



DEBATES

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DAILY HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

23 October 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 **Monday, 10 November 2025**.

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Thursday, 23 October 2025

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—unparliamentary language Speaker's ruling

MR SPEAKER: Yesterday, in the debate concerning facilities on multicultural communities, Mr Pettersson drew the Assembly's attention to standing order 55 and asked that I review the transcript. Mr Pettersson did not identify which member he believed had offended the standing order. We subsequently had a brief discussion. I have examined the proof transcript of the proceedings, together with the relevant provisions of Assembly standing orders. Standing orders 54 and 55 state:

Offensive words

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

Personal reflections

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

Standing order 57 provides:

When the attention of the Speaker is drawn to words used, the Speaker shall determine whether ... they are offensive or disorderly.

The *Companion to the Standing Orders*, at paragraph 11.77, notes that the Assembly, based on the practice of the House of Reps and the United Kingdom House of Commons, follows the following practice:

- members can direct a charge against other members or reflect upon their character or conduct only upon a substantive motion which admits of a distinct vote of the Assembly ...

I am unsure, despite further conversation, exactly which remarks Mr Pettersson was referring to, although, in his contribution to the debate, he indicated:

I want to make a quick detour from my prepared remarks, however, to reflect upon questions asked in question time yesterday, as well as comments that Ms Barry made in her remarks before. There were questions in question time suggesting that I, as minister, have been picking winners; today, Ms Barry referred to a favourable relationship with a minister leading to good outcomes. They are very dangerous insinuations to make, and highly offensive. If members in this place wish to raise matters in that regard, please do so in an appropriate way. Making these insinuations is offensive, and I find it very hard to have a constructive relationship with someone who would make such insinuations against me, having regard to the work that I do, diligently, in putting the interests of the community first and foremost.

I do not doubt that Mr Pettersson was extremely genuine in making those comments, but, having considered the matters raised, I do not believe I can rule on the matter, because I do not believe that what has gone on has challenged standing order 54 or standing order 55 in a way that would require me to make a ruling. I would urge that, if members consider a member's character is in question, they should use the proper norms of the Assembly and move a substantive motion.

Dissent from Speaker's ruling

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi—Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations) (10.04): I move:

That the Speaker's ruling be dissented from.

With the greatest respect, I find your ruling egregious. The insinuations were clear to all members in the question by Mr Hanson and in references by Ms Barry following that. Also, specifically in Ms Barry's remarks yesterday with regard to a relationship with the minister, there were very clear insinuations of corruption that undermine all the good efforts by ministers to impart their efforts and their energies in an impartial manner.

To me, it is an extraordinary ruling—that you can insinuate a minister has been behaving in this way, and that they did not do it through a substantive motion. Instead, you have allowed a question to be asked in question time that clearly contained imputations and inferences. At the first hurdle, the question should have been ruled out of order. That was not the case. I was reasonably content to let it slide, thinking it was an inappropriate question, but then it was doubled-down on. When it comes to the matter of land in the ACT, there were references that a good relationship with a minister leads to favourable outcomes.

To be very clear, the quotes that are egregious to me are that I, as a minister, have been picking winners and sidelining others, and that a good relationship with the minister could determine your success. Yesterday, Ms Barry described assertions against the minister. I do not know how, in any way, you could not describe the comments as personal reflections. A personal reflection is egregious. So, Mr Speaker, with the greatest respect, I think this is a terrible ruling. It sets a terrible precedent. I have no

doubt that, if this precedent stands, the way that members in this place make inferences about ministers will only get worse. So, Mr Speaker, I dissent from your ruling.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.07): I do not have all the quotes before me because I was not expecting this. Ms Barry asked a series of questions of the minister. It is reasonable to do so. The minister then had the opportunity to respond to those questions, which he did. I do not recall him raising a point of order at the time or having that discussion at the time.

Mr Speaker, you have reflected on this. You have given a clear articulation as to why you believe it was not out of order and that, if these matters are to be debated, it is to be done after moving a substantive motion. I get it—the minister did not like the line of questioning, but he then had the opportunity to respond to that line of questioning or he could have raised a point of order. Mr Speaker, you have given a fulsome response. I do not think that your response brushed away the issues. Your response leant on parliamentary practice. You went to House of Representatives’ practice and that of other parliaments, and you looked at the standing orders. It seems to be a reasonable response.

I get it—Mr Pettersson did not like the line of questioning. I am not trying to brush that aside; but, in terms of your ruling, it seems to be an accurate and consistent ruling, having gone to the standing orders, House of Representatives’ practice, and so on. It seems to be a pretty legitimate ruling. Mr Speaker, it is fair to say that I do not often get rulings from you that I agree with. Yesterday, I did not like your ruling, but I acknowledge the fact that you looked at the matter and dealt with it fairly, and I respect your ruling. In this case, Mr Pettersson might not like the interpretation, but it is reasonable and it is consistent. It is based on historical precedents, House of Representatives’ practice, and so on. Sometimes you have to just accept that that is the way of it, that is the form. I think your ruling in this case is appropriate.

Debate (on motion by **Miss Nuttall**) adjourned to a later hour.

Economy—Pacific trade mission

Ministerial statement

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (10.10): The government recently undertook a trade mission to Fiji and New Zealand to strengthen Canberra’s Pacific partnerships and grow our tourism sector. The mission was coordinated by the Office for International Engagement and VisitCanberra, with the assistance of the commonwealth Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Guided by our International Engagement and our Tourism 2030 strategies, the government has long recognised the importance of regional diplomacy and city-to-city collaboration in addressing shared challenges and unlocking new economic opportunities for our community.

This trade mission marked a significant milestone in these efforts through the signing of the memorandum of understanding between Canberra, Suva and Wellington to establish the Council of Pacific Capital Cities. The agreement was co-signed in Suva on 4 June with the Acting CEO and Chairman of Suva City Council, and in Wellington on 6 June with the Mayor of Wellington.

The Council of Pacific Capital Cities is a platform for practical cooperation, engagement and knowledge sharing across a range of areas, including climate change, sustainable development, economic diversification, arts and culture, and governance. It reflects a growing need for capital cities in the Pacific to work together on shared priorities, from responding to the impacts of climate change to pressures on housing and infrastructure. Under the agreement, the cities will develop a three-year work plan, supported by annual summits.

The government's delegation also advanced key bilateral relationships during this mission. In Suva, we met with the Suva City Council, and I had the opportunity to meet all three of Fiji's deputy prime ministers. The visit was an opportunity to build on the success that Canberra-based businesses have experienced in the Fiji market. I particularly highlight the significant investment and expansion of ONA Coffee and EPC Solar, who have each significantly expanded their operations in Fiji, supported by this and previous government trade missions.

Growing exports to Fiji in this way also supports the ongoing development of our aviation connections to the country. This creates further opportunities, business to business, as well as tourism, leisure and government travel, and provides an opportunity to fill the belly of the Fiji Airways plane as it comes in and departs from Canberra airport each week.

This forms part of the engagement with both Fiji Airways and Tourism Fiji, providing a valuable opportunity to strengthen our relationships and work in collaboration to support growth in the Canberra-Nadi aviation connection. In short, the more we grow trade, and the more people to people, and government, and business to business activity there is, the more flights there will be between Canberra and Nadi.

This is important because these partnerships support a range of activities in North America. This supports inbound travel to Canberra from North America via Nadi—from a number of North American ports, through Nadi, direct into Canberra. This is important because the United States is our second-largest international market, behind China, and continues to grow year on year. We have a very successful partnership with Tourism Australia and other tourism and aviation partners to convert this opportunity into increased visitation to Canberra. This is all part of growing the value of our visitor economy by 2030.

In Wellington, in addition to co-signing the Council of Pacific Capital Cities MOU, we progressed elements of our Sister City Agreement, which, remarkably, reaches its tenth anniversary next year. We particularly thank the Wellington City Mayor and the council for their continued support of this relationship, and particularly for their kind gesture in hosting a Freedom of Entry Parade for HMAS *Canberra* in the Wellington CBD. This event, I confess, on a very windy and wet Wellington Saturday morning, did attract a big crowd, more than 250 Royal Australian Navy personnel, and embarked forces. It was a powerful symbol of the enduring ties between our cities and nations.

I am pleased that the Canberra Business Chamber were also involved, leading a parallel business delegation to Wellington, with 16 ACT businesses engaging in activities, meetings and networking events. The Canberra Convention Bureau also participated

and were particularly active in promoting Canberra as a destination for business events and tourism.

I note that the mission also supported a cultural exchange element, which is part of the Sister City Agreement, with the announcement of another Indigenous artist exchange, which will see artists from both Canberra and Wellington engage in a month-long residency this year.

Building on the success of the partnership with Fiji Airways, the government remains committed to pursuing opportunities to re-establish direct flights between Canberra and New Zealand, strengthening our ties with key aviation, tourism, innovation and education partners across the ditch.

We had the opportunity to meet with the CEO of Tourism New Zealand and the CEO of Air New Zealand during this mission. This provided an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to investment, trade and tourism between Canberra, New Zealand, the Pacific and the United States. This mission was part of a national effort that the Australian government is encouraging states and territories to be part of across the Pacific.

I note that not only the ACT government but indeed this parliament continue to play a very active role in the Pacific that is supporting this important national priority. We have numerous Pacific partnerships and engagements, at both a parliamentary and government-to-government level.

There are many people and organisations to thank for their contribution to the success of the trade mission. Can I first thank the staff at the Australian High Commission in Fiji, led by High Commissioner Peter Roberts and Acting Deputy Head of Mission Andrew Shepherd. Our mission in Fiji, I understand, is about the third largest. The Australian High Commission is the third largest overseas mission. There is serious engagement by the Australian government in the Pacific, headquartered in Suva.

The High Commissioner and the Deputy Head of Mission hosted a number of events and activities, accompanied the delegation to our engagements with Suva City Council, and were very helpful in facilitating meetings with Fiji's three deputy prime ministers.

For the New Zealand leg of the trade mission, I thank the Australian High Commission in Wellington, particularly High Commissioner Daniel Sloper, and Brad Williams, our Consul-General and Senior Trade Commissioner, who is based in Auckland.

Finally, I acknowledge the hard work of the ACT government representatives in the commissioner's office, and in VisitCanberra, in making all the arrangements for the mission.

I present the following paper:

Pacific Trade Mission—Ministerial statement, 23 October 2025.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—*The Long Yarn* report—government response

Ministerial statement

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform) (10.18): I rise today to table the ACT government's response to *The Long Yarn* report, a community-led report aimed at preventing and addressing the disproportionate rates of domestic, family and sexual violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT.

I begin by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people, the traditional custodians of the ACT, and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and the region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution that they make to the life of this city and this region. I acknowledge the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community who come from across Australia and make Canberra their home.

I would like to acknowledge the many victim-survivors, community sector workers, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, Aboriginal community leaders and community members who generously shared their experiences and wisdom to offer the government their expert advice on how to stop the violence. I thank all members, past and present, of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Expert Reference Group, who authorised this report. Please know that your experience and powerful advocacy are truly valued, and I am committed to delivering real change for the community.

Before I go further, I want to speak directly to victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence in our community. I take seriously my responsibility in this portfolio, and I know everyone in this place wants to ensure that every Canberran is safe in their relationships and can access effective and safe support when they need it.

Alarming rates of violence are perpetrated against victim-survivors in this community. We know the figures are even worse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised from family and domestic violence-related injuries than non-Indigenous women. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are up to seven times more likely to be homicide victims compared with the national average, with almost three-quarters of those women killed by their current or former intimate partner. We must acknowledge that a significant proportion of people who use violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children are non-Indigenous men. These statistics also reflect the barriers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women feel and face in accessing support.

Colonisation, dispossession and government policies, such as the forced removal of children and the disruption of kinship and community ties, have created grief, loss and

intergenerational trauma; however, strong community leadership and enduring resilience have prevailed. We pay tribute to the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have fought tirelessly to improve this situation for their communities. People have shared their stories and insights and offered the government clear and compelling recommendations on what needs to be done, through the foundational work of the *We Don't Shoot Our Wounded* report in 2009 and updated advice in *The Long Yarn* report, handed to my predecessor in August last year. *The Long Yarn* report provides the government with ACT-specific recommendations that reflect a set of key themes raised by consultation participants when updating the original recommendations of the *We Don't Shoot Our Wounded* report.

The government gives its strong commitment to work in genuine partnership with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on self-determined responses that foster strong, resilient families and support healing. The ACT government agrees to all 12 recommendations of *The Long Yarn* report. I am pleased to report to the Assembly that some progress has now been made against all 12 recommendations, and this is reflected in the government's response; however, there is still significant work to do to fully deliver on the recommendations, and we will prioritise this work.

Through this response, the ACT government commits to continuing to support the growth and development of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to ensure culturally appropriate support is available for men, women and children, and to centre the voices of victim-survivors. This is work that cuts across multiple areas of government, including justice, housing and child protection, as well as in the domestic, family and sexual violence space. We will continue to develop the ACT's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy with critical input from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to ensure services are available across the spectrum of interventions, from prevention through to recovery and healing, and that the workforce is appropriately trained and supported, including in mainstream services.

The 2025-26 budget included investment in the Violence is Not Our Way education campaign to encourage victim-survivors and perpetrators to seek help and promote positive role models for men, women and children. I look forward to seeing this roll out in due course. Additionally, improved data collection and Aboriginal-led research and evaluation is being prioritised to better reflect community experiences, support capacity building and guide more effective, culturally responsive services.

The task of addressing family violence in our community can feel huge and hard, but we must harness the community's drive for change and push forward together. The government recognises that many of *The Long Yarn* recommendations require an ongoing and sustained commitment to achieve the desired outcomes envisaged by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors, community sector workers, ACCOs, community leaders and community members. This work will also intersect with significant projects, including the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement; the Be the Change We Seek justice framework; the response to the Jumbunna report; and the forthcoming National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan.

This statement is a formal and public gesture of our commitment to listen deeply and continuously while working in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander community. We recognise that the answers are best led by the community and delivered by the community for the community. We must continue to work together to strive to create an ACT community free of violence.

I present the following papers:

The Long Yarn Report—ACT Government response—
Response, undated.
Ministerial statement, 23 October 2025.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (10.25): I welcome the government's response to *The Long Yarn* report today, and I am happy to see that all recommendations have been accepted. I look forward to reading the government response in detail. As the minister knows, I have been vocal, both publicly and in direct engagements with her and her office, about the need for culturally safe family, domestic and sexual violence crisis services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island women and children here in the ACT.

We need to be aware, in this place, of the crisis we are facing in Canberra, where the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women aged 15 years or over seeking homelessness support as a result of family and domestic violence has grown every year since 2018, from almost 400 per 10,000 women up to 614 per 10,000 women in 2023-34.

The urgency and severity of this situation cannot be overstated. While there are, of course, some amazing crisis response services already operating here in the ACT, we cannot ignore the well-known fact that, for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, mainstream services are, unfortunately, not culturally safe and risk re-traumatising them. The obligation to ensure that culturally-safe domestic and family violence crisis services are available is a commitment that the government made, and continues to make, including when it signed the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Yhurwun Bullan is one organisation that is willing to step into this space and has provided a business case to government for delivering an Aboriginal-led family and domestic violence crisis service in the ACT. But, while that is under consideration, and steps are, it seems, being taken to support their ability to provide such a service, Yhurwun Bullan's delivery of a specialised women's outreach program has been discontinued—hopefully, temporarily—because of a shift in governance arrangements. The significance of this and the devastating impact on women in our community cannot be overstated.

My office has received multiple calls in recent days and weeks from desperate and incredibly vulnerable women who are once again feeling let down and “abused”, as one woman put it, by the system that should be protecting them. These are women who cannot speak out publicly because they already live every day in fear of their lives, and have AVOs in place; women for whom Yhurwun Bullan transformed their lives in ways

that, obviously, I cannot do justice in these remarks—helping women to attend appointments to receive services they would not otherwise have access to; accompanying them to hospital to undertake invasive forensic exams following sexual assaults; helping to find them safe accommodation after they had been placed by mainstream services—in one example provided, in the same refuge as their abuser’s family members; and providing a safe place for their children to connect with culture, with other children, with other families and be supported to thrive.

My team has been fielding calls from women who are now, once again, left fearing for their lives, as they have described it. Women who are concerned that their friends will not make it, now that the supports they so desperately relied upon are not available, and “their rights taken away”—again, this is in one woman’s words. They feel they are being left to fend for themselves in a system that has failed them up to this point.

I want to thank the minister and her office for a proactive engagement and ongoing dialogue about these matters. I would also urge government officials to respond to this matter with the seriousness and urgency that it demands and to acknowledge that, without an appropriate urgent response that supports the delivery of both a culturally-appropriate Aboriginal-led service and culturally-safe dedicated mainstream services, Aboriginal women and children’s lives continue to be at risk here in the ACT.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Avian influenza H5N1 strain—preparedness

Ministerial statement

MS ORR (Yerrabi—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (10.29): I rise to update the Assembly on the risk of high pathogenicity avian influenza H5N1 strain to Australia, and the ACT’s work as part of a national effort to be prepared.

Avian influenza, or bird flu, is a viral disease of birds found all over the world. As the name suggests, bird flu mainly affects birds, but it can also affect other animals and, on rare occasions, humans. H5 bird flu is a highly contagious, deadly strain of bird flu that has killed millions of wild birds and tens of thousands of wild mammals globally. H5 bird flu is different to the H7 strain that caused the 2024 and 2025 bird flu outbreaks in Australia. This outbreak impacted Australia’s poultry industry, including poultry farms. To date, H5 bird flu has not been detected in Australia, but we are surrounded by the deadly virus.

Since 2021, H5 bird flu has spread globally through North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Antarctica and the subantarctic islands. Birds can carry the virus without showing signs of disease. The greatest risk of the virus arriving in Australia is from the annual spring migration of wild shorebirds from the Northern Hemisphere to Australia, or through wild bird movements from the subantarctic islands.

The virus has been detected on Kerguelen and Crozet islands, which are only 500 kilometres from Heard Island and the McDonald Islands. From there, it is only a short distance for the virus to travel to Macquarie Island, and then to mainland

Australia.

The spread of H5 bird flu has been unpredictable and the virus continues to leap into new animal species. In recent years the virus has infected humans; wild animals, such as seals and sea lions; domestic animals, such as cats and dogs; farm animals, such as cows and goats; and zoo animals, such as tigers and leopards. H5 bird flu is a threat to our wildlife, ecosystems and threatened species, and, while no-one knows what H5 bird flu will mean for Australia's unique fauna, there are genuine fears that already endangered species could be wiped out.

Experts agree that once H5 bird flu is in our wild bird population, there will be very few options to prevent or limit the spread of the virus. The Australian government has increased its surveillance and preparedness activities across the agriculture, human health and the environment sectors, with more than \$100 million being committed to preparing for an H5 bird flu incursion.

I acknowledge and thank the Australian government for their national leadership and coordination of preparations and their considerable investment, including funding for states and territories to be better prepared.

An important first step in preparing for the arrival of this devastating virus in Australia is to understand which of our vulnerable native fauna are most at risk of contracting bird flu. We have learned valuable lessons from international cases of bird flu and our recent experience with H7 bird flu in our poultry, which will be, again, at risk. Those species most susceptible to the virus are animals living in groups; animals living around water; and scavengers, who may come into direct contact with an infected animal, infected feathers and faeces, or an infected carcass.

Some of our most beloved and recognisable Canberran fauna will likely fall into this highly susceptible category, including birds such as black swans, ducks, magpies and the wedge-tailed eagle. Unfortunately, despite its name, we know from global cases that not only birds may be affected by this virus. Documented cases of bird flu in mammals means that other highly susceptible species include the rakali—the water rat—and the waragul—the dingo.

Australia is home to a wondrous diversity of native wildlife, including many endemic species that are found nowhere else on this planet. But with our unique wildlife comes some uncertainty as to how this strain of bird flu will affect them. Impacts of bird flu on marsupials and monotremes, like possums, quolls and platypuses, are poorly known.

I am pleased to share that the ACT has been playing its part in the national efforts in preparing and planning for the arrival of H5 bird flu into Australia. The government is working hard to seek to, as far as possible, limit the impact of bird flu on our precious native wildlife. The government's best fauna scientists have considered the life history, behaviour, diet and movement patterns of all bird and mammal species found within the ACT to assess their expected susceptibility to bird flu. With this knowledge, we can put our best foot forward to plan, prioritise and inform on-ground management to achieve the best outcomes for wildlife.

While the true magnitude of the impact of bird flu on Australian wildlife is yet to be

experienced, preparedness will be key to implementing actions to mitigate spread and build resilience in populations beyond incursion.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the ACT's preparations for H5 bird flu. In May this year the ACT's new Biosecurity Act came into effect. This act modernises the ACT's biosecurity laws and ensures that the ACT has best-practice legislation to prevent, prepare, respond to and recover from a biosecurity incident.

To monitor for the presence of H5 bird flu, the ACT is an active participant in the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program. This program plays a vital role in protecting Australia's biosecurity by monitoring for avian influenza strains in wild bird populations. Through both targeted and general surveillance, we are working collaboratively with our jurisdictional counterparts to detect and respond to potential threats early. This surveillance includes important wetland areas in the ACT, such as the Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

In addition to our surveillance efforts, I want to acknowledge the proactive work of the ACT biosecurity team, who have been working closely with teams across the ACT government to bolster preparedness activities and raise awareness about the potential impacts that H5 bird flu could have on our wildlife, industry and community.

In the ACT, we are taking a one health approach to avian influenza preparedness and planning, recognising that the health of animals, people and the environment are all deeply connected. This approach allows for greater collaboration, innovation and co-benefits, acknowledging that the outcomes we achieve together are more impactful than working in isolation.

Collaboration spans across environmental, health, waste, emergency and communications teams, ensuring that we are ready to respond and are equipped to inform and support the public effectively. As an example, significant efforts are underway between the biosecurity team and colleagues in Health and Community Services to ensure human health risks are adequately considered, addressed and managed alongside biosecurity responses, planning and readiness activities.

It is truly a one government response. As members of the Legislative Assembly would know, biosecurity is not just a rural issue; it is a whole-of-community responsibility. In the ACT, we are fortunate to have a diverse and dedicated agricultural sector, including one large egg production facility and four free-range poultry enterprises spread across our territory. These businesses are vital to our local food supply, our economy and our way of life. That is why the ACT government has been actively working with each of these enterprises to ensure they are well informed and well prepared for potential biosecurity incursions, including the growing global threat of avian influenza.

The government is also ensuring that, through the Biodiversity Conservation Forum, the ACT's environment community is kept informed on development and preparations. I thank all members of the forum for their ongoing interest and support.

In closing, H5 bird flu poses a significant threat to the native wildlife of Australia. In the ACT, we must continue to do all we can to be vigilant and prepared. I encourage any Canberran that witnesses suspicious deaths or illness in ACT wildlife to contact the

Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

I present the following paper:

High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza H5N1 Strain risks and ACT preparations—
Ministerial statement, 23 October 2025.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Order of the day—postponement

Mr Cocks, pursuant to standing order 127, fixed a later day for the moving of notice No 1, Assembly business.

Leave of absence

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

That leave of absence be granted to Ms Castley (Leader of the Opposition) for this sitting day for personal reasons.

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

That leave of absence be granted to Ms Barry for this sitting day for personal reasons.

Legislative Assembly Sitting pattern 2026

Ordered that order of the day No 2 Assembly business be postponed until a later day.

ACT government campaign advertising Appointment of independent reviewer

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (10.40): I move:

That, in accordance with section 12 of the *Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Act 2009*, this Assembly approves the appointment of:

- (1) Mr William “Bill” Campbell AO PSM KC as Independent Reviewer—ACT Government Campaign Advertising for a period of three years commencing 2 December 2025; and
- (2) Ms Philippa Lynch PSM as Acting Independent Reviewer—ACT Government Campaign Advertising for a period of three years commencing 2 December 2025. This appointment is effective in instances when the Independent Reviewer—ACT Government Campaign Advertising cannot for

any reason exercise the functions of the position.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (10.40): The Greens will support this reappointment. The Chief Minister will be aware that the Greens and I have taken issue with some recent government advertising campaigns. This most notably includes the recurring message from the Chief Minister on the front of the *Our CBR* newsletter. During the federal election, it included a blatant plug of the commonwealth government's housing policies, insofar as they related to the work of the territory government. Housing was a highly relevant issue in the federal election campaign, and I remain concerned that ACT taxpayers effectively funded federal electoral advertising promoting the federal government's policy.

Fortunately, in February this year, I had the pleasure of meeting Mr Campbell in a private meeting facilitated by the Chief Minister's office, for which I am grateful. As a consequence of that meeting, I have no concerns about Mr Campbell or his work. My concerns lie in the details of the rules he is bound to follow when reviewing government advertising campaigns. Therefore, I am happy to support his reappointment. As for the rules themselves, I am still considering my options. We can return to that at a later date.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.41): We will support the motion and the reappointment. Having just listened to Mr Braddock from the Greens, if they want to have a chat about the rules and whether they need to be tightened, I am very happy to engage with them on that.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (10.42): I thank members for their support. I remind colleagues that this requires a two-thirds majority of the Assembly. The bells would need to be rung to get the required 17 people in the chamber. To be clear, there are no pairs for this vote. It will require all who are present. Given that everyone in at least three parties is supporting the resolution—I am not sure about the Independents, but, in the end, we can get to 17 without the Independents—we can now call for that vote, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: The Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Act 2009, as mentioned by the Chief Minister, requires that this appointment must be agreed to by a special majority of the Assembly, which is 17 votes. That being the case, I direct that a vote be taken.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 22

Noes 0

Andrew Barr	Laura Nuttall
Yvette Berry	Suzanne Orr
Andrew Braddock	Mark Parton
Peter Cain	Marisa Paterson
Fiona Carrick	Michael Pettersson

Tara Cheyne	Shane Rattenbury
Jo Clay	Chris Steel
Ed Cocks	Rachel Stephen-Smith
Thomas Emerson	Caitlin Tough
Jeremy Hanson	Taimus Werner-Gibblings
Elizabeth Lee	
James Milligan	

Question resolved in the affirmative, with the concurrence of a two-thirds majority of members.

Building and Construction Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 (No 2)

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

Title read by Clerk.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (10.47): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to present the Building and Construction Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 (No 2) to the Assembly. The government is delivering on our commitment to enable 30,000 new homes by 2030, through an ambitious agenda of planning, housing productivity and building quality reforms. The government's expectation is that these homes are not only well-designed but also built to a high quality, and the bill is being introduced to help ensure that our building and construction regulatory system remains fit for purpose and provides appropriate regulatory oversight.

Complementing this, the bill also reduces and removes unnecessary regulatory barriers and simplifies building regulations and processes so that these new homes can be built faster, and to provide the building and construction industry with clarity on operating in compliance within this regulatory system.

The bill will amend several components of the ACT's building and construction regulatory system to ensure that it is fit for purpose and proactively addresses quality and safety: the Building Act 2004 and regulation, the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act 2004 and regulation, the Gas Safety Act 2000, the Professional Engineers Act 2024, and the Property Developers Act 2024 and associated regulations.

The bill amends existing provisions under the Building Act and regulation to enhance the swimming pool reforms that commenced on 1 May 2023, through clearer language to clarify exemptions and definitions, better alignment to policy intent and more precise articulation of obligations. The bill will also extend a standing exemption from any further upgrade requirements to spas with lockable lids, regardless of when they were installed. This is a balanced response and is consistent with the approach taken in New South Wales, which seeks to not impose further regulatory burden and cost on the

owners of spas with this inherent safety feature. In consultation with industry, and as part of broader efforts to enhance the community's understanding of the swimming pool safety reforms, the City and Environment Directorate is also reviewing legislation and documentation to identify other areas of improvement and efficiency. I look forward to reporting back to the Assembly on the progress of this work by the end of this year.

The bill also introduces provisions related to public registers, operational matters and the approval of building manuals, in support of the licence applications under the Property Developers Licensing Scheme opening on the first of this month, ahead of mandatory licencing commencing from 1 October 2026. These amendments will remove unnecessary duplications within the compliance pathway and align requirements with current legal standards. I am also pleased to progress amendments to require "works as executed", also known as "as-built" plans, to be provided to the Construction Occupations Registrar, following the completion of building work, under the Building Act.

While the act has always intended for this to occur, it has not explicitly required for these plans to accurately reflect the actual construction outcomes. This can lead to discrepancies with the original design at the building approval stage and causes issues if defects arise, including when a defect first became apparent. Codifying this requirement into the act will bring the ACT into line with New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland and ensure certifiers receive and submit accurate "as-built" plans after completion to demonstrate compliance, reduce potential disputes and enhance compliance activity.

Finally, the bill includes a range of other minor and technical amendments. These updates aim to clarify and modernise existing legislation related to the building, construction and engineering professions, ensuring that the laws remain current, consistent and aligned. Key improvements include better clarity around licensing requirements, obligations and regulatory processes and strengthening the legal framework through linking related acts. The bill will improve administrative efficiency and enhance the overall effectiveness of our building regulatory system.

These amendments support the broader housing and construction productivity agenda of the government by reducing regulatory burden, eliminating duplication and fostering clearer processes. Ultimately, they will bolster regulatory oversight, promote better building practices and deliver a robust, streamlined building and construction system for the benefit of all Canberrans. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Hanson**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Statute Law Amendment Bill 2025

Debate resumed from 25 June 2025, on motion by **Ms Cheyne**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.53): The Canberra Liberals will be supporting this bill. It is an omnibus bill and it contains a number of minor and technical amendments. Amongst them are updating multiple acts with gender neutral language, updating

references to the commonwealth Criminal Code across the statute book, updating references to the commonwealth Administrative Review Tribunal, omitting standard notes that are no longer used in drafting practice, correcting typographical errors and updating language, updating definitions and notes, and omitting redundant standard notes.

I note that this is probably a very easy piece of legislation for us to deal with, but I have no doubt that this represents a lot of work by others, particularly by the PCO. We will be supporting what appears to be sensible changes, and I thank the minister for bringing it forward.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (10.55): This might be the largest piece of legislation that we pass this term, even if the content is entirely uncontroversial. The Attorney-General has already described at length in her introductory speech what it does, and I do not need to repeat it all. But, as her predecessor, I want to take a moment to thank and honour the significant work done by those who put this bill together, as Mr Hanson just touched on.

The Parliamentary Council do a significant amount of work behind the scenes of the ACT government, supporting everyone who brings legislation to the Assembly. They are professional, kind and, above all, are always trying to be as helpful as they can. I have found that to be the case regardless of whether they have been assisting me previously as the Attorney-General, as a minister generally and now subsequently as a crossbencher. If you want to find the best example of non-partisan and dedicated public servants in the ACT, the Parliamentary Council Office would be a good place to start. They do the work to keep our statute book in good shape, and that is exemplary. We see that in this bill today, as well as in the wealth of omnibus bills that come through the Assembly.

The modernisation of legislation to ensure functionality and interpretability is something we can take for granted. When I look over at the United States of America and some of the challenges their institutions are facing, I am reminded of how their systems of law are frequently reliant on centuries-old statutes, with judicial interpretations and precedents which are struggling to stand the test of time. More expert commentators than I can reflect on the current state and role of the US Supreme Court, but it seems quite evident that one of the elements of conflict and uncertainty is because the legislatures of the United States of America have principally failed to keep their statute books modernised.

If you want to legalise same-sex marriage, you should not just rely on a judicial interpretation of laws written last century; you should legislate it properly and make the law clear. When societal standards change, you should get it reflected in law. An excellent example is when the ACT's statute book moved from using the terms "he" or "she" to "they", recognising the existence and validity of non-binary people. The Parliamentary Council previously did the work to make that happen and are now cleaning up what, I think, might be the last remnants of the old terminology across our statutes in this bill.

They are also doing things like clarifying what a drivers licence is; separating the concepts of midwifery professions out of nursing professions so they can be handled

distinctly; and updating a range of pointers to commonwealth legislation that have been moved or changed over time.

This is a stabilising bill. It stabilises our laws and makes them easier to interpret into the future and will hopefully make the work of the courts easier over the longer term. Again, I want to thank the Parliamentary Council for their excellent work. On behalf of the Greens, I commend this bill to 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) (10.57), in reply: I table a revised explanatory statement for this bill, and, in concluding debate, that is probably where the substance of my comments will be.

I greatly value the Scrutiny Committee looking very closely at, as Mr Rattenbury rightly pointed out, minor matters and amendments but also a very considerable bill. The committee recommended in Scrutiny report 8 that I consider amending the explanatory statement for the bill to address some minor matters, including an incorrect reference to the number of schedules in the bill and a brief explanation of why the bill includes amendments to defined terms to conform to Queensland legislation.

While it is covered in the response to the committee—and the revised explanatory statement achieves this—I thought it worthwhile putting on the record why Queensland legislation is relevant to this bill. Queensland is the host jurisdiction for the national law regulating health practitioners. The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2010 applies the national law as if it were an ACT law. The minor amendments in schedule 2 of this bill ensure that the Legislation Act definitions of “enrolled nurse”, “midwife” and “nurse” are updated to reflect amendments made to those terms in the national law. The former single profession of “nursing and midwifery” is now recognised in the national law as two separate health professions: “nursing” and “midwifery”.

I would also like to express my appreciation for members’ continued support for the Technical Amendments Program and, in particular, the acknowledgement across the chamber of the excellent work of the Parliamentary Council Office. I can only echo those sentiments. Quite honestly, what would we do without them? Again, as Mr Rattenbury said, they are incredibly hardworking and, if you want a definition of “apolitical”, that is them.

The Technical Amendments Program is enabling a significant amount of cleaning-up and updating of the ACT statute book. It has been useful in repealing a large amount of redundant legislation, and, over time, much modernisation and consistency across the statute book has been achieved. I have spoken about this a few times in this place, but I think our legislation register is the best in the country. I think that the way the PCO approaches legislation, updating it and keeping track of it all is methodical and first-rate—and this is a clear example of that.

This bill, in particular, is another example of the ongoing value of the Technical Amendments Program and, though each individual amendment might be minor, when viewed collectively, the amendments are a significant contribution to improving the

operation of the affected legislation and the statute book generally. I thank all involved in its development and passage 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 11.01 am to 2 pm.

Questions without notice

Veterans—bulk-billing

MR HANSON: I thought I would give Ms Orr another crack after yesterday, Mr Speaker. She did so well.

Mr Milligan: Preamble!

MR HANSON: On a point of order, you are allowed a preamble on your original question; not your supplementaries!

Anyway, my question is to the Minister for Seniors and Veterans. Minister, veterans in the ACT are finding it increasingly difficult to find a GP that accepts their Veteran White and Gold Cards, leaving many struggling for access to mental health care. GPs say this is due to the ever-increasing cost of running a practice in the ACT, with DVA rebates also not keeping pace. As one GP put it, “We’re making decisions between paying our own mortgages and continuing to serve the veteran community.” Minister, what is the ACT government doing to ensure that veterans in Canberra can access GPs who accept veterans’ healthcare cards?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Just as the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs is not responsible for every policy area that impacts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the minister for disability is not responsible for every policy that impacts people with disability, the Minister for Seniors and Veterans is similarly not responsible for every policy area that impacts veterans.

I thank Mr Hanson for the question. I am concerned and I have been concerned to hear from veterans groups and organisations about an increasing inability to use their cards to access general practice services and primary care. The ACT is working very closely with the commonwealth government to improve access to GP care more broadly, and particularly access to bulk-billing. The tripling of the bulk-billing incentive will come into effect under the commonwealth government from November this year. That incentive will enable all Canberrans, including our very important veteran community, to get better access to primary care.

I believe that I have had a request for a meeting from a veterans organisation, possibly to discuss this issue and access to health care more broadly. I am very happy to have

that conversation. If there is anyone that Mr Hanson would like to put me or my office in touch with specifically to have a conversation about how we could advocate for veterans having improved access to primary care, I am very happy to do that as well.

MR HANSON: Minister, have you or the Minister for Seniors and Veterans raised this specific issue with the federal ministers?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I do not believe I have raised this specific issue with the federal minister. I will check and correct the record if I have, in the context of the many times that I have advocated for better access to primary care in the ACT, and to address the paucity of GPs and the lack of bulk-billing services in the ACT. Those have been ongoing topics of conversation with governments of both stripes since I have been minister and, indeed, before that. I do not believe I have raised this issue specifically, but I am very happy to do so, with both the federal Minister for Health and Ageing and the federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, how is the ACT government working with ACT Health to ensure that local healthcare providers are aware of veterans' entitlements and know how to support them?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: We have a general practice policy unit in the Health and Community Services Directorate with two really fantastic GPs providing great advice to the Health and Community Services Directorate and the ACT government. That supports our engagement with GPs and the broader primary care sector, including practice owners. We have been having conversations about the complexity of Medicare billing. I have not had a conversation with them to date about this specific issue. It has not previously been raised in this way, but I am very happy to have a conversation with that team as well about how we can work with the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Capital Health Network, which is the primary health network for the ACT, to get better information out to practices about the support that they can provide to veterans and how they are reimbursed for that.

Housing—building approvals

MR COCKS: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, the latest economic indicator summary shows that building approvals in the last 12 months are significantly lower than the previous years, dwelling commencements have fallen 36 per cent and new investor loans are down almost 40 per cent. What impact does a slowing housing market have on the government's fiscal position?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. What the latest dwelling commencement figure shows is that it rose to 3.9 per cent in the June quarter, or 565, which is below average but still increasing and in fact higher than most jurisdictions in the country—I think, bar one. So things are improving as we see monetary policy easing. We are seeing quite a significant investment pipeline of new homes in the ACT. I particularly note Scentre Group's proposal, announced this week, to build thousands of new homes in the Woden town centre. Large proponent-led major plan amendments have been brought forward, which are now being considered by government in a range of different areas across government to deliver more housing in the territory, and the

government is delivering on our planned reforms to support more housing.

Some of those major plan amendments have not yet gone through. Missing middle housing reforms is one of those. We expect that it will be handed over to the Assembly committee soon, and they may undertake an inquiry into that. But we would like to see that progress in a timely way so that there is certainty of the planning opportunity that will be available across over 70 per cent of blocks in Canberra to be able to deliver more homes.

What I have heard from the construction sector is that they are waiting for those reforms to go through before then building more homes. They have started their planning work in preparation, which is fantastic, but they are waiting for those reforms to go through, which of course need to be endorsed by the Assembly under the Planning Act. Once those are in place, we expect to see an uptick in activity in that area.

MR COCKS: Treasurer, what are the implications of a slowing housing market for the forecast growth in residential rates and stamp duty?

MR STEEL: Every year, in the budget, Treasury will of course update its expectations around the growth in the number of rateable properties. So we will do that in due course. But I note, as I pointed out to Mr Cocks only in the last sitting week, I think it was—because he had assumed that the overall rates revenue was increasing only because we put up rates in terms of the percentage increase that we consider every year—it actually increases based on the number of rateable properties as well. It is great that he has actually found that out and agreed.

MR HANSON: Treasurer, is current growth below estimates? If so, what impact has that had on revenue?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. We will consider that in the budget and make adjustments. So I will not be making an announcement now about future work Treasury will be doing as part of the budget process. What I would say is that the property market grew very strongly over the last five years in the ACT. It was at pretty much record highs in the sort of post-COVID environment. With interest rates being high, we have seen a relatively significant reduction in the level of commencements, but there has still been a strong pipeline of approvals, and we expect those approvals to start commencement in the future.

Housing ACT—maintenance

MR RATTENBURY: My question is to the Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs. Minister, I have been contacted by an advocate on behalf of a couple in their 80s and 90s who have been unable to use their front porch since it was demolished by Housing ACT almost half a year ago. Without a porch, rain comes into the house and pools inside, and they are unable to store a mobility scooter that one of them relies on. Minister, they have written to you, they have spoken with both Housing ACT and Programmed and they have lodged a notice to repair, but despite their best efforts, the porch remains unusable and they do not have a date for repair. What steps should the couple take now given all the other avenues they have tried have been unsuccessful?

MS BERRY: As Mr Rattenbury will know, I will not discuss individual matters in the Assembly or in public. However, if they have written to my office then I will follow up with them about the issues they have raised.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, do you consider it acceptable that Housing ACT, as the lessor of the property with responsibility for carrying out repairs under the Residential Tenancies Act, has not carried out these repairs despite knowing about them for almost half a year?

Mr Pettersson: Point of order.

MR SPEAKER: Point of order, Mr Pettersson.

Mr Pettersson: Mr Speaker, Mr Rattenbury is asking for an expression of opinion.

MR SPEAKER: It is difficult to argue with you, Mr Pettersson—on this particular matter—because the way the question has been framed is indeed asking for an opinion. I am going to ask the member—

MR RATTENBURY: If you would like I can reframe the question?

MR SPEAKER: Please.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, why has Housing ACT not met its obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act to undertake a repair in a reasonable timeframe?

MS BERRY: I refer the member to my first answer.

MS CLAY: Is a delay like this a reflection that there should be more funding provided in the budget to Programmed and their contractors?

Mr Pettersson: Point of order: seeking an expression of opinion.

MR SPEAKER: I do not believe that this one is asking specifically for an opinion. I am going to let it stand. I do not know if you want to repeat the question, for the benefit of all of us, Ms Clay.

MS CLAY: I will repeat the question as many times as you need me to, Mr Speaker. Is a delay like this, in property maintenance, a reflection that there should have been more funding in the budget for Programmed and their contractors?

MS BERRY: I will refer the member to my first answer.

Parking—Theatre Lane car park

MR EMERSON: My question is to the minister for planning. Most days, as part of my commute, I travel through the Theatre Lane car park, which remains partially open to pedestrians and cyclists. No construction-related activity has commenced in a significant portion of the now cordoned off accessible car parking spaces. Minister, why has the government permitted the entire car park to be closed, including some of the

very few accessible car parking spaces in this part of the city, when it is clear that this is not required—certainly not yet?

MR BARR: As the theatre projects sits within my responsibilities, I will take the question. The early works include some investigative drilling and a range of other things that may not be completely visible to Mr Emerson. I am happy to provide some further information on notice as to why particular areas are required to be closed. But one need not take too big a leap of imagination to say that if they were not closed off and someone, for example, had an accident in an area where work was being undertaken or was soon to be undertaken then I would be being asked a very different question in question time.

I will take the specific detail on notice. I did respond to a question yesterday around the relocation of, in particular, the accessible car parking spaces. I refer Mr Emerson to the detail there. There are, indeed, hundreds of accessible car parking spaces distributed around the CBD, and the ones that were in the Theatre Lane car park have been moved to the City Hill and Hobart Place car parks.

MR EMERSON: Chief Minister, did the government consider the impact on people who require accessible parking before closing off the car park in its entirety, noting that GP accreditation, including for the family practice across the road from this Assembly, is contingent on the provision of accessible parking close to the practice?

MR BARR: Yes, we did. The relevant government agencies, who are both the approval side and the proponent side, sought to adhere to the requirements. That is why there was a relocation of those spaces, and if there needs to be any further detailed discussion and any further changes to particular car parking spaces within the broader precinct that can certainly occur. But it has to be understood that we cannot have people traipsing through construction sites, because there is considerable risk associated with that.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, what analysis was done, prior to approving the full closure of this car park, on exactly how many accessible parking spaces would be required for people with a disability or an impairment who travel into this specific part of the city for work or for medical appointments, given the additional pedestrian time required by those people?

MR BARR: There was a determination to completely replace every single accessible car parking space, as well as others that were provisioned for other specific purposes, that did include: the permits for this place; general practitioner; accessible; and a range of other car parking requirements—loading zones and the like.

Obviously there are limits to exactly where those additional car parking spaces can be. We cannot put them in midair. We cannot put them in locations that are not safe and accessible. But they have been redistributed, and they are within several hundred meters of the Theatre Lane car park.

Housing—building approvals

MR COCKS: My question is to the Treasurer, and it follows on from Mr Hanson's very reasonable attempt to get the Treasurer to respond to his supplementary question.

Treasurer, what assumptions were made in the budget that has just been, about the strength of the housing market? Do you have any data that says those have not been borne out over recent months?

MR STEEL: I refer Mr Cocks to the budget papers, where it outlines what the expectations are, and the forecast for the following year. Of course, it is a forecast and there will be assumptions underpinning that—and a lot of those are explained in the budget papers. I am happy to take it on notice and come back if there is any further detail that I can provide.

Treasury, of course, provides me with updates on the latest building data and statistics published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. They are not just looking at data on a quarterly basis—or a monthly basis, depending on the metric. They will look at it over the year. Then, of course, that will feed into their assumptions about further years. Of course, they will take some level of conservatism in relation to some of those figures as well and look at what the trends have been over a longer period of time.

So, I am happy to come back on the first part of the question. But, no, they have not provided me with any indication at this stage that the most recent ABS release of building activity in Australia, released on 15 October, would lead to a direct change to their assumptions.

MR COCKS: Treasurer, when will Treasury review the accuracy and performance of its assumptions and forecasts about the housing market, and brief you on significant deviations or need to change those forecasts?

MR STEEL: Through the budget process.

MS MORRIS: Treasurer, will you provide any such advice to the Assembly?

MR STEEL: Well, it is considered as part of the budget process. Of course, we publish the budget papers with any updates that are required published in the papers themselves.

ACT Fire & Rescue—hybrid electric fire truck

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. The hybrid electric fire truck has been off-road more than 80 per cent of the time that it has been owned by the ACT. It has only been able to operate without the assistance of a traditional fire truck for seven days, and it has been offline since June due to a traction battery fault. Minister, is the hybrid electric fire truck back online? If so, since when?

DR PATERSON: I thank the member for the question. I have not received advice yet that it is back online, but I will follow it up and, if there are any updates, I will provide that advice to the chamber.

MS MORRIS: Minister, what is the government's plan to manage all future breakdowns, once the warranty expires at the end of 2025?

DR PATERSON: I will take on notice exactly what ESA's plan is. But the fire truck is currently under warranty. There was a problem with the batteries. Unfortunately,

batteries cannot be sent by plane, so they have had to come by boat to Australia. That is why there has been a more significant delay in receiving these batteries.

MR HANSON: Minister, has the government considered returning the fire truck for a refund or replacement before the warranty expires at the end of the year?

DR PATERSON: No. The fire truck makes an important contribution to our fleet. With respect to the days that Ms Morris referred to that this fire truck has not been in service, it did not enter the territory and then go straight into service. There was a significant commissioning period when we had to get every single ACT Fire & Rescue officer trained on this specific fire truck. That is why it has not been on the road for the majority of that time. There have also been delays with mechanical issues with the truck.

The ACT was a leader in Australia in terms of acquiring an electric fire truck. This fire truck is something that will offer our ACT Fire & Rescue officers significant work health and safety positives, in that they do not have to carry their gear upstairs into a fire truck. This is the way of the future, and we are looking forward to having this fire truck back in the ACT and back in operation.

Domestic Violence Crisis Service—crisis line

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence. The government has known since May 2024 that the DVCS crisis line was missing too many calls, when a review warned that this can have serious implications for victim-survivors' safety and wellbeing, as well as their trust in the service. This month, DVCS confirmed that only about half of the calls are answered, with some victims waiting days. Minister, why commission reviews if you will not implement the recommendations?

DR PATERSON: We have, and that is why we have prioritised frontline service funding in the budget. The budget saw an additional \$30.5 million over four years to address domestic, family and sexual violence. A proportion of that funding has gone to DVCS to support their operations and the incredibly important work they do in supporting victim-survivors in our territory.

MS MORRIS: Minister, can you update the Assembly on the progress of implementation of other recommendations of the May 2024 SVA review?

DR PATERSON: What review is Ms Morris talking about?

MR SPEAKER: Ms Morris, could you repeat the question, please.

MS MORRIS: Minister, can you update the Assembly on the progress of implementation of other recommendations of the May 2024 review?

DR PATERSON: I am not clear on the May 2024 review. I am not clear about what Ms Morris is talking about. If she specifies the review, I will take it on notice.

MS MORRIS: On the review that I referred to in my first question.

MR SPEAKER: Minister, it might be prudent for you to take it on notice and perhaps get further advice from Ms Morris.

MR COCKS: Minister, when can we expect to see the crisis line answer rate improve?

DR PATERSON: We will continue to work to support DVCS and the other services we know are under significant pressure.

Lake Ginninderra—water quality

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water. I have been contacted by a lot of people in Belconnen about the recent dog deaths in and near Lake Ginninderra. A lot of people are worried. I am worried, as I take my dog swimming and paddleboarding there as well. What action is the ACT government taking now and over the next few months to reduce algae blooms and harmful bacteria in Lake Ginninderra?

MS CHEYNE: This is lineball between me and Ms Orr. Given the premise of Ms Clay's question, I will take it. But, depending on what the others are, they might be for Minister Orr. To the premise of the question, obviously, none of us have come away from the news of the dogs passing away from being near or swimming in Lake Ginninderra without being deeply affected, and our heart goes out to those families.

What I would note about this type of blue-green algae, *Tychonema*, is that it is something that occurs on the floor of the lake and in the sediment of the lake and it is always there. So it is not something that is necessarily produced like some of the other blue-green algae types that we see floating across the lake that have that blue-green tinge or that other oily appearance. This looks, as Dr Su Wild-River said on the radio the other day, like poo or faecal matter. It is at the surface of the lake when it has broken away from the lake floor or broken away from the sediment. So, to the question about how to reduce that algae, that is different to a question about how to reduce other types of algae, I suppose.

MS CLAY: Noting that the only funded Healthy Waterways project is in Tuggeranong, how is the government taking action to improve water quality for Lake Ginninderra and our other waterways?

MS ORR: The program that Ms Clay has referred to, Healthy Waterways, and looking at the Tuggeranong region, is one specifically related to that catchment. The government is doing work across all our catchments, noting that that program is focused on removing pollutants entering into our waterways system, which, as Minister Cheyne noted in her response, is not necessarily how you would respond to this particular type of algae and the dangers that come from it.

As I noted in my response to questions earlier in the week on this topic, we do have various parts of government out monitoring the lakes and doing inspections. They will continue to do that, particularly over the summer swimming season as we work through what are quite complex issues around the management of our water system and doing that to the best that we can with the information that we have.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, what are the environmental impacts of *Tychonema* on our native ecosystems, including fishes and native vegetation in our waterways?

MS ORR: Mr Speaker, I will take that one on notice and I will seek some advice from the experts in my department on this.

ACT Policing—support

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Minister, on 1 October, you announced the new ministerial direction for ACT Policing. Can you update the Assembly on your priorities for ACT Policing?

DR PATERSON: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for his question and his interest in the ACT government's priorities for ACT Policing. As minister for police, I have complete confidence in the officers of ACT Policing which keep our community safe every day. The ministerial direction is issued under the policing arrangement between the ACT government and the Australian Federal Police. The new ministerial direction for ACT Policing has strengthened the ACT government's commitment to building a safe, just and resilient community.

Key initiatives under the new direction include: supporting a domestic and family violence investigation unit with specialist training in coercive control and technology assisted abuse, while continuing to work with partner agencies to support victims and hold offenders accountable; supporting the development of the National Firearms Register and uplifting the ACT Firearms Registry to ensure a fit-for-purpose regulatory regime that enhances community safety; implementing culturally informed policing practices, strengthening engagement with the Chief Police Officer's Advisory Board and supporting justice reinvestment strategies to reduce over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system.

The ministerial direction also includes addressing recidivist dangerous driving, reducing road trauma, supporting reforms relating to raising the age of criminal responsibility and countering violent extremism. I look forward to continuing the work with the ACT Chief Police Officer, Scott Lee, ACT Policing and the broader AFP to achieve our shared goal to ensure Canberra remains the safest city in Australia.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, the ACT government has made a record investment in ACT Policing in the recent budget. How will this funding enable ACT Policing to keep Canberrans safe?

DR PATERSON: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for his supplementary. During the budget debate I was very pleased to speak in detail concerning the record investment made by the ACT government into our police in our city. The ACT government is strongly committed to supporting ACT Policing to keep Canberrans safe.

The government invested \$112 million over four years to meet the 11.2 per cent pay increase for ACT police officers in line with their new enterprise agreement. Just over \$5 million has been invested in a new sexual assault and child abuse team to support victim-survivors of sexual offences. This is in addition to the more than \$7 million

allocated in the 2024-25 budget to implement recommendations of the Sexual Assault (Police) Review.

\$1.14 million has been allocated to design and plan for our new city police station and headquarters and \$2.5 million to consider options for infrastructure requirements for the Molonglo Valley. We will make sure we provide ACT Policing with the facilities and capabilities they require to keep our community safe.

MS TOUGH: Minister, can you update the Assembly on the progress the government is making to achieve the commitment of 150 new police officers by 2029?

DR PATERSON: I thank Ms Tough for her question. The ACT government is strongly progressing to meet our election commitment around police numbers. At the 2024 election ACT Labor committed to recruit an additional 150 police officers. I am pleased to report that ACT Policing welcomed 89 new recruits in the 2024-25 financial year, and very excited to report that since then an additional 29 recruits have joined ACT Policing. The recruits graduated from their college in a ceremony at the National Gallery just last week. It was an honour to attend this ceremony with the new AFP Commissioner. I look forward to attending many more graduations over this term and welcoming more recruits to ACT Policing.

Woden Town Centre—planning and development

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. In the 2016 *Canberra: a statement of ambition* the Chief Minister said:

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

Under our new outcomes-based planning system, we are seeing an outcome for the Phillip Pool site which was not based on a proper needs analysis and clearly does not meet the needs of the community. We also have major development proposals from the Hellenic Club for Phillip section 7, and the Scentre Group concept master plan, both of which propose to include community facilities.

Minister, how can you give the community confidence that we will have better outcomes with these developments, with the right facilities being built in the right place to meet the needs of our rapidly-growing community?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Carrick for her question. A lot has changed since 2016, and there is actually a new statement, *CBR switched on*, which replaced the previous statement of ambition. It still has design at its centre, as does the new planning system, and the National Capital Design Review Panel has been put in place. This is a relatively new body, led by the chief architect, which is providing design guidance on any proposal that involves the development of buildings over five stories. That is having a significant impact already, with really improved design outcomes. This is important for the new residents but also for surrounding residents and people who will be using the areas directly next to those future buildings.

That review panel will assess some of the proposals that Ms Carrick has mentioned. It

has already been involved in engaging with—I understand—Geocon, the proponent and lessee of the Phillip Pool on their proposal. Scentre Group—I know—understands that they will need to engage with them in relation to their proposals that are currently out for consultation. As the Hellenic Club would have in relation to their work on their proposals on their own block and the block that they have bought—village green. That was subject to quite a significant design process led by the Suburban Land Agency.

So, yes, design is still at the centre of the planning system. It has been embedded in everything that we do through the design guides, a new feature of the planning system requiring development to respond to them. *(Time expired)*.

MS CARRICK: Minister, has the National Capital Design Review Panel holistically assessed the planning for the Woden town centre to ensure we get great outcomes, or will their assessment be piecemeal, one DA at a time?

MR STEEL: They will be assessing quite large precinct proposals that are coming forward, and that includes subdivision design applications, which are DAs and which may cover quite a significant area. They have involvement in that. They were involved in our project—The CIT Woden campus—and I think we have achieved an excellent design outcome there, with benefits for the wider community and not just the students and staff in that building.

So they are involved in those precinct-level proposals, and they will continue to make a significant contribution to improving the built form of Canberra, as we build more homes and more commercial development, and, as we expect to see, more private development occurring, particularly in the town centres—

Ms Carrick: I have a point of order. I asked whether they would be assessing the whole precinct—the Woden town centre—for great outcomes, or whether it would be one DA at a time. We did not get an answer on whether it would be the whole precinct or one DA at a time. The CIT was one DA.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Carrick, I have taken your point of order on relevance. Mr Steel, I do not know if you wish to provide any more?

MR STEEL: The CIT did not have one DA. It had multiple DAs. There was a subdivision development application. There was design guidance provided by the National Capital Design Review Panel, and it was a precinct-based approach. So, yes, they look at DAs, but DAs can include subdivisions, which are larger, precinct-based proposals. So, yes, they are involved in that discussion.

MR EMERSON: Minister, is the government willing to negotiate on the public land that Scentre Group seeks to develop in the Woden town centre, in order to get the best outcomes for community facilities, or will that be left to chance?

MR STEEL: It will not be left to chance. It will be left to the process under the Planning Act and regulations. There are a range of processes that Scentre Group will have to go through for their proposal. It is great that the first stage, before they come to government formally, is that they will be consulting with the community. That is important.

This will require major planning amendments to the Territory Plan to facilitate what they are proposing, which will also have its own level of community and Assembly involvement. It will require development applications. Part of it—and I stress that it is only part of it—requires some level of direct sale of government land that is adjacent or contiguous to their existing centre. That would be considered under the proposals in the Planning Act and regulations. There are a range of criteria in there that have to be met, and they would have to demonstrate to government that they have met those criteria. Then that would be considered by government, and government would make a decision as to whether the land should be sold to them, not sold at all, or, indeed, be put out for a competitive sale—depending on the block.

I understand that there are four blocks that they are, potentially, seeking to purchase, including some of the existing surface car parks in Woden that they currently license from the territory. That will be considered in due course, but, at this stage, I understand that those direct sale applications have not yet been made, so it would be too early to make a judgement on those.

General practice—diagnosis of ADHD

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, during estimates it was great to discuss that government was seeking EOIs from GPs who would be interested in managing and prescribing medications and diagnosing ADHD. I have had really positive feedback from a few of my constituents down in Tuggeranong about this initiative. With that in mind, how many EOIs have been received so far? And is there a decent geographic spread of providers across Canberra?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you, Miss Nuttall, for the question. I am not able to provide an answer right now on the exact numbers. I know there has been really strong interest from across the general practice community on this, but I will take the question on notice as to exactly how many EOIs have been received.

The chief psychiatrist is confident that we are getting a good response, and I certainly also get a really positive response from the GPs that I speak to.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, what is the timeline for the EOI process, and when might we expect GPs to begin this trial?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am afraid I do not have that detail in my head right now, so I will take the question on notice.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, perhaps when you respond on notice, can you indicate how many of the GPs who are interested in the program are bulk-billing?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: No, I cannot. It will be impossible for me to be able to answer that question. Particularly because what we know is that GPs, generally speaking, are not either “bulk-billing” or “not bulk-billing”. Many GPs will bulk-bill some patients and not others. So, they will make a judgement on the basis, in part, of whether they think the person they are seeing requires bulk-billing to be able to access health care—or whether they are a relatively high-income person who can afford to pay for their health care and is willing to do so.

I imagine that this is a broadening of the scope of practice for general practitioners. It is not necessarily going to be a specific item number that will be billed in a particular way. And there will be no requirement in terms of the expansion of scope of practice capacity for it to be a bulk-billed service, so we will not be able to determine how many GPs are likely to bulk-bill, or the number of patients that they are likely to bulk-bill for this particular activity.

ACT Law Courts—public advocate pilot project

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Attorney-General. The Public Advocate and ACT Courts pilot project highlighted the significant number of vulnerable court users who are disadvantaged in accessing justice. According to the annual report, the project led to improved outcomes for both court users and the court, but its funding ran out at the end of September, and it has since stopped. Attorney-General, why have you ended this program?

MS CHEYNE: I do not have the information with me, so I will take it on notice, because I want to be accurate. I know exactly what program Mr Braddock is talking about. I want to make sure that I am 100 per cent right in what I say. At the moment it would just be a guess.

MR BRADDOCK: Attorney-General, what is happening in the meantime, since the funding has run out and no further supports are in place?

MS CHEYNE: I will take that on notice as well.

MR RATTENBURY: Attorney-General, what is the government's long-term plan to help these vulnerable court users?

MS CHEYNE: Thank you, Mr Rattenbury. I will take that on notice, in the context of the reasons why I am taking the first two questions on notice.

Crime

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. A coffee shop in Casey was subject to a ram-raid attack the night before last and not for the first time. The owner said, "We need to stop this. It's happening a lot in Canberra right now and it's not safe the way it should be." Minister, what do you say to victims of crime who feel unsafe and let down by this government?

DR PATERSON: I thank Ms Morris for the opportunity to say that I am very sorry that this has happened to the owners of that cafe. It was a pretty dramatic incident that occurred and I understand how devastating that is to them personally and to their business. But it has been really lovely to see how the community has rallied around this coffee shop in support of them. I think it demonstrates the strength of our community during hard times.

MS MORRIS: Why do more than half of Canberrans now feel that crime is a growing problem in our communities?

DR PATERSON: Again, I thank Ms Morris for the opportunity to speak to Canberrans and let them know that crime is actually significantly decreasing in the territory and has been over the past decade. The ACT is the safest city in Australia. That is in large part thanks to ACT Policing and thanks to our brilliant community services that support our community.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what are you going to do differently to ensure that local people and small-business owners are able to feel safe in Canberra?

DR PATERSON: I will continue to support ACT police to investigate these incidents and ultimately resolve them. I think that is what the community would like to see: resolution and understanding who did this.

Sport and recreation—Stromlo district playing fields

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Since it was promised in 2016, the ACT government has put more than \$1 million into designing the Stromlo district playing fields. Despite this, the DA is not supported by multiple ACT government agencies, including the former TCCS, Emergency Services, Evoenergy, Icon Water and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna. Minister, why don't you have the support of your own government's agencies?

MS BERRY: Often with development application processes there will be departments of the ACT government that will respond to those applications based on different needs and then the proponent of the development application will work with those agencies to ensure that they can be satisfied that the project is going along nicely or make the adjustments that might need to be made that are raised by those departments. It is perfectly reasonable for other ACT government departments to be part of that process.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, it has been almost a decade. How much longer will it be before local families will get what they were promised in 2016?

MS BERRY: I do not have the actual date of when the project was to be completed. I think it is 2027, but I will double-check and bring that back to the Assembly.

MR COCKS: Minister, what was the government's original estimated cost for the playing fields and what is your current estimate?

MS BERRY: I will take that question on notice.

Universities—UNSW Canberra City campus

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you please provide an update on Stage 1 of the UNSW's Canberra City campus project?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Tough for the question. The University of NSW Canberra City Campus project is a significant strategic investment in Canberra's future. It strengthens our higher education offering and it cements Canberra as Australia's knowledge capital. The government was pleased to participate in the formal commencement of Stage 1 of

this transformative new campus. It is one that will offer modern facilities, student services and retail, and connect education, industry, government and community. I particularly commend UNSW Canberra for their strong focus on priority areas such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, climate, public policy and defence at the new campus. These are all critical fields for Australia's future, skilling people for jobs in knowledge intensive sectors, which aligns with the government's broader goals for economic diversification and to build a resilient and future-ready workforce.

MS TOUGH: Chief Minister, what are the benefits that this important project will bring to the Canberra community?

MR BARR: Thank you. The project brings a substantial social and economic benefit. The new campus will play a key role in revitalising the southeastern edge of our CBD, significantly enhancing activity in the precinct and connectivity to the city centre. The project is expected to create 350 jobs throughout the construction phase and, once complete, generate even more local jobs, attracting over 6,000 students and educators. This is thousands of additional students, workers and their families provided an opportunity to study, to collaborate and to live in a much more active area, providing a significant boost to the city's building, hospitality and small business sectors. The project will also support the growth of the territory's largest export market, international education, which already welcomes around 20,000 international students from more than 100 countries who choose to study in Canberra each year.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Chief Minister, does the government expect any collaboration opportunities to stem from this campus development?

MR BARR: Yes, Mr Speaker, in short. I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for his interest. CIT and UNSW Canberra are already working on a number of collaboration opportunities in some of the fields I have outlined, and this week we have seen further collaboration across the sector with CIT and UC announcing a new suite of guaranteed pathway arrangements, making it easier for students to move between vocational and higher education. This UC CIT partnership spans high demand areas including nursing, early childhood education, leadership and management, graphic design, accounting, project management and government.

Seeing our higher education providers so publicly strengthen their relationship and collaboration opportunities, which is consistent with the national Universities Accord, is an incredibly encouraging development for Canberra, one that will ensure our higher education system is more connected and flexible for future generations of students who choose to study in Australia's knowledge capital right here in Canberra.

On that happy note, Mr Speaker, I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Supplementary answers to questions without notice

Housing—building approvals

MR STEEL: Earlier in question time, I was asked about the Treasury assumptions and budget assumptions related to the housing construction sector, and I said that we were in the top two jurisdictions to see rises in dwelling commencements in the June quarter

of 2025. In fact, we were the highest in trend terms, at 3.9 per cent, followed by Western Australia, at 3.5 per cent, and the Northern Territory, at 3.2 per cent.

Domestic Violence Crisis Service—crisis line

DR PATERSON: In response to Ms Morris’s question, the review Ms Morris was referring to was the Review of the Sexual Violence and Domestic and Family Violence Crisis Responses Services, which was conducted by Social Ventures Australia and provided to the ACT government during the last term of government. This review was focused specifically on the ACT’s two crisis services: the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and Canberra Rape Crisis.

The recommendations contained in the review have informed government work and priorities since May 2024, including through the investment contained in the 2025-26 budget. The government continues to work with these important stakeholders to understand their needs and support them as they continue to implement the recommendations of the review.

General practice—diagnosis of ADHD

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: In response to Miss Nuttall’s question about expanded ADHD scope of practice for general practitioners, I can advise that there were 71 GPs who expressed an interest in being involved overall, including 58 GPs who expressed an interest in both expanded prescribing and diagnosis—prescribing being stage one of the reforms and diagnosis being stage two. This response overall represents more than 10 per cent of GPs in the ACT.

The introduction of the pilot stage one of the initiative is aiming for delivery in December 2025, subject to the regulatory changes being complete. The second stage of the pilot, to enable GPs to diagnose ADHD and initiate psychostimulant medication, will require some additional levels of education and supervision. The requirements for that are still being worked through. But I am happy to stay in touch with Miss Nuttall and provide her with some further information, as well.

ACT Fire & Rescue—hybrid electric fire truck

DR PATERSON: I have a really quick one. Everyone will be very happy that the battery problem with the electric fire truck has been rectified and the vehicle is now operating normally.

Lake Ginninderra—water quality

MS ORR: Ms Clay’s question on the funded Healthy Waterways projects in reference to Tuggeranong threw me a little bit, and I gave an answer that perhaps had two thoughts combined in one. For the sake of clarity: the Healthy Waterways Program is for the whole of the ACT. Although there has been a particular focus on Tuggeranong, there are projects across all catchments, as I mentioned in my answer. While there are different funding initiatives in current budgets, a lot of the projects have been completed and are now in the evaluation phase across our city.

MS CHEYNE: I am predicting that my answer to Ms Clay's question is about to get subject to a 118AA. On that, Mr Speaker, I hope I am wrong—but not usually. I do note that the question was specifically in relation to the very unfortunate dog deaths, which were as a result of the *Tychonema*. But what I can say is that the ACT government has contracted the University of Canberra to study Lake Ginninderra to understand the levels and sources of nutrients that drive algal blooms in the lake, and that reports from this study and weekly samples are indicating that blue-green algae levels in the lake remain at a steady level. In terms of *Tychonema*, as I said, it is a normal occurrence in our waterways and generally does not pose an issue except when it is ingested. That is why toddlers, dogs and other animals are at much higher risk, because they are more likely to ingest water and thus ingest the clumps that are floating there.

In terms of the overall health of the lake, despite the blue-green algae levels staying pretty stable over a recent period of time, it is the Belconnen Oval Wetland that has the primary aim of supporting the health of Lake Ginninderra. It only opened earlier this year. Where it is going to have the biggest impact is the subsurface element; but also, once the water plants, which act as nutrient filters, have become established, acting like a hydroponic garden to target dissolved nutrients—which comprise 50 per cent of total nutrient loads in Canberra's stormwater—we expect that reduced nutrient loads will assist, because we know that nutrients in stormwater are a key stimulant of harmful algal blooms.

Parking—Theatre Lane car park

MR BARR: I have updated information in relation to the Moosehead's car park. The area that has been established behind the hoardings is required for service relocations, work to allow the Playhouse to remain open during construction, and other site preparation works which are essential to the early works package. The majority of the space required is for the footprint of the new theatre and for site establishment and construction logistics, which includes material layover, vehicle access and turning circle, and site sheds.

Housing—building approvals—standing order 118AA Domestic Violence Crisis Service—crisis line—standing order 118AA

MR COCKS: We are down to, I think, two 118AAs this afternoon, and I will make them fairly brief. In my question to the Treasurer, I asked: what impact does a slowing housing market have on the government's fiscal position? I do not believe the Treasurer made any reference to the fiscal position; so I suggest that that was not answered.

The other one was my supplementary to Ms Morris's question to Minister Paterson, where I asked when we can expect to see the crisis line answer rate improve. There was no reference to timelines or improving answer rates.

MR SPEAKER: We will take those on board and make an assessment. Dr Paterson, I do not know if you want to add anything here, but, ultimately, we will be making an assessment whether you do or you do not.

ACT Fire & Rescue—hybrid electric fire truck

DR PATERSON: I provided inaccurate information to the Assembly just then. The electric breathing apparatus truck is back online but the electric fire truck is not yet. I will provide an updated response.

MR SPEAKER: It has been a rollercoaster of emotion in this chamber this afternoon regarding the fire trucks. We will consider those two 118AAs and get back to you before the end of sitting.

My understanding is that the matter involving Mr Pettersson's dissent on my ruling will be discussed and debated in this chamber after private members' business. More than anything else, I wanted to alert Mr Werner-Gibbins, who may be taking the chair and does not want to be sitting in this chair when we discuss that.

Papers

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

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to section 21—Auditor-General's Report No 4/2025—Gaming machine licensee regulation—Government response, dated October 2025.

Crimes (Controlled Operations) Act, pursuant to section 28—Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission—Controlled Operations Annual Report—1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, dated 4 August 2025.

Crimes (Surveillance Devices) Act, pursuant to section 38—Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission—Surveillance Devices Annual Report—1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, dated 4 August 2025.

Custodial Inspector Act—Review of a Critical Incident by the ACT Custodial Inspector—Suspected drug overdose, endangering life of a detained person at the Alexander Maconochie Centre 21 May 2024—Government response, dated October 2025

Molonglo Valley—Proposed police station—Assembly resolution of 8 April 2025—Government response, dated October 2025.

Water Resources Act, pursuant to subsection 67D(3)—ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group—Annual report 2024-25, undated, together with a statement.

Public transport—concession fares

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (3.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the importance of public transport for people who, for a variety of reasons including health and financial, cannot own a private motor vehicle;
- (b) Canberra's two-speed economy, in which families with professional wage-earners thrive but those on lower incomes significantly struggle;
- (c) the ACT currently has free off-peak public transport travel to most

- concession card holders, and free travel at all times to seniors over 70;
- (d) that this current system disadvantages the following groups:
 - (i) pensioners and concession card holders who are required to travel during peak times to attend appointments, work, or be involved in their community;
 - (ii) school students who have to pay to go to school and obtain an education; and
 - (iii) part-time tertiary students;
 - (e) the expected conclusion at the end of November 2025 of Labor’s trial of “Fare Free Fridays”, consistent with announcements made in late 2024;
 - (f) that future available subsidies for public transport should be directed to those who need them the most during a cost-of-living crisis; and
 - (g) 2024 election commitments made by both the ACT Greens and the Canberra Liberals to provide free public transport to students, seniors and concession card holders at all times; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) repurpose any remaining budget appropriation for the “Fare Free Fridays” trial into general price reductions for concession fares on public transport, commencing from the start of December 2025;
 - (b) extend concession fares to all students, including part-time tertiary students through the mid-year budget review;
 - (c) incorporate an initiative to make all concession travel, regardless of the time or day of travel, fare-free on an ongoing basis into the 2026-2027 budget process; and
 - (d) report back to the Assembly on its progress against these calls on the second sitting day of June 2026.

Transport is an essential social service. For the sake of community connectivity and social and economic justice, public transport should be provided and managed in a way that ensures maximum public benefit and is available to everyone, no matter their circumstances. This means recognising the inequalities present in our transport system and working to reduce them.

The ACT has a two-speed economy. Those whose families include professionals, be it in the public sector or in an important trade, tend to live comfortably. Others tend to struggle. The cost-of-living crisis never really went away. Prices are still high. Wage rises are still hardly keeping up with inflation. A lot of people continue to budget in a way that asks the question: will I be able to eat? This reality was front of mind for all of us during the 2024 election campaign, which is why all parties took to that election a suite of varied measures to alleviate the cost of living. I put it to members that those initiatives remain just as relevant today as they were 369 days ago.

An initiative put by the Greens was to make public transport free for concession-holders at all times, not just at off-peak hours, and that we would make sure this benefit was extended to all students, seniors and concession card holders. Specifically, that included part-time tertiary students, who currently do not get any form of concession fare even though they are forced to balance the increasing costs of an education against a part-

time income.

Students, seniors and other concession card holders represent a group of people which we recognise as living with some level of disadvantage. It is not a fool-proof system, but it is an effective way of us saying that these people deserve extra assistance. These people experience the cost of living more acutely and so deserve our financial support in their daily lives. A student should not have to choose between the cost of food and the cost of getting to school. A pensioner should not have to factor in the cost of getting home when they take the bus to see their no-longer bulk-billing doctor. An unemployed person should not have to turn down a job interview because it would demand they travel to it during peak hours.

The Greens were very glad to see that our initiative for free public transport for students, seniors and concession card holders was also matched by the Canberra Liberals. After the election, going into supply and confidence negotiations before a government could be formed, we were optimistic that we could get this one up. Unfortunately, during negotiations, Labor disagreed—the budget was full; there was no more money or savings to be found. Yet, there was money and savings for one of Labor’s initiatives: a one year trial of Fare Free Fridays.

This Labor initiative was not targeted at our most vulnerable; rather, it looks like it was designed to do two things: firstly, to get ahead of what would become a very significant ticketing debacle with MyWay+; and, secondly, to appease the Property Council, who were complaining quite loudly about people working from home. It certainly surprised me to see Labor put our public transport ticketing policy somewhat at odds with their flexible working policy objectives.

I mentioned before that Fare Free Fridays was set up for a one-year trial. The 2024-25 budget review, published in February, identified just under \$6 million in savings to offset the foregone revenue over the 12 months of the scheme. Despite this, the 2025-26 budget quietly appropriated an additional \$2.4 million for the scheme. That is in budget statement E on page 50, for anyone following along at home.

We do not know what Labor’s plans are for public transport subsidies beyond the life of this trial. Nonetheless, as of right now, the Labor trial is expected to finish at the end of November, and my motion has been prepared on that basis. There is probably still some money for it in the kitty, and I put it to the Assembly that the remaining money could be better directed to those who need it most and that future subsidies in future budgets should also be put towards those most in need of it—towards fare reductions for our students, seniors and concession card holders. But, if that is too scary for the Treasurer, I think there is a lot more good that he could do with what he already has, and that is the purpose of my motion today. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (3.07): I thank Mr Braddock for bringing the motion to the Assembly today. I appreciate the positive and progressive intent of the motion. Who would not want cheaper public transport fares or free public transport fares, particularly for concession card holders?

I would like to address the genuine policy and political inconsistencies in this approach

and ask the Greens to reflect on whether their politics is serving the interests of the broader Canberra community. When designing and delivering a public transport network, there are always trade-offs. There are tensions between different values and how realistic it is for the government to manage these within the resources that they have available. A balance needs to be struck. For example, if you look at maximising mode shift and patronage numbers alone, you would prioritise more rapid routes over some of the connections to the suburbs. If you would like to maximise social equity, you would design the opposite network and prioritise coverage over frequency. There are always trade-offs in the system.

In relation to fares, if you look at making fares lower, you will have less funding available to invest in the existing public transport network or, indeed, additional and improved services to that network. There are trade-offs. A point consistently made by the Public Transport Association of Canberra is that if you can afford to invest in free public transport, then you can afford to invest in a better public transport system. The point that they are making and the reason they give priority to improving the public transport system over providing free fares is that it provides benefits for all Canberrans, including concession card holders, who already have concessional travel. There are benefits for the broader community by trying to improve the uptake of public transport overall and getting the mode shift that we all want to see on our transport network.

We want to encourage more people on public transport. In recent days—and I understand the Greens are running a campaign on this motion today—we have seen some very unfortunate stereotyping of our bus system. Buses play an incredibly important role in transport systems in cities around the world, and particularly here in the ACT. They are used by everyone. We should promote them to everyone. I was particularly disappointed to see the post by the Leader of the Greens—Mr Rattenbury’s post—on social media on Friday, which effectively implied that buses are shit. I do not think that is particularly useful to do if you are trying to encourage people to use public transport.

Mr Hanson: On a point of order: I ask whether Mr Steel has used unparliamentary language.

MR STEEL: I withdraw.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you very much. It is withdrawn.

MR STEEL: I encourage people to go online and look at it. It is pretty bad when you are trying to encourage people. I think it does completely the opposite of what Mr Rattenbury is trying to do. He should reflect on that post. If we want to encourage people to use public transport, we should talk positively about our bus system. It is a great service that is relied on by many people in our community, including people who do not have the opportunity to drive. It is also relied on by other people, including those commuting to the public service every day. There is a wide mix of people. We want to see even more people using it. Making those kinds of comments does not help.

It is important to improve our service. We made some improvements in term 2, with the increases that we committed to at the election. We started the work to deliver those increases with improvements to the Rapid frequencies on routes that had capacity

issues—some of the local routes—to get to our eventual target of 20-minute services on weekdays. And we have made improvements to frequencies on Sundays now, as well.

Our public transport network can always be better, but it is really important that we work together to try to do that. To do that, you need a revenue source. When we pay a public transport fare, it goes directly back to helping to fund those services: the drivers, the equipment they have, and the buses, including the new bus fleet. It helps to put on new Rapid services and all of the extra services that people would like to have around our city.

The government already provides a range of concessions that are targeted to Canberrans who need it most. That includes the flexible bus service as well, which provides free accessible travel for Canberrans who are older or those who have mobility difficulties to get to and from their home to local community service locations, such as hospitals, shopping centres and medical centres. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander transport program provides bus use for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to connect with the community's culture in the ACT and surrounding regions. The student transport program provides free travel during the school term to primary, high school and college students when they or their parent or guardian hold a concession card. People over 70 years of age, children under five years of age, veteran Gold Card holders and their companions, and people with an impairment and their companion travel free on public transport services at any time. Holders of a pension card, an ACT Services Access Card, and ACT and interstate Seniors Card holders can also travel for free in off-peak times, from 9 am to 4.30 pm and after 6 pm. This is on top of the concession fare rates that are available to other cohorts.

The ACT acknowledges the concerns raised regarding the exclusion of part-time students from these transport concessions. Concession eligibility is in line with full-time study status to ensure consistency across education providers and transport systems. Full-time students are also presumed to have lower incomes and a higher reliance on public transport, which underpins the rationale for targeted support. Our policy is also in line with other jurisdictions. Adelaide Metro, Transport for NSW and Transport Victoria all exclude online, part-time and correspondence students from concession fares. We welcome ongoing dialogue with stakeholders as we continue to consider eligibility criteria. Funding models and administrative systems need to ensure fairness and sustainability when reviewing concession policies, because we must ensure that fairness and sustainability is maintained.

The ACT government employs a nationally competitive flat-fare model, which includes daily and monthly fare caps, to distribute fares as equitably as possible. This is because we know that some of the thriving professional wage earners noted in Mr Braddock's motion may simply prefer to catch light rail or buses. We do not put pressure on Canberrans who may be able to afford to pay a bit more. Our flat model means that, unlike other jurisdictions, Canberrans do not pay more for travelling longer distances or utilising multiple public transport services in their journey. The journey caps mean that travel is subsequently free for full-fare, section-fare and tertiary travels after they take a total of 40 trips over the month. This amount is less for ACT school students, with 30 trips or 15 return fares for a school student travelling to and from school Monday to Friday. This is less than \$10 a week over the course of the month.

For those who have not tried our public transport network yet, the ACT Labor Party took a policy to the election of encouraging Canberrans who have not previously used public transport to try it, by implementing fare-free Fridays, which allows them to discover the pluses of buses. This has been running since November last year, as promised. We will undertake an evaluation of that in November this year, and then we will make a decision about the future of fare-free Fridays.

The ACT government remains committed to exploring ways to encourage people on to public transport and to support them to rethink the way they travel around our city. This will be supported by our ongoing investment, expanding our transit light rail system, expanding and modernising our bus network, and ensuring public transport services remain affordable and accessible. We will continue to work towards striking the right balance for public transport, particularly in pricing, alongside ensuring that the public transport network delivers a reliable service and a better service within the resources available.

As Treasurer, I cannot let this motion go by without recognising again that, in the first sitting week since we debated the budget, this is a motion—but there have been motions from the Liberals, as well—requesting the government to spend tens of millions of dollars on new initiatives outside of the budget at a time when our budget is challenged by very significant pressures, particularly across our healthcare system. I want to acknowledge that, and I will continue to acknowledge that every time the Liberals bring forward a motion in the future asking for tens of millions of dollars of funding for a digital licensing system.

These business cases will be considered, and we will certainly consider what Mr Braddock has brought forward in his motion. But they need to be considered against the priorities of the community and the government, the fiscal realities of the territory, and making sure that we also deliver what we have committed to do—not only with regard to our Labor election platform in relation to transport, but also with regard to the supply and confidence agreement that we have with the Greens, which very clearly specifies the transport initiatives that we would prioritise and this is not one of them. The priorities were to increase services to try to encourage people onto public transport. This could potentially undermine the delivery of those supply and confidence agreement items. We are happy to consider them, and I thank Mr Braddock for bringing forward this motion today, but we need to be aware of the realities of this and the potential impact it may have on the delivery of our commitments and also the fiscal position of the territory.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.20): On behalf of Ms Castley, who is unwell and away today, I begin by saying that the opposition supports the underlying principle. Given the financial challenges that come with running an organisation like Transport Canberra, and particularly the challenges of bringing in fare revenue, we have concerns with the government's fare-free Friday. It is an expensive policy and it is not well targeted. It is not clear to us what this trial is meant to achieve, how its performance will be managed or what sort of accountability will apply to the minister.

I note that Mr Braddock said that it is because of some nefarious relationship with the Property Council, which put out a press release. Mr Steel has just responded to that.

Given the debate we will have later on accusations about things and dissenting, it is interesting. I wonder whether Mr Steel will move a point of order and there will be dissents on that one.

We think that there is a case for relocating funds. Mr Steel has concerns with where the money is coming from; but, in terms of priorities, it is about relocating funds from fare-free Fridays to make sure that they are better targeted. We will support this motion.

In terms of the point that Mr Steel made about Mr Rattenbury's social media posts, I have had a chance to look at it, and it is a bit strange. I will give you that, Mr Steel; I admit it is a bit strange. It says:

The lion DOES concern itself with ending the brutal reign of car dependency in Canberra by making buses less ...

Who is the lion? Is that Mr Rattenbury? Is he the lion? It is a weird post; I will give you that.

We could make the bus service better. The Canberra Liberals have argued for this for many years, and Mr Steel says, "Where does the money come from?" The point that I have been making for a while—

Ms Cheyne: Wait for it.

MR HANSON: Wait for it—is that if you had not spent billions of dollars on a tram, perhaps you would have a better bus service. If you want to reflect on how to make the bus service better, I would go back to the very good bus plan that was presented by the then-shadow minister, Mr Parton, at the last election. Read that. It outlines how to do that and how we can actually pay for that if you get the priorities right. I agree with Mr Steel: you have to have the right priorities. You have to be very cautious about saying that we do not have enough money to run a bus service while you are spending it on a transport system that is not providing for all Canberrans.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (3.23): I rise to speak in support of Mr Braddock's motion that calls for free fares for all concession card holders at all times. In doing so, I give credit to the Greens and the Liberals for taking this policy to last year's election. This would be a very positive step forward for public transport in the ACT and will provide cost-of-living relief to some of the people in our community who clearly most need it. As well, it would go some way to addressing transport poverty or transport disadvantage in our city. It also follows the lead of similar initiatives elsewhere which show that meaningfully reducing transport costs not only helps with the cost of living but also can significantly boost public transport usage.

Queensland's change to 50-cent fares for public transport trips for everyone is one example. The Queensland government started with a trial of this initiative and found that the number of passengers increased by 20 per cent during the trial. They used the data to provide a breakdown of exactly how much this boosted public transport, by type. According to the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads, light rail usage jumped by 27.5 per cent, rail usage by 18.6 per cent, ferry usage by 42.8 per cent—perhaps something to consider—and bus usage by 15.8 per cent.

It would be great to see similar statistics and breakdowns for us here in the ACT, in relation to ACT Labor's election commitment to fare-free Fridays. Knowing whether it was successful is important. We have heard about some preliminary data suggesting that the number of passengers using public transport on Fridays has increased by 24 per cent compared to last year; but, of course, the trial is yet to be completed.

As the government outlined in response to a petition earlier this year calling for free public transport across the ACT, one of the reasons to continue charging for public transport is the benefit of data collection. As Minister Steel stated in his response, tapping on and off light rail provides a level of detail "needed to inform strategic decisions and balanced investment". That might not be a reason to avoid free fares, but it was put forward. The same response also noted that data from fare-free Friday "will be reviewed and a decision will be made on its continuation as part of a review of Transport Canberra's future fare strategy". The minister has basically repeated this point here today. We are yet to hear any further detail about this review, though, and what the evaluation of this data indicates for the future of public transport fares in the ACT, including on Fridays.

In relation to that, I have to say I am deeply sceptical about the reliability of any tap on, tap off data related to fare-free Fridays. I am a light rail user myself and I can tell you many people do not tap on before taking the light rail at the best of times. They certainly will not feel compelled to tap on when they know there is no fare and, given the violence and harassment we have seen being experienced by bus drivers in the ACT, I do not think that they will compel people to tap on and tap off.

I am voting in support of this motion today. I hope to see some real analysis coming out of the government's fare-free Fridays trial, as has been promised, lest the cynics among us—and it sounds like Mr Braddock might be included in that group—start concluding that this particular election commitment was not really promised and delivered for policy reasons but for political reasons. We need to be more proactive about promoting public transport. That seems to be something that we all agree on in this place. I genuinely look forward to learning more about the kind of impact this initiative has had over the past year.

In closing, if we are serious about moving away from our deep car dependency here in the ACT, which I hope we are, we need to think more creatively about how to support both public and active transport, so I welcome motions such as this one. With that in mind, I once again thank Mr Braddock for bringing the motion forward to the Assembly today.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (3.27): In closing, I thank all members for their contributions today. I want to go to a couple of points that were raised by the Treasurer and Minister for Transport in his speech. Firstly, I would agree with him in terms of the priorities for public transport here in our city. The biggest barriers to people using public transport are service reliability, availability, frequency and speed. Once the convenience criteria stack up, people will use it. Cost is a barrier only for those who are doing it tough, which is the point of my motion today. It is significantly more cost effective to reduce the cost burden for the very small number of people who have been

targeted by this motion.

Beyond that, I see the next priority is to bolster the government's investments in building new light rail lines—I will disagree with Mr Hanson's comments on that—and bus routes as well, adding to the fleet size to improve frequency and optimise routes to increase reliability. Once that is happening, I would begin to look further as to what can be done. In the meantime, targeted cost-of-living relief will have far less revenue impact than we are seeing by other initiatives taken forward by the Labor government. The Treasurer's comments would have so much oomph behind them, in terms of calling for financial restraint from other parties within this Assembly, if he were not also pushing forward for the fare-free Fridays initiative, which has cost over \$6 million per annum.

Finally, this is a cost-of-living motion within the context of public transport. We have a social responsibility to direct available government subsidies to those who need them most. Some people simply do not have the means to fully and comfortably provide for themselves. We know from experience that, when cost barriers are removed for these people, they are much better able to build themselves up to a point where they can develop those means. Stress is reduced, hope can blossom and people can find their way.

Once again, I thank all members for their support. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Lakes and waterways—Yarralumla Creek

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (3.30): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) Woden is the only town centre without a significant water feature;
- (b) Yarralumla Creek has been a concrete drain between Mawson and North Curtin since the 1970s;
- (c) as Canberra experiences continued growth and expansion, it becomes increasingly important to confront several pressing challenges, including the impacts of urbanisation, the effects of climate change, habitat loss and maintenance of wildlife movements and migrations;
- (d) by creating a natural oasis within the urban landscape, we can enhance community cohesion, promote environmental stewardship, and ensure that the ecological integrity of the area is preserved for future generations;
- (e) ACT Government policy (District Strategies 2023) on the blue-green network includes:
 - (i) explore opportunities to integrate Yarralumla Creek into the blue-green network along Athllon Drive and Yamba Drive, including connectivity with Farrer Ridge at the head of the creek; and
 - (ii) undertake more detailed planning for the Yarralumla Creek corridor

- as an enhanced blue-green network connection, landscape feature and public park, aligned with planning for the light rail corridor; and
- (f) the learnings from the “Sullivans Creek Re-naturalisation Opportunities Report 2024”, could inform re-naturalisation opportunities for Yarralumla Creek;
- (2) further notes that:
- (a) areas adjacent to the creek in the Woden Town Centre have been developed and other areas to the north and south have been identified for high density housing; and
 - (b) to ensure space is provided for future naturalisation of the creek, planning is required prior to densification so that the opportunity for naturalisation is not lost forever; and
- (3) calls on the Government to:
- (a) undertake a Yarralumla Creek re-naturalisation options report and identify the space required for project opportunities across the catchment;
 - (b) update flood risk mapping for extreme weather events;
 - (c) not sell land along the creek until the above options report has been finalised and considered by government; and
 - (d) report back to the Assembly by December 2026.

I rise today to speak to a vision for a re-naturalised Yarralumla Creek that jumps with life. This is not just about restoring a waterway; it is about creating a living corridor, one that supports biodiversity, celebrates First Nations culture and enhances the resilience and liveability of the Woden Valley.

For decades, Yarralumla Creek has been a concrete drain between Mawson and north Curtin. Woden remains the only town centre in Canberra without a significant water feature. As our city continues to grow, we must confront the challenges of urbanisation, climate change, habitat loss, and the need to maintain wildlife movement and migration. A natural oasis within our urban landscape will do more than beautify the area; it will promote community cohesion, environmental stewardship and a deeper connection to Country.

The ACT government’s own policy supports integrating Yarralumla Creek into the blue-green network and planning it as a public park aligned with the public transport corridor. We also have the benefit of learnings from the *Sullivans Creek re-naturalisation options report 2024*, which can inform and strengthen this project. But time is of the essence. Areas adjacent to the creek are already being developed and others are earmarked for high-density housing. Planning must occur before densification so that the opportunity for naturalisation is not lost forever. This becomes more important as the government plans to significantly increase the population of the town centre through the addition of another 17 residential towers, up to 55 storeys, bringing us to over 50 residential towers.

The Yarralumla Creek re-naturalisation options report would work with our community and the ACT government to develop a long-term vision and landscape concept plan. It

would scope opportunities to restore the riparian corridor, creating an ecological link through the Woden Valley to the hills and ridges around it.

The aim of the project would be, firstly, to connect to nature by reversing the damage caused by past concreting and fragmentation and restoring habitat for frogs, turtles and other species. Re-naturalising the creek would slow the water flows, rehydrate soils and cool the landscape. Secondly, the aim would be to connect people—transforming the creek into a string of destinations that will allow people to sit, relax and walk their dogs. Community involvement would foster ownership, care and environmental stewardship.

Initiatives to achieve the vision would include creating urban wetlands and ponds to support aquatic life, stabilising creek banks with local stone and native vegetation, slowing water flow to reduce downstream impacts, rehydrating soils and replenishing groundwater, and filtering and purifying water naturally.

This motion calls on the ACT government to undertake a Yarralumla Creek re-naturalisation options report and identify the space required for project opportunities across the catchment. Importantly, it calls on the government not to sell land across the creek until the options report has been finalised and considered by government.

This is our opportunity to re-imagine Yarralumla Creek, not as a forgotten drain, but as a vibrant, living corridor where nature, culture and community come together for generations to come.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (3.34): There are actually four inevitabilities of life: death, taxes, water being wet, and the Greens supporting worthy re-naturalisation projects. We will, of course, be supporting Ms Carrick's worthy project to scope out the re-naturalisation of Yarralumla Creek. This is a good motion. As beloved philosopher Joni Mitchell is fond of saying, "Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you got till it's gone." In our case, we have paved paradise at Yarralumla Creek; but, with the magic of science, we can actually unpave it and make it a far more beautiful, biodiverse and brilliantly efficient nature corridor.

We often forget to think about it, but it only takes a moment to remember, "Huh, water literally keeps us alive." We assume that our water system will just tick along in the background, but we actually need to actively work to repair, regenerate and maintain our catchments.

The Healthy Waterways Program has been really helping with that. Between stage 1 and stage 2, our former Greens minister for water, Mr Shane Rattenbury, gave us rain gardens, wetlands, ponds, channel restorations and so many other key projects. Stage 1 had an estimated benefit-cost ratio of anywhere between 1.3 and 2.6—that is, always pretty good.

Around my patch, the re-naturalisation of the Tuggeranong Creek around the Calwell playing fields from stage 2 is great. The plants slow down the rush of water towards Lake Tuggeranong and absorb the nutrients that would otherwise feed the blue-green algae there. It is also really nice to look at.

In previous speeches, I have aired my frustration with the fact that this ACT Labor

government has not topped up any money towards the Healthy Waterways project. Indeed, the final project listed to restore the creek line through Tuggeranong Homestead appears to have been scrapped, despite being up on the website and presumably scoped. Funding has all but dried up.

I am a bit bummed that this seems to be a common theme with this Labor government's approach to water projects, because they have also walked back their enthusiasm and funding for the Sullivans Creek re-naturalisation project. This is disappointing because a lot of people put a lot of work into not just the \$121,000 scoping study, but a proper, two-month YourSay consultation period, with surveys, pop-ups and stakeholder consultations. Reading through the options report, this creek is significant to our Ngunnawal people, and it holds great potential for natural filtration, restoration of nature corridors, climate readiness and visual amenity.

Our challenge in the water space now is that we have had worthy, scoped projects, and this ACT Labor government walked back on them. I genuinely hope they might be able to correct me if I am wrong, but it seems that they have not given us any meaningful alternative water projects, either. When we do not have a steady flow of water projects, we lose community buy-in and local expertise. The way government has consistently engaged Landcare groups and citizen scientists to care for and monitor local water projects has been of incredible mutual benefit—we care more about water and we take better care of it.

Similarly, our civil contractors have built expertise around waterway projects in the local landscapes; so have public servants. They build on their relationships with our Ngunnawal traditional owners and the broader Canberra community. If funding dries up, we risk losing people taking this work seriously and doing it well.

We stand here now with a new, quite worthy re-naturalisation project at Yarralumla Creek. Unlike Sullivans Creek, we have not done an options paper on Yarralumla yet, but we can look at previous work done in the Yarralumla catchment in stage 1 of Healthy Waterways. There was a rain garden in Curtin, a pond in Mawson, and waterway restoration projects in Yarralumla proper, and again in Curtin.

In preparation for writing this speech, I came across an excellent Facebook page, helpfully called “Yarralumla Creek Re-naturalisation”—give it a “follow”—and one of the posts from back in December 2024 showed the stark contrast between the clogged, harsh, man-made drain holes of the current Yarralumla Creek and the beautiful scenes of the Molonglo River, which the creek feeds into.

We know that the type of waterway makes a massive difference to catchment health. Right now, there will be a certain pollutant load in the stormwater rushing down Yarralumla Creek—rubbish, phosphorus and the other kinds of nasties that we really do not want to see in our creeks, let alone in our iconic rivers. Things like reed beds, landscaping and porous surfaces slow down water, prevent erosion, absorb pollutants and restore the water table. They reduce that pollutant load incredibly convincingly when done well. It means that the problem is far less likely to intensify downstream.

The other very prudent part of Ms Carrick's motion is the “ask” to not sell the land along the creek line until the options report has been finalised and considered by

government. It does make sense. Let us not deal ourselves out of having a thriving, re-naturalised creek just because we did not get there in time. Let us make sure that we have easements for a natural creek line so that the new Wodeners can enjoy it when they move in. We can imagine that having a re-naturalised creek would have far more capacity to deal with an increased pollutant load from denser living conditions nearby.

We cannot just consider the creek during housing development if we have yet to test what our environment needs. An options paper would be well placed to consider the expected impact of the development nearby, so let us put the horse before the cart.

The Greens will absolutely be supporting Ms Carrick's motion to have a serious look at re-naturalising Yarralumla Creek and make our planning decisions in light of environmental values that we would otherwise likely never be able to get back.

MS ORR (Yerrabi—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (3.40): Yarralumla Creek flows through the centre of the Woden Valley and, for much of its length, it is contained within a concrete stormwater channel. Before development, the creek was not concreted and it took several forms, starting as a vegetated swale at the top of the catchment, then progressing to a chain of ponds and finally a stream in the lower catchment. As the Yarralumla catchment has steep hillsides—for example, at Red Hill—the flows were high at times, eroding the banks and transporting sediments down the catchment into the Molonglo River.

The current channels were built following the devastating Woden flash flood of 1971, which killed seven people. I note that there is a very touching memorial to the young people who lost their lives that day that stands down on the greenway to the west of the Yarra Glen roundabout.

Yarralumla Creek plays a vital role in Canberra's urban water system as a designated floodway carrying significant flows during periods of heavy rainfall. Its function is particularly important in managing stormwater and mitigating flood risks across the southern gateway corridor.

The concrete floodway acts to stabilise the waterway against its natural tendency to meander across the valley and change its shape and course over time. The concrete floodway also helps to divert water quickly away from residential areas, managing flood risk.

To better understand and plan for future conditions, the City and Environment Directorate is currently finalising a comprehensive flood study for Yarralumla Creek. This study will model the impacts of climate change and anticipated development in the corridor, providing critical data to inform future land use and infrastructure planning. This study draws on previous works for the catchment, including studies in 2015, 2018 and 2024.

The government has already embedded in the Woden District Strategy—and associated policy DO7—a direction to explore opportunities to integrate Yarralumla Creek into the blue-green network, including potential for wetlands and the incorporation of water-

sensitive urban design principles to enhance ecological value and urban resilience.

The ACT Healthy Waterways Program initiated a study in 2015 that identified a range of options for creek works, ponds, wetlands and rain gardens within the Yarralumla Creek catchment. Four Healthy Waterway projects have been completed from 2018 to 2020 in the first phase of works for the Yarralumla Creek catchment. The first is a rain garden at the flood memorial site; the second is Mawson Pond, along Athllon Drive, opposite Marist College; the third is bank stabilisation north of the Cotter; and the fourth is bank stabilisation south of the Cotter.

These projects did not involve naturalising the creek, as their intent is to improve water quality by taking out nutrients or sediment loads. The bank stabilisation of the creek north and south of the Cotter Road was done to avoid bank and stream bed erosion downstream of where the concreted channel flows into a natural stream section. The erosion was transporting sediment downstream into the Molonglo River, causing water quality issues.

Four options for channel naturalisations were identified as part of this study. The costs and benefits of the channel naturalisations were considered, and the options were subsequently excluded in the process of finalising a list of 24 priority and 24 reserve options for possible construction.

I note that this motion calls on the government not to sell land along the creek until a re-naturalisation options report has been finalised and considered by government. There are already several sites identified in the Indicative Land Release Program over the next five years along Yarralumla Creek, including at north Curtin, Mawson and Athllon Drive.

Further work is underway on other potential development opportunities along the creek, consistent with the district strategies and as part of planning on the southern gateway. These developments will be undertaken only after full evaluation of flood risk, which is underway by the directorate, and with due consideration of opportunities for further supporting the health of our waterways that have been identified.

As Ms Carrick's motion reflects the work and consideration already underway, I see no issue with reporting back to the Assembly on the matters outlined in the motion, and will endeavour to do so in a timely manner, so as not to delay the release of suitable land that does not compromise our environment but does provide much-needed homes for our city.

The Sullivans Creek options paper has again come up in discussion. I believe there was a comment made about this government walking back its enthusiasm and funding for the Sullivans Creek re-naturalisation program. I would like to state for the record that there was no funding attached to the options paper. The options paper, while informing ongoing consideration of broader programs and projects, has not been adopted by the government with a particular course of initiatives, programs or funding attached to it. I think it is a little bit disingenuous—and I will keep saying it every time it comes up—to keep saying that money has been withdrawn when no money was ever attached to it.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (3.46): I would absolutely like to start by commending

Ms Carrick for bringing this motion today. Ms Carrick and I sat beside each other in the Estimates process this year where the question of Yarralumla Creek certainly came up. It seems interesting to me that it has taken until this motion today to get some revelations on detail from the minister. I do not believe we have had any success in getting some of the information, but I think the highlight of the minister's revelations today is that before development, the creek was not concrete.

Going to the motion itself, I am pleased to say that the Canberra Liberals will be supporting the motion. We have a very narrow window of opportunity to look into the activities that Ms Carrick has called on here. We have this very narrow window of opportunity, because we are on a cusp, as the minister has put forward, of quite massive densification around the Woden town centre and, indeed, along this very corridor. Blocks are being developed already throughout Woden. I was doorknocking around Lyons quite recently, and the changing skyline is absolutely astounding. You see it from Lyons, you see it from Hughes and you see it from Curtin—you see it right throughout the Woden Valley. It is a changing skyline in Woden. At the pace that things are changing right now, we must make sure we are planning for the future before we start falling over problems by doing things the wrong way around.

So I commend Ms Carrick, because there is this narrow window of opportunity, and the minister has only highlighted it more strongly by talking about the five sites identified on the land release program. Those five sites within that corridor are indeed precisely the reason this action needs to happen now and not wait.

They are precisely the reason why I would encourage both the minister, the planning minister and, indeed, Ms Carrick to pay attention here. If I heard correctly, the words that the minister used around what they are looking at and what will be considered—she went to great lengths to talk about flood risk—are not precisely the same things that Ms Carrick is calling for in this motion. So I would encourage the minister to make sure, in the response that comes back—assuming this motion passes today, and I believe it will—that the exact wording that Ms Carrick has brought today is what the government reports back, because that is the will of the Assembly if the motion passes and that is what we want to see coming through.

Re-naturalisation is not some radical idea. Clearly, it has already been done in other places. It is reflective of the changing science from the 1970s when the creek clearly was first concreted—and it was for very good reason, to deal with some serious flood risks. But the changing science and the work that has been done through projects, including across Canberra, show that re-naturalisation not only is possible but also can be extraordinarily effective. It can be effective in dealing with not only the flood risk but also the environmental impacts throughout those corridors, as well as transforming what amounts to a concrete drain into a usable and enjoyable piece of social infrastructure.

The green spaces along Yarralumla Creek, around areas like Curtin, are incredibly valued by our community. The green spaces that we have access to are highly valued. But what we do not have is a consistent green pathway throughout what is now, essentially, a concrete drain. In places like Dickson and down along Sullivans Creek, we have seen re-naturalisation backed by expert reports, supported by the community and delivered with tangible benefits. Moving away from concrete and towards the

natural state of the environment in these areas helps support cooler suburbs, better biodiversity, safer flood protection and more walkable public spaces. So we have to get to the planning now, not just put it off and try to squeeze it in later after the government has already sold off these important assets.

I would also like to note that Ms Castley, as shadow minister for the environment, did want to be here and make some comments to really emphasise the opposition's support for this motion and to emphasise that it is an approach that we have seen used elsewhere in a positive and constructive way. It is something we should see more of.

We wanted to note, just very quickly, that we think that the reporting timeframe is fairly generous. Fourteen months, which is quite a long time, is the timeline that Ms Carrick has chosen to give the government to come back. But, that said, it is a deadline and not a delivery date, and I hope that the government will take the opportunity to provide the community with a report in a more timely manner. That would enable all of us the time to consider the report and what steps are the most appropriate ones for the communities who live around the creek, those who interact with it or who simply appreciate its role in the territory's natural environment and the ecosystem. It is also critical for us to see this report as soon as possible, given that a number of these areas are already included in the government's land release plan.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (3.53): I rise to speak in support of Ms Carrick's motion and thank her for bringing it to the Assembly today. It is a very worthy motion and focuses on an issue that is important to people in her electorate and also across the ACT—to actually follow through on the delivery of the blue-green network that we have been promised; noting also the role that re-naturalising existing stormwater drains can play in addressing issues like blue-green algae, which is currently topical for tragic reasons.

I am very much supportive of this approach. I also would support, as Miss Nuttall pointed to, the reconsideration of funding of the Sullivans Creek opportunities report. I am a little bit wary of the line in this motion calling for us to follow the example set, with what has happened there. But I hope to see that that initiative is funded and could be done in parts, as perhaps this could be done following the development of the opportunities report promised by this motion. Thank you, Ms Carrick, for bringing this forward.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (3.54): I thank everyone for participating in this debate and for the great speeches from Miss Nuttall, Mr Cocks and Mr Emerson. I agree that we must have a plan for the future. There are thousands of people moving in and they need somewhere to go. We do not have a dog park anywhere near all those towers, and there are dogs in them there towers. There are a lot of dogs. There are a lot of people walking around the Woden town centre concrete with their dogs. They need somewhere to go. So let's have a dog park along the creek as well.

I would just like to note Ms Orr's mentioning of the loss of seven young people's lives in 1971. It was on Australia Day 1971. This was a tragedy that has affected our community. I organised a 50-year public memorial, where locals expressed their emotions from the night of the tragedy. It was incredibly moving. It was the first time they had ever had a public memorial for those seven young people that we lost.

I have been asking for this plan to naturalise our creek for years and years. I am asking for a fair go for our side of town. We are cramming people into the town centre and we are cramming them along the corridor. For goodness sake, give them something to do and somewhere to go. It is more than a cost-benefit analysis; this is about people and their lives. So thank you to everybody for supporting my motion today, and I look forward to the naturalisations option paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Motion to take note of papers

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

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

Dissent from Speaker's ruling

Debate resumed.

MR SPEAKER: We will now move back to the motion from Mr Pettersson. While I am not participating in the debate, I am happy to preside over my own execution or otherwise!

The question is:

That the Speaker's ruling be dissented from.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (3.57): I rise to speak briefly on this motion of dissent from your ruling, Mr Speaker, on Minister Pettersson's point of order taken yesterday during Ms Barry's motion on support for multicultural communities. We will be supporting you in your ruling that the point of order does not stand in this instance. The ACT Greens have deliberated carefully on this, not least because similar comments and sentiments to those raised by Ms Barry are raised, perhaps not infrequently, by members of this chamber all across the political spectrum and across a diversity of topics.

Mr Speaker, you gave your reasoning that Ms Barry's remarks did not in fact raise a point of order under standing orders 54 or 55. Reviewing the recordings in context alongside Ms Barry's clarifying remarks, it seems apparent to us that Ms Barry was clear in articulating that what she was conveying was a position held by some members of the community. In this sense, we are satisfied with the Speaker's ruling that this does not constitute an imputation of motive or personal reflection from Ms Barry's part; rather, it is in fact a public perception that Minister Pettersson is being challenged to acknowledge and recognise that it exists. The Greens have certainly heard sentiments from the community, too—sentiments that are not uniquely ascribed to Minister Pettersson.

I would also reflect that it would be problematic for members to never raise points of

community concern. In raising those points, it is generally often our sincere hope that the minister in question will take the opportunity to reassure the community that those concerns are unfounded or perhaps that they are being addressed. I appreciate members' willingness to adjourn debate this morning as everything unfolded, and I look forward to seeing this debate resolved.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform) (3.59): I would like to rise in support of Minister Pettersson's motion of dissent from your ruling, Mr Speaker, regarding remarks made by members of the opposition yesterday. I view both the question asked by Mr Hanson in respect to picking winners and sidelining others and Ms Barry's comments in the motion regarding the relationship with the minister could determine your success or otherwise in government land releases as significant imputations on the minister's reputation. I find these comments highly offensive and feel deeply offended on behalf of Minister Pettersson, and see these comments as a significant imputation on his reputation. To me, they clearly infer improper or corrupt conduct. I strongly argue, Mr Speaker, that you reconsider these remarks and rule them highly disorderly.

One of the things that I think we should hold very closely is that our parliament does not tolerate the base level personal attacks on individuals that we see as headlines in other jurisdictions. We are protected by standing order 55, and that is the duty of the Speaker to uphold. It protects the dignity of the Assembly, prevents the abuse of parliamentary privilege and preserves public confidence in proceedings.

Mr Speaker, I am sure you would take offence if I argued that your decision in this matter was a matter of picking winners, that a good relationship with Mr Speaker will determine your success in this matter. I believe that you hold, as an important principle in your speakership, that you aim to be as impartial as possible. If I were to make these accusations against you, I believe I would be considered by yourself and other members of the Assembly as behaving in a highly disorderly way. Allowing such imputations to stand unchallenged risks normalising personal attacks and eroding the standards of respectful debate that we all seek to uphold in this parliament.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi—Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations) (4.01): In closing, I want to start by saying, with the greatest respect, I have great respect for Mr Parton as Speaker, but on this matter I wholeheartedly disagree with his ruling this morning.

To bring members' memory back to this morning, Mr Parton essentially said that a point of order was brought to his attention with regard to a motion yesterday; that he had looked into the standing orders; and that he was not sure which remarks I was referring to. He looked to my contribution, what I said. There had been a chain of events and there had been a question. There had been a speech by Ms Barry. There had been a response by me. There had been another speech by Ms Barry. Having considered the matter raised, Mr Parton said:

I do not believe I can rule on the matter, but I urge members that if members

consider a member's character is in question, they should use the proper norms of the Assembly and move a substantive motion.

I agree, Mr Speaker, which is what I had sought to do when I had previously intervened in the debate and raised my concerns with the language that Ms Barry was using and urged her to raise a substantive motion. In response to that, Mr Speaker, Ms Barry doubled down and, instead of seeking to pursue that mechanism which you are now directing her to, I received comments like this: "Ms Barry would like to respond particularly about the comments made by Mr Pettersson and repeated by Ms Stephen-Smith about her assertions on the minister." That is when Mr Cocks helpfully decided to chime in and say, "Yes; it is not made up." Ms Barry also chimed in to say, "It is not made up; they are telling me." Mr Speaker, as you would be aware, it is not a defence in this place to say you are quoting someone else as you then seek to impugn someone's reputation. Our standing orders provide protection to members from that very specific instance.

It is frustrating to see members once again, even now in this debate this afternoon, making imputations on people's reputations with the thin veil of saying, "Well, someone else said it and therefore I am allowed to come in here and repeat it." It is not fair. It is not okay. I imagine other members would have a very similar feeling. Having spoken to many members today about that feeling, a lot of people have expressed a similar feeling: that they do not think that that was fair and that, when it has happened to them, they did not think it was fair then. So I would encourage members to reflect: if you were in my position, how would you feel?

Mr Speaker, the meaning of corrupt conduct is quite clearly known by most members in this place. It is spelled out in law:

Conduct by a public official that constitutes the exercise of the public official's function as a public official in a way that is not honest or is not impartial;

That sounds a lot like, "I have been picking winners and sidelining others." Or:

... dishonestly obtaining or assisting in obtaining, or dishonestly benefiting from, the payment or application of public funds for private advantage or the disposition of public assets for private advantage ...

That sounds a lot like, "A good relationship with the minister could get you or determine your success when it comes to land release." It is deeply offensive to be even associated with those ideals, Mr Speaker. So it is frustrating to see other members not so inclined to defend me.

Let me put it in a different way, Mr Speaker. There are, in essence, two elements to this: were there assertions about me and are they improper? It is quite clear to me that there were assertions about me. If you look to the *Hansard* transcript, Ms Barry confirms that the assertions were about me. If you accept that there are assertions about me, you then have to ask the question: "Are they improper?" I think they are improper. I think they are deeply improper. I think any member accused of those things would consider them improper.

So I am very confused, Mr Speaker. If you hold the view that those are improper actions,

don't you think that they should only be raised through a substantive motion like the standing orders? It should not be allowed to just kind of slide in with a snide imputation. No; it should not be that way; you should be afforded a proper process. If you believe the actions that have been inferred upon me would have been improper for me to do, then surely you accept that the imputation I did that thing is an imputation of an improper motive. That is all I ask. If you think something wrong has occurred—if that is the case—and if you believe that improper imputation did occur, then all I simply ask for, Mr Speaker, is for those remarks to be withdrawn. Thank you.

Question resolved in the negative.

Statements by members

Town criers national championship 2025

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.06): I want to speak about an event that I hosted in the reception room on Friday, 10 October to welcome Australia's town criers to Canberra, as part of their national championship event the following day. I want to acknowledge in the gallery Lord Joseph McGrail-Bateup, Canberra and Queanbeyan town crier. It would probably be inappropriate for me to ask him to give a greeting to us, because we would probably need earmuffs. Lord Joe was the loudest town crier in the country at the competition last year, I believe. Unfortunately, as he was the host of this year's event, he was not allowed to compete. I reckon, and I am advised, that he would have won it again.

I hosted a reception at the Assembly two Fridays ago, on 10 October. It was delightful. I want to acknowledge Ms Carrick for joining us for a time; I thank her for showing her support. I had the privilege of opening the national competition, as part of the Canberra Highland Gathering, at Kambah Oval, near the Burns Club, on the following Saturday.

Town criers, as members may be aware, were really the earliest form of the internet. Most people in the medieval societies of Europe and the United Kingdom could not read, so the royal authority would send out a town crier with news that they all needed to hear. That person came with royal protection, so be careful what you say and how you greet Lord Joseph this afternoon.

Gambling Harm Action Week

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform) (4.08): I am glad to stand today and speak about Gambling Harm Action Week. That is this week. We know that one in six adults in the ACT are impacted by harm from either their own gambling or someone else's. That is nearly 58,000 Canberrans.

On Monday, the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission launched their new language guide for talking about gambling and related harms. I encourage everyone in the chamber to check out this guide. It provides practical principles to support conversations about gambling harm and removes stigma from people experiencing harm.

At the launch, we also heard from ATODA about their new research relating to the co-occurrence of gambling and substance use harms. The practice guide from ATODA provides 10 themes which can be integrated into current practice and are intended to give service industry workers the confidence to address the co-occurring of gambling and substance use harms.

Last night I attended the launch of the Fair Play Hub at ANU. This is a tool created by the ANU Centre for Gambling Research and the Youth Coalition. I strongly encourage all members to go to this website. You can put in your kids' computer games, and it tells you the level of gambling features that exist within these games. I thank Relationships Australia and everyone involved.

Waste—repair and re-use strategy

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.10): I recently spoke at the 2025 Australian Repair Summit. It was a really great panel, with representatives from South Australia and New South Wales. We were reflecting on where recycling policy had gone, and the ACT used to lead on recycling. We set the world's first zero waste target back in the 90s, and we made a lot of progress from there.

Shane Rattenbury pushed hard for a Productivity Commission inquiry, and that has had some impact. We have legislated to enable the Commissioner for Fair Trading to use a new power to require businesses to attend binding conciliation with consumers to resolve disputes. That is promising, but unfortunately that is just another method of pushing the burden back onto consumers and back onto the community. We really need structural change—that is, putting the burden back onto those who are creating the problem.

Here in the ACT, we have some amazing repair initiatives coming from the community. We have repair cafes all over Canberra—Hawker, UC, Ginninderry, Hughes, Tuggeranong and Watson. We have amazing community initiatives, like Roundabout Canberra. We have op shops and second-hand stores like the Green Shed Underground, the Shed, and many more. We also have a circular economy strategy in the ACT, which is fantastic, but it does not have a repair and re-use strategy or action plan. I am really interested in the repair strategies coming out of New South Wales and South Australia and seeing what we can learn about that here in the ACT.

Scolyer, Professor Richard AO—tribute

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (4.12): I rise today to express my admiration and gratitude for world-leading melanoma pathologist Professor Richard Scolyer, 2024 Joint Australian of the Year and Officer of the Order of Australia.

Following Professor Scolyer's own devastating diagnosis with the brain cancer glioblastoma in 2023, he volunteered as patient zero in a pioneering and world-first immunotherapy treatment modelled on his own work in melanoma treatment. Despite the average recurrence time for his cancer type being six months, he managed to stave it off for almost two years. Now, thanks to his selflessness, work is underway to begin clinical trials of his therapy, to give other glioblastoma patients hope for a better way forward.

I am aware that Professor Scolyer's cancer battle is getting close to its end, and I want to express my deep admiration and gratitude on behalf of our community and of all Australians, and particularly of all those whose lives have been impacted by cancer, for his remarkable contributions, for dedicating his professional life—and, more recently, much of his personal life, too—to improving outcomes for cancer patients, and for his courage, compassion and generosity of knowledge, time and emotional energy to this cause.

I hope Professor Scolyer can find comfort in the knowledge that his immense contributions have improved, and will continue to improve, the lives of so many people around the world. I wish him, his family and loved ones all the very best for their journey ahead.

Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm—award

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (4.13): I wish to take this opportunity to pass on my heartfelt congratulations to the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm operations team from the Health and Community Services Directorate, who were awarded last night the Kerry Kennedy Award at the Institute of Public Administration Australia ACT Spirit of Service Awards.

The Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm provides a place of healing where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can feel safe and supported to make ongoing and meaningful changes in their lives, including working towards a healthier lifestyle; thinking about the meaning and impact that alcohol and other drugs have had on their life; and focusing on physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing. It is an important part of a broader ecosystem of supports that aim to tackle underlying social and emotional issues, using a therapeutic community approach, traditional healing concepts, cultural programs and life skills training.

Anyone who is aged 18 to 50 years who identifies as a First Nations person and who does not have a history of violent or sexual offending can attend a program at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. Outcomes for participants include pursuing educational outcomes, employment, connecting and reconnecting with children and families, and reconnecting with Country and culture.

This award reflects the significant uplift and growth in day-to-day service utilisation and participant outcomes over 2023-24 and 2024-25 due to the hard work and efforts of the team.

Ovarian cancer—Frocktober

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (4.15): Today is 23 October. That means I am wearing my 23rd different dress this month. Why? Because it is Frocktober. Frocktober raises money and awareness for ovarian cancer, particularly research for an early detection test, because there is not one. The most common symptoms are abdominal bloating and pain, feeling full after eating a small amount, and increased frequency and urgency to urinate. Symptoms can also include changes in bowel habits, unexplained weight loss

or gain, excessive fatigue, lower back pain, indigestion or nausea, bleeding after menopause or in between periods, and pain during or after sex. The problem is that many of these symptoms are other things that affect women and can be easily dismissed.

Ovarian cancer has a five-year survival rate of 49 per cent. If diagnosed at a late stage, which happens to about 70 per cent of women with ovarian cancer, this drops to just 29 per cent. It is the most lethal gynaecological cancer. The picture has barely changed since my grandmother had it 30 years ago. Four women today in Australia will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer, but one woman will die every eight hours in Australia from ovarian cancer.

Colleagues, join me this Monday in the reception room for a morning tea to talk about ovarian cancer and learn more about it. Wear a dress if you can. Come and chat, and donate if you are able to.

Gambling harm

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.16): I listened to the pious lecture from Dr Paterson about gambling harm. I think it is very important, when the Labor Party are standing up here and lecturing the rest of us about gambling harm, that they acknowledge their own sins in this matter. They reap millions from their pokies and in donations from their mates in the CFMEU. Mr Speaker, if you do not think it is true, I will refer to a 2022 article by the ABC, which stated:

The Canberra Labor Club group operates more than 400 gaming machines. It was set up by ACT Labor to support the party and its articles of association require any profits to be paid to the branch. In 2019-20 it generated just under \$10 million in net gaming machine revenue ...

The Canberra Labor Club group channels funds through the 1973 Foundation, set up to generate property investment income for the Labor Party while putting distance between the party and club group, according to the Canberra Times. The figures include payments disclosed by both entities, as well as Labor (ACT). It is impossible to tell from the disclosures if the same funds are being transferred between the three groups.

This is a quote:

“The Labor Party has tens of millions of dollars of equity tied up in being part of the clubs industry themselves,” Mayne said.

“This is unique in the world. No other major political party operates mini suburban casinos to help fund their operations and cocoon their asset base.”

Discussion concluded.

Standing order 118AA Rulings by Speaker

MR SPEAKER: I have two rulings to make. One of them relates to Dr Paterson’s answer to Mr Cocks’s question, “Minister, when can we expect to see the crisis line

answer rate improve?” It is almost a rhetorical question, and I am not really sure what the opposition expected the minister to say—“Sometime in May of next year”? Dr Paterson responded with an answer about her efforts to see improvements in the crisis line rate improve, and I am of the belief that she was responsive to the question.

The other matter involved a question to the Treasurer. Indeed, although the point of order that has been raised refers to substantive question No 2 today, it kind of applies to quite a number of questions along this line in this particular session. The question specifically was, “What impact does a slowing housing market have on the government’s fiscal position,” which was asked in that substantive question and in two, or indeed potentially three, further questions. Despite the fact that we do not have the *Hansard* to review, we have made a decision that the Treasurer was not responsive to the question. In regard to, “What impact does a slowing housing market have on the government’s fiscal position,” I am making a ruling that I would like to see a written response from the minister in the next 24 hours.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Youth—Raise Our Voice in Parliament campaign

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) (4.20): I, like many of my colleagues this week, am speaking on behalf of a young student—this student is from Aranda Primary School—as part of Raise Our Voice Australia’s initiative of having our young students’ voices heard in our parliaments.

Certainly, in the electorate of Ginninderra, we were provided with a vast selection of speeches, and I want to commend all the students who provided one. I am sorry that I do not think that, between the Ginninderra members, we have been able to read all of them; but they were terrific, and I really enjoyed it.

I chose this speech because of how it resonated with me, especially as a student who spent grades 4 to 8 in very small towns. I think the smallest town I was in was Moura, which had—I looked at the census data—1,980 people in 1996, when I was in grade 5.

That is enough of an introduction to the speech by 11-year-old Yile from Aranda Primary School, and I thank Yile. Yile wrote:

Did you know that only two in 10 students in remote areas were classified as strong or exceeding in fundamental NAPLAN exams like numeracy? They also fall behind 8 months on average from their urban counterparts.

Hello, my name is Yile from Aranda Primary School in the ACT and I’m addressing the learning inequality of urban cities against remote locations. The key cause of this problem is the lack of educational resources in remote areas. For example, in remote areas, a third of students don’t have internet access.

Furthermore, in the 2022 AIMO—

I believe that is the Australian Intermediate Mathematics Olympiad—

none of the prize awards were awarded to students from any remote school. But this is a problem we can solve. Funding small remote cities can be pivotal in fixing the divide, and launching a program to provide people with internet access is also important. If this divide is fixed, people in remote areas will have access to higher education and a wider range of jobs, allowing them to pursue their dreams.

Everyone in Australia has potential, and it is time to awaken it. This is not about urban versus remote, this is not about numbers or geography, this is about promoting equality all across Australia.

That concludes Yile's remarks. Just on that, from my own personal reflection, I appreciate that it is contested as to whether a town of 2,000 people is regional or remote. I would probably say it is regional; it is still pretty small. I would note that, in year 8, I was dux of my very small school, coming first in maths and whatever it might be. I think it is well known that I then went to boarding school in a much larger regional city from year 9 onwards. It was very difficult for me in my first year because I realised I was about a year behind everybody else.

It seems that this is an issue that is persisting. I am absolutely blown away that there is an 11-year-old in my electorate who recognises that and is thinking of their colleagues in other parts of Australia. I hope that those words, that passion and conviction turn into action, if not by the leaders that we currently have, then perhaps by someone like Yile.

Active travel—cycling

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (4.24): Today, I was proud to host a public forum of Pedal Power ACT in the reception room here in the Assembly. I was really pleased to see so many members of the public and fellow members of the Legislative Assembly who want to see a Canberra where more people ride around the city that they love. In particular, I thank Paris Lord from Canberra By Bike, Doris Voorbraak from the Embassy of the Netherlands, and Stephen Hodge from We Ride Australia for being on our panel.

If there is one thing I want all MLAs to note from our event, it is this: investing in active travel means addressing all our societal problems. If more people ride their bikes to where they need to go, they are far less likely to develop cardiovascular disease, they are less likely to struggle with their mental health, they are not dropping thousands of dollars at service stations to pay for petrol, and they have an additional point of social connection. Amongst all the political jockeying about the ballooning health budget here in the ACT, I am yet to hear about how investing in preventative health measures such as active transport can go so far in contributing to the improved health of the Canberra community.

The Greens took to the last election a commitment to fill out the city's cycling network, consisting of 135 kilometres of separated bike paths. This initiative was costed by Treasury at \$216 million, based on the cost of \$1.6 million per kilometre. For some of you, that figure may make you stop and say, "That is a lot of money," so I decided to

put some context around it. That is the same cost as approximately two major road duplications; but, remember, our commitment was for an entire city network. Also, as a guide, road duplications can cost at least \$30 million per kilometre. Depending on which particular benefit-cost ratio you wish to apply—which I have seen varies in different pieces of research—active transport presents many times the initial investment in terms of benefits elsewhere in the budget, in particular the health system—as I mentioned earlier—and mental health as well, plus community connection and addressing loneliness. This is because people are no longer stressed and stuck in traffic; they are happy, healthy and causing less strain on an ever-increasing health budget.

Also, transport emissions make up 65 per cent of the territory's emissions. The most cost-effective step we can make to address this is to reduce our emissions through more cycling. EVs have a role, but cycling will drop emissions faster and for far less initial investment. Therefore, it is just a question of political will to change our priorities, and that is something we will need to keep working on within this building.

What I asked all attendees, and I would also ask members here today, is: what can we do to help contribute to cycling in the ACT? Every time any one of us cycles, rollerblades or scoots somewhere, we are encouraging others to do the same. So let's all become bike ambassadors. Let's make sure that, as keen cyclists, we know about the existing programs encouraging cycling and spruik them wherever we can. We need to be visible on our bikes, not just for safety reasons but also to highlight to others that the option exists. We also need to have fun on our bikes and be seen enjoying riding those bikes so that people can see what they are missing out on.

Each state and territory has a unique transport system. Right here in Canberra, we could lead the nation. Let us become a jurisdiction where we successfully reduce the rate of cardiovascular disease. Let us become a place that reduced car pollution. Let us mitigate the mental health crisis, the cost of living crisis and the climate crisis. Let us stop societal problems looming in our future by investing in the preventions. So let's embrace cycling.

Youth—Raise Our Voice in Parliament campaign

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (4.28): I rise to speak on behalf of a student in my electorate for the Raise Our Voice in Parliament initiative. I have chosen Franklin's speech because it goes to such an important issue. Here it goes.

“Hi. I'm Franklin from Charles Weston School. I'm 12 years old and would like to acknowledge the fact that mental health is a huge problem in Australia and all around the world. Every day, about 150 people in Australia attempt to take their own life due to declining mental health. Seventy per cent of those people are aged 15 to 17 years old, with many years of their lives ahead.

People who commit suicide bring grief and depression to others, like friends and family, leading to more attempts, killing more people and starting the cycle all over again. We need you, the government, to help take action and reduce or maybe even wipe out all suicide rates in Australia, giving us a healthy country.

My first solution is to encourage mental health checks every day to make sure we can

take the best care of everyone's mental health, and guiding them to get the help instead of bottling their emotions inside. My second solution is to raise awareness through social media posting, videos and buying advertisements related to the topic. My final solution is to reduce prices of therapists, making them affordable for everyone.

Thank you for recognising this major problem. I hope we can fix this together.”

I would like to thank Franklin for his impressive thinking and solutions on this very serious issue.

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (4.30): I, too, would like to use this opportunity to read a speech written as part of the Raise Our Voice in Parliament campaign. This year's students were asked to respond to the question: what steps should the government take today to build a better tomorrow for young Australians?

I am thrilled to have with me a speech written by Diya, a young Brindabellian we are delighted to have with us here in the chamber this afternoon with her mum. Thank you for joining us. Diya's speech is about the cost of living. It asks important questions about our system and offers insight into the broader impact on society. I will begin her speech now. It says:

My name is Diya, and I am a year 11 student at Narrabundah College.

I am proud to say that I was born and raised in Australia, and I feel truly blessed to live in a country where people's rights and needs are valued by the government.

However, over the past few months I have noticed a drastic rise in the living costs, and the incredible impact it has had on society.

Given these high costs, I have unfortunately come to the realization that my future may not be as peaceful as I once dreamt.

I fear that I may not be able to live a stable life.

This cost-of-living crisis has become so severe that it has sparked protests such as the recent 'anti-immigration'.

Yet, these protests are not simply just marches, they have escalated into violence, with some individuals even calling for a return to the discriminatory ideas of 'White Australia'.

I am deeply concerned that this crisis will not only affect those who are already struggling financially but will also segregate the unity us Australians have long upheld.

I am afraid that my generation, Gen Z, and the ones to come will be forced to carry the weight of both debt and racism.

I am afraid that the growing expenses of daily life could possibly strip away basic human rights that us Australians were guaranteed by the government.

Despite these fears, I still have hope. I believe that there is still time to change this crisis and to make Australia a place where young people can have greater dreams

and ambitions without being constrained by the costs of living.

I urge the Parliament to address these issues quickly, not with partial fixes, but with full solutions.

By increasing affordable housing, ensuring wages keep pace with living costs, providing relief on essentials like energy and healthcare.

The parliament can protect young Australians' futures.

Thank you so much, Diya, for your active democratic and civic engagement, for your thoughtful and considered words and for trusting me to share this speech on your behalf with the chamber this afternoon. I am sure we will see you back here in the chamber in no time.

I also take this opportunity, on behalf of all colleagues in the chamber, to thank the team at Raise Our Voice who continue to encourage our kids to participate in democratic processes by identifying the issues that matter to them the most and inviting them to act, and including the ACT in that this year. Thank you.

Lake Ginninderra—water quality

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.33): I want to take a moment to mark the deaths of the two dogs who died near Lake Ginninderra, Scout on 29 September and Lily on 11 October, and the impact it has had on their owners and their families. I know there are a lot of dog lovers and dog owners here, and I think it is pretty devastating. For a lot of us, our pets are a part of our family, and our hearts break for you.

Scout went for a swim at Nengi Bamir Beach at Lake Ginninderra. I have had a lot of Belconnen residents reaching out to say that the sign said it was open for use and there were no warnings present about the danger of blue-green algae there. Lily's case is particularly alarming. She did not enter the water. She ingested some dirt near the water's edge.

Animals of Canberra have been advocating for better signage and communication. They have shared Scout's and Lily's stories. They are trying to raise awareness about the harm caused by blue-green algae. I want to share what they are advocating for. I will quote directly from them here:

If a dog can die from being on the beach, the signage must be far clearer, larger, and placed where people actually walk, so that from all angles of entry it is abundantly clear that there is a danger to being there. The ACT Government must do more to protect Canberra's beloved companion animals. And what about children playing in the sand?

We got some more information today—a little bit of information about the blue-green algae. I understand that it does have an impact on humans as well. It can cause skin and eye irritations, fever, nausea and various other symptoms. It is not great. A lot of residents in Belconnen have reached out to me, and I am getting some really simple, practical questions. We are all checking the information on the website. We can see that there is water testing going on, and we can see the regular updates that we get about

being open for primary or secondary contact.

Most of us are finding that that is not enough information to work out: is this place actually safe for us to use in this way? I am having this question asked regularly. The only thing I am doing at the moment is directing them to the government website for information. I think we are getting a pretty clear call that there is a need for clear, dog-specific warnings and there is a need for clearer public alerts when we have this type of blue-green algae or this type of toxin detected. A lot of people are calling for better testing and monitoring, and better long-term solutions, to make sure that we have safe swimming water.

I know that ministers have also received the same information from Animals of Canberra, and I look forward to the government's response to those community calls.

Ginninderra electorate—engagement

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.36): I rise to speak on what appears to be the one-year anniversary of our election as members of this Assembly. I am tempted to say my re-election, but my understanding is that, at midnight on election day, we were all unemployed. If you were a member, you were actually out of a job. Really, the whole campaign was an appeal to the community: please hire me again. I am very pleased to say that, about 12 months ago, I was re-hired by the electorate of Ginninderra. Of course, the same applies to each member in this place—either re-hired or entered the place for the first time.

It has been a very interesting year, and a different year from last term, of course, particularly with the Greens not being in a coalition government with Labor. It has created a different atmosphere and vibe in the chamber, and some would say some opportunities to really hold the government to account.

Over the past 12 months, I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the impact that community representation can have, whether it is advocating for families struggling with rising costs, supporting local businesses striving to thrive, standing up for the health, education and wellbeing of Canberrans, or attending to the basic services that Canberrans notice every day—and, in lots of cases, just wishing that they were better.

Being here in this parliament is not just an honour; it is a responsibility. It is about being a representative of the people of the electorate that we represent, bringing their concerns, hopes and ideas to the attention of government, and ensuring that no issue affecting our community goes unheard.

I take this responsibility very seriously. I am here because the people have entrusted that responsibility to me, to act on their behalf and in their interest—obviously, particularly the people in my electorate of Ginninderra.

I want to take a moment to sincerely thank my staff over this term—Swan, Sophie and Jess at the moment. Of course, many of you would have known John, who left my office a few months ago to work as an adviser in federal parliament. I am really privileged to have people who support me, and whose advice I take on board very genuinely, because they represent a part of Canberra and how Canberra thinks that I do not. I tell my team,

“I want to know what you think, even if you disagree with me, because your view represents a bit of Canberra that I need to be able to understand better.”

Of course, there were the people who supported me during the campaign itself, and who continue to support me. I will not list the names; there is trepidation in case I leave someone out. With respect to the people who supported me during my campaign—organising my volunteers, organising my socials, making my corflutes, putting them out early in the morning, and just being there for me with advice and practical support—I want to thank all of them, from the people who put up a sign in their yard, to those who were a part of my campaign team. I hope they are happy to stick around, because I plan to do so. The parliament is more than bricks and policies; we actually have an impact on people’s lives in this city, and particularly in our electorate.

I do not like being called anything other than what I have signed up to be—that is, a member of the Canberra Liberals. Having regard to the various terms—left, right, up, down, inside or outside—I actually avoid those, because I have opinions on things, and I am happy to explain my opinion and the reasons why. If you want to put it in a certain box, go ahead, but I do not actually try and do that myself.

I have a bit of a credo on my “Peter Cain, Member for Ginninderra” web page, and it is something that I want to read out, in closing. It indicates what drives me as a political philosophy, so to speak—that is, the importance of the individual. I quote:

Every individual has value, irrespective of differences one from another, whether those differences be of gender, age, colour or creed, and there is incredible potential for good in every human life.

Youth—work experience placement

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (4.41): I rise to give this speech on behalf of our fantastic work experience student this week, Ruby, who has done an excellent job. The speech is called “Modern Day Zoochosis in Humans”. Ruby wrote:

Have you ever been to a zoo and seen an animal pacing back and forth, its movements restless and eyes dull? If the answer is yes, what you witnessed was not just boredom, it was a symptom of zoochosis. Zoochosis is when an animal held in captivity starts to display repetitive or self-destructive behaviour, such as pacing, rocking or even self-harm. It is developed when animals are kept in habitats that are unnatural to them, with no control or promise of freedom.

These conditions that foster cases of zoochosis don’t sound all that different from the world we live in today. From the moment we are born, we are kept in boxes—schools, offices, houses—and are expected to stay productive almost all of the time. We are made to go to school and work, and live as functioning members of society. Additionally, we are constantly being stimulated by unnatural sounds, lights, screens and so on.

Our human body was not designed to live like this. We were created to have regular social interaction and spend the majority of our time outside in the sunlight, not at desks in closed-in offices. Since the pandemic, the use of social media has increased significantly, also adding to the unnatural circumstances humans are forced into.

Due to all of this, I believe that society is suffering from symptoms of modern-day zoochosis. Globally, there has been an intense mental health crisis and, over the past few years, it has got substantially worse. Anxiety, depression, dissociation and burnout are becoming more common among people every day, and it is entirely possible that these are all symptoms of the same condition.

Whilst humans don't live in a physical cage with metal bars, the endless nine to five workdays, pointless routines and inexorable doom scrolling serves as a cage just as hard to escape from. In a global survey held in 2024, 11,000 people were asked if they had experienced feelings of burnout at their workplace. Of that 11,000, 48 per cent had answered yes. Additionally, over the past 15 years, depression rates have nearly doubled in Australia.

It is unfair to be putting this much pressure onto people when they have never asked for a life like this in the first place. Over time, people are becoming increasingly miserable and that feeling of helplessness is rising. What are we to do when our lives are completely reduced to routine, when we work to live and live only to work? While this problem seems to be almost inescapable, the solution is within you, and it's quite simple. Making time to explore your passions, getting outside more and even just having downtime from your phone and social media can help you break from the monotony that modern day life often traps us in.

Furthermore, I think it's important to call out the government on the fact that, due to the rising cost of living, people are having to choose between doing what they love and finding a job that they can just financially survive on. The rise of the cost of living has resulted in life becoming bleak and people becoming extremely unhappy. It's essential to remember that we are all only human and we weren't made to live lives with so much stress and anxiety put onto us. We weren't made to work grey, isolating jobs and live the same routines day by day.

Instead, we were made to explore, to create and truly live in this world rather than simply exist, which is why it is so important to find ways to liberate yourself from the endless cycle of invisible cages that we have subjected ourselves to.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.45 pm until Tuesday, 28 October at 10 am.

Standing Order 118AA—answer to a question without notice Housing—building approvals

Mr Steel (*in response to a question from Mr Cocks on 23 October 2025*):

In response to the Speaker's ruling in accordance with Standing Order 118AA at the conclusion of Question Time on 23 October 2025, I can advise that the answer is as follows:

Treasury prepares updated economic and revenue forecasts twice a year, as part of the annual budget cycle, in line with the Financial Management Act 1996. Updates to revenue estimates reflect new information on actual revenue collections, changes to forecasts of relevant economic parameters, and relevant policy measures.

Changes in the housing market can impact the Government's fiscal position. Transfer duties are the revenue line most closely linked to housing market cycles and are mainly collected through one-off transactions. Transaction volumes and property values are the parameters that impact the amount of transfer duty collected, with the large majority of revenue generated from established dwellings and the rest from newly completed dwellings. Therefore, housing market dynamics have a relatively limited impact on transfer duty revenue stemming from newly completed dwellings

Most general rates (and related levies) and land tax revenues collected each year come from the established market, with a small proportion (around two per cent) from newly completed dwellings. These revenues reflect the dwelling stock, and by design, are a relatively stable revenue source and are largely immune from housing market cycles. Revenues collected are dependent on the number of ratable properties, their average unimproved values (AUV), and property rates.

Housing market data is volatile, which means individual data outturns (for example, building approvals and commencements) need to be interpreted with caution including any implications for economic and revenue forecasts. This volatility can reflect the characteristics of the ACT's housing market, which produces more units than houses, compared with other jurisdictions. As a result, the data can be lumpy as large developments finish, and new ones commence on different timing.

The housing market also affects the Government's fiscal position through the Suburban Land Agency (SLA) and City Renewal Authority's (CRA) land sales, for which the Government receives dividends (net of costs). The demand for new housing and land prices will, all things being equal, directly impact these dividends.

The ACT Treasury will prepare updated economic forecasts and revenue estimates for the 2025-26 Budget Review, which will be released in February 2026.

Questions without notice taken on notice

Housing—National Housing Accord

Ms Berry (*in reply to a question by Mr Rattenbury on Tuesday, 21 October 2025*):

Under section 65 of the *City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act 2017* (CRASLA Act), relevant ministers must set housing targets for the minimum number of public, community, and affordable housing dwellings in new developments.

The 2024-25 housing targets were developed in consultation with Housing ACT and SLA through the development of the ACT Indicative Land Release Program 2024-25 to 2028-29 (2024-25 ILRP).

- Sites suitable for public, community, and affordable housing dwellings were agreed by Cabinet and identified by an ACT Government Housing Targets Reference Group, ILRP Working Group and ILRP Steering Committee that included representation from the City Renewal Authority (CRA), the previous Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD), Housing ACT (HACT), the Suburban Land Agency (SLA) and Treasury.
- The ILRP is an indicative program and can change from year to year, whereas housing targets are formalised and fixed through notifiable instruments, even if a site is not released in the year originally intended.
- Any site with a target applied from previous financial years, which has not been released, will continue to have the target applied in the future.

The Notifiable Instrument (NI2024–509 - *City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency (Housing Targets) Determination 2024 (No 2)*) gives effect to the housing targets published in the ILRP by placing requirements for affordable, community and public housing on land scheduled for release by the ACT Government.

The 2024-25 ILRP identified land for a multi-unit site of up to 40 new public housing dwellings in the Molonglo Town Centre. Housing ACT was consulted and agreed to the site.

Lake Ginninderra—water quality

Ms Orr (*in reply to a question by Ms Barry on Tuesday, 21 October 2025*):

The Government's investment in improving water quality covers a broad range of programs, initiatives, services and activities of Government. In addition to targeted investment through the Healthy Waterways program, Government investments in water quality include: rural and urban land and natural resource management activities; stormwater infrastructure delivery and maintenance; city operations such as street sweeping; the planning and delivery of water sensitive urban design assets in new developments in water catchments; lakes management operations; activities of the Environment Protection Authority; operation and maintenance of roads, gross pollutant traps and water quality assets; building and construction requirements, regulation and compliance activities; management of the urban forest; and water quality monitoring.

Many of these activities are invested in by Government as they provide multiple community benefits, of which water quality is only one. Therefore, providing a definitive quantum of investment in water quality alone is not possible.

ACT public service—work health and safety

Mr Pettersson (*in reply to a question by Mr Cocks on Wednesday, 22 October 2025*):

The ACT Public Sector State of the Service Report provides information on misconduct investigations and findings in the ACTPS. In the 2014-15 report ten misconduct investigations resulted in a finding of bullying or harassment compared to the 2024-25 report identifying three. This represents a decline of approximately 70 per cent of findings of bullying or harassment.

This decline needs to be considered in the context of the growth of the ACTPS, with the Service increasing approximately 50 per cent in size from 2014-15 to 2024-25. In this context, the incidence of bullying and harassment findings has remained low despite the continued growth in the size of the service.

The reports do suggest an increase in reports of bullying and harassment by staff. Comparison of report numbers between those years should be made with caution, due to improvements to the coding and classification of reports and upgrades to online reporting made in the past ten years. An increase in reports of bullying and harassment, with no corresponding increase in the independently investigated findings of bullying and harassment, could be attributed to improved awareness and reporting of psychosocial hazards.

In the ACTPS there have been significant increases in incident reporting coinciding with the introduction of online safety reporting systems that assure confidentiality for people making reports, and policy efforts to destigmatise the reporting of psychosocial hazards and associated illnesses.

Parking—Theatre Lane car park closure

Mr Barr (*in reply to a question by Mr Milligan on Wednesday, 22 October 2025*):

There are currently 203 public car parks and 55 permit holder carparks (including 18 accessible car parks) affected as a result of the Theatre Lane carpark closure.

All permit and accessible parking has been relocated to the nearby City Hill and Hobart Place car parks.

Following feedback loading zones have been adjusted down from nine to six to accommodate a further two accessible car parks.

Public housing—maintenance

Ms Berry (*in reply to a question by Ms Barry on Wednesday, 22 October 2025*):

Programmed Facilities Management (PFM) met with the sub-contractors that work on

vacant properties on Friday 17 October 2025. Government officials did not attend this meeting.

The intent of this sub-contractor briefing was to advise that the business-as-usual activity of scoping new vacant properties each week will be paused, with a new process to be devised to ensure funds remained available for the remainder of the financial year. This is to ensure escalated and prioritised vacant work can be managed, while returning as many properties as possible within available funding, and not exceeding the 2025-26 Total Facilities Management allocated budget.

In response to a question from one of the contractors on budget, PFM provided clarification that the budget had not been overspent, that other work streams like responsive works were not affected, and that the pause on scoping was an interim measure while a plan was developed.

Ms Berry (*in reply to a question by Mr Cocks on Wednesday, 22 October 2025*):

The ACT Government appropriated \$65.96 million for public housing maintenance in 2025–26. Of the \$51.76 million for repairs and maintenance works, as at 30 September 2025, the expenditure is \$9.872 million for 2025-26. No budgets have been reallocated.

Schools—safety

Ms Berry (*in reply to a question by Mr Hanson and a supplementary question by Mr Cocks on Wednesday, 22 October 2025*):

The jurisdictional review was undertaken by the Education Directorate.

Analysis of the Victorian and South Australian legislative frameworks found both jurisdictions provide the following protections:

- a. clear definition of an authorised or designated person who holds power of exclusion
- b. definition of person to be excluded or removed from school grounds
- c. when the authorised or designated person can exclude
- d. how the authorised or designated person can exclude
- e. guidance on associated offences and penalties.

The Government will consult with stakeholders as part of the Education Directorate's forward legislation reform program in 2026.

WorkSafe ACT—compliance

Mr Pettersson (*in reply to a question by Mr Milligan on Wednesday, 22 October 2025*):

WorkSafe inspectors meet and engage with ACT public service executives frequently, for example in the course of responding to work safety reports about directorates, investigating work safety compliance matters, and to discuss work safety legislation and legislative reform with policy executives.

The Work Health and Safety Commissioner's statutory functions include sharing information about work safety performance. They are able to publicly identify industry sectors, workforces and hazards that they consider are of high priority or risk. One way the WHS Commissioner does so is in their annual Statement of Operational Intent, a notifiable instrument under the Work Health and Safety Act.

The Work Health and Safety Commissioner's 2025 Statement identifies public administration as a priority industry sector and psychosocial hazards as a key focus area.

The Statement of Operational Intent is in part responsive to an annual ministerial Statement of Expectations, which is issued by me, as portfolio minister, and prepared in consultation with the tripartite Work Health and Safety Council.

The 2025 Statement of Expectations, which is also a notifiable instrument, calls for WorkSafe to prioritise industry sectors with relatively high rates of injury and illness, including the public sector and construction sector. Psychosocial risks highlighted in respect of the public sector were occupational violence and workload strain, particularly for front line service delivery roles.

ACT Fire & Rescue—hybrid electric fire truck

Dr Paterson (*in reply to a question by Ms Morris on Thursday, 23 October 2025*):

The ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) is currently in discussions with the manufacturer regarding the warranty and a possible extension once the vehicle has been repaired. At the end of the warranty the vehicle will be maintained in the same manner as the rest of the fire truck fleet, through the ESA Workshop. The ESA Workshop technicians undergo specialist training in the repair and maintenance of EV's, including specific training on the electric fire truck in collaboration with Rosenbauer and Fire Rescue Victoria. The ESA Workshop completes maintenance activities that enable our frontline vehicles to remain operational all year round, this includes an after-hours on-call technician. This capability continues to play a vital role in supporting operational readiness across the ESA.

Courts and tribunal—Public Advocate and ACT Courts pilot project

Ms Cheyne (*in reply to a question by Mr Braddock and supplementary question by Mr Rattenbury on Thursday, 23 October 2025*):

1. On 27 June 2024, the former Attorney-General approved \$108,507 from the Confiscated Assets Trust Fund (CAT Fund) for the Public Advocate and ACT Courts and Tribunal to undertake a six-month service provision/research initiative to explore ways the Public Advocate could further improve access to justice and the experience of court for persons experiencing vulnerability (see approval instrument here). Funding for the initiative was to be expended by 30 June 2025. Due to administrative savings there were unspent funds which, on 23 June 2025, I approved being used to extend the initiative for a further three months (see approval instrument here).

2. Following the funding being expended, the Public Advocate referred a proposal to the Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACS) for additional funding to extend the project until 30 June 2026. JACS has considered the proposal and will support the Attorney-General to make a decision on whether to make an allocation of funding from the CAT Fund for this purpose.
3. The ACT's Disability Justice Strategy 2019-2029 is the Government's long term plan to improve equity and inclusion for people with disability in the justice system. Under the Disability Justice Strategy, the Government has provided funding for Disability Liaison Officer positions across agencies, including a position in the ACT Courts and Tribunal.

The ACT Courts and Tribunal continue their commitment to providing pragmatic, systemic and consistent support for all Court and Tribunal users, and the support services and stakeholders operating across these spaces.

A range of specialised supports and programs, including but not limited to Therapeutic Court and Tribunal programs, availability of the Guide Dogs Therapy program, The Elders and Respected Persons Panel for Circle Court and the Therapeutic and Client Services team continue to operate across the ACTCT.

Staff who are client-facing are equipped with the relevant training and resources to enable and promote proactive, positive and effective engagement with Court and Tribunal Users.

Lake Ginninderra—water quality

Ms Orr (*in reply to a question by Miss Nuttall on Thursday, 23 October 2025*):

Tychonema is a type of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) that typically forms mats on the bottom of water bodies, rather than floating freely like other forms of cyanobacteria that also occur in urban lakes. While its presence can raise some environmental concerns, its impacts are generally limited on the aquatic environment unless blooms become concentrated and extensive.

While *Tychonema* can influence aquatic ecosystems under certain conditions, its effects do not usually pose a serious threat to natural ecosystems as discussed below:

- *Fish Health* Fish do not typically consume *Tychonema* directly, so under normal conditions, their health is not significantly affected. However, in cases of dense blooms, toxins may enter the food web and accumulate in fish tissues over time. If a bloom is identified as toxic, it's recommended to avoid contact with the water and refrain from eating fish from the affected water bodies.
- *Oxygen Levels* When *Tychonema* blooms die off and decompose, they can contribute to a temporary reduction in dissolved oxygen. This may cause stress to fish and other aquatic life, particularly in still or shallow waters, but such events are usually short-lived and localised.
- *Vegetation* Native aquatic plants are generally unaffected unless *Tychonema* mats become thick enough to physically smother them or if oxygen levels drop significantly for extended periods. These scenarios are uncommon and typically associated with prolonged or severe blooms.

Stromlo district playing fields—development

Ms Berry (*in reply to a question by Mr Milligan and a supplementary question by Mr Cocks on Thursday, 23 October 2025*):

Infrastructure Canberra is progressing the delivery of the Stromlo District Playing Fields project, which will be delivered in multiple stages. Subject to relevant authority approvals, Stage 1 construction is anticipated to be completed by June 2028, as outlined in the [2025-26 Budget Statement](#).

The original estimated cost for the Stage 1 election commitment was \$15 million in 2020. The current estimate, as per the [2025–26 Budget process](#) is \$35.365 million.

At the time of the 2020 election commitment, detailed planning and design for the District Playing Fields had not yet been completed. Capital costs to address site engineering requirements and constraints including civil works, stormwater management, utility services, and landscaping had not yet been fully quantified. Since 2020, the cost of delivering capital projects has increased significantly, driven by broader economic impacts following the COVID-19 pandemic.