aesthetically devastating eyesores or trample over volunteer-driven environmental conservation efforts.

A proactive planning process could allow communities, through their government, to pre-emptively indicate to telecommunications companies where their infrastructure is welcome, rather than waiting for the telco to propose any given site, and watching on, as the inevitable community confusion and backlash mounts, with people rightly asking, "Why on earth would you put a 25-metre tower there, exactly?" The only obvious answer, as Mr Werner-Gibbins indicated earlier, is because it is easier for the telecommunications company to access.

We have had this happen in Kurrajong this term; it has happened now in Brindabella. I am sure this matter will come before us again if the policy gap here is not addressed. Perhaps by the end of the term there will be a faction focused on Indara's efforts within the Assembly advocating for some kind of change. I hope that the government will take seriously the policy gap that I think has been made clear by these matters repeatedly having been brought before the Assembly

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (3.57): I am happy to provide my support for Mr Emerson's amendments to Ms Morris's motion, which ask the government to consider options, and we will be happy to do that.

I think that some further work is required. These amendments came very late in the piece. They are a little bit undercooked, I think, in terms of what they are asking for, but they do allow the government to come back and explain the quite complex interplay between federal telecommunications law and the ACT's planning system, and the interactions with the community and, indeed, proponents.

It is very important to note that this is not a development that has been proposed by the ACT government. I am pleased to note that Mr Rattenbury has accepted that point. The reason why that is important is because the private proponent has put forward a development application that must be assessed by the Planning Authority on its merits under the statutory process. If Mr Rattenbury was trying to suggest to me that I should

intervene in an independent statutory process, that is very concerning. I think he knows that it is not possible for me to do that without being thrown into the Integrity Commission.

That is why I have been very careful in my words and why I have not commented on the merits of the proposal in my speech. Every other member of the Assembly can do that. I cannot, in relation to development applications that are on foot at present, as this one is. It has not been approved; it is still under assessment.

The amendments that Mr Emerson has proposed are not specifically related to the development application that is underway. They seek to draw on a more systemic approach to telecommunications proposals generally. I think it is a useful contribution to the debate to consider what the current process delivers, in terms of engagement with parts of the ACT government, other than the Territory Planning Authority. I refer, in particular, to the land managers that will form part of the new city and environment directorate, the former land management parts of Transport Canberra and City Services and the Parks and Conservation part of EPSDD, and the role they might play with the telecommunications companies.

It is the telecommunications companies who have the commercial interest and the telecommunications and technology expertise, not the ACT government. The ACT government cannot say where optimal telecommunications services should be in the ACT, and I hope that is not what the proposal put forward by Mr Emerson seeks to do. The government do not have that expertise.

However, that is not to say there has not been work done in the past, in working with telecommunications providers and land managers, in order to have a better understanding of arrangements. We will come back as a government and provide some further advice in relation to that.

I do not want to see any cost shifting whatsoever from telecommunications companies to the ACT government. I refer, for example, to the suggestion that we should undertake a detailed plan of every single subsection of every block and section in every part of the ACT and identify every single one of those that might be okay for a telecommunications provider to put up a monopole. We should not have to pay for that work. Due diligence and studies to support a proposal should be done by the telecommunications companies.

That sort of plan, if it was done by the ACT government, notwithstanding the fact that we do not have any telecommunications expertise to be able to develop those sorts of plans, would cost millions of dollars to do. That is something that, as Treasurer, and as a member of this place, I could not accept. That is not to say that there has not been engagement and could not be further engagement between land managers and telecommunications companies about towers, particularly in augmenting the 5G network here in the ACT to deliver better services for Canberrans. It should be done in a way that, of course, respects the range of different environmental, community and other factors that might need to be considered.

The Territory Planning Authority, in their independent statutory role, must deliver their decisions based on the independent statutory process. They have an application

before them, and they must be allowed to continue their work in assessing it. No motion of the Assembly can stop that work. It is part of the law. They have to do that work.

Of course, we can come back in relation to the broader systemic issue, outside that specific DA, with some further information. We are happy to support the amendments that have been proposed. I also thank Mr Emerson for the factual correction to the first part of the amendments.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (4.04): I rise briefly to reassure the minister for planning, as he well knows, that I was not seeking to suggest that he should intervene in the planning system. He knows that I understand that. We have had that discussion before. What we have just seen is the latest example of the Labor Party, when they are a little uncomfortable and they do not have a better answer, creating a straw man case to deflect, or start to go after the person, rather than debate the merits of the issue. We see it time and again, and this community deserves better than that.

Mr Emerson's amendments agreed to.

MS MORRIS (Brindabella) (4.05): I want to thank everyone who has engaged with, and contributed to, the debate on my motion today. My motion has attempted to give voice to hundreds of Fadden residents who have wanted to share their deeply-held views about the suitability of the proposed site and the need for better phone reception in their community.

In closing, I want to touch on the government's amendment and why the opposition did not support it. Before I do so, I thank members of the government and the crossbench for accepting the part of my motion which calls for an acknowledgement of the concerns that we have heard today from Fadden residents. I am very pleased that the Assembly has acknowledged my community survey findings and has acknowledged that the community is overwhelmingly concerned about the site, but that they are also concerned about their phone reception and want better phone reception.

Overwhelmingly, people—we heard from my survey that it was 79 per cent of respondents—have said, “No, thank you,” to the site of this proposed development, as lodged; 28 per cent have said that they need better reception; and 51 per cent have said they prefer alternative sites for the development. Again, I thank you all for acknowledging those findings today.

However, given the findings that have been acknowledged, I am disheartened and concerned that, despite the tension between Labor members and Greens members with respect to other telecommunications issues that have come to this place, those members have worked together today to block genuine attempts to open up a pathway forward to consider alternative sites. By removing (3)(d) from my motion—which would have required the EPSDD to re-evaluate the suitability of candidates B and D to progress to a development application stage—the government, with the support of the Greens, has effectively given the green tick of approval for this development to be undertaken on the site that has been talked about today.

Those opposite should be in no doubt about the message that they have sent to the Fadden community today by not allowing a reassessment of alternative sites. The government—again, with the support of the Greens—has ensured that there is currently only one pathway forward for a phone tower in Fadden, and that pathway is to plonk a 25-metre-tall phone tower on one of the most cherished pieces of outdoor recreational community green space in Fadden—something that the Labor Party and the Greens have just acknowledged is an option that the Fadden community fundamentally rejects.

We will, of course, await the outcome of the development application, but whatever that outcome is, it continues to present a problem for the Fadden community. If the application is successful, the government's amendment, which has just been passed with the support of the Greens, has blocked any other option from being considered for development, and to protect the corner of Bugden Avenue and Nicklin Crescent from development. If that application is rejected then the government's amendment, which was just passed with the support of the Greens, has blocked any other option for development from being considered for the government to deliver better phone services to Fadden residents.

My motion had sought to find a middle road to take us forward, but the amendment, which the Greens have supported, has blocked that. I am disappointed with the outcome, and while I am grateful that members have acknowledged the community's concerns, and that the government will publish the findings, I am very disappointed that Labor, with the Greens, have blocked this pathway forward.

Mr Werner-Gibbings has said that there are many other options that are not listed in the development application, and I really hope that that is the case. We will work very hard to make sure that an alternative site can be found, because if it is not the case then the Labor government's amendment in the Assembly today, which has just been passed with the support of the Greens, has blocked any other sites from even being considered by the Planning Authority. I thank all members who have engaged in the debate today.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Planning—Coombs peninsula—rezoning

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (4.11): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the Coombs Peninsula (Section 52 Block 16) is an elevated site which is part of the Molonglo River corridor, it slopes down to the river on three sides;
- (b) the habitat, including the vulnerable pink tailed worm lizard, should be protected and remain part of the river corridor;
- (c) the site is currently zoned for residential housing and is on the land release program for 30 dwellings; and
- (d) there has been community advocacy and a petition to stop development

of the site;

- (2) further notes that, in the 2024 ACT election, the:
 - (a) Labor Party committed to protect the Coombs Peninsula from future development; and
 - (b) ACT Greens committed to protect places of high ecological value like Coombs Peninsula; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
 - (a) remove the Coombs Peninsula from the land release program and rezone it to be consistent with the rest of the Molonglo River corridor, for example the Non-Urban NUZ4– River Corridor Zone; and
 - (b) report back to the Assembly by 3 September 2025 with the rezoning paperwork for the Minister to refer to the appropriate committee.

I would like to start by acknowledging the Coombs community—particularly Karen Collins—which has, for many years, advocated to retain the Coombs peninsula as part of the Molonglo River corridor. I would also like to acknowledge that many members of this Assembly have also advocated for the protection of the peninsula—a cherished piece of land near the Molonglo River. Despite the ACT government’s plans to release this land for residential development, the community’s voice has been clear and unwavering in its calls to preserve this area as open space. The Coombs peninsula is more than a plot of land; it is a sanctuary for both wildlife and the local community.

A motion passed by the Legislative Assembly in 2019, supported by a petition from 559 residents, highlights the strong desire to retain this space for environmental and recreational purposes. This motion, championed by former Liberal MLA Giulia Jones, reflects the community’s commitment to safeguarding our natural heritage. The peninsula is home to a diverse array of wildlife, including the endangered pink-tailed worm-lizard, platypus, and numerous bird species. Observations from local residents such as Karen Collins reveal the rich biodiversity that thrives in this area—from kangaroos and wombats to water dragons.

The Coombs peninsula is a vital habitat that supports a wide range of flora and fauna. Moreover, the Molonglo River Reserve Management Plan outlines several actions to protect species and enhance habitat connectivity, emphasising the importance of preserving the Coombs peninsula. The presence of platypus in the river is a testament to the ecological significance of this area. Ensuring the protection of their habitat is crucial for maintaining the health of our river ecosystems.

The social value of the Coombs peninsula cannot be overstated. It serves as a recreational haven for residents, offering opportunities for walking, jogging, cycling, horse riding, and exploring nature. Families gather there for picnics, kite flying and ball sports, while others enjoy bird watching and fishing along the river. The peninsula provides a space for relaxation and community activities, fostering a sense of connection and wellbeing among the residents.

In the face of climate change, preserving green spaces like the Coombs peninsula is essential. The microclimate created by the mist across the river corridor has a positive effect against climate warming, contributing to climate action efforts. As more people

live in higher density suburbs, access to high-quality urban open space becomes increasingly important. This is an ACT Labor election commitment, so it is time to remove the Coombs peninsula from the land release program in the upcoming budget and rezone the land to be consistent with the rest of the Molonglo River corridor—for example, the non-urban NUZ4 river corridor zone.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (4.14): I am pleased to speak today on Ms Carrick’s motion on Coombs peninsula, which we support. As noted by Ms Carrick, the Labor Party has already committed to protecting Coombs peninsula from future development—except, of course, for a cycleway, and we are looking forward to that work getting underway to provide great amenity for people to enjoy this fantastic part of the Molonglo Valley.

Our commitment was part of Labor’s plan for Molonglo because we recognise the value that Coombs peninsula has for the community, as a place for recreation but also for its natural values for the residents of Coombs and people visiting the Molonglo Valley and exploring the Molonglo River corridor. Last term, the government had already agreed that the Coombs peninsula would not be considered for release for future development. It is not currently on the 2024-25 Indicative Land Release Program and it will not be on the 2025-26 Housing Supply and Land Release Program, which I look forward to releasing around budget time.

We are expecting that the next steps in protecting the Coombs peninsula will take the form of a subdivision development application which will be lodged with the Territory Planning Authority later this year. That application will seek to rezone this part of Coombs from residential to non-urban. Following the SDA approval, which will have its own process, it is anticipated that a minor Territory Plan amendment process will be undertaken to reflect these changes in the Territory Plan. This is considered an administrative process under the Planning Act 2023, and it was the same process that was undertaken to extend the Molonglo River Reserve in Stromlo and Denman Prospect to cover part of the area commonly referred to as Bluetts Block, which we delivered on earlier this year. Minor planning amendments are notified on the legislation register under the Planning Act, and they will be available on the authority’s website once we get to that stage.

I look forward to keeping the Assembly informed as we deliver on our commitment to protect Coombs peninsula, and to providing an update. I commend Ms Carrick’s motion.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (4.17): I move the following amendment that has been circulated in my name:

Omit paragraph (1)(d), substitute:

- “(d) there has been sustained community advocacy to protect Coombs Peninsula, including a 2019 petition sponsored by Canberra Liberals MLA Giulia Jones;
- (e) in 2019, the Legislative Assembly passed a motion, led by Canberra Liberals calling on the Government to protect Coombs Peninsula and rezone it for environment and recreation purposes; and

- (f) protecting the Coombs Peninsula has been a consistent policy position of the Canberra Liberals since the 2020 election.”

I am moving an amendment to this motion simply to provide some important context regarding an important motion. Protecting the Coombs peninsula is not a new issue for the community or, indeed, for this Assembly. As Ms Carrick acknowledged in her opening speech, it was a former Liberal MLA, Ms Giulia Jones, who raised this issue and brought it to the floor, through sponsoring a petition from the community and by raising a substantive motion. That substantive motion is at the heart of the amendment that I bring.

It is extremely important to understand this context, because protecting this piece of land never needed to be a promise from the Labor Party. They should never have had to make that promise, because the Assembly, in 2019, called on the government to protect it then. All the way back in 2019, this Assembly decided that this was a piece of land worth protecting, but the Labor government at that time, and indeed for the entirety of the last term of government, did not think it was worth taking the steps required to put that protection beyond doubt.

Labor chose to go to not just one but two elections promising to protect this piece of land, but still did not get to the point where the land was protected. Despite having reformed the Planning Act, despite all the work that has gone into zoning, and all the work that has gone into deciding what ought to be in the land release program, so many years later we are still talking about the issue. I think it goes to the heart of why the community has not trusted Labor on this. When I doorknock in the area, people are still talking to me about how they do not trust the current minister or the Labor government to take the steps required to protect that land.

Once again in the Assembly we are talking about a motion that, in all of its substance, is exactly the same as the motion we were talking about in 2019, before most of us were part of this Assembly. We are talking about a motion that goes to all the same issues. Indeed, it goes back further, and I acknowledge at this juncture the efforts of former Greens MLA Caroline Le Couteur, who also raised these issues for years.

Two of the parties in this place—I would say that the Independents have come along with us—have, for a very long time, been trying to make sure that residents have access to this land into the future and have been trying to protect the environmental value of this piece of land that has a direct impact on all the surrounding reserve. I am very pleased to hear, finally, the government say that it will take the steps required to protect it. But until it is done, forgive me if I share the community’s scepticism. I look forward to seeing this not just agreed in this place but implemented in practice.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.21): I rise to speak to Ms Carrick’s motion and to thank her for bringing it forward, and to speak to the amendment circulated by Mr Cocks. The Greens are happy to support both the motion and the amendment.

As members know, cities across Australia are continuing to grow. We are expecting Canberra’s population to grow from 453,000 in 2021 to 695,000 by 2050, and we will need another 100,000 dwellings as a result. We are not delivering enough public and private housing to meet the demand that we are facing. As at the end of March, there

were 3,189 applications on the public housing waitlist, with an average wait time of 220 days for people on the priority waitlist. The Greens took an initiative to the 2024 election that we thought, and that third parties like ACTCOSS said, would have been enough to clear that waitlist. We are sorry to say that we do not have the level of ambition on public housing, at least, to clear that.

This population growth means that every city is under pressure to expand our boundaries, and there is pressure on our rural areas and on our environmental areas. There are a lot of challenges in managing all of this and in keeping our cities livable and inclusive. But endless sprawl is not giving us good outcomes. It is expensive to build new greenfield suburbs and provide the new roads, the schools and the services for them. We know with the land at Bluetts Block—and I thank the planning minister for referencing this—that sprawl is destroying our bush, our grasslands and our habitat. It is causing extinctions. We also do not want to see more sprawl out at Coombs peninsula.

We are in the midst of an environmental crisis. It is unprecedented. More plants and animals are being added every year to the list of vulnerable, threatened and now extinct animals. The loss of our biodiversity has been set out at length by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. In her *State of the environment 2023* report, she explained very clearly that, year on year, our environment is degrading; it is getting worse. What we are doing is not protecting it. The recent action taken by the ACT Greens to ensure the grassland earless dragon shows the kind of work we need to do to keep our precious areas safe from urban development. It highlights some of the steps we need to take when we expect government to take strong measures to address these crises.

But we should not be pitting housing against the environment. The housing that we need should be closer to existing jobs, schools, public transport and services. Putting homes further away from all those services—from the jobs that you need to commute to every day, from the schools that you need to get to, and from your health facilities and your infrastructure—locks people into long, difficult and expensive car commutes. It increases the environmental impact of those developments through the transport emissions—our largest source of tracked emissions at the moment—and it increases the costs for people living in those homes. That situation is made worse by the endless nature of the sprawl that we have been seeing until recently.

The response in Canberra, as in other jurisdictions, was to aim for a compact city. We have had a compact city policy here for a long time. That was intended to make Canberra denser through high-quality medium and high-rise development, closer to our city and town centres, in places that have higher land values and established services and facilities already there. I am pleased that recently we made an agreement to set city limits and make sure that we are delivering on that compact city policy.

The protection of Coombs peninsula has been the subject of debate in the Assembly for a long time, and Mr Cocks has outlined some of that prior history. In 2019, the preservation of the land was subject to consideration by the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal, as part of Draft Variation No 360—Molonglo River Reserve. At the time the Conservation Council and local Coombs residents highlighted the environmental value of the land and the benefits in not developing it

for housing. Despite the committee recommending that Coombs peninsula be considered for environmental and recreational purposes, the government of the day disagreed with that view and indicated that they would proceed with development.

It is really good that the government has now decided to support this motion and bring about the changes to the Territory Plan to add this land to the remainder of the Molonglo River corridor. That is a fantastic outcome. It is supported by the Greens, and I commend Minister Steel for taking that step. The Greens have long thought the environmental and recreational values of the Coombs peninsula should be recognised. That is why we included the Coombs peninsula in our agreements with Labor for the Tenth and the Eleventh Assembly. Last term and this term we put “protect Coombs peninsula” in there. As with Bluetts Block, stopping Coombs peninsula being developed for housing stops the loss of biodiversity and habitat.

It is still essential that we have more housing, but we need to make sure that that housing is delivered in a way that respects and protects our environment and also serves the needs of the people who will live in those homes. I was pleased to hear the minister for planning talk previously in the Assembly about the development of the Missing Middle Housing Design Guide and how this will be brought forward shortly in draft form. That will let the community see exactly what these homes will look like and let them participate. It is reassuring that the government has agreed to do the work that is necessary to establish that urban growth boundary that we have all now agreed to limit Canberra’s urban sprawl and to reduce that relentless year-on-year degradation that our environmental commissioner pointed out in such a bleak manner in her last report.

I would like to thank Ms Carrick for bringing this motion forward. Thank you very much for raising this and for making sure that the next steps, the planning steps, are taken to protect Coombs peninsula.

Amendment agreed to.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (4.27): I would like to thank Mr Cocks for his amendment and his support, and I welcome the acknowledgement of the work of the Liberal Party to protect Coombs peninsula. I would like to thank Ms Clay for her support, and I would also like to acknowledge Ms Caroline Le Couteur for her contribution to protecting the peninsula over a number of years.

I would like to thank Minister Steel for supporting the motion. He said that a subdivision development application to rezone the land from residential zones to the Molonglo River corridor would be required and that it would be an administrative process which will be notified—and I think he said by the end of the year. But I would like to see the timeframes align with the motion and have that notifiable instrument brought forward by 3 September, as per the date in the motion.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Statements by members

Arts—Hawker Repair Cafe exhibition

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.29): I would love to talk about the art show I recently attended at the Hawker Repair Cafe in Hawker Men's Shed. It was a really fun event. There was a full room with a lot of amazing artwork created by talented local artists. It was such a fun fundraiser to help with some of the new sheds, and the Repair Cafe out there is really pleased that they have found some funding and they have some grant funding from the ACT government.

It is a delight to see them year on year doing so much great work in the community. They have built the community gardens at Hawker out of recycled material. They are working on some other recycled material projects at the moment for Belconnen high. They are so deeply embedded in the community. Their repair cafes happen once every three months. They are really good fun. The next one is on 15 June. They have an excellent repair rate. They usually fix nine in 10 items that you bring to them, and the electricals queue is usually out the door. So go and check them out. They may have expanded that out to markets. It is really lovely to see how much the local arts community is embracing this little piece of our local community. It was a delightful event and it was lovely to go to. I was pleased to see Minister Cheyne and my colleague Mr Rattenbury there, and I think Mr Cain was there as well.

Ginninderra—shops—car parking

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.30): I rise to speak briefly about the ongoing parking issues in Ginninderra which continue to cause concern for residents, shoppers and small business owners. For example, the removal of a significant number of parking spaces along Hardwick Crescent at Kippax Fair has had real consequences, particularly for people with mobility challenges and for older residents who rely on convenient, close access to their local shops. The remaining parking bays are harder to reach and often full and, in some cases, poorly positioned. What should be a quick stop to grab groceries or visit a local business has become a bit of a hassle. These changes are damaging to local businesses. Foot traffic is down and local shop owners are telling me that they are losing loyal customers.

Over at Evatt shops, we are at least seeing a bit of progress. Upgrades are underway, including new accessible parking bays and an accessible toilet block. But, in the meantime, several parking spaces were removed during construction, and locals would love to have a clear update, some timely delivery of advice as well as timely delivery of the construction.

Our local centres are more than just retail spaces; they are community lifelines and places where the community gathers. I would urge the government to really consider the impact of planning with these enhancements and these developments to prioritise clear communication and what the community actually needs.

Health—Endometriosis Community Day

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (4.32): I rise today to acknowledge the Endometriosis Community Day, which will be held on Saturday, 24 May as part of the 16th World Congress on Endometriosis, being held in Australia, in Sydney. This is the first time that the World Congress on Endometriosis has had a community day, welcoming endo sufferers to the congress. I want to acknowledge Maree Davenport,

Professor Jason Abbott, QENDO, ACE, Endo Australia and many others for their work on making this happen. This day is about more than awareness; it is about community, visibility and pushing for change.

Endometriosis affects one in seven Australian women. It is a chronic, often invisible illness that can cause debilitating pain, infertility and years of lost opportunity. It takes, on average, seven years to be diagnosed—seven years of missed school, lost work, emergency room visits and being told, “It’s all in your head; just go away.” Too many in our community, including young people here in the ACT, have to fight to be believed and to access the care they need. While we have seen progress with national funding and research initiatives—which I have talked about in this chamber a lot and always will—there is still a long way to go.

The upcoming community day will bring together advocates, clinicians and researchers, along with those with lived experience, to amplify that lived experience and shape the future of endometriosis care. I encourage anyone who can get to Sydney to attend and be part of it. It will be a wonderful day. We must ensure that voices are heard, by investing in earlier diagnosis, better education and stronger support systems. Endo is real.

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Ms Cheyne**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

ACT Domestic Violence Crisis Service

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.33): The ACT Domestic Violence Crisis Service candle-lighting ceremony was held last Wednesday here at the Legislative Assembly. The candle-lighting ceremony is a deeply moving and solemn tradition. It gives our community a rare and sacred moment, a time to come together to remember and honour all those affected by domestic and family violence. Each candle lit—although, in this case, because of the indoor practice, they are illuminated by a battery—symbolised a life lost, a life shattered by violence that should never have found a place in our society.

As the soft glow of each candle filled the room, it was impossible not to feel the weight of each life behind that light. The lives of children, of women, of men, each with their own dreams and their own futures, were stolen by a violence that should never have been allowed to take root or bear its horrid fruit. It was an evening of deep reflection and solidarity. While we mourn those we have lost, we also stood together in hope—hope that we can and must do better to prevent violence and support survivors with compassion, dignity and strength.

Today, I want to take a moment to commend the CEO of the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Ms Sue Webeck, and every one of the frontline workers who work at the Domestic Violence Crisis Service for the incredible life-saving work they do

every single day. Their courage, dedication and boundless compassion form the background of our community's response to domestic and family violence. They show up time and time again, and they deserve our thanks. Of course, many community support agencies were represented as well at this event, and my comments also apply to those wonderful support agencies.

Our remembrance is not enough, though. We must make sure that we are acting. Any domestic and family violence demands that we work hand-in-hand with frontline workers, survivors, advocates and the broader community. It demands that we each recognise our role and accept that, as individuals, as leaders and as a society. At times, violence will flourish in silence, but we must not stay silent. If we see it, we must call it out; if we suspect it, we must act. We must teach our children from their earliest years about respect, consent and kindness, and about how every choice we make has the power to affect the lives of others because every life is precious. Every soul has a purpose and every life cut short by violence is a loss to us all. This issue cannot end without unity. We must listen, we must learn, and we must work together.

We must empower frontline workers by ensuring they have the training, the resources and the respect they need to continue their critical work. We must create programs that not only respond to violence but prevent it, by fostering resilience, healthy relationships and early intervention. Most importantly, we must empower survivors. We must help them to rebuild their lives, not only with services, but with real pathways to healing, stability and independence.

It was a delight and an honour to hear from a young man who is a survivor of a violent domestic upbringing.

Support services must be trauma-informed, culturally safe and built with love and compassion at their core. It is also vital that we encourage every person in our community to get involved, to learn, to listen and to support the organisations working tirelessly to end this crisis. Government and parliamentarians have a significant role to play, as do we in this place. We must hear the community, we must learn from frontline organisations, and we must value their expertise. That means funding not only must be increased but it must be secured, sustainable and directed in consultation with the people on the ground who know exactly what is needed. Funding these organisations is not charity; it is an investment in the safety, dignity and future of every individual and every family in our community.

The candle-lighting ceremony was a powerful reminder that there is still much work to do. So let us honour the candles that were lit in memory of lives lost, not just with words but with action, and let us move forward together, determined to end violence, to lift up survivors and to build a future where every life is cherished, safe and free.

ACT Nursing and Midwives Excellence Awards

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (4.38): I rise today, as promised, or threatened, yesterday, to continue my recitation of, and congratulations to, the winners of the ACT Nurses and Midwives Excellence Awards which were held on 8 May.

Yesterday, I was unable to get to the consumer recognition awards. These awards have been in place for a couple of years now, and many nominations were received from consumers acknowledging the amazing nurses and midwives that had cared for them at times of joy and strife. As a result, the judges found it very hard to pick a single winner, and there were six people awarded.

In no particular order, Stephanie Smith from Tresillian QEII Family Centre received a consumer recognition award. Stephanie provided exceptional care and support, helping a health consumer and her daughter escape an unhealthy environment and improve their wellbeing. Stephanie's empathy and resources were life-changing to the health consumer, making them a happier, healthier and more confident mother.

The Kambera House nurses from Community Home Australia were also recognised. In the last year of life, the health consumer's family member received exceptional holistic care from the Community Home Australia nursing team. This significantly improved their comfort and wellbeing. The nursing team's dedication and compassion allowed the health consumer's family member to spend their final days in a nurturing home environment surrounded by loved ones.

Jasmin Boscheinen, from maternity care at Canberra Hospital, Canberra Health Services, received recognition. Jasmin provided exceptional support throughout the health consumer's pregnancy and birth, especially during a period of debilitating pelvic pain, staying with them for over 48 hours at the hospital. Jasmin's dedication and empathy transformed a potentially traumatic birth into a positive experience. This significantly impacted the health consumer's overall wellbeing.

Lindsay McDonald, from maternity care at Canberra Hospital, Canberra Health Services, was also recognised. Lindsay's calm demeanour and genuine empathy created a trusting environment. This significantly improved the health consumer's comfort and confidence throughout their pregnancy and birthing process. Lindsay's holistic approach and unwavering support left a lasting positive impact on the health consumer's family.

Celeste Scott, from ward 7B, general medicine, Canberra Health Services, was also recognised in the awards. Celeste provided exceptional care during a challenging time, offering comfort, encouragement and clinical expertise. This significantly improved the health consumer's emotional wellbeing and recovery. Celeste's kindness, advocacy and personalised care alleviated the health consumer's anxiety and discomfort. This left a lasting positive impact on them and their loved ones.

Last but not least, Megan Ferguson, from CC Medical, was recognised. Megan provided exceptional care to the health consumer during a daunting time. This ensured they felt safe and supported with compassion and clear communication. Megan's efforts, from attending to their needs to facilitating bonding with their newborn, left

the health consumer feeling well prepared and significantly improved their overall experience.

Once again, congratulations to all of the nominees and winners of the 2025 ACT Nurses and Midwives Excellence Awards, and thank you to all of our nurses and midwives that work across our health system in Canberra Health Services and beyond, every day.

Homelessness—Gungahlin youth foyer

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (4.43): I wish to make the case for the Gungahlin youth foyer. Gungahlin has rapidly expanded its population and, as we plan for housing, we also need to consider affordable housing, in particular for young people and their needs. Gungahlin town centre east will include a build-to-rent site with 350 dwellings, of which 52 are planned to be affordable rentals. This design puts focus on affordable housing and public spaces, and presents a unique opportunity to introduce a youth foyer into the Gungahlin district.

To understand why the new foyer is so crucial, let us examine the model itself. Foyers provide a point-in-time service that empowers young people to achieve educational and employment pathways fostering sustainable independence. The foyer model's strength lies in providing stable accommodation for up to two years, coupled with personalised coaching and access to opportunities. For young people lacking family support, foyers offer the necessary time and resources to build fulfilling, independent lives. A youth foyer embraces an advantage-thinking approach, nurturing young people's goals and talents while building essential life skills. The model is based on a principle that empowering young people through education, employability and personal development is the most effective way to ensure their success.

Canberra already benefits from Our Place in Braddon, an inner north youth foyer that accommodates up to 25 residents. Soon, Canberra will welcome a youth foyer in Woden, providing stable accommodation and support for young people at risk of homelessness. This facility will include independent living units, communal spaces and access to education at nearby institutions. I would like to argue why Gungahlin should be next.

In Gungahlin, young people aged 12 to 25 make up approximately 19.2 per cent of the population, if not more, and that number continues to grow, outpacing the national average. While specific statistics on youth homelessness in Gungahlin are not really available, the number of homeless 12- to 24-year-olds in Canberra overall increased by 13.7 per cent, from 351 in 2016 to 399 in 2021. Mental health concerns are also alarmingly high. While a lack of statistics exists for young people aged 12 to 25, it has been found that Gungahlin had one of the highest numbers of children aged zero to 14 who self-reported a mental health condition in the ACT in 2021. This trend suggests significant mental health concerns within Gungahlin's younger population. As such, Gungahlin, with its large youth population and high rate of mental health issues, is a prime location for a foyer.

The Foyer Foundation's *Under one roof* report details the following social and economic benefits of youth foyers. For every \$1 invested in youth foyers, there is a

\$6 return on investment to governments. Youth foyers create \$172,417 in reduced lifetime costs per person compared to those supported through specialist homelessness services. Eighty per cent of youth foyer participants exit into stable housing, and 65 per cent gain secure, decent employment and are 1.6 times more likely to achieve a higher level of education after participating in a foyer compared to sustainable housing schemes. Finally, participants are 60 per cent less likely to be involved in the justice system.

As such, incorporating a foyer into Gungahlin would not only address youth homelessness but also provide younger residents with mental health support, enhance social diversity and align with the ACT government's commitment to social inclusion. Given Gungahlin's young population, a foyer would significantly impact and improve the local community. Now is the time to act. Together, we can create a better future for young people at risk of homelessness.

Employment—artificial intelligence

MS BARRY (Ginninderra) (4.47): I rise today not to discuss a distant science fiction future but a very real and fast-approaching challenge—one that will define the lives of our children and grandchildren, and perhaps even our own. The challenge is this: what happens to our society when artificial intelligence and robotics displace the majority of jobs as we know them? This is not speculation. Across industries, from manufacturing to customer service, from logistics to white-collar professions like law and accounting, AI and automation are becoming faster, cheaper and more capable. Algorithms are now diagnosing diseases, driving vehicles and writing reports.

While productivity may soar, the fundamental question remains: where do the people go, and how do they live? We must confront this now, not later. Waiting for mass unemployment before acting is not leadership. So let us begin today to adapt, to rethink and to re-form.

First, we must redefine the relationship between work and human dignity. For centuries, our identities have been tightly bound to our professions. But in a world where mechanics can do more than us, faster than us and often better than us, we must shift our cultural mindset. Human value must no longer be tied solely to economic outputs.

Second, we must consider policies like universal basic income not as handouts, but as dividends from a society that has invested in technology. Where machines are doing the work, the gains must benefit all of us. Pilot programs around the world have shown that basic income can reduce poverty, improve wellbeing and even foster entrepreneurship.

Third, education must be overhauled. We must teach not only technical skills but lifelong adaptability, emotional intelligence, creativity, and critical thinking skills—skills that machines struggle to replicate. We must provide retraining programs that are accessible, flexible and relevant, especially for older workers, who will feel these changes first.

Fourth, we must support community development. As traditional jobs fade, local

initiatives—be they in arts, care work or environmental restoration—should be recognised and supported as meaningful contributions to society. We need to promote purpose, not just productivity.

Fifth, we must ensure ethical AI governance. AI systems must be transparent, fair and accountable. The power to control these technologies cannot be left solely in the hands of a few individuals. We need public oversight and global cooperation to ensure AI benefits the many, not just the few.

Colleagues, we are on the edge of a profound transformation, but fear is not our guiding principle. Let us be the generation that prepares for its future, not in panic but with principle. Let us imagine a society where people are free to create, to care, to learn and to live—not because they must work to survive, but because we have built a system where technology serves humanity, not replaces it.

It may surprise members to hear that this speech was entirely written by AI engine ChatGPT in response to my staffer asking the question, “Prepare a 500-word speech suitable for a member of parliament addressing how society should prepare for widespread job displacement due to AI and robotics.” As I read ChatGPT’s suggested text, I was struck by the profound changes in the fabric of our society implicit in this next industrial revolution.

It is unsettling to me that this change is arising so quickly and without significant consideration in this place about the nature of a society where we work and where we find benefits. I would like to start a discussion group. I would not, but if this is something that is of interest to you, please reach out to me and let us plot the future.

Federal election—Bean electorate

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (4.51): I rise to comment on the federal election result for the electorate of Bean. It appears David Smith MP has been returned for another term, in a tight race that reduced a massive 12.9 per cent margin—a very safe seat—to a narrow margin of, at current count, just 0.2 per cent—a very marginal seat. This was brought about by an immense grassroots campaign supporting the candidacy of local midwife Jessie Price, who ran as a community independent. I knew Ms Price would mount a strong campaign when I bumped into her shortly after her candidacy was announced and she said, “Now I just need to meet every person in Bean.”

Many people in the south Canberra electorate reported feeling like their incumbent member had failed to represent their interests and there was a strong sentiment on the ground in favour of a new option—someone who would not only be a passionate voice for their priorities but would demonstrate those priorities consistently through their actions; someone who is deeply embedded within their community and who would fight for the people they represent.

Although Mr Smith’s primary vote remained relatively steady, and I congratulate him on his re-election, the desire for another option was also clearly borne out in the results, with almost everyone who did not vote for the incumbent either voting for Ms Price or preferencing her ahead of him.

Reflecting on the election result on ABC radio this morning, Mr Smith said that Ms Price had run on many of the same issues that the government ran on. This, I think, is the key point, the key lesson, out of the election. Independents like Jessie Price are not running against progressive incumbents because they want to see them replaced by conservatives; they are running because they want to see progressive rhetoric translate into real progressive action. They do not just want to hear about progressive ideals, they want to see them upheld.

The independent movement is here because people do not just want representatives who care about their communities; they want representatives who will really fight for their communities, who are not compromised by factional infighting or narrow party lines, and who will stand up against vested interests and prioritise the best interests of the people they represent.

People are not voting for independents like Jessie Price because, as some have implied, they have big money backing them; instead, people are voting for them precisely because they are tired of people in power kowtowing to big money. They are tired of leaders failing to lead, going slow on issues where big money holds sway and has a lot to say, like climate action, property tax reform and gambling harm reduction.

Senator David Pocock did not double his primary vote just because he has a big profile or just because the Liberals did not run a strong candidate or a strong campaign; he doubled his primary vote because he is pushing back on big money, on vested interests, on political inertia and on small-target politics. Progressive independents like Senator Pocock are achieving electoral success because by voting for them people can say no to business as usual—hoping that, in doing so, they can bring about real action on the progressive issues that this election tells us really matter to people in our city.

The lesson from the massive swing towards independents in the ACT at the federal election is not that Canberrans have vastly different values from those espoused by the political party that has had the most success here. It is that they, like the independents they are getting behind, share many of those values, but they want to see those values translated into ambitious action. The message is that Canberrans want their elected representatives to tackle the root causes of the challenges we face. They want politicians to lift their gaze, to say no to vested interests and to transcend party machinations, focusing not on consolidating power but on pursuing courageous reforms that will make a real difference for current and future generations of Australians.

Education—public schools

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS (Brindabella) (4.55): On the 29th of last month enrolment applications opened for ACT public schools for the year 2026. As such, I am rising this afternoon with empathy and encouragement for those ACT families who are considering the options for their child's next step in the ACT's public education system. For some families that step will be their first, via kindergarten at the local public primary school. To them I would say: congratulations and welcome.

For social development and academic outcomes, ACT public schools are very good

places to send your children, and they are the definition of value for money. ACT public schools are funded at or above 100 per cent of the schooling resource standard, and I am very happy that Minister Berry has secured over \$1 million in federal funding between 2025 and 2029 under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement. That funding will help to ensure that the ACT continues to stand out for its targeted investment in both student and teacher wellbeing. The integration of programs addressing mental health, bullying prevention and social-emotional learning into the curriculum means wellbeing is prioritised in our public schools alongside academic achievement.

I note that today I am wearing a pin with the crest and motto of Weston Primary School, my primary alma mater. The motto of the pin is “Age Quod Agis”. As an aside, not enough public schools have Latin mottos these days and something must be done about it. Nevertheless, since year 1 in 1988, I have understood “age quod agis” to mean “growing through learning.” However—a bombshell!—I can reveal to the Assembly that “age quod agis” in fact translates to “do what you are doing”, or “do well whatever you do”.

Despite learning I have been living an educational lie for 37 years, I like this phrase; it resonates. It emphasises the importance of focusing on the task at hand with dedication and mindfulness. It can also be interpreted as a call to concentrate and not let one’s attention wander, which no student has ever had to be reminded about by every teacher, in every school report or at any parent-teacher interview, ever! Mind you, students at ACT public schools demonstrably concentrate more and let their attention wander less than students in other jurisdictions.

ACT students consistently perform well in national assessments like NAPLAN, at or near the top in literacy and numeracy. This may be because the territory benefits from smaller class sizes and higher teacher-to-student ratios, which enable more individual attention and support for each student. The ACT also has one of the highest proportions of teachers with postgraduate qualifications in Australia, which combines with a strong focus on retention and investing in continuous professional development to ensure educators are well equipped to deliver high-quality instruction.

There is no doubt that some teachers in Canberra—indeed, around the country—are under pressure, and struggle to feel that they are handling the increasing complexities in the student body, and that the administrative and general workload increase is preventing them from teaching. My father taught in the ACT’s public education system at Copland College, Erindale College and Lake Tuggeranong College for 15 years. Having also taught in the New South Wales public and private systems for 12 and 19 years respectively, he assures me that these issues are not unique to the ACT. Indeed, apart from the extra workload created by the dearth of teachers across the eastern seaboard, these issues are not unique today, either.

Nonetheless, he does not resile from his opinion that the ACT model of secondary public education, split between a year 7 to 10 high school and a year 11 to 12 college, is the best educational model in Australia for setting up a young person for success. Year 10 students who are thinking about where to take their last step in the ACT public education system, like my son is right now, can expect more responsibility at college, more maturity and more autonomy—calling teachers by their first name,

flexible timetables, no bells, no uniforms, no tiny, grotty year 7s scurrying around chasing their handball balls into your friendship group.

Last Thursday, our family went to the information evening for Lake Tuggeranong College, another TWG alma mater. This Thursday, we will visit Erindale College. Next Tuesday, it will be Canberra College. Whatever college my son chooses, like all of his year 10 cohort across the ACT public education system, his most important choice will be the subjects and themes he chooses to study for the last two years of his compulsory education. To share a high school maths teacher's advice to Cesc at a parent-teacher night two weeks ago:

Do not choose the courses you feel you should do or you were told to do. Choose the subjects you are interested in. Being interested, you will enjoy learning about your interests, you will concentrate more, your mind will wander less, and then you will do well, whatever you do.

Age quod agis.

Health—bone marrow failure syndromes

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (5.00): This year marks 10 years of Maddie Riewoldt's Vision—a decade of extraordinary progress in the fight against bone marrow failure syndromes, thanks to a family who turned unimaginable loss into a national purpose. Maddie was just 26 when she died of aplastic anaemia, a rare and often fatal bone marrow failure disorder. In her final days, she asked her family to do what she could no longer do: fight. Fight for research, fight for answers, fight so that others would not have to suffer in silence.

Since its founding in 2015, Maddie Riewoldt's Vision has become a powerhouse of hope and research. It has raised more than \$10 million to fund clinical trials and testing, establish a national registry, and create a vital network of support for families and patients. And it was wonderful to see at the federal election bipartisan support to invest \$3 million to support Maddie Riewoldt's Vision so that this work can continue to happen—because no Australian should be left behind just because their illness is rare.

This story is not only national; it is local, too. Belinda, one of my constituents in Tuggeranong, was diagnosed with a rare blood disorder in 2023. She is one of only a handful of Canberrans living with one, and I really appreciate Belinda taking the time to share her story with me. She knows firsthand the fear and uncertainty that come with these conditions, but she has also shown extraordinary strength and determination in the response.

Over the last few years, Belinda has hiked the eight highest peaks in Australia—one in each state and territory—to raise funds and awareness for Maddie Riewoldt's Vision. From Mount Kosciuszko to Mount Zeil, Belinda is climbing for every young person facing bone marrow failure and rare blood disorders. She is climbing for research, for visibility, for a future where diagnoses do not come with despair but a path forward. Her eight-peak challenge is a bold and brilliant campaign, and a reminder that advocacy does not always look like a speech in parliament like I am

delivering today. Sometimes it looks like putting on your boots, taking a breath and climbing a mountain—or eight.

I caught up with Belinda a couple of weeks ago and she let me know she has finished her eight peaks, making her the first Australian with a blood disorder to climb all eight peaks. In the process, Belinda and her family have completed almost an entire lap of Australia. I am told that you can often find Belinda training in the hills and reserves around Lanyon, and while she has now climbed the eight peaks, I am sure she will still be out there walking, hiking and climbing.

Bone marrow failure syndromes are rare, but they are devastating. Each year more than 160 Australians, many of them children or young adults, are diagnosed with conditions that affect their ability to produce healthy blood cells. Treatments are often complex and uncertain. The emotional and financial toll is immense. But through organisations like Maddie Riewoldt's Vision, and through champions like Belinda, we are making progress.

I say to Maddie's family: thank you for your courage, your advocacy and your vision. I say to Belinda: thank you for showing us power of purpose, and for proving that even the tallest mountains can be moved; and I look forward to continuing to catch up with you over the coming months and year. I say to the broader community: let us keep investing in rare disease research. Let us keep standing with those who face the hardest battles, and let us ensure that the next 10 years—and further into the future—of Maddie Riewoldt's Vision bring even more breakthroughs, more awareness and more lives saved.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time for the debate having expired, the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 am.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.02 pm.