



DEBATES
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DAILY HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

13 May 2025

This is an **EDITED PROOF TRANSCRIPT** of proceedings that is subject to further checking. Members' suggested corrections for the official *Weekly Hansard* should be lodged in writing with the Hansard office no later than **Monday, 26 May 2025**.

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Tuesday, 13 May 2025

MR SPEAKER (Mr Parton) (10:01): Members:

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

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

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

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

Petitions

The following petitions were lodged for presentation:

Planning—Woden town centre—petition 3-25

By Dr Paterson, from 466 residents:

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

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

There are currently a large number of multistorey developments that have been constructed in recent years and many more to be constructed in Woden Town Centre over the next decade. These developments have created separate and distinct precincts across Woden Central including the Irving Street precinct, the Easty Street precinct and the Woden Centre precinct.

The Woden District strategy states protection and enhancement of the natural environment, development of an economic and employment hub, sustainable neighbourhoods, and inclusive communities as directions for Woden. This plan provides a general overview of the intentions of planning for Woden's low and medium density suburbs surrounding Woden Centre. It does not however take into consideration the specific needs of the high density, multistorey residents which now surround the Woden Town Centre.

The 'Braddon Place Plan' of 2019 and the Acton Waterfront Place Plan 2020 represent comprehensive reviews of how residents of a community want their area to develop into the future. This is a critical juncture for Woden Town Centre to ensure it develops as a liveable community with integrated natural and constructed green spaces as well as ensuring a self-sustaining vibrant cultural and entertainment multi residential precinct for people to use every day of the year.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to:

Call on the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services to conduct an inquiry into improving the sustainability and liveability of Phillip/Woden Town Centre and its surrounding precincts.

The Terms of reference of this inquiry could include:

Understanding the vision that residents and businesses share around Woden in to understand the benefit or need for a ‘place plan’ for the Woden Town Centre, including its adjacent residential communities, both existing and upcoming.

What work is required to create a shared vision and the identification of the unique landscape, character and offering of Woden.

How can the physical and social aspects of Woden and the pedestrian, vehicle and social connectivity through the centre be improved. This should include planning for impending changes over the next decade, including the large amount of residential development in the area and the extension of light rail to Woden, to ensure the smooth and efficient interaction between different modes of transport that do not negatively impact the area’s liveability.

What natural, social, and physical characteristics of Woden should be preserved and enhanced.

The best ways to engage the lived experience of residents of Woden residents through this process to foster a sense of local ownership and pride in the development of the town centre.

Domestic and family violence—proposed inquiry—petition 6-25

By Ms Morris, from 310 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to the alarming impact of family violence in our community.

Since the ACT election in October last year, there has been 302 victims of family violence, with 378 family violence assaults recorded across the ACT. On average, police attend 13.5 family violence incidents each day. Meanwhile, victim support organisations consistently report being underfunded and oversubscribed. Many victims describe their experiences with the justice system as both traumatic and unjust.

Furthermore, the ACT Ombudsman’s November 2020 report on the parole processes at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) highlighted “inadequate policies and procedures governing the parole processes,” with the term “victim” appearing only once throughout the 48-page document.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the ACT Government’s policies on the prevention of Family Violence and the administration of Parole.

This inquiry should examine, but not be limited to, the following issues:

- Assess whether the funds raised through the Safer Families Levy are being allocated effectively to support family violence prevention and victim support services.
- Determine if Domestic and Family Violence Crisis Support organisations receive adequate and sustained funding to meet the needs of victims.
- Investigate the long-term physical, emotional, and psychological effects of family violence on those affected.
- Evaluate whether the parole process ensures that victims feel safe and protected from fear and intimidation.
- Review the types of programmes offenders seeking parole are required to complete and assess their effectiveness in reducing reoffending.
- Examine if the current parole system upholds the human right to safety for victims and if parole is being granted appropriately to offenders of family violence.

Wanniassa Hills—fire trail—maintenance—petitions 9-25 and 24-25

By Mr Werner-Gibbings, from 52 and 125 residents, respectively:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to the state of the Wanniassa Hills Fire Trail:

- a) The Wanniassa Hills Nature Reserve is well-loved and frequently used by residents of Fadden, Gowrie and beyond.
- b) The Wanniassa Hills Fire Trail is in desperate need of repairs. The bitumen surface has eroded and cracked, drains are blocked, and the retaining wall requires repair.
- c) The lack of drainage causes water to run into nearby backyards when it rains, and
- d) The state of the trail discourages residents from using it for exercise and engagement with one of Tuggeranong's beautiful nature reserves, stifling a vision for an active, liveable Tuggeranong and limiting opportunities to foster community.

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

- a) Repair the surface of the 2km bitumen trail,
- b) Unblock and schedule regular maintenance on the gutters,
- c) Clear the drainage pipes in the retaining walls, and
- d) Repair the stone retaining wall where required.

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

Motion to take note of petitions

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

That the petitions so lodged be noted.

Planning—Woden town centre—petition 3-25

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform) (10.03), by leave: I table the following paper:

Petition which does not conform with the standing orders—Woden Town Centre—Proposed inquiry into improving the liveability of (118 signatures).

This petition, which contains 466 online signatures and 222 physical signatures, calls on the government to explore ways to improve the liveability of Woden town centre. I would like to start by thanking residents at the Ivy. This conversation started a year ago with them around ways we could improve the liveability of Woden town centre. I thank Sam Edwards, who is the principal petitioner, for all her work in getting signatures, and also thank Ms Carrick for her work in getting signatures for this petition.

There is incredible work going on in Woden at the moment. Multiple multistorey developments have been constructed over recent years and many more will be constructed over the next decade. These developments have created separate and distinct precincts across Woden, including the Irving Street precinct, the Easty Street precinct and the Woden town centre precinct.

The Woden District Strategy talks about protection and enhancement of the natural environment, development of an economic employment hub, sustainable neighbourhoods, and inclusive communities as directions for Woden. This plan provides a general overview of the intentions of planning for Woden's low- and medium-density suburbs surrounding Woden town centre. We would like further consideration of the specific needs of the high-density, multistorey residents and the liveability of the town centre in general. We are calling for a request to the Standing Committee on Environment, Transport and City Services to conduct an inquiry into improving the sustainability and liveability of Phillip and Woden town centre. We have outlined some draft terms of reference in this petition.

I thank all the members of the Woden community for putting up this petition and look forward to seeing the outcome.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (10.06): I rise to speak to the petition regarding the potential for a vibrant Woden town centre. I thank Minister Paterson for sponsoring this important petition. I note that another couple hundred signatures have been presented, bringing the total to around 700. I would also like to thank Sam Edwards for starting the petition and my volunteers for ensuring it received over 500 signatures.

Over the past decade, I have gained valuable insights into town planning and the concept of liveability. I have seen Woden's strengths and recognised its untapped potential. I firmly believe in development that enhances our community and balances residential areas, bustling community spaces, job opportunities, essential services, inviting public spaces and robust community facilities. But, as we know, this takes town planning. As the Chief Minister says, cities do not succeed by accident or by leaving things to chance; they require design, good governance and great collaboration.

The new CIT is a fantastic asset for the town centre, aside from forgetting to provide parking for the students and the teachers. We need to maximise its impact by transforming the surrounding area into a welcoming destination—a place that fosters connection and strengthens our sense of belonging. To do this, we need to make sure our public spaces are sunny and are not surrounded by blank walls of 28 storeys that will further overshadow the core of Woden, which current zoning allows.

One of the major advantages Woden has is the major bus interchange. People arrive from across the southern suburbs and Rapid buses move through it. It is a place where people can come together. The Prevention United report from earlier this year is about joining forces to prevent mental health conditions and says:

In the ACT specifically, young females are on average more anxious than their counterparts in other parts of Australia.⁸⁸ The ACT also has some of the highest youth self-harm rates of all Australian jurisdictions, and the second-highest level of youth psychological distress.⁸⁹ The ACT government needs to understand why this is the case and, in the process, identify the key risk and protective factors that should be prioritised to reverse this trend.

It also talks about identifying local needs and gaps related to social connection and social cohesion. It talks about community activities to reduce loneliness and social isolation, which is good for mental health.

I want to raise some of the policies we need to discuss for better planning in Woden town centre. How do we support people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds who use the town centre for a daily outing? What is the policy for the equitable provision of arts facilities, aquatic centres and indoor sports stadiums, and who should pay for them—the private or public sector? Why is the policy for building heights around public spaces so different across Canberra? Where are the active fronts to encourage the day and night-time economy? How can we improve congestion and access to the centre by car and cycle paths? We need to ensure that we have a decent facility for Woden Community Service to provide its critical services to vulnerable people in our community, noting that funding for planning a community facility was provided in 2012-13 and we still do not have that facility. We need to support homeless people, people with mental health issues and people who do not feel safe in their homes. What is the value we place on biodiversity, including naturalisation of Yarralumla Creek?

We need to work together to create a Woden town centre that reflects the ambitions of its residents. Let's move beyond town cramming and focus on strategic people-centred planning that addresses housing needs while fostering a thriving community. Let's embark on a collaborative process to identify and implement solutions that will enhance the liveability of our town centre. I propose we inquire into planning and provide recommendations that will prioritise community needs, economic vitality and social

wellbeing. Let's work together to build a Woden we can all be proud of.

Wanniassa Hills—fire trail—maintenance—petitions 9-25 and 24-25

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS (Brindabella) (10.10): I am pleased to rise this fine morning to present the petition from 177 users of the Wanniassa Hills fire trail, which runs along the edge of the Wanniassa Hills Nature Reserve beneath Mount Wanniassa. The Wanniassa Hills Nature Reserve is a cherished area, frequently used and enjoyed by residents of north-east Tuggeranong, particularly from the suburbs of Wanniassa, Fadden, Gowrie and Macarthur. It is a beautiful and relatively accessible reserve with extraordinary views, not just south and west across Tuggeranong Valley but also north and east. It is decorated by kangaroos and paper daisies. It provides residents with vital green space for recreation, exercise and community gatherings.

However, numerous users of the trail have raised with me the deteriorating state of the bitumen that goes along the trail, both when I was at their front doors during my campaign last year and since my election. As a regular walker of the trail myself, I can attest that these concerns are not misplaced. It is clear that the trail has suffered from a lack of proper maintenance for too long and is now in need of restoration. From what I understand, the trail was originally constructed to help prevent water run-off from the nature reserve's steep hill slopes into nearby residences. This was an essential measure to protect homes from flooding and water damage.

However, much of the trail no longer protects homes. The gutters and drains are blocked with dirt, weeds and leaves, and sometimes they are so hard packed that you would not know gutters are there. These days, the blocked parts of the trail's gutters and drains do not mitigate the flooding and water damage issue for residences but exacerbate it. During heavy rainfall, some residents have to deal with surface water flooding over the path and entering their yards or even their housing foundations. Additionally, the accumulation of debris, sediment and vegetation in the drains has caused water to crack and damage the surface of the bitumen trail. Flowing water has led to large washouts and potholes in the trail, particularly in the steep section near its Nicklin Crescent terminus.

For the Assembly's benefit, I note that this issue is not new. It was first brought to my attention during my election campaign in 2020. The users and the community have been vocal about their concerns. I acknowledge the efforts of the former member for Brindabella, Nicole Lawder, who raised this issue with the former ministers responsible, in 2022 and again in 2023. I also thank her for her advice and handover of this issue.

The lack of regular maintenance of the Wanniassa Hills fire trail has allowed problems to worsen and made the trail increasingly unstable. That is why 177 signatures have called for the drains to be cleared and the surface to be repaired. This petition reflects the community's urgent desire for a plan of improvement that involves regular maintenance and drain cleaning and would ensure its ongoing utility as a valuable public resource.

I thank very much the current Minister for City and Government Services for engaging on the matter. As always, it is encouraging to see that the government can and does

listen to the concerns of its community. I look forward to working with her and the community on an ongoing, feasible and long-term solution for drainage and surface maintenance that can be prioritised by the government. This would not only restore the Wanniasa Hills fire trail to its former condition but also ensure that it remains a safe and enjoyable space for the next 40 years.

Domestic and family violence—proposed inquiry—petition 6-25

MS MORRIS (Brindabella) (10.14): Today I am proud to present this petition which calls for an inquiry into the prevention of family violence in the ACT. I thank Mr Brad Clark and his partner for spearheading this petition, because, regrettably, they have both learned in the hardest ways that domestic violence is a crisis which is gripping our community. It is a cancer that needs to be eliminated and it requires the attention of everyone in this chamber to act.

When Mr Clark initiated this petition in February, more than 300 victims of family and domestic violence had come forward in the space of just four months, and police responded to around 13 family violence incidents every day. The daunting reality is that, as we gather here today, somewhere in Canberra another family is suffering the trauma of violence in their home, yet, despite the scale of this crisis, victim support organisations continually tell us that they are underfunded and oversubscribed. The very services that offer victims a pathway to safety are stretched beyond their limits, and they themselves are at a crisis point.

Many victims who have courageously attempted to escape domestic violence and seek safety, shelter and justice describe their experience within our system as sometimes traumatic and unjust. One woman told me that the trauma and insecurity she faced in escaping violence were in some ways more unbearable than the violence she endured in her former home. The institutions that should be offering protection too often become an obstacle to the safety that victims seek to get.

Regrettably, this has also become clear in our parole system. The ACT Ombudsman report in November 2020 on the parole processes at the Alexander Maconochie Centre highlighted “inadequate policies and procedures governing the parole system”. The term “victim” only appeared once in the entire document. Anecdotally, I have been made aware of situations where convicted domestic violence offenders have been released on parole against the advice and evidence of witnesses, including parole officers, and, sure enough, those convicted offenders released on parole have gone on to commit more crimes, sometimes days or even hours after they were released.

This is not just an administrative failure; it is a moral failure. We need to do better. The rights and safety of victims must be at the heart of our justice system, yet time and time again it seems like it is just an afterthought. This petition calls for a comprehensive inquiry into policies and procedures regarding the ACT’s response to the prevention of family violence and the administration of parole—an inquiry that asks the hard questions and demands real answers.

The victims of family violence in Canberra deserve more than we are currently providing. They deserve action and they deserve a system that protects them, supports them and puts their safety first and above all else. That is why this petition is so

important. I thank everyone who has signed it, because we cannot allow the crisis of domestic violence to continue to go unchecked.

Planning—Woden town centre—petition 3-25

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (10.17): I want to say a few brief words on the petition to improve Woden's liveability. It is commendable that we now have a member of cabinet in the Labor government willing to point out the decades-long failures that we have seen in Woden. In my first speech, I spoke about how Woden could and should be the beating economic heart of Canberra's south and that we deserve more than just failed experiments. We need to do more than just rely on building more shoebox apartments for Woden. We need to make sure people in Woden have the infrastructure and the services that they deserve, in the same way that anywhere else in Canberra can expect.

It has been a very long time coming to actually get some sort of acknowledgment from the government that things in Woden are not doing very well—that the economic situation and the liveability of one of our most important town centres has fallen behind. You cannot continue to just undertake, as Ms Carrick ably calls it, urban cramming without making sure people have the things they need to live well in high-density areas.

I commend all of the work across parties to get this petition up, because people in Woden deserve better.

Domestic and family violence—proposed inquiry—petition 6-25

MS BARRY (Ginninderra) (10.19): I want to say a few words in support of Ms Morris's petition. I thank the 306 residents who signed the petition. This petition continues to put the issue of domestic and family violence on the table. It continues to shed light on this issue. As Ms Morris indicated, it is a cancer. When I look across society, especially our community, we sometimes get a bit comfortable in accepting this issue. Sometimes when you raise it, there is an eye-roll or a sense of "Oh, my God—domestic and family violence again," but the reality is that women and children are still dying from domestic and family violence. Society is continually being impacted by domestic and family violence.

Last week, in this very building, we remembered 106 women. We lit candles for those who have passed away from domestic and family violence. A few colleagues were there, as well as people I did not know, and we held each other and cried. I cried because I had victim-survivor guilt. Why did I survive but not those 106 women? Why was I lucky to leave that situation alive but those 106 women were not?

This is an issue that is eating into every fabric of our society. It is an issue that we must put at the forefront of our mind. We must continue to talk about domestic and family violence and solutions. For example, why do victims of domestic and family violence have to apply for a domestic and family violence order every two years? Why is that the case? Why can't it be three years? Why can't it be five years? Why can't it be ongoing until the victim makes an application to withdraw it? These are issues that we need to consider, and these are issues I hope will be addressed when this petition is considered.

Ms Morris, I again thank you for sponsoring this petition. I commend you for doing it.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Birthday greetings

MR SPEAKER: Members, with indulgence and pursuant to the unspoken code of the Speaker's office, I wish to draw members' attention to the fact that, it being 13 May, it is the anniversary of the birth of my chief of staff, Elyse Heslehurst. It is timely for me to wish her a happy birthday. She is a gun, and we would be shot without her!

National Road Safety Week Ministerial statement

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy) (10.22): I wish Elyse a very happy birthday. Also, I am proud to rise today to discuss another significant occasion this week: National Road Safety Week. It commenced on Sunday, 11 May and concludes on Sunday, 18 May.

The ACT government remains committed to vision zero: no deaths or serious injuries on our roads. To achieve this goal, every person who interacts with our road network needs to acknowledge and take seriously their responsibility for road safety. Every vehicle crash has a cost, whether it be financial, emotional or physical. In the most devastating cases, those involved are seriously injured or killed. The impact of a death on the road is felt widely by those who know and love the victims. Those people, who suffer lifelong consequences and an absence that we know will never again be filled, are also victims.

Any death on our roads is one too many. In 2024, 11 people lost their lives on ACT roads. Of those 11, five were motorcycle riders. So far this year, three lives have been lost. Two were vulnerable road users, including a cyclist and a motorcycle rider. While every person has a responsibility for road safety, it would be remiss of us not to acknowledge that the impacts of dangerous driving can create a disproportionate risk to vulnerable road users: young people; people on foot, on a bike, on a motorcycle or on a mobility scooter; or public transport users. All of these people are more exposed than people sitting inside a private vehicle.

The consequences of being involved in a crash can be even more devastating for vulnerable road users. We see this play out on Canberra roads in devastating ways. Most recently, there was the incident that saw two St Edmund's College students, Aiden and Aaron, injured on Canberra Avenue. Yesterday, I was able to meet Aaron and his father, Josh, who had incredible father's intuition, saw the vehicle that hit the boys and realised that, perhaps, there had been an incident near his son's school. He raced back and applied some life-saving treatment to Aiden, not realising yet that Aaron had also been hit. Yesterday, I was able to speak directly to Aaron and Josh, as well as Aiden's brothers, Bryce and Cooper, and the broader school community about what incredible support they have provided each other.

As a government, I acknowledge our role in making our road network as safe as it can be. I was pleased to announce the installation of a new signalised midblock pedestrian crossing on Canberra Avenue, near Burke Crescent. The crossing will provide a safer way for students from St Edmund's and St Clare's colleges to cross the road to get to and from school. The design for this new pedestrian crossing is currently being fast-tracked to support the approvals process and enable construction. Canberra Avenue is NCA-designated land, so anything that we propose to do in that area requires the NCA's engagement and approval, but I trust that they will come to the same conclusion that we have from the feasibility study that was commissioned last year and will assist us in making this major change. I will report back during a future sitting period as to the specific timing of installation.

I have seen some continuing commentary surrounding the incident in the lead-up to and after the announcement yesterday, about the need for Canberra Avenue to be a 40-kilometre-an-hour zone, but I note that every school has at least one 40-kilometre-an-hour zone and every school frontage has a 40-kilometre-an-hour zone. There are schools that are placed in popular areas—areas where there are high traffic volumes and arterial roads—but, nevertheless, the safe environment of a 40-kilometre-an-hour zone is provided for every school, and that includes St Edmund's, which has multiple school zone signage on streets surrounding the school. The school's main frontage is McMillan Crescent, not Canberra Avenue. There is just a handful of school zones in the ACT that have a frontage that leads on to busy roads, and they tend to have some pretty significant issues with compliance. There is a range of reasons why a 40-kilometre-an-hour zone is not appropriate but a signalised pedestrian crossing is. It will require traffic to come to a halt so that students are able to cross safely and in a sufficient amount of time to do so comfortably.

The announcement yesterday builds on other significant progress we have made to make our roads safer. Last term, new laws were passed that give our dedicated ACT Policing members the ability to issue traffic infringement notices for first time low-range drink driving and immediate licence suspensions for drink or drug driving, speeding in excess of 45 kilometres an hour over the speed limit or aggravated dangerous, furious or reckless driving. Road safety laws can be enforced by ACT Policing in any place and at any time.

We also have an extensive road safety camera network that includes fixed cameras and transportable cameras that can currently detect running a red light, speeding, driving an unregistered vehicle or using a mobile device. Later this year, we will also turn on the ability for cameras to be able to detect drivers and passengers who are not wearing seatbelts. I look forward to introducing legislative amendments to enable the automated detection of this offence later today.

Of course, having an effective and proportionate legal framework to deal with offences is only part of the solution. Our efforts are complemented by programs including our pre-learner driver mentor program, which matches learner drivers with mentors who help them learn to be a safe driver, and the PCYC Dangerous Driving Intervention pilot, which aims to reduce aggressive driving and reduce young driver involvement in road trauma. This is a pilot program that commenced in April 2024 and targets at-risk youth aged 14 to 17 years of age. The program includes in-school presentations and other referral opportunities, such as from police or the Education Directorate. I am pleased to

say that I have recently extended funding so that the pilot can continue and we can measure its effectiveness appropriately.

We also have the Road Safety Community Grants Program, for which applications closed yesterday. I look forward to receiving advice from the ACT Road Safety Advisory Board on the applications that should progress. I thank them in advance for their dedication to funding initiatives that have a real impact on road safety outcomes. I met with the board just a few weeks ago. The calibre of the experience that they hold as individuals and collectively means that we are in very good hands with their recommendations.

Before I close this statement, I send my deep and sincere condolences to the families and friends of those whose lives have been lost. Also, I thank those in our community who are dedicated advocates for road safety. Many of those dedicated advocates are still grieving and will remain grieving for the rest of their lives. Their work is so valuable and so appreciated.

Through you, Mr Speaker: to every driver who gets behind the wheel of a vehicle, I remind you that, every time you drive, you risk irreparably damaging another person. You are responsible for driving safely. We will not accept speeding, ignoring road rules or otherwise failing to take every effort to ensure the safety of road users around you.

Also, I note that a wrap-around on one of our buses on the road has been supported and designed in conjunction with ACT Policing. It says, "Drive to arrive". It is supported in conjunction with the enforcement efforts of ACT Policing. I am pleased that it has been able to be on the road for Road Safety Week.

In closing, I reiterate my commitment to road safety. I am proud to say that I have taken the pledge to drive so that others survive. I pledge to drive as though my loved ones were on the road ahead; I will remove all distractions and never use my mobile phone while driving; I will not put other people at risk by speeding, driving while tired or under the influence of alcohol or drugs; I will protect all vulnerable road users, especially those whose job places them in harm's way, by slowing down and giving them the space they need to be safe. I truly hope to see every member in this place take that pledge. They can do so at roadsafetyweek.com.au.

I commend this statement to the Assembly.

I present the following paper:

National Road Safety Week—Ministerial statement, 13 May 2025.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (10.31): I would like to thank the minister for the statement on National Road Safety Week and also affirm that I have also taken that pledge. I want to make a few additional comments. Safe streets are vital for everyone to travel safely regardless of transport mode. Safe speeds and safe infrastructure, which

are vital for safe speeds and personal safety of active transport users, are key parts of the Safe System Approach to road safety used here in Australia, and also key influencers of a large part of the demand for acute and chronic health services here as well.

The streets with speed limits above 30 kilometres per hour but without paths on both sides and convenient or prioritised crossings are not considered safe under the Safe System Approach, which means that most of our streets here in Canberra are not safe. The evidence is clear that potential impact speeds must be no greater than 30 kilometres per hour for a healthy, robust adult. It is even less for children and vulnerable adults. If a robust adult is hit by a vehicle at 30 kilometres per hour, they have a 10 per cent chance of death. At 40 kilometres per hour, it is 30 per cent, and at 50 kilometres per hour, it is 80 per cent. These risks apply to lower speeds for children and vulnerable adults.

People respond to the environment in which they are moving. Currently, our streets and roads are giving visual and physical cues that they are driving fast. What we need are streets designed and regulated to cue drivers to drive at the appropriate speed. There is a mountain of evidence and a global move led by the World Health Organisation for 30 kilometre per hour speed limits as the evidence-based maximum default safe speed for most streets, with higher speeds on only selected streets which have those separated paths and priority crossings for people walking, rolling and cycling. There is a substantial body of standards, guides and case studies to achieve this, and I encourage us in Canberra to examine what we can do to make our streets safer for a safer speed setting.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (10.33): I rise to respond to Ms Cheyne's statement, and I thank Ms Cheyne for making her statement and for making the Canberra Avenue crossing commitment. I am sure the announcement of a new signalised pedestrian road crossing will bring a sigh of relief to Eddie's and St Clare's students, parents, carers, teachers and the broader school communities. This announcement indicating that the government is now taking action in an attempt to prevent further horrific accidents is laudable. Of course, it cannot undo what happened to Aiden and Aaron, and I am well aware that this crossing would not necessarily prevent a dissimilar accident from happening, given the exceptionally reckless driving involved here.

Nonetheless, any move to make it easier and safer for children to walk and ride to school is welcome. When it comes to Canberra Avenue, it is also long overdue. Successive principals of both St Edmunds and St Clares have called for improved road safety measures around their college campuses for years. It has now been three years since former principal Joe Zavone brought a petition to the Assembly sponsored by Ms Lee to reduce the speed limit around Eddie's to 40 kilometres an hour. It feels like a kind of sick foreshadowing that our community has been sounding the alarm bells for so long, and unfortunately, it does seem like a tragedy had to occur for the government to do something about it.

In a media article from 2022 on the petition, someone in the comments section said:

Mr Zavone should know how it works. He'll need to sacrifice a student to get the government to take action.

Three years later, and only by a narrow miss, that was almost the case. Would it not be great if this kind of reactive policy making gave way to a proactive policy development process focused on taking seriously all community concerns?

When Mr Zavone brought his petition to the Assembly, he was told that limiting the speeds to 40 kilometres an hour was not something the government could do on arterial roads, yet we have a 40 kilometre an hour zone on Northbourne Avenue. It is one of Canberra's busiest arterial roads. A 40 kilometre an hour zone should absolutely be a consideration for Canberra Avenue. I say this as a member of this Assembly and also as an old boy of St Edmund's College myself. I hope the minister will consider changing her position on this.

It is incumbent upon us as a community to ensure our children can walk and ride safely to school with their mates. We know the significant health, wellbeing, economic and social benefits of really prioritising active transport and we need to have the courage to realise those benefits. Parents should not have to worry about whether their child will be hit by a car on the way to school and principals should not have to repeatedly ask the government for action on commonsense changes that would increase safety for their students.

So while I am pleased by the government's commitment to act, I do hope the government acknowledges there is still more to do and appreciates the necessity of listening to the concerns of our community early with a preventative mindset. I would also note that the school community remains uncertain about when exactly this signalised crossing will be installed, having already heard some mixed messages about whether it would take six months or 12 months or perhaps longer, courtesy of the NCA. I thank the minister for the commitment to make another statement in this place when that becomes clearer and implore that all steps be taken to expedite its construction. Again, I thank the government for their commitment today to move quickly on this.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform) (10.37): I would like to speak and thank the minister for her statement around recognising National Road Safety Week. I would like to acknowledge the major collision team within ACT Policing who do incredible, incredible work and some of the most challenging work, attending the most horrific car accidents that occur in our community. I would like to thank our ambulance service and Fire and Rescue, who also are first responders to these scenes and thank them for their tireless commitment to keeping our community safe.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (10.37): I will be brief. I would like to thank the minister for her sincere words and clear commitment to the safety of all road users. I would like to echo her calls for all of us, community and government alike, to do everything we can to not just passively, but actively protect vulnerable road users and all road users. I would like to also extend my sincerest condolences to the families and friends who have lost their loved ones on the road.

A couple of times I have witnessed the irreparable grief second and thirdhand of those who have lost dear friends to car crashes. The minister is absolutely right. One death on

our roads is too many, and three lives lost this year alone is devastating. It is precisely because one death on our roads is too many that a preventative investment in road safety, as Mr Emerson was saying, is so important. I am reassured to hear that the minister has invested in the signalised intersection alongside other road safety measures.

I am rising today as a local member to once again express my serious concern over a road in the southernmost part of my electorate, which is Smiths Road. The Smiths Road community has been consistently vocal to this Assembly regarding the alarming state that the road is in, and they are concerned that no permanent solution has been reached. I experienced the state of the road myself when I went out there driving up to meet with the community. I can tell you I did not feel safe and I was worried about whether my car would actually withstand the judders even at 30 kilometres an hour.

Now, a part of this road is unsealed. It is graded frequently, I imagine, at significant cost to government. But even when graded this road is so rough that emergency services vehicles will, and in fact have, refused to travel along it for a number of hours. We have seen this in cases of medical emergency and significant fire risk. The dust kicked up by the tyres means visibility is severely restricted. There are substantial unmarked divots in the side of the road, which are barely wide enough for two cars to pass each other. It has been clear to the community and the road users that grading the road and putting in signage has not solved these problems.

For many in the Smiths Road community, this is their daily commute. They have to use this road dawn, dusk and dark. They have expressed to me their serious concerns for their safety and the safety of anyone travelling out past Tharwa, especially when they are not experienced drivers. In this context, the community has been calling for a follow through on a commitment made back in 2019 by Minister Steel for the final stretch of road on the ACT side to be resealed. It is my sincerest hope that this commitment will be rectified in the upcoming budget, as I strongly believe it aligns with the ACT government's Vision Zero.

I again thank the minister for the goal and commitment to Vision Zero and for reciting the pledge to drive others to do so. I want to confirm, having heard it, that I will be taking that pledge as well. I believe we are completely aligned on the role of maintenance and preventative investment in keeping everyone safe on our roads.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Vocational education and training—initiatives

Ministerial statement

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) (10.40): I am pleased today to update the Assembly on how the ACT government is partnering with the Australian government to address local and national workforce needs and deliver a vocational education and training system that provides high quality, responsive and accessible education and training in the ACT.

All of us in this place are well aware of our economy's need for skilled workers, both now and into the future. We are a highly educated and skilled workforce, where two out of three individuals hold a certificate III or higher, surpassing the national average. There are currently more than 4,700 apprentices and trainees in training in the ACT. The most popular qualifications include electrotechnology, carpentry, plumbing, light vehicle mechanics and early childhood education and care. All are qualifications that are essential to support the electrification of our city, increase the supply of housing and support a growing city.

But there are significant challenges facing our vocational education sector. The ACT has an unemployment rate of 2.9, the lowest in the country. In many respects, this is a very good thing, but having such a tight labour market does present challenges for the vocational sector and training sector. While some of these challenges are felt most acutely in the ACT, these are national issues and we very much welcome the Albanese government's ongoing commitment to this sector. This commitment has meant the ACT and Australian governments have been able to partner to provide more opportunities for Canberrans to access high-quality training.

One of the best examples of this is the Australian government's commitment to free TAFE. To deliver this commitment, they are partnering with states and territories to deliver free places through public TAFE providers, recognising and embedding the role of the public provider at the heart of the vocational education and training sector. Here in the ACT, we have entered into a free TAFE agreement with the federal government worth more than \$25 million over four years. Through this agreement, CIT have already delivered over 3,700 fee-free places, removing the barrier to entry for people looking to learn, retrain or upskill, and a further 1,200 places will be delivered this year, providing training in the care and experience sector, advanced technology and the renewable sector. CIT will also deliver 340 more construction training places, including pre-apprenticeship courses under the free TAFE initiative. These pre-apprenticeship courses give learners a taste of the trade industry and prepare them for trade apprenticeships.

The National Skills Agreement is another key feature of the vocational education landscape. This agreement represents a co-investment of more than \$667 million into VET in the ACT over five years. Together, the governments have committed to deliver a VET system that provides high quality, responsive and accessible education and training to boost productivity, deliver national priorities and support Australians to obtain the skills and capabilities they need to prosper.

The ACT government, and all governments, agreed to progress national policy initiatives including: Closing the Gap and supporting the Aboriginal community controlled VET sector; improving access to foundation skills for those in need of support; increasing completion of training, particularly for vulnerable cohorts; enhancing VET data and evidence; establishing TAFE centres of excellence; establishing the national TAFE network; and strengthening the vocational education and training workforce. This is an important and ambitious reform agenda. We are working closely with the VET sector, including the Canberra Institute of Technology, to deliver on these commitments.

One of the initiatives already underway against the National Skills Agreement is the

Electric Vehicle Centre of Excellence at CIT Fyshwick. This \$27.3 million investment will deliver innovative, world-class training to increase Australia's EV capability and develop a skilled workforce to meet future demands. This partnership with the Australian government acknowledges the ACT's role in Australia's net zero transition. This transition will require an uplift across a number of trades, including electricians and auto mechanics. The Centre of Excellence has already begun to deliver training in electric vehicle skills nationally through the EV educator upskill project, EV training roadshow project and development of further pilot programs to address urgent skills gaps in this emerging industry. The roadshow is a nationwide initiative to bring electric vehicle training directly to the regions, supporting employers and communities in the early stages of the electric vehicle transition. This initiative ensures access to up-to-date EV knowledge and training across Australia's diverse geographic and economic landscapes.

In addition, the ACT government invested \$500,000 to explore a future energy skills hub at CIT Fyshwick and further collaborations to enhance training programs. In the last budget, the ACT government also increased the subsidy rate for Certificate III in Electrotechnology to 90 per cent of the efficient price. This subsidy increase will support the growing demand for the renewable and construction workforce in the ACT by ensuring the sustainability of training providers in the territory and attracting new learners.

Earlier this year, I released the ACT Skills Action Plan through to 2028. This plan outlines how the ACT government, in collaboration with the Australian government, will build on Canberra's strong and sustainable skills sector to continually improve Australia's VET system to meet national priorities. I look forward to providing an update on the Skills Action Plan and plans for the other initiatives under the National Skills Agreement as they are agreed with the Australian government.

In the coming months, we will also see the opening of the new CIT campus in Woden, with classes due to commence in semester 2. This is a significant milestone in vocational education and training in the ACT. This investment of \$325 million will see high-quality training of up to 6,500 students each year and will offer courses in key areas such as IT, cybersecurity, creative industry, hospitality and business to meet the growing demands of employers in the ACT.

We are fortunate to have a rich and multicultural community here in the ACT and this diversity is instrumental in achieving successful outcomes, particularly for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. This rich diversity builds respect for different cultures and creates a more inclusive environment where individuals are more comfortable and empowered to participate in training and employment.

The ACT has the highest rates of participation and completion in VET for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students compared to the national average. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation for 15- to 64-year-olds in VET in the ACT is 408 per 1,000 people—the highest in the country—significantly higher than the national average at 271.3. The ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander VET qualifications completed in the ACT is also the highest in the country at 93.7 per 1,000 people compared to 47.6 nationally. Despite the progress made, significant gaps remain in achieving equal education and employment rates with non-Indigenous Australians. A

new Yurauna Centre will also be delivered at the CIT Bruce campus to provide additional support services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and community members.

Skilled migration also plays a crucial role in addressing workforce shortages in the ACT. The ACT government works with the Australian government to fill critical skills gaps in the ACT by identifying occupations in high demand through the ACT Critical Skills List and prioritising migrants with the skills needed to fill these roles. By attracting skilled professionals from around the world, the ACT can address skills shortages in critical sectors, enhance its competitiveness and stimulate economic growth. Moreover, a diverse workforce promotes creativity and problem-solving as individuals from different backgrounds contribute unique ideas and approaches. The Australian government's strategic planning regarding migration, as outlined in its Migration Strategy, aims to maximise these benefits by aligning migration policies with national, economic and social goals.

As is clear, this is an exciting and pivotal time in the ACT VET sector. We are planning and implementing new projects that will ensure our VET system is future-focused, resilient and responsive while continuing to support our existing training sector to deliver in-demand qualifications that our local businesses need now. As the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations, I look forward to continuing to work with our industry bodies and training providers as we take these next steps.

I present the following paper:

Strengthening our skills—Ministerial statement, 13 May 2025.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Public Accounts and Administration—Standing Committee Reference

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (10.50): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT Revenue Office currently relies on a self-assessment quiz for individuals to determine their eligibility for the Home Buyer Concession Scheme (HBCS);
- (b) in the 2023-2024 financial year, 236 reassessments of the HBCS were conducted, representing a 191 percent increase from the previous year;
- (c) preliminary data indicates that reassessments for the 2024-2025 financial year are on track to exceed 236 and may reach up to 350, which would represent a further 41 percent increase;
- (d) reassessments may require individuals to repay conveyance duty, incur

- a daily simple interest charge of 12.42 percent, and may also be subject to penalty fees; and
 - (e) concession recipients often include vulnerable individuals, such as first-home buyers, domestic violence victims, pensioners, and recently divorced persons;
- (2) further notes that:
- (a) there is currently no statutory time limit on when a reassessment may occur, with some reassessments occurring more than five years after the original application;
 - (b) the reassessment process can impose significant financial and emotional hardship on individuals;
 - (c) the Revenue Commissioner has acknowledged the potentially unfair nature of certain reassessments, particularly those involving changes in marital status, and has recently exercised discretion to waive debts in specific cases; and
 - (d) concerns have been raised about the administration, transparency and fairness of the reassessment process under the *Taxation Administration Act 1999*, including:
 - (i) a lack of executive oversight;
 - (ii) limited review mechanisms (the decisions are only internally reviewable); and
 - (iii) the continued use of debt collection measures while objections are pending;
- (3) requests the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration to undertake an inquiry into the administration of the HBCS and issues arising under the *Taxation Administration Act 1999*, including:
- (a) the effectiveness and appropriateness of the self-assessment process;
 - (b) the fairness, transparency and financial impacts of reassessments;
 - (c) the appropriateness and proportionality of penalties and interest charges;
 - (d) the scope and exercise of administrative discretion by the Commissioner and the Minister;
 - (e) the adequacy of the objections and appeals process, including limitations on external review;
 - (f) potential legislative or policy reforms to improve the application and reassessment processes; and
 - (g) the reassessment process, including timeframes, and the use of Business Intelligence; and
- (4) requests that, should the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration agree to inquire into the matter, the Committee report by the first sitting day of December 2025.

I am rising today to ask the members of this Assembly to support an inquiry into the administration of the Home Buyer Concession Scheme. This is one of those issues that really drives home the fact that there are people at the end of every decision that the government makes. This is the program through which the government is supposed to be making life easier for people to try and buy their first home or deal with difficult

circumstances like a separation or a divorce.

It is not the first time I have discussed this issue. I have been asking questions about this issue and raising the issue repeatedly over the course of months, both in this chamber and outside of it, because the way the government has been going about extracting money from people who never knew that they would be asked to pay seems entirely out of step with community expectations. It seems entirely out of step with common decency and potentially out of step with what the law says itself, because right here in the ACT, we have seen first home buyers, separated families, survivors of domestic violence and pensioners being pursued for tens of thousands of dollars.

Tens of thousands that they do not have in backdated stamp duty, interest and penalties by a government that has for too long seemed entirely unwilling to see the people, the humans at the receiving end of their actions, because what the government seems to be doing in many instances is going back years in time to change its mind about decisions that people thought were utterly settled.

I understand how, in the first instance, the minister and the government probably looked at this issue and thought it was just a partisan attack. But as I said, there are people at the end of this issue. People who are receiving bills for astounding amounts of money, and people, for the most part, who have been trying to do the right thing. For the most part, the people targeted by these retrospective decisions are not trying to game the system. They are just trying to secure their future. They are trying to buy a home. They are trying to do the right thing by their family. They have acted in good faith. They have completed the forms. They have worked through, most of the time, the online program that is supposed to tell them whether they are eligible or not. They have sought advice from legal experts or conveyancers. Then they have checked the box that says they think that they are eligible for this, and then they have received a notice from the government, a notice that says they have been assessed as eligible for a concession under the program.

It does not seem to be just a policy flaw in this instance, but a fairly systemic failure when people are later receiving significant bills, life-changing bills and then having to fight the government to not have to sell their home or take out a second mortgage to be able to pay off that obligation.

The motion identifies some of the concerns that have come to light, and I have a very long speech that I could read out, but I think there is really only one thing that I think members need to understand here, and that is that while I have had assurances from the minister and from the government that they believe—and I believe that they believe this—they believe they have acted entirely within the law. They believe that what they have done meets the letter of the law, but that does not mean that what is happening is right.

The human impact of the decisions and the actions the government is taking when they send out that first letter that tells people that they have an obligation to pay the government thousands of dollars—and by the way, they can pursue that money even if you lodge an objection to it—the actions that they take when they send out a debt collector for someone who is just trying to make ends meet. I do not believe that that meets the standards this community expects. I do not believe that that is the standard

that this Assembly wants to see. I do not believe that it is the standard that we would like to see land in any future program. Therefore, I think it is really critical that we get to the heart of what has gone wrong in this instance so that no one else is impacted, no one else receives an unfair assessment going back years in time with thousands of dollars in fines and thousands of dollars in interest, because when you get one of those notices and you are left hanging on the line for months at a time, there is a human impact and it is not what we should accept.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (10.58): I thank Mr Cocks for bringing this motion. The government will be supporting this motion today. I also want to recognise the advocacy of not only Mr Cocks but also Mr Braddock and other people in this place who have made representations on behalf of their constituents—and there are quite a number of members who have done so for constituents who have received reassessment notices from the Revenue Office in relation to the Home Buyer Concession Scheme.

As I did on radio this morning, I want to acknowledge up-front that I have been distressed at some of the experiences that have been conveyed to me by people who have received those reassessment notices, and particularly their experience in relation to the language that has been used and their engagement with the Revenue Office. I want to assure the Assembly that my office has been working with the Revenue Office about how we consider language in reassessment notices and how we consider pathways for people to get further information and support when they receive a reassessment.

Should the committee choose undertake this inquiry—and I recognise that we cannot, as the Assembly, entirely dictate to the committee, but we can make a request of the committee—I think that it will be a good opportunity to look at all of the facts, because I do think some of Mr Cock's language is inflammatory, and some of his assertions are incorrect. In particular, the Revenue Office does not rely on a self-assessment quiz for individuals to determine their eligibility for the Home Buyer Concession Scheme. In his remarks, Mr Cocks noted that there is a self-assessment tool available on the Revenue Office website. But it is not accurate to describe that as a quiz and it is not accurate to describe the Revenue Office as relying on that. They do not get you to submit the results of a quiz; however, they do rely on self-assessment and a declaration from the taxpayer that they are eligible for concessions.

This, as I have said before, is not an unusual way for tax agencies and authorities to operate—in particular the Australian Taxation Office. For anyone who has ever completed a tax return, there are a range of things where the Taxation Office relies on the taxpayer to provide accurate information about concessions and about deductions. They rely on the honesty of the taxpayer. You sign a declaration and then you know that they could come back and audit you in the future.

However, I absolutely accept the point that Mr Cocks has made—and that a number of constituents and people who have corresponded with me and other members have made: that, where they have acted in good faith, genuinely understood that they were eligible for the concession and have received reassessment notices out of the blue, this has caused them considerable distress, that some people receiving these notices are in quite

challenging circumstances and are quite vulnerable, and that we need to consider how we engage with those taxpayers who may be in that circumstance.

I also have to be clear, though, that we cannot have a situation where the Revenue Office is unable to undertake compliance activity and issue reassessments. That is asking for people to deliberately “misclaim” concessions or misidentify their tax obligations. Some of the things that Mr Cocks has sought for the committee to look into, including things around interest rates and penalties, do not only apply to the Home Buyer Concession Scheme. The concerns that we have had raised largely relate to the Home Buyer Concession Scheme, but a number of these issues relate right across the board to all of our tax lines, including the time period for assessment as well.

To give an example of where this might be quite clear is where someone who owns an investment property and would be subject to land tax may not let the Revenue Office know that this property is rented out and is subject to land tax or is not their primary residence. The Revenue Office may find this out some considerable period later and will then ask the owner to pay the tax that they are eligible for, and that would come with penalty and interest rates. I think most people would agree that, if you know, or you should reasonably know, that you are liable for a tax and you have failed to declare that, there should be some penalty associated with that; otherwise, many people would deliberately seek to avoid paying their tax until they were caught having misrepresented their situation. I absolutely acknowledge this is not the circumstance that Mr Cocks is talking about, and this is not the circumstance of a number of these individuals in relation to the Home Buyer Concession Scheme.

So I think it is really important to recognise that there are a relatively small number of circumstances that are really concerning in terms of the way that people have received information and the way that they have been able to engage with the Revenue Office, and I have talked publicly as well about some of the circumstances regarding the advice they have received.

The one other thing I would say about the Home Buyer Concession Scheme in relation to assessment up-front is that one of the criteria for eligibility for the Home Buyer Concession Scheme is that the person lives in the property for at least 12 months, and that, obviously, cannot be fully assessed at the time that the application or the declaration is made up-front. So undertaking an initial assessment would (a) potentially delay a person’s eligibility for the concession or their capacity to access the concession when they want to move quickly to purchase a home. We know that some of these individuals have said that part of their motivation in purchasing a home when they did was because they wanted to move quickly to do so. So, if an assessment process was going to delay the capacity for them to get access to that concession and impact their ability to purchase a home in a timely way, that could be potentially problematic for those individuals, and, in any case, there would be a requirement to further assess whether the person had remained in that home for 12 months. Again, I understand there will be exceptional circumstances where people may not be able to remain in the home for 12 months, and those would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Overall, I think that this inquiry would be a good opportunity to get to the bottom of all of those issues, to understand the balance that needs to be struck, to recognise the experience of those individuals for whom this matter has caused distress—to pay

respect to that experience—and to work through that in a methodical way, should the committee choose to undertake this inquiry. Again, I thank Mr Cocks for bringing the motion to the Assembly.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.05): I would like to thank Mr Cocks for bringing this motion and the minister for her comments on it and that explanation of some of the different situations that people might find themselves in with the Home Buyer Concession Scheme. The Greens are happy to support this motion today. This looks like a useful inquiry, should the committee choose to take it on, and we think investigating the way in which the Home Buyer Concession scheme has been implemented is a really good use of this Assembly's time.

The Greens support Treasury efforts to collect tax and reduce tax avoidance. But, clearly, there are reports—and many of us have received them directly—from people who have made genuine mistakes in the way that they have applied for the Home Buyer Concession Scheme. Some people received some of the wrong information—we heard that on radio this morning—and these people feel they have been targeted with intimidating messages from the ACT Revenue Office. We are also led to understand that some of the assessments behind these messages are automated. All of that is a really good package of issues for government to open up and see what is going on here.

Managing your personal and your financial circumstances is really tough at the best of times, and we are not in the best of times at the moment. We are in a cost-of-living crisis, and unexpected demands for repayment are really stressful, particularly if they come with changeable, swinging interest rates, and particularly if people did not expect that if they did not see it coming. So it really important that we pause and we acknowledge the people who have been affected by this. I think it would be great if people who are getting these letters are contacted personally.

If the government and the Revenue Office are taking the time to understand their situations individually, that is a really good way to make sure that we can check the information is right, to make sure that payment plans can be negotiated, to work out what the individual circumstances are that are going on and how government can engage compassionately with this situation. There will be some people who owe money, but we need to consider, when they make those payments, whether those interest rates are aligned with the actual cost of government borrowing and whether people have made genuine mistakes and that is why they are in this situation. It would be good for us to understand the scale of this problem and how many people have been affected by this.

All of that is really great material for the Public Accounts Committee to have a look at if that committee decides that this is a good use of their time. There will probably be a lot of assistance we can provide for the people affected in this case, and I think it will be rich ground for learning how we undertake exercises like this in the future and how we can make sure that the government is not causing unnecessary distress for people.

We are not always talking about hugely wealthy individuals here. The whole point of the Home Buyer Concession Scheme was that it was meant to help people get into the housing market who might not otherwise be able to afford to do so. In the Greens, we often wonder why, in a country as wealthy as Australia, we are often targeting our

revenue efforts more and more on poorer Australians, rather than looking at the third of corporations who do not pay tax at all. That is clearly not an ACT level issue; that is clearly a federal issue. It always gives us grief that we are targeting people who have less and less money to try and find that revenue when there are so many richer sources of it. That is the way other countries go about it. They actually target the wealthy individuals in their country. They target their natural resources. They target billionaires and corporations. They are not always going after individuals.

I think this is going to be a really interesting inquiry. We are pleased that this issue has been raised, and we hope that, if it goes ahead, it will act quickly enough to assist anybody who is suffering distress at the moment.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (11.10), in reply: I am very pleased to hear that this motion will be supported today. I will not go on for too long, but I do need to touch on a couple of things from the minister, because I think it is important that, should the committee agree to have a look at this, they not be taken in by some of the potential distractions and strawmen that could be presented here.

There were two in particular that I wanted to touch on. One is the idea that this has been happening just like a tax return. Anyone who has completed a tax return—I hope that is all of us here—knows that, when you work through your tax return, you provide a whole lot of steps of information. You say how much you earned from this job, how much you earned from that job and how much you have paid for different tax deduction categories. You provide all sorts of information, and the ATO comes back with a calculation of what your tax return is going to be. That is not what happens here. As the minister pointed out, there is a questionnaire available on the Revenue Office website, but, essentially, the only thing you actually do when you apply for one of these concessions is to click a checkbox that says, “I think I am eligible for this thing.” That is the only thing. That is not the same as what you do with a tax return.

The other thing I wanted to point out is that it is important to understand that there are differences in the way the government is targeting who it gets money from and what tax liabilities that it pursues—this was something that came up in a briefing that I got from the minister’s office—in that it sounds like the government is prioritising those cases where it is going to get the biggest return on investment. The way it was put to me was the greatest return and the greatest likelihood. If that is the approach that we are taking, rather than targeting those who have done the wrong thing, then there is definitely something not working right here.

So I would encourage the committee, should you choose to take up the inquiry, to make sure that you look beyond the surface level, because there is a lot to understand here.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Legal Affairs—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 6

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (11.14): I present the following report:

Legal Affairs—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny

Report 6, dated 12 May 2025, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings—

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR CAIN: Scrutiny report No 6 contains the committee's comments on 10 pieces of subordinate legislation. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend this report to the Assembly.

Economics, Industry and Recreation—Standing Committee Report 1

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS (Brindabella) (11.15): I present the following report:

Economics, Industry and Recreation—Standing Committee—Report 1—Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023-24, dated 8 May 2025, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings—

I move:

That the report be noted.

This is the first report of the Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation for the Eleventh Assembly. The Assembly referred this annual report to the inquiry on 3 December 2024. The committee held its public hearings on 11, 12, 13 and 14 February 2025. Witnesses took 33 questions on notice. During the hearings, the committee scrutinised ministers and officials about the operations of their portfolios and directorates. The hearings were a valuable opportunity for committee members, many of whom are new to the role, to better understand the operations of government. The report makes 27 recommendations.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to recognise ACT government directorates for their assistance to the committee. I would also like to thank those who otherwise contributed to the committee's hearings, particularly the Hansard and Broadcasting teams. I will also add in here the committee secretariat, who did not put themselves down but obviously are the most important part on making sure the inquiries are held effectively and efficiently. We thank them.

The committee looks forward to consideration and implementation of the recommendations. I thank my fellow members of the committee, Ms Fiona Carrick, Ms Deborah Morris, Mr Jeremy Hanson, Mr Shane Rattenbury and Mr Thomas Emerson. I commend the report to the Assembly.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (11.16): I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for bringing this report to the chamber today, and I thank all my fellow committee members for their collaborative and consensus-oriented approach, which allowed us, I think, to land a range of meaningful recommendations in this report. I particularly thank Mr Hanson and Mr Rattenbury for always standing at the ready to remind us within the committee

of their ideological differences, always in good humour. Like Mr Werner-Gibbings, I thank the incredible secretariat for all their work in managing the public hearings, collating evidence and helping prepare this report.

I want to take this opportunity to speak to recommendation 22, which asks the government to consider establishing a dedicated office or role to lead and coordinate efforts around the night-time economy. This is not a new call; it is one that Music ACT has made since before last year's election. Just last week, Music ACT local musician Lucy Sugarman and representatives of some 20 local venues joined me in reiterating this call in a letter to the Minister for the Night-time Economy.

With the pressures building and the challenges escalating, the case for action has only grown stronger. It has been an incredibly tough few years for our hospitality and nightlife sector. A global pandemic shutting doors, a spiralling cost-of-living crisis and skyrocketing insurance premiums made survival harder than ever, and now massive disruptions to operations, courtesy of construction works, have led to the closure of a lot of venues, like Transit, Sideway and now also Cube. These are places that are more than just businesses; they are gathering places, cultural landmarks and community cornerstones—third places between work and home for bringing people together.

Canberra has long worn the label of being Australia's boring capital. Local business owners have been changing that story by lighting a spark in our night-time economy. From hidden boutique bars to classic neighbourhood pubs, they have been building something vibrant, diverse and distinctly Canberran. These venues are what bring our streets to life after dark. They create jobs, they foster connection and they shape the culture of our city. Do we want to risk losing that?

Business owners in this sector are used to a hands-on approach. They are used to being able to pick up the phone, speak to someone directly and get things moving. That is the rhythm of hospitality, and our government needs to match that rhythm to make good on their commitment to activate the precincts, including the City Centre entertainment precinct, that they are identifying as key nightlife hubs. That is why I believe this recommendation is so important. We need a night-time economy coordinator with industry experience, who is able to support and act on the night-time economy minister's clearly genuine interest in backing our city's hospitality sector and live music scene.

This is not about adding red tape or creating another bureaucratic layer. It is about embedding a champion inside government—someone who understands the industry who business owners can turn to; someone who removes obstacles rather than creates them; someone who works with the sector to grow, energise and future-proof Canberra's nightlife; someone who is always on the other end of the phone, eager to act as a genuine partner for venue managers, bookers and artists, standing ready to really rip things up and get stuff done alongside local businesses and proactively feed the character and energy of our city; someone who knows which venues are doing well, which spots are struggling and where the gaps are in the ecosystem, who looks at major events like Florida, Enlighten or even the weekend's packed out Raiders game, and asks, "How can we encourage people to kick on? How do we shift hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors from these public spaces into private venues to back up a good day with a great night out? How can we build on what we are already doing

to bring more life and cultural vibrancy to our city, ensuring major daytime events are coupled with nighttime activations and venues across the city?”

We need something within government who is focused on realising Canberra’s potential as a unique, cultural and creative hub. Without this kind of proactive, cross-portfolio leadership that is focused on direct, ongoing engagement with venues and creatives, we may just find ourselves watching on as more iconic venues vacate the field, taking part of our city’s soul with them. Let’s back the people who keep Canberra alive after dark. Thank you.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy) (11.21): The government will, of course, respond in due course; however, given the comments of the last 24 to 36 hours or so, I think it is important to put on the record what does exist for businesses. I appreciate that Mr Emerson thinks he knows how I spend my time or where my attention is dedicated, but he may also wish to school himself on everything that has occurred so far, particularly in the last 12 months.

Yesterday, we announced 50 per cent liquor fee discounts for licensed cafes and restaurants up to 150 capacity and 50 per cent liquor fee discounts for any licensed venue of 151 to 350 capacity which showcases artists and musicians 10 times a year. That will encompass almost every venue that is in the Melbourne Building, depending on how their licence is structured. This is on top of already delivering increased noise limits in the CBD; a CBD entertainment precinct; 50 per cent liquor fee discounts for licensed venues and restaurants up to 80 person capacity; 80 per cent liquor fee discount for any licensed venue up to 150 person capacity which showcase artists and musicians 10 times a year. That is not 10 times in the future; they can apply for that now, based on evidence of 10 times in the last year. We also have free loading zone permits for musicians, 10 free opportunities a year for licensed venues to extend opening hours or floor space, and the ability for the ACT government to declare special events, such as Anzac Day and the National Multicultural Festival, which automatically extends the opening hours for licensed venues, in addition to the 10 free opportunities I just spoke about.

There is a dedicated Event and Business Support Team. It has received and assisted with 232 business inquiries this financial year, and about 40 per cent of those relate to hospo businesses. It further supports businesses in a way that they want to interact with government by providing a weekly drop-in service at the Woden Service Centre. Any person can attend to discuss a business proposal, and people do make use of that. We have also committed to a new approach when it comes to noise complaints.

I would note in closing on this point in particular that I would reflect that allyship is about decentring, not standing in the spotlight. I would trust that members would reflect and promote what has been done, speak confidently about our sector and build consumer confidence rather than creating issues where they are already being addressed.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee Report 2

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.24): I present the following report:

Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee—
Report 2—Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023-24, dated 12 May
2025, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings—

I move:

That the report be noted.

This report was circulated to members under standing order 254C. This is the second report of the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services for the Eleventh Assembly. The Assembly referred the inquiry on 3 December 2024. We held public hearings on 10, 11, 14, 18 and 19 February. Witnesses took 143 questions or notice. The report makes 46 recommendations.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all ministers, statutory officials and directorate staff for their engagement in the inquiry process. I would like to thank my colleagues on the committee, Ms Fiona Carrick, Mr Peter Cain and Ms Caitlin Tough. It is really a collaborative and cohesive committee that is getting through an awful lot of very, very difficult business, and it is a pleasure to work with you all.

I would also like to thank our secretariat, who are already up to their second large report this term, with a third on the way. It is a busy committee, and they are working very, very hard, and we thank them for their efforts. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Amendment Bill 2025

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

Title read by Clerk.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy) (11.27): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to introduce this bill into the Assembly today. It seeks to amend the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act 1999, the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Regulation 2017 and other pieces of road transport legislation to support traffic camera detection of seatbelt offences using our existing mobile device

detection cameras later this year.

Unsafe behaviours on our road network threaten the lives and wellbeing of all members of our community. All Canberrans should feel assured that while they are on ACT roads, their safety is a priority—reinforced in my ministerial statement this morning and reflected again in the legislation before us today. With this in mind, I am pleased to present this bill as a significant step forward—another one in our commitment to road safety in the ACT.

It is important to understand the bill's intention and purpose. Effectively, by targeting known risk factors and supporting a culture of compliance, we are continuing to build a transport system that prioritises safety at every level. Every serious crash on our roads brings devastating trauma, injury and heartache for those involved, their families, friends, coworkers, first responders and healthcare workers.

I also want to acknowledge—which I missed in my earlier speech, Mr Assistant Speaker—the efforts of Roads ACT not just in maintaining our road network system; I think few people know or recognise that they are often among those first responders to ensure the safe passage of vehicular traffic when there has been an accident or an incident and in providing support in those moments. We are incredibly indebted to them.

We are especially moved by the advocacy of families who have lost loved ones to dangerous driving. Their voices are instrumental in shaping our approach to road safety, and I recognise just how difficult it is to be reliving their own trauma in their advocacy. It speaks volumes about the types of people that these people are.

National Road Safety Week, which is this week, serves as a crucial reminder that road safety is everyone's responsibility. By following road rules such as adhering to speed limits, wearing seatbelts, avoiding driving under the influence and being mindful of vulnerable road users, we can all contribute to safer roads.

Drivers are responsible for ensuring all passengers wear a seatbelt or appropriate restraint lawfully, as well as themselves. Ensuring that seatbelts are worn correctly is crucial for protecting the lives of drivers and passengers. This expectation is a more than reasonable one. Risk of serious injuries or death in a crash intensifies when a seatbelt is not worn at all or is fastened but not worn correctly, such as tucked under the arm.

In contrast, wearing a seatbelt correctly reduces risk of death or serious injury from a crash by up to 50 per cent. Seatbelt offences have been in place in the ACT and other jurisdictions for decades; however, complacency brings consequences that we, as a community, cannot afford to risk. There are still fatalities linked to not wearing a seatbelt, and there are still high rates of non-compliance found around Australia.

The government has an important role in maintaining a modern regulatory and enforcement framework that supports safe behaviours on ACT roads. The use of traffic camera technology helps enforce our existing road rules to target unsafe driving and can bring behavioural change; however, currently, seatbelt compliance can only be enforced in the ACT by ACT Policing. Nationally, there have been major changes

regarding the enforcement of seatbelt wearing through the use of traffic cameras. Queensland, New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria have implemented traffic camera detection of seatbelts in recent years, and Western Australia has begun a trial, with enforcement through traffic cameras anticipated in the near future.

Given these advancements, it is imperative that the ACT does not fall behind. By using our existing mobile device detection camera assets to also detect seatbelts being worn by drivers and their front seat passengers, we can significantly expand enforcement of these life-saving road rules.

This bill will amend the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act, which sets out a framework for traffic offence detection devices, to provide for the preparation for camera enforcement of seatbelts later this year.

In summary, this bill establishes the term “seatbelt detection system”, which involves using existing camera technology to detect seatbelts being worn. It amends the existing traffic offence detection device framework to include the new seatbelt detection system and to allow for images to be used that depict both the driver and/or passengers wearing seatbelts, as currently traffic cameras only capture actions of the driver. It rearranges existing definitions to align with current drafting practice without changing their meaning. It expands the exemption for workers servicing our road safety cameras to also apply where their work relates to the seatbelt detection system. Finally, it makes other minor technical amendments to keep our legislation up-to-date with current drafting practice.

Following the introduction of this bill, other regulatory and operational preparations will follow. That includes the separate amendments that will be made to the regulation that ensure the existing seatbelt offences can be effectively enforced by traffic cameras.

The separate regulatory changes following introduction of this bill will align with that of New South Wales in three main ways. The first concerns the two existing driver offences for not ensuring passenger seatbelt compliance. Currently, there are separate offences for passengers aged over 16 years of age and under 16 years of age, which will now be streamlined into one single offence for better enforcement. This change does not have a material impact on the road rules as it is a superficial amendment to allow infringement notices to be issued to drivers without needing to know the age of the passenger.

Secondly, upcoming regulatory amendments will include a clear definition of how to wear a seatbelt, ensuring that it is properly adjusted and fastened. This will align with the model Australian Road Rules and with other jurisdictions, ensuring consistency and clarity for all drivers and passengers.

Finally, individuals who have a medical condition or a disability requiring an exemption from wearing a seatbelt will be given 28 days to provide evidence of their exemption after receiving an infringement notice. Currently, this must be produced immediately under the road rules, which is not possible under camera enforcement.

It is important to have effective implementation to achieve the desired behavioural change among drivers and passengers in wearing seatbelts correctly and reducing road

fatalities and serious injuries. An extensive education and awareness campaign will form part of implementation in the lead-up to commencement. For example, we recognise many people may not understand the importance of not only fastening their seatbelt but having their seatbelt properly adjusted. Having the sash firmly against the front of the shoulder can make all the difference under the force of a crash.

This education and awareness approach will align with the campaigns used in other jurisdictions so there is no risk of misunderstanding. When you make the decision to drive on ACT roads, you are accepting responsibility for following the road rules and making sure that your passengers are properly restrained. The traffic camera enforcement that is enabled by this bill is intended to serve as a catalyst for behavioural change for any drivers who continue to drive without their seatbelt properly adjusted and fastened, or their passengers.

This bill represents another tangible step in our ongoing commitment to making ACT roads safer for everyone. Just as other states have successfully implemented similar measures, the ACT will demonstrate that risk-taking on our roads is not an option with the introduction and the passage of this legislation.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

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

Better Regulation (Repeal of Legislation) Bill 2025

Debate resumed from 6 May 2025, on motion by Ms **Cheyne**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (11.37): I will not speak for an extended length of time today. I will commence by saying very clearly that the Canberra Liberals support getting rid of regulations that no longer make sense.

I will start off, as well, by acknowledging and thanking the minister for her commitment to working with and finally listening to the Canberra Liberals as we try and talk about deregulation and respond to the impact of bad regulation on the Canberra community and businesses across the ACT. Once again, this particular bill, as worthy as it is to get rid of old regulations that are not doing their job anymore, is not the sort of deep regulatory reform that Canberra does need. Once again, this is more focused on dead regulations, outdated issues and making life easier for the government than it is on having a tangible impact on the business community and consumers, and I think it is really important that we recognise that things are not perfect in the business community.

We have been hearing some of those discussions this morning. We have seen some of the independents finally coming on board with what the Canberra Liberals have been talking about for a very long time. The actions of the government do have an impact on businesses. The regulations, the regulatory frameworks and the regulatory complexity that we have seen accumulate over a very extended time from the government have a tangible impact on everyone in the Canberra community.

It is about time that the issues people are facing are taken seriously. It is about time that we had a shift in direction from this government—to listen to the genuine concerns that we have been trying to highlight for a long time so that we can make things easier for people just trying to do their best.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (11.39): The Greens are supportive of cleaning up defunct legislation and have no issues with this bill. I will speak very briefly on the repeal of the Hemp Fibre Industry Facilitation Act 2004 because it did pique my interest.

I understand from EPSDD officials that this was originally a private member's bill from way back in 2004, and I have been grateful to have the opportunity to speak to rural landholders and government as part of my deep dive. Thank you to the farmers, the Rural Landholders' Association, Minister Cheyne's office and EPSDD officials for their remarkably quick and informative feedback at short notice.

In my capacity as ACT Greens spokesperson for food and agriculture, I did in fact receive feedback from the community that the hemp act was not doing what it needed to. The explanatory statement from this bill says:

The Hemp Fibre Act is being repealed because there is no viable hemp fibre industry within the region due to a lack of interest from rural lessees in cultivating industrial hemp and to climatic issues which means that Canberra's climate is not conducive to a viable hemp fibre industry. No rural lease holders have ever applied for a licence under the Hemp Fibre Act. This repeal will lessen the burden on the government from having to respond to inquiries about applications for hemp fibre licences that are inappropriate.

I have since spoken to rural leaseholders who have, in fact, previously expressed interest in hemp fibre production, but the kind of horticulture that they needed to do was prohibited by the planning system laws, so they were unable to apply for a licence.

They also expressed to me that climate is not a critical issue in the ACT given that industrial hemp is often grown under climate-controlled conditions inside. To me, this indicates that the current hemp act is not fit for purpose, rather than the problem being a lack of interest in the hemp industry, and that is likely why we did not have the applications that we expected to. I think it is important to get those perspectives on the record

That being said, given that we currently do not have anyone interested in establishing a hemp industry here in the ACT, we have reached the conclusion that it would probably be gentler on both government and industry to completely repeal the legislation now, knowing the government could draft better purpose-built legislation should anyone express interest in the future. Other states have more sophisticated fit-for-purpose legislation that we could model ours on and spare prospective growers the pain of trying to work with a system that does not really work.

If anyone listening to this speech or reading the *Hansard* in their own deep dive many years from now is interested in establishing a hemp industry in the ACT, I would encourage them to make a submission to government to get the conversation started and maybe "cc" me in if I am around. If we are going to legislate for a hemp industry,

let's do it right.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (11.42): I am speaking on this bill today because we all know Canberra is a city with a wide scope of businesses, and we all know that those businesses are struggling under this government. In essence, this bill is supposed to ease the administrative burden on business, eliminating outdated laws and streamlining regulations so that it can be rewarding to own and grow a small business in Canberra. That is a worthy goal; it is what we all want.

The Canberra Business Chamber 2024 annual report tells us that the ACT has the lowest four-year business survival rate in the country. The years of regulatory burden in the ACT have been growing. It has been slowing innovation, discouraging competition and adding layers of complexity that make it harder for small businesses to grow, invest and employ.

Last year alone, more than 5,000 businesses closed in the ACT, and we know many of these were small businesses and sole traders. These are people who rely on the government to make good decisions to support their livelihoods, but the government is letting them down, and that is why they need an urgent but responsible commitment to deregulation.

We must treat business as a partner, not as a problem. We must say “yes” to business. I have operated businesses in Canberra, and it is no easy feat, especially when you are bogged down in paperwork and administration and process so much so that you cannot focus on doing the thing that you are good at—the things that your customers want which generate your revenue.

Just across the road we have seen businesses struggling with costly licensing fees that disproportionately impact small bars, restaurants and independent venues. We have complex approval processes involving multiple government agencies. We have stringent noise regulations that discourage live events and nightlife, even in commercial and entertainment precincts. We have limited flexibility in updating and amending licence conditions without triggering new assessment processes.

I do not want to see any more small businesses in my city and my suburbs being struck down by rigid framework. I want local business to receive the foot traffic and the revenue they deserve.

We want a regulatory environment that encourages small business investment and reduced compliance costs. We want to see competition and productivity by lowering the barrier for entry and for businesses to stay in business. We want to see support and a culture of entrepreneurship, where regulation enables rather than stifles ambition. That is what provides the best outcomes for Canberrans, whether they are entrepreneurs, small-business people or customers who rely on their local shops. We want to build a better Canberra. That is why we need to change course and embrace a new approach. Thank you.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy) (11.45), in reply: I am pleased to address the Assembly

in support of this bill and its passage today, and I certainly thank the Canberra Liberals and the Greens for their engagement with it.

I particularly thank Miss Nuttall for her very detailed engagement with something that I thought was uncontroversial, but I absolutely respect the points that she made, and, in fact, she said what I was going to say, so I am not going to repeat that. Certainly, it does give me an opportunity more broadly to reiterate what I said last week: if you have got some ideas, let's have a look.

I have got to say there are some old pieces of legislation that I have been trawling through, and it does seem that some of them, even though they are from the 1910s, 20s and 30s, still have some relevance to fee determinations. I am on it, and so is our fantastic team who prepared this bill, together with the Parliamentary Counsel's Office.

This bill will repeal several acts, subordinate legislation and declarations. These outdated statutes were identified during a thorough review process to ensure that our regulatory framework was and continues to be fit for purpose. By removing outdated legislation, governments can ensure that the legal framework remains responsive to the current landscape, providing legal clarity and certainty.

When old laws remain on the books, they can create confusion and inconsistency. This can lead to difficulties in interpretation and enforcement, potentially resulting in unintended outcomes, so by regularly reviewing and repealing obsolete provisions and legislation, the government provides a clearer regulatory environment. Further, by removing outmoded constraints that have been provided for in legislation, we can create a better environment for fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, and this has the benefit of assisting individuals, businesses and communities, and overall economic development and competitiveness.

I certainly acknowledge Mr Cocks's views, which were echoed in part by Ms Castley, about the extent to which this repeal bill goes, and I would note we are just past six months since ministers were appointed, so the fact that we do have a repeal bill, when I think we have not had one for at least more than a term, is a great step. I appreciate we can go further, and my door is open as we work through what more we can do.

In the meantime, we have found quite a bit, and that means that the bill will repeal the COVID-19 Emergency Response Legislation Amendment Act 2020, as well a similarly titled act from 2021. As I mentioned in March, now that the emergency in the ACT is over, the acts no longer have any effect, so they can be removed from the statute book, something that I think has a particular level of catharsis for some of us in this place.

The bill will repeal the Drugs in Sport Act. This was originally enacted to confer functions and powers on the Australian sports drug agency of the commonwealth about the use of drugs and doping methods in sport by ACT competitors. This has been superseded by commonwealth legislation, so it is no longer required.

As I have mentioned, the Hemp Fibre Industry Facilitation Act 2004 is being repealed, and again I acknowledge Miss Nuttall's comments and her commonsense approach to what we are trying to do here. This does not rule it out forevermore, but it does mean that we can start afresh if there is interest and, indeed, the climatic and other conditions

in the future.

It also repeals the Magistrates Court (Fair Trading Motor Vehicle Repair Industry Infringement Notices) Regulation 2012. Given that all of the associated infringement notice offences were repealed in 2016, this is now obsolete.

Finally, it is a bill that repeals 24 declarations under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012. This is a result of amendment legislation in 2020 that removed the requirement for declarations to be notifiable instruments, and therefore these declarations are no longer necessary.

This bill and others like it that are planned for this Assembly term demonstrates this government's ongoing commitment to modern stewardship of the ACT statute book, seeking continuous improvement and rejecting an attitude of setting and forgetting. Again, I deeply thank our "better reg" team for everything that they have done in identifying these and working across directorates on areas that were identified for repeal.

This is a terrific first step, but it goes without saying that the beauty of our statute book—and I understand that the annual survey into the Legislation Register is now open for feedback—is within the realm of the Parliamentary Counsel's Office. They do an extraordinary job, and having now met them and sat down with them and understanding everything that they do, I greatly value that work and their commitment to working with us on what more we can do to streamline our statute book and ensure it remains fit for purpose now and into the future.

I commend the bill to the chamber.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 11.51 am to 2.00 pm.

Questions without notice

Canberra Health Services—data security

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health and relates to reporting in yesterday's *Canberra Times* that a Canberra Hospital worker has been charged with stalking and threatening to murder a colleague. The story reports that the worker was employed as a cleaner and "used his position to access the woman's medical records". Minister, why would a cleaner be able to access personal and private medical records?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am not able to comment on a matter that is currently before a court. That matter is sub judice.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, why isn't the \$458 million Digital Health Record system able to prevent unauthorised access to medical records?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I have a sneaking suspicion that Ms Castley is mixing up two articles, but, again, I am not able to comment on any matter that is currently before a court. Those matters are sub judice. And I do not believe that Ms Castley actually has any evidence to support the assertion that she has made in her question.

MR COCKS: Minister, do you have systems to track unauthorised access to patient records?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Yes.

Transport Canberra—bus driver safety

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Last year, I asked if you were only taking action on the safety of bus drivers in response to the threat of a strike. You said no and added, "We are committed and we are getting on and delivering on it." Yet the local TWU secretary, Klaus Pinkas, told ABC radio last week that the government was not, in fact, getting on and delivering on it, and so drivers were once again considering a strike. Now another strike is in the offing, will you actually deliver on driver safety?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I made that statement because we were the only party at the election that had committed to do a range of things to help prevent and address occupational violence being faced by our bus drivers. We did that because we met with the driver workforce and their representatives of the Transport Workers' Union, who had raised concerns, and we committed to undertake a range of actions.

We have since been meeting and consulting through Transport Canberra, and also myself and my office, with the Transport Workers' Union in relation to the implementation of the four agreed actions. The key one that the Transport Workers' Union is particularly interested in is the installation of Perspex screens in our bus fleet to help prevent violence, which is totally unacceptable for anyone, in any workforce, in any workplace in the ACT, including in our buses and in our interchanges. We have ordered those screens, and they are due to start being fitted out on the Transport Canberra fleet from June. We informed the TWU earlier this month that they had been ordered, and I was pleased to provide Mr Pinkas with an update on 7 May that they would start to be fitted in June. We are getting on with the work that we said we would do. We are taking action, and that order also follows extensive engagement and consultation on the design of the screens to make sure that they were fit-for-purpose for the workforce before we made the order.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, was Klaus Pinkas wrong when he said of your government, "They spend all this money on a new ticketing system, they're quite happy to, but not prioritise their employees' safety, which is quite frankly horrendous"?

MR STEEL: Well, I do disagree, Mr Speaker, with that statement because firstly, the ticketing system helps to fund a sustainable revenue base to make sure we can support

drivers, including for things like occupational violence and to make sure we can deliver the services that Canberrans rely on, that they also support. So that is important. Of course, we are investing at the same time in taking action on occupational violence: whether it is the preventative measures with Perspex screens being fitted out through the order that we have already made for the Transport Canberra fleet; whether it is the legislative powers that the government currently has under consideration that we will look to bring to the Assembly as soon as we can; whether it is the work that is happening in relation to de-escalation training that will kick off from the middle of this year for the workforce; as well as, of course, the work that we are doing to look at how we can provide a team of transport officers, which was a commitment that we made at the election that we are currently considering as well. So we will continue to work with transport workers and their representatives to deliver on the commitments that we made and that you did not.

MR COCKS: Minister, was Klaus Pinkas wrong when he said of you, “All’s been promised, nothing’s been delivered”?

MR STEEL: I disagree with that statement because we have taken action by actually ordering the Perspex screens and they will be delivered in June.

Gambling—clubs inquiry

MR RATTENBURY: My question is to the Minister for Gaming Reform. Minister, the tender documents to conduct the inquiry into the future of the ACT clubs industry were issued on 23 April. The tender closes on 20 May. What are the criteria by which the respondents to the tender will be assessed as suitable to win the tender and conduct the inquiry?

DR PATERSON: The tender process is an independent procurement process, and the terms of reference, as the member outlined, were released through this public process. In terms of the criteria for who will be appointed, that will be in terms of who has the expertise and the relevant understanding of the ACT context to be able to lead the inquiry into clubs.

MR RATTENBURY: Who did the government consult in developing the criteria and terms of reference for the inquiry?

DR PATERSON: Clubs ACT and the Alliance for Gambling Reform.

MR BRADDOCK: Can you confirm that you have abolished the Community Clubs Ministerial Advisory Council?

DR PATERSON: Yes, I can. I wrote to members of the council, and that ministerial council, which was set up last term, will not continue.

Light rail—construction impacts

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Transport. This morning, the minister announced support for businesses around London Circuit who have been significantly affected by roadworks associated with light rail over the last five months.

Minister, why has it taken you so long to act?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. It has not; we have had in place for some time a business partnership for the light rail stage 2A project that outlined a range of initiatives and supports that the ACT government would provide. But we also knew that we would need to continue to work with and listen to businesses in the corridor, particularly as the construction ramped up. That has now become very real for the businesses in the corridor, particularly on London Circuit, in the last few months.

Through the most recent engagements through the City Construction Group, where we have those business stakeholders coming along to provide feedback to the ACT government, we have been able to act on a range of their suggestions, which were practical and agreed by the ACT government, and we were pleased to deliver an updated package that builds on the existing business partnership plan that we had in place.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, was the months-long delay because you were hoping federal Labor would bail out the ACT government and provide support to affected businesses?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question and refer her to the answer that I have already provided. The answer is really, no, because we had already acted. Canberrans escaped a bullet two weekends ago, and the hospitality industry and the broader business community also escaped a bullet, in the form and shape of the Liberal Party. People are thanking God that they were not elected two weekends ago, because it would have smashed their businesses, with 15 per cent of the workforce being retrenched. What impact would that have had on the ACT economy?

Mr Cocks: Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order on relevance. The question, as much as it touched on federal Labor, was not with regard to any other policy other than funding for this particular community.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Steel, I have a view that perhaps you have drifted off from the base of the question. Do you have anything more to add?

MR STEEL: I have already answered the question; thank you.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, are you aware of any other issues where ACT government actions were delayed in the hope of securing federal support? If so, could you please provide a list on notice?

MR STEEL: I reject the premise of the question.

Teachers—working conditions

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, I refer to various reports about teacher retention in schools, including a recent *Canberra Times* article entitled “‘Completely outrageous’: Why Canberra teachers are quitting teaching”. One teacher says, and I quote:

The amount of pressures and the things we were being asked to do, the amount of

time we were being asked to spend, the money we were being asked to spend on resources ourselves was just completely outrageous.

Another stated, in response to the article, “We’re beyond the point of quick fixes,” and that it is “conditions—not compensation—driving people out”.

Minister, is it the case, as these teachers are saying, that it is conditions for teachers in ACT schools that are completely outrageous?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. It is true that our teachers do an incredible job across a range of different areas. They are being asked to use their professional expertise to teach children to learn, but also, in addition to that, sometimes they are put into the role of psychologist, of carer, of looking for housing support—a range of different jobs they are required to do, particularly where young people are coming to school with more complex needs and have complicated lives. There is a lot of pressure put on our teaching staff, when their profession is to teach; that is their expertise.

The ACT government has recognised that and is working with the Education Union to reduce workload. Things like buying things for your classroom with your own money are not okay and should not be occurring in any of our schools. There are funds available within school budgets to be able to purchase items that are required at schools, so I do not have any expectation for teachers or other school staff to be purchasing things out of their own pocket. That is a very clear message from me, and I know it is a very clear message from the Education Union as well.

MR HANSON: Minister, why after 23 years of Labor government are teachers complaining about the conditions in schools?

MS BERRY: Thank you. I would have to say that a lot has changed over the last 23 years, and particularly over the last five years. The complexities that our teaching workforce have had to manage have included a workforce crisis resulting from a range of different circumstances, particularly COVID; this has had an impact on different workforces but particularly on the teaching workforce. We have had an aging teaching workforce, so we are seeing more people leaving the system and we are having to recruit new and beginning teachers to our profession. So there are quite a few things that have changed over the years that we have not had to struggle with or work towards in previous years.

However, I am confident and absolutely committed to working with our teaching workforce and all our school staff—from school cleaners, BSOs, LSAs and teachers to school leaders and principals—to make sure we have the best possible environment for our teachers to be able to do what they have been taught to do, which is to give our children the best possible chance at a great education.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what is government doing that is beyond the quick fixes that obviously are not working for teachers?

MS BERRY: There are no quick fixes, but we have a significant recruitment program where we are continuously recruiting, across the country, new and beginning teachers

to move to the ACT. In addition to that, we are working with the Australian Education Union, the principal's association and teachers on a workload reduction program of works to make sure we can hear and understand the kinds of workloads that have been addressed by schools over the last period of time that we must address. Also, we are looking at the workforce and seeing what it is that we need to do to support our teaching professionals, particularly by putting in programs of work like our inclusion coaches in Tuggeranong, which we started rolling out last year, that have had a huge impact on the workload of school staff and have also had a positive impact on young people with complex lives and disabilities, as well as their families. Those are the kinds of things that we are rolling out.

There is no silver bullet with that kind of work; it is a journey, and we will have to be on it together. It will take some time to deliver and to make sure that we get it right, but at the end I think it will make a change to our schools for the positive and will give teachers the time that they need to do their jobs.

Teachers—working conditions

MR HANSON: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, an education expert, in response to a *Canberra Times* article, noted that there is a “disconnection between policy and practice”. He stated:

... decisions are often made far from the classroom, with little understanding of the daily reality. Teachers are left to implement reforms they had no voice in shaping.

Minister, why do teachers feel that decisions are still made far from the classroom?

MS BERRY: I would accept that that might be the experience of some teachers, and I am sorry if that is the case. I have been strongly recommending to the Education Directorate that they work very closely with all stakeholders in our school communities in forming policies. We worked very closely with stakeholders in the disability space, to work on our inclusion strategy over the last year, as well as on our Stronger Foundations. Mr Hanson brought a motion to the Assembly around literacy, and we agreed to include numeracy in that task force work. We are now rolling out that policy, in very close communication with all of our schools.

We have a significant workforce in our school communities, and we need to contact each one, one at a time, and often regularly, to tell them what is going on, because they are busy at school doing their jobs. But we are committed to making sure that they are part of the conversations on solutions to any of the issues that are being raised in our schools. There is no point in pushing policies or change on schools unless we are working together to implement them.

MR HANSON: Minister, what responsibility do you take for experts on the front line raising concerns that decisions are being made that are remote from the classroom, with little understanding of reality?

MS BERRY: I have probably taken that question in my first answer, and accepted

responsibility. Sometimes the communication might not be as ideal as it should be, but we are committed to listening, and to making sure that we make it as extensive as possible and include as many people as possible in any decision-making that the Education Directorate does.

I can provide another example. We will be going out shortly to look at sponsorship and corporate donations to our schools, which we were already rolling out, starting this year, and looking at the policy around that. There will be a serious conversation with a range of different stakeholders, and particularly our schools and students, about what that might look like, with respect to different sponsorship for individual schools from large organisations. That will be an important piece of work that will go out in YourSay, not only for community consultation but also directly with our school communities, to understand exactly what sponsorship means to them, and how we implement a policy going forward that is modern and meets the needs of our schools.

MR MILLIGAN: What will you change to address the disconnect between policy and practice in your directorate?

MS BERRY: I have said what we are already doing, which is working hard to listen to everybody who wants to be part of a conversation about schools.

Mr Hanson: It's not happening, though, is it?

MS BERRY: I have heard what Mr Hanson has said, and I give that message again to our school communities that they are absolutely welcome, and I encourage them, particularly our teaching and learning professionals, to reach out through the Education Directorate, their schools, ACTPA, the Education Union, or more directly through my office, so that we can work together to make our schools the best they can possibly be.

Early childhood development

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for Children, Youth and Families. In 2021, the ACT recorded the second-highest level of child developmental vulnerability in Australia, at 26.7 per cent, behind only the Northern Territory. While other states and territories have experienced a decrease or only a marginal increase since 2015, the Australian Early Development Census shows that the ACT recorded a 4.2 per cent increase. Minister, has the ACT's rate of child development vulnerability improved since 2021?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mr Emerson for the question. I will take that on notice.

MR EMERSON: This might need to be taken on notice too. Does the latest data show that the ACT's levels are now in line with or better than the rest of Australia?

MR PETTERSSON: I will take that on notice.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, what work has the government done to support developmentally vulnerable children?

MR PETTERSSON: I will take that on notice as well. The reason for that is that a

range of ministers are responsible for these matters. This does not neatly fit within my portfolio responsibilities, but I will take those questions on notice and get a fulsome response back.

Roads—Woden town centre

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Minister for Planning. Minister, Corrina Street in the Woden Town Centre is routinely congested with traffic, queuing back from the entrance to the Westfield underground car park. This congestion often stretches through the roundabout and all the way north, past the library as far as Launceston Street, as well as along Brewer Street and out onto Melrose Drive, blocking access. What is your policy for identifying congestion problems and what action has the government taken to address this poorly planned access point?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I think she said Corrina Street. As part of the planning system, there are referral entities that are consulted with when new developments are proposed as part of the planning assessment process. Transport Canberra and City services would be consulted particularly on traffic impacts associated with any new development that is planned in the town centre. That would look at the streets that are impacted, whether it is directly next to the development or closer by, and they would provide advice for the Territory Planning Authority, the independent authority, which would make a decision in relation to an individual development application.

In relation to broader planning, yes, traffic considerations are taken into account with the planning work that is undertaken at a more strategic level and through the development of the district strategies. So the broader potential changes to the Territory Plan would need to consider the impacts on road traffic in particular. The ACT government's approach through the Transport Strategy has been to see a significant investment in public transport to make sure there are sustainable forms of travel to move more people more efficiently around the city as it grows. The great thing about more people living in mixed use development in town centres in particular is that it provides those people with access, direct access to public transport, which those centres are well serviced with. So that is part of the sustainable approach that we are taking to transport, not just to focus on road transport, but a range of other sustainable modes as well.

MS CARRICK: What action has the government taken to ensure this traffic congestion does not continue to worsen as the population density in the town centre and around the region densifies, include the densification of Athllon Drive through to Tuggeranong. This is about getting into the carpark under Westfield through Corrina Street and the massive traffic congestion.

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. As I mentioned, we are investing in mass transit solutions like light rail. I would hope that as a fellow member for Murrumbidgee, Ms Carrick would support that project in the Assembly. It is one that will provide better access to frequent public transport. We have seen the benefit of that in the city, where it reduced congestion on Northbourne Avenue.

Ms Carrick: Point of order.

MR SPEAKER: Point of order. Mr Steel if you can just be seated and stop the clock please. Ms Carrick.

Ms Carrick: This is about traffic congestion into the underground carpark underneath Westfield, not about light rail.

MR SPEAKER: I think there is a genuine point of order on relevance because we are talking about within Woden Town Centre.

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. All of these forms of travel work together. Light rail is a congestion buster. That is what it does. It encourages more people to use sustainable forms of transport like public transport, and we are encouraging walking and cycling, including on Corrina Street where we installed a new bi-directional cycle lane to encourage safe active travel use. So all of these modes work together to take more cars off the road so that those who have to drive are not facing higher levels of congestion. That has to be the focus because we cannot duplicate, or triplicate, or quadruplicate our roads out of this problem. Hindmarsh Drive, for example, which is nearby, faces significant congestion in the peak times and that will continue as our city grows. But it is already a six lane road so you cannot add more lanes and hope that it will have a different outcome. So, the solution that we have is to invest in sustainable transport options. We have done that on Corrina Street with active travel and we are doing it in Woden Town Centre with the investment that we are making in light rail and by strengthening rapid bus services as well with the election commitments that we have made.

MR COCKS: Minister, has the government—I am guessing I might know the answer here—has the government had any conversations with Scentre Group about redesigning access to the Westfield Woden underground carpark to reduce the traffic congestion in that immediate area?

MR STEEL: I will take on notice to find out whether there has been a specific discussion amongst officials with Scentre Group. Obviously part of the land I think the member is referring to, and knows it is owned by Scentre Group, which operates the Westfield Centre, the former Woden Plaza there. I will take that on notice. It does sort of fall into Minister Cheyne's portfolio in the road space as well. So I will be happy to find out whether there is some further information that we can provide.

Youth homelessness—Our Place Braddon

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Homes and New Suburbs. Minister, one week ago I asked you when you would be able to advise the young residents of Our Place if the ACT government funding for their service would be continuing. At the time, it was seven weeks until their funding was due to expire. It is now six.

To draw a comparison, the Residential Tenancies Act requires eight weeks' notice to terminate a lease if a landlord intends to sell the property or move in themselves. If the Our Place residents were under the Residential Tenancies Act, then the minimum time period for advising them of a terminated tenancy would not have been met. What is an

acceptable time period to advise these young people if they can continue to live at Our Place?

MS BERRY: I thank Miss Nuttall for that question. I think I made myself clear—as clear as I could be without breaching any cabinet or budget confidentiality—last week. That is what I will continue to do. As soon as I can, I will let the community know—particularly Barnardos tenants and Barnardos themselves—about the project, the contract and the funding for that work going forward.

Miss Nuttall: Mr Speaker, I have a point of order on relevance, if that is okay. The question was specifically asking what an acceptable timeframe is. I am not sure I had an answer to that.

MR SPEAKER: Unless the minister wants to add more, I think she has made an attempt to answer the question. She is not moving, so I do not think there is any more! Miss Nuttall, do you have a supplementary question?

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, what is the absolute minimum timeframe for the contract renewal for Our Place that could come through the cabinet budget process?

MS BERRY: I guess, if you were talking hypothetically, you could assume that a contract could be renewed on the day that the contract finishes. That would be the hypothetical circumstance. That is not where I want to be. However, as I said, I am not able to provide a response until the matter goes through the budget processes. At that time—or earlier if I am able to—I will provide that certainty to Barnardos and the tenants who live there.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, do you know how many young people have left Our Place already, given the uncertainty of its funding?

MS BERRY: I have not been advised that there are any people leaving Barnardos, but if that is the case it would be concerning. I will follow up with Barnardos and via Housing ACT and the manager of that contract. But I certainly have not been advised. If Mr Rattenbury or Miss Nuttall are aware of anybody leaving because of this specific circumstance—I have never said that the contract would not be continued, but I have not yet been able to confirm whether it would. I have made that clear.

Health—infrastructure

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, you have announced the South Tuggeranong Health Centre construction commencement and the establishment of new operating theatres at Canberra Hospital. How will these health infrastructure investments expand access to health care for Canberrans?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Tough for the question. I was delighted in the past week to mark important milestones for our significant health infrastructure investments: construction commencement of our new South Tuggeranong Health Centre, which will bring vital health services to the South Tuggeranong region, and the opening of the dedicated operating theatres at Canberra Hospital for our obstetrics team, which will support mothers, birthing people and babies.

Last week, Ms Tough and Mr Werner-Gibbins were with me in breaking ground on the construction of the South Tuggeranong Health Centre in Condor. Design of the \$16.6 million health centre has been shaped by extensive engagement with clinicians and the local community. Eleven consultation rooms and a flexible layout will support a range of health services, providing localised and multidisciplinary care. Services will include paediatrics, pathology, dementia care, a diabetes clinic, falls and falls injury prevention, chronic disease programs and a virtual care specialised space.

On Monday this week, we launched the dedicated operating theatre complex for obstetrics at Canberra Hospital, made possible with a \$5.5 million investment. These dedicated operating theatres are larger in size and will improve the Canberra Hospital's capacity for both emergency and scheduled obstetrics procedures. This will be particularly valuable when complications arise during birth, because these theatres remain close to the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children.

These projects are part of our larger investments in health infrastructure—our largest investment since self-government—including the \$640 million Canberra Hospital expansion, with the Critical Services Building opening in August last year; nearly \$70 million of investment in our health centres; and more than a billion new Northside Hospital.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what other investments is the ACT government making in health centres and public hospital infrastructure across Canberra?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Tough for the supplementary. We have demonstrated our commitment to delivering high-quality health care and infrastructure when and where Canberrans need it by investing in the infrastructure required for our growing population. ACT Labor took to the election a practical, progressive health infrastructure plan for our regions—something those opposite and, indeed, on the crossbench failed to do for Canberrans.

Construction of the new health centre in South Tuggeranong is the first of four new health centres for the ACT that will provide multidisciplinary health services and provide access to care closer to home, particularly for people with complex and chronic care needs. We are, of course, also in the final stages of construction on the \$8.5 million southside hydrotherapy pool, which will deliver rehabilitative and supportive care in the community.

At Canberra Hospital, we are continuing to deliver improvements across the campus with the new Yamba Drive entrance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lounge and veterans lounge, which will open in the coming months. We are also delivering state-of-the-art equipment upgrades, a new acute palliative care ward, endoscopy suites and a comprehensive cancer centre. We are also continuing planning to deliver the Canberra Hospital Master Plan to redevelop the campus over time, supported by a more than \$21 million investment.

Construction will commence shortly on the \$49 million Watson Health Precinct, which will deliver modern facilities for Marymead CatholicCare, Ted Noffs and Winnunga Nimmityjah to deliver essential community-based health services.

The more than \$1 billion Northside Hospital represents the single-largest investment in health infrastructure and will include state-of-the-art facilities, a bigger emergency department and intensive care unit and more operating theatres. Our very early contractor involvement with delivery partner Multiplex is in place, and they are working with our teams to prepare concept designs and early works for the new hospital.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, how will the ACT Labor government's health infrastructure investments support the Canberra community and the health workforce?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the supplementary and Ms Castley for her efforts. Delivering and investing in state-of-the-art facilities and infrastructure has been central to our comprehensive plan for health services in the ACT. We are ensuring innovations in our health facilities create accessible spaces that support Canberrans and our health workforce. We are delivering state-of-the-art facilities with the latest medical technology. A more than \$45 million investment in upgrading equipment across our public hospitals has ensured that our consumers and health workforce have access to modern resources that will improve health outcomes.

The new Critical Services Building was, of course, the first all-electric major hospital building in Australia and contains features, designed closely with consumers, that have, in fact, changed the Australasian Health Facility Guidelines for everyone. We have also increased productivity in the emergency department, with the installation of Australia's first automated pathology sample delivery system. We will continue to deliver those innovations in the new Northside Hospital and focus on working with consumers and carers throughout the project. We will also deliver a new facility for child and adolescent mental health services, the Cottage Program, through the Northside Hospital project, which will support young people in our community to access more intensive mental health supports.

We will continue doing all of this work in collaboration with our fabulous clinicians and the consumers who use our services and their carers.

Midwifery—continuity of care

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Health. I would love an update on how we are going to meet our increased midwife-led continuity of care targets. In 2023 the Assembly agreed to my calls, and community calls, to set a target that 75 per cent of women and birthing people should have access to midwife-led continuity of care by 2032. Where are we up to now?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you Mr Speaker, and I thank Ms Clay for a long enough question that I was able to find the right piece of information for! As Ms Clay would recognise, the first target that we are looking to meet is a target of 50 per cent of women and birthing people having access to a continuity model of care by 2028. So in preparation for the expansion of continuity of care, CHS has drafted a maternity model of service that paves the way for CHS to operate as one single maternity service across the two sites. As part of that, and in engagement with the workforce—who I really want to thank for their engagement in this process—the continuity of care model will be

reviewed, ensuring improved access and equity.

CHS is also currently consulting on the intake point for maternity models of care across the network, and implementing improvements to intake will also ensure increased equity of access and consistency across the network as well.

In addition, CHS is currently researching and consulting on alternative and appropriate models for continuity of care—and as Ms Clay would understand, there are a number of models of care that count as continuity in the maternity space—so this will ensure a sustainable and expandable model of care that improves outcomes and that can be implemented to meet our targets.

Finally, there is a commitment in the enterprise agreement to review schedule 3, which covers continuity of care. The commitment states that the head of service and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation agree to conduct a comprehensive joint review of all matters related to the Special Employment Conditions—Continuity of Care Midwifery Model set out in the nursing and midwifery enterprise agreement. That review will enable the—(*Time expired.*)

MS CLAY: Do you have any reports looking into how we will be working to meet the target and when will you be releasing those reports?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you. I will take the detail of that question on notice, Mr Speaker. I will just finish in relation to the review of the EA, because that may be relevant to the question that Ms Clay is asking in terms of review.

The review is intended to enable the territory to consider alternative continuity employment models, and that is really important in ensuring that our workforce is sustainable in continuity. Currently, the employment arrangements are quite restrictive, but we did recently do some work to ensure that graduates could work in the continuity of care model, and that has been really welcomed by our workforce.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, what consultation have you done and with whom?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: There has been some significant work in consultation with our midwifery workforce. And again, I want to thank the midwives and the Office of the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer, who have engaged in this process of review—as well as our executives, who have supported that work. What they have really tried to do is to ensure that that work is led and supported by the midwives and that we are being guided by them, but also by the experience of consumers. Of course, part of our Maternity in Focus changes have included the implementation of more formal feedback-seeking from people who have given birth in our public health system to understand their experiences so that we can foster that continuous improvement.

Domestic and family violence—safe houses

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence. Minister, I have been contacted by women escaping domestic violence who are concerned for their safety in designated safe houses. One woman felt so unsafe that she fled from her designated safe house and sought refuge in a

McDonald's, where she spent the night. The woman told me that her so-called "safe house" was no better than the domestic violence situation she had escaped. Minister, is the government aware of and concerned that some women escaping domestic violence are saying they feel just as unsafe in safe houses? If so, what are you doing to ensure their safety?

DR PATERSON: I thank Ms Morris for the question. In relation to the specific circumstances that Ms Morris has raised, there has been collaborative work between my office and Minister Berry's office to understand the exact circumstances of that person. I absolutely commend the work of safe houses and our services that provide housing to women and children throughout our community. I believe that these services work above and beyond to provide safe housing. We, as the ACT government, will support those services, and work with them to ensure that the housing and services that are provided to those women and children are safe. I appreciate Ms Morris raising the issue of this circumstance with us, and we will work to resolve that.

MS MORRIS: Minister, why do women escaping violence feel unsafe in so-called designated safe houses?

DR PATERSON: I do not want to demonise safe houses. I think this is a one-off experience. I appreciate Ms Morris raising that with me and with Minister Berry, and we will work to understand what is going on in this circumstance.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, is it appropriate that women escaping violence are subject to substance abuse, male visitations and violent behaviour in designated safe houses?

DR PATERSON: I think your question is inappropriate, in that you are demonising safe houses, which are there to protect women and children. There is a one-off circumstance, and we are working with Ms Morris on that circumstance. We are working to understand that situation, which I understand is very complex. I want to assure the community that our safe houses are there to support women and children escaping violence.

City and government services—cycleways

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services. Minister, a constituent has drawn attention to the deteriorating conditions on the C2 is an industrial area adjacent to Oaks Estate that was the subject of a debate earlier in this sitting period. There, the cycle path suddenly disappears, forcing cyclists onto a poorly-maintained road alongside a large volume of heavy vehicle traffic. Given that the answer to question on notice No 118 states that zero dollars for new constructions was included in the most recent budget, for 2025-26, which would apply to such missing links through Beard, when can users of this section of the C2 cycle route expect a safe, fully dedicated cycle path to be installed?

MS CHEYNE: I apologise, Mr Braddock. I do not have that information in front of me, so I will take it on notice.

MR BRADDOCK: How does the government plan to install missing links when there are zero dollars allocated in the budget for such new constructions?

MS CHEYNE: I do not think that is an accurate read of my response to the question, which I have taken on notice. What I would refer Mr Braddock to are the significant election commitments that we have to footpath maintenance, and those do include filling in missing sections. But I will familiarise myself with the question taken on notice and, if I need to correct the record, of course I will.

MS CLAY: Has the workforce of the path repair crew increased to 10 in the first quarter of 2025 to facilitate better paths?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Clay for the question. Certainly, that recruitment has been underway. I believe it was delayed for a reason that is not quite coming to me. As to whether that crew has expanded to 10 in the first quarter of 2025, I will take that on notice.

Waste—collection

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is also to the Minister for City Services. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the transition of the household waste collection contract?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the question. A procurement process was undertaken in 2023 and the new contract for our household waste collections was awarded to J.J. Richards & Sons. While preparing to cease service in the territory, Veolia continued to provide a largely stable service. Aside from a single afternoon of disruption due to staffing issues and another which was necessitated by the death of a colleague and the workforce's attendance at a funeral, there were no significant disruptions to service. Those issues that were experienced in those two days were rectified in the following days, as was required under Veolia's contract.

The new contract with J.J.'s commenced on 28 April. The first week of service is widely recognised as challenging for a new provider anywhere in the world, and yet I would suspect that most people are not aware that there has been a transition. It has been extraordinarily smooth. Only one per cent of collections were reported as a missed collection, and even then, some were genuine reports of missed services because there were new routes undertaken, for example, but others were wrongly reported missed collections, certainly with good intention, but it was simply due to collections occurring at a different time of day. TCCS continues to work closely with J.J.'s to minimise any disruption and to ensure the contracted service is delivered at a high standard. I particularly thank the fantastic drivers from Veolia, and now, the workforce has transitioned to J.J.'s. They are under an EBA. They really do a thankless job. It does remind me a little bit of wicket keeping; you do not notice they are there until they drop the ball. Our garbo's never drop the ball, accidentally, and what they have done to support us is a credit—(*Time expired.*)

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, what changes will the community see and how will it impact the service?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the supplementary. The most obvious difference is the trucks. The contract included a new fleet of trucks on the road,

including 30 general waste, 12 recycling and 11 green waste or FOGO collection vehicles. A new electric garbage truck is also expected to come into service in the territory. This fleet of trucks is more agile and technologically advanced. They can manage some of the tougher tasks and this has resulted in some changed service conditions, with the most significant being that in Charnwood.

Depending on where you live in Charnwood, prior to this new contract, your rubbish would have been collected on one of four different days. I am happy to update the Assembly that the new fleet of trucks allows the collection in Charnwood for household bins to occur on Wednesdays alone. It is a more efficient service that achieves better outcomes for our community.

To finish my response to the first question, I would encourage members to have a look at what is happening in Birmingham if they need a reminder of just how vital a garbage and household waste collection service is. I think the fact that this has been such a smooth transition and that our workforce provides such a high standard of service cannot be overstated. We are very lucky to have such a dedicated workforce and are very thankful to Veolia, J.J.'s and City Services for managing such a smooth transition.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what should members of the community do if their bins have not been collected?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Tough for the supplementary. In the first instance, I would encourage Canberrans to wait, in order to be sure that their collection is not simply occurring at a different time that day. The new provider does have different routes which may alter the time that a household's bins are collected on any given day. However, if a bin has been missed, customers can call J.J.'s at 6270 5070 within 24 hours and leave the bin on the curb. It will be collected. ACT No Waste and the team that is responsible for the enhancements to Fix My Street have also worked with J.J.'s to set up a simple missed bin collection request form on the TCCS website and that interfaces directly with J.J.'s. So if you submit through that form, J.J.'s will be able to receive that missed bin collection and to respond accordingly. J.J.'s and City Services will continue to focus on minimising service disruptions and ensuring the smooth transition across the ACT.

Roads—Woden

MR COCKS: My question is to either the Minister for Transport or the Minister for City and Government Services, depending on who is more appropriate. Minister, despite repeated campaigns over the last term to upgrade intersections and transport infrastructure along Yamba Drive and Hindmarsh Drive, the then minister for transport and city services advised that there was no plan to address these issues, because they were not in the top 100 most dangerous intersections. It has now been revealed that the intersection of Hindmarsh Drive and Yamba Drive is the second most dangerous in the ACT.

Minister, what analysis have you undertaken to understand the relationship between the problems at this intersection and the surrounding roads and intersections?

MS CHEYNE: I will take this question, but I will take the substance of it on notice. I

need to doublecheck that ‘second most’ versus ‘top 100’ et cetera. There are different applications of how the most dangerous intersections are determined, and that might provide some further context to the answer. But I will take the substance on notice.

MR COCKS: Minister, will you agree to fix the traffic and safety problems in this area, including the surrounding intersections and the interface with pedestrians and buses accessing the hospital?

MS CHEYNE: Without the information available to me at this moment, I cannot agree to anything. But I will seek to provide as fulsome a response as I can to Mr Cocks.

MR HANSON: Minister, what is your understanding of the relationship between increased congestion, driver frustration and traffic accidents?

MS CHEYNE: Mr Speaker, that is an odd question. Here we are again! What I would say is that a whole lot of different factors are interrelated when it comes to accidents and congestion. We have been investing in traffic monitoring. There is a Traffic Management Centre—

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, do you want to hear the answer to the question?

Mr Hanson: Once she started by saying it was odd, I lost hope!

MS CHEYNE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. We do have a Traffic Management Centre. It is monitoring the flow of traffic throughout the city. There are, I think, hundreds of CCTV cameras at major intersections—and smaller intersections as well—across the city, so that our teams who program the signals can respond to what they are seeing.

Of course, the factors that Mr Hanson reflected on yesterday can be interrelated, but plenty of other factors can as well, such as the condition of the road. It can be the weather. It can be a person’s personal circumstances. So, yes, there is a relationship between them, but that is not the only part of the story.

Roads—Coppins Crossing Road

MR COCKS: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services. Minister, residents in Molonglo Valley are now facing two-hour commutes, overcrowded buses and growing traffic jams. The transport network is being overwhelmed by rapid population growth and delayed infrastructure, particularly the long-overdue Coppins Crossing bridge. These issues are now spilling over into surrounding suburbs and roads. Minister, did the government undertake any traffic modelling to understand the impact of the bridge project on traffic congestion?

MS CHEYNE: Yes, I think that is very clear by the fact that we gave very advanced notice about the closure of the bridge area for these three weeks. I would note that it is only for the installation of four girders on the side of the river where they have now been installed. The rest of the girders are going to be installed in the weeks following this weekend. It will take longer, but Coppins Crossing will be open.

We did know that this would be seriously disruptive. We let people know as soon as possible, as soon as we had a good idea about the delivery date of the girders and of the arrival of Australia's second-largest crane and the build for that. Once we were certain on that, we gave as much notice as possible to advise people that they would need to be taking a different route.

MR COCKS: Minister, what options did the government identify to alleviate or deal with traffic congestion during the bridge construction, other than pushing the problem back onto residents with the generic message "Rethink your routine"?

MS CHEYNE: I think there are limited options for the government to provide when Coppins Crossing is the only way through that particular area and over the Molonglo River bridge. We were not able to magically have helicopters or things like. We were able to give some clear direction about the detours to take and that this would have an impact. We were able to stress what buses were available, and the government took on the feedback about the school routes, in particular, and responded accordingly with some extra services.

MR HANSON: Minister, as someone who spent a long time on Streeton Drive and the Cotter Road this morning, when will Canberra's traffic problems be fixed, given the government has been promising a solution to traffic congestion since 2016?

MS CHEYNE: Mr Speaker, light rail is a big part of that. As you heard, it is a congestion-buster and it does encourage people to take a different mode of transport.

Mr Hanson: Is it coming to Molonglo?

MS CHEYNE: Yes, it is coming to Woden, Mr Hanson. In addition, we are investing in major upgrade projects right across the city—for example, the Monaro Highway. You would understand, particularly, Mr Speaker, the impact of those lights there in ensuring that, while we have to do a particular bit of effort on that road with Dogtrap Creek, all efforts have been—

Mr Hanson: A point of order, Mr Speaker. The question was about when this will be fixed. I am after a date or a timeline. The minister is saying that it will be a tram that is going to fix it all. When will that be coming out to Molonglo?

MR SPEAKER: If it is possible to be more relevant to the question, that would be good.

MS CHEYNE: He just asked another one. Traffic movements and modelling change all the time with population. We have been projecting population. Some of that has been notoriously difficult, because we have not had the most accurate data from the ABS. When the population projections do come through, what we have been relying on, the latest data that has been available to us, has not been accurate, and our city has been growing much faster. That does make it very difficult to plan. But we are investing in our roads, and we are doing so in partnership with the commonwealth. There are always going to be more areas that we can invest in and make changes to as we acknowledge how the community is growing, where they are living and how they are travelling. To

ask for a particular date for transport to be solved is just silly.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice

Taxation—reassessments

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Last week, on 8 May, I took a question on notice from Mr Cocks about whether all of the constituents who had received retrospective stamp duty assessments due to an interpretation of marital status had been contacted by the Revenue Office at that time. I was advised just after 5 pm on the same day that every taxpayer who could be reasonably identified and who had been reassessed as ineligible for the homebuyer concession on the basis of a partner's income in the circumstance of being separated but not divorced had been contacted.

However, as I indicated in a subsequent answer, the Revenue Office confirmed that there are others who could be separated but not divorced but who appear to be ineligible on criteria other than partner income. As I noted in the Assembly in response to Mr Cocks's subsequent question, those cases would require further investigation and review.

Canberra Health Services—Canberra Hospital operations centre

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I also took on notice last week a very odd question from Ms Castley in relation to the employment of Dr Howard, the former Chief Operating Officer of Canberra Hospital. While, obviously, we would not normally speak about employment arrangements, as this is a former chief operating officer, I provided some information after question time that day.

I can further advise that Dr Howard is currently doing some clinical supernumerary shifts in the intensive care unit at Canberra Hospital, that Dr Howard remains credentialed as an intensivist at Canberra Health Services, and that this work is not related to his chief operating officer role, from which he has resigned.

Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee

Reference

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform) (3.02): Pursuant to standing order 99, I move:

That e-petition No 003-25 on the sustainability and liveability of Phillip and Woden Town Centre and its surrounding precincts be referred to the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services

I think we made the case this morning during the tabling of petitions as to why it is important that this petition goes, hopefully for inquiry, to the standing committee. I thank the Assembly for their patience.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Mr Speaker presented the following paper:

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to section 17—Auditor-General’s Report No 2/2025—Energy efficiency standard for rental properties, dated 9 May 2025.

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

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 26—Consolidated Financial Report for the financial quarter ending 31 March 2025.

Public housing—Minimum energy efficiency standard—Proposed upgrade—Assembly resolution of 29 November 2023—Government response—Report to Legislative Assembly, dated May 2025.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Act—

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2025 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-41 (LR, 1 May 2025).

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2025 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-42 (LR, 1 May 2025).

Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act—Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Appointment 2025—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-44 (LR, 5 May 2025).

Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Act—Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Services Industry Voluntary Members Levy Determination 2025—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-43 (LR, 1 May 2025).

Veterinary Practice Act—Veterinary Practice (Fees) Determination 2025 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-40 (LR, 30 April 2025).

Planning and development—Tuggeranong

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (3.04): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the district of Tuggeranong is home to around 90,000 people across 19 suburbs in the south of Canberra;
- (b) Tuggeranong, including Lanyon and the broader rural areas, is a distinct and sizeable region of the city that contributes to its economy, workforce and community;
- (c) the residents of Tuggeranong love its well-designed layout and landscape, and its suburban feel while being well connected to the

- natural environment surrounding it;
- (d) Tuggeranong is not a district likely to have new suburbs developed in it due to its geographical location, and population predictions from 2024 show Tuggeranong has a zero percent growth by 2060, without planning changes to support more housing;
 - (e) the ACT Planning Strategy 2018 calls for sustainable urban growth by working towards delivering up to 70 percent of new housing within our existing urban footprint, and by concentrating development in areas located close to the city centre, town and group centres and along key transit corridors;
 - (f) in 2023, the ACT Government released the Tuggeranong District Strategy, which identified key sites and change areas located close to transport corridors; and
 - (g) the ACT Government has a housing plan to build 30,000 new homes by 2030, including reforms to support more missing middle housing, transport-oriented development and more housing at shopping centres;
- (2) further notes that:
- (a) ACT Labor took a plan for Tuggeranong to the 2024 ACT election focused on the investment and renewal Tuggeranong needs, including improved investment in new Rapid bus services and shopping centres;
 - (b) the ACT Government's objective to expand light rail services through the Woden Valley district into the Tuggeranong district along Athllon Drive as part of stage 4 of light rail; and
 - (c) shopping centre precincts and transport corridors offer an opportunity for an increase in well located housing, connected with public and active transport, and services; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) develop a draft transit-oriented development plan for Tuggeranong along the rapid transport corridor on Athllon Drive including the Tuggeranong Town Centre and through to Lanyon, following development of the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework;
 - (b) consider how the plan could improve nearby shopping centre precincts including Wanniasa group centre, Tuggeranong Town Centre and Lanyon group centre through mixed-use development including shop-top housing to help achieve the housing target; and
 - (c) report back to the Assembly on progress by the last sitting week in November 2026.

It is no secret that I believe Tuggeranong is the best part of Canberra, and I make no secret of my desire always to stand up for the people of Tuggeranong. I want to see renewal and growth, and Tuggeranong continuing to be a vibrant region.

The urban areas of Tuggeranong are beautifully located in valleys and on hills, bordered by the Murrumbidgee River, the Rob Roy Nature Reserve, Urambi Hills, Namadji and Tidbinbilla, to name a few. Beyond, to the south and west, are our rural areas, that are home to many families making a life for themselves. Many people in Canberra do not appreciate the true beauty of Tuggeranong until they cross the lake, keep driving south, even further south, and then come for a visit. But the 90,000 of us who call Tuggeranong

home know just how great it is.

As the city of Canberra continues to grow, as we witness the redevelopment of the Canberra city centre and the creation of new suburbs, particularly to the south-west and north-west of Civic, Tuggeranong has remained relatively unchanged, except for the development around the lake. There is limited space for any new suburbs in the Tuggeranong and Lanyon valleys.

Many people will say, “What’s wrong with that? Tuggeranong is perfect. We don’t want to be crowded or lose what makes us who we are.” But, as every resident of Tuggeranong knows, we need renewal. We need housing options to suit all generations who want to call Tuggeranong home, and we need improved public transport to connect us all together. I do not think it has to be a binary choice between staying as is or having renewal.

Apart from the natural beauty of Tuggeranong, one of the things that I love is its sense of community, its sense of pride and its strong local identity. But I see many young people being forced to move away because there are such limited suitable housing options for young people in Tuggeranong. I see many older people forced to move away, too, because there are not the opportunities to downsize within our community. This brings with it issues with our sense of community. If we are losing people at both ends of life to other parts of the city, how do we keep our region growing and strong?

I grew up in a coastal suburban area with that same sense of community, but where many people had to leave after finishing school—an area that has seen suburban sprawl take over in the last 20 to 30 years but still sees people leave, an area that has more often thought about transport and community assets second to building more and more houses. But I know that this government, the ACT Labor government, support the revitalisation of Tuggeranong while considering community needs, including improved transport, without the need for suburban sprawl.

I know that many young people do eventually come back to Tuggeranong because it is a wonderful place to raise a family. I have picked Tuggeranong as my home to raise a family. We have family homes galore throughout our suburbs, with big backyards, schools, green spaces and community facilities. But when people leave, we risk them not coming back, and I do not want to continue living in a place where our young feel they must leave to make a future.

Our older generations too often find it difficult to stay as well. They have to move away from family, friends and the community they have known so that they can live in a home that is better suited to their needs. I do not want it to be a place that our older generations feel they have to leave, either. I want to see a region full of all types of housing, from big family homes to smaller villas, townhouses, apartments and shop-top housing options that suit everyone. It is that missing middle housing that is so often talked about, and it is definitely needed.

What I do know, from living in Tuggeranong, is that there are only a few roads in and out, giving the potential to develop them further as rapid transport corridors and, as we have seen from light rail stage 1, bring with it opportunities for increased housing along these corridors. The design of Tuggeranong, with its main roads in and out, gives us the

opportunity to use transit as a way of increasing housing, like the missing middle, that the community needs, without just building all over the place.

Mr Parton: The tram is nearly there—nearly!

MS TOUGH: We will get the tram. As I said earlier, there is limited space for new suburbs in Tuggeranong. The original planning for Tuggeranong talked about crossing the Murrumbidgee River and having a region on both sides of the town centre, with the town centre in the middle. This did not eventuate for a variety of reasons, which is why we have the town centre where it is—nowhere near the actual centre.

Most people I speak to are quite happy that Tuggeranong never went west of the river. With an agreement to set an urban growth boundary this term, it is likely that Tuggeranong will never go west. But that historical plan for Tuggeranong, leaving us with a town centre on that western edge, has presented some unique transit problems for our urban population. Transiting into the town centre to move on to the next town centre, or on to Civic, does not really work for most residents of Tuggeranong as it currently stands.

That brings me to today's motion. This motion is about the future of our region. It is about making sure all generations have somewhere to live close to those they love, closer to the community they know. Existing population growth models predict that, without planning changes, the Tuggeranong region will not grow at all by 2060, while the rest of Canberra, particularly the north side, continues to grow. It is only with a change in policy and change in approach by government that we can ensure Tuggeranong does grow, and we can have our fair share of the benefits of that growth.

The ACT government's 2018 Planning Strategy called for sustainable urban growth where 70 per cent of new housing is within the existing footprint—ideally, development along key transit corridors, and those close to town and group centres. The 2023 Tuggeranong District Strategy identified sites in Tuggeranong that could be key to future development along these transport corridors. As a party, the ACT Labor government took up a plan to build 30,000 new homes across Canberra by 2030.

This motion pulls together those strategies and plans and says, "Let's look at Tuggeranong. Let's look at what we can do for the future of Tuggeranong. Let's have renewal. Let's have housing options. Let's look after future generations and promote our region." It is about putting our hand up and saying, "Tuggeranong wants to be included in the growth of the city and deserves the same future-focused planning as any other part of the city."

I want to see a transit-oriented development plan for Tuggeranong, particularly looking at the rapid transport corridor along Athllon Drive, where light rail is planned. I appreciate the interjections from my colleague Mr Speaker, and I say: yes, light rail will come to Tuggeranong.

Mr Parton: Will it?

MS TOUGH: It will.

Mr Parton: Are you announcing the date?

MS TOUGH: I want to see light rail in Tuggeranong. I want to see the continuation of this transit corridor down to my home in the Lanyon Valley, connected through to the town centre, and across the whole of the Tuggeranong region. The Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework that is currently underway, with a focus on the light rail corridor extension to Woden, will provide a useful basis for this work to build on. Following on from this, it is a natural step to continue that planning south into Tuggeranong.

In the meantime, there is work that can already get underway. ACT Labor's 2024 Tuggeranong plan has a focus on the investment and renewal that Tuggeranong needs—our shopping centres, our transport, our playgrounds, our sports facilities, and our schools and medical facilities.

One of the items that will significantly help with this transit corridor is a new rapid bus service from Lanyon through Kambah into Civic—something for which I have been advocating. I have spoken to many residents of Kambah who would love to see this rapid bus, and many residents of Lanyon, like me, who would welcome an easy-to-use public transport connection north from Lanyon into Kambah.

Kambah is a vibrant part of Tuggeranong. It is the OG Tuggeranong, having celebrated 50 years last year. It is an area of history, and it is full of promise. Some public transport infrastructure and planning changes could see it reach new potential. It would be remiss of me not to mention the numerous residents and supporters of Kambah that I have spoken to about the future of Kambah.

Lanyon, at the other end, is right at the edge of the urban boundary of Tuggeranong and Canberra. We are located quite close to many rural communities, so improved connection into Tuggeranong and the city would be fantastic, and more housing options are more than welcome, too. Improved shopping centre precincts are needed across Tuggeranong. Calwell and Lanyon have recently been upgraded, and the plan also made commitments regarding Chisholm, Erindale and Monash.

A rapid transport corridor along Athllon Drive provides the opportunity to improve the Wanniasa group centre and the Tuggeranong town centre. The government has been working with the owners of South Point on what can be done to improve housing and transport connections in the town centre. It provides the perfect opportunity to explore the use of shop-top housing in the town centre and throughout Tuggeranong, to help achieve the housing target, to improve the missing middle and improve our shopping centre precincts.

It is not just Wanniasa, the town centre and Lanyon that will benefit from the rapid transport corridor, and I thank Miss Nuttall for her forthcoming amendments, which mention a few of the other shopping centres as well. The strategy, and improving our shopping centre precincts to encourage shop-top housing throughout our group and local shopping centres, will help with housing needs and the missing middle of the Tuggeranong region and across Canberra. Personally, I hope this is part of the way of revitalising the Richardson shopping centre precinct, too.

I also want to mention rural constituents across Brindabella, who reach out to me quite often. A development plan for Tuggeranong focused on housing, transport and future development, along with an urban growth boundary, provides rural landholders with the certainty they need for a future in rural ACT. I hope this is a step in the right direction for these constituents, too.

I am anticipating that colleagues on the other side of the chamber will speak about how this just proves the neglect of Tuggeranong and that no-one listens to Tuggeranong, and I appreciate all of the interjections so far about different things in Tuggeranong.

Mr Parton: I try. I'm here for you!

MS TOUGH: Thank you; I appreciate the support. In answer to that, I say the 2024 Tuggeranong plan clearly shows that the government is listening. Investment in Tuggeranong over the years shows that the government is acting. My colleague Mr Werner-Gibbings, who is currently sitting in the chair as Assistant Speaker, and I are here to amplify the voices of Tuggeranong in the Assembly. Given that you are in the chair, Mr Assistant Speaker, I understand you might not be able to speak on today's motion, but I know I have your support on this, and on anything I do to promote Tuggeranong and its future.

I want to conclude by thanking Miss Nuttall for her time this week in engaging in constructive discussions about amendments to the motion, and I foreshadow that Labor will be supporting the amendments that have been circulated in her name. I thank Minister Steel and his office for engaging early with me on this, so that my ideas could be wrangled into something. I thank those opposite for the interjections and for their forthcoming contributions to the debate.

This is about listening to communities, working together and ensuring Tuggeranong is well placed to thrive, now and into the future. I thank all of those in the community who have continued to advocate for a stronger Tuggeranong. Big things have small beginnings, and my dream of a strong, vibrant Tuggeranong is well underway. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MS MORRIS (Brindabella) (3.15): I thank Ms Tough for bringing forward this motion today, which the opposition will be supporting. Mr Acting Speaker, I share the desire to plan for the future of Tuggeranong. While it is very nice to hear members of the Labor Party talk about improving transport, housing and local shopping centres in Tuggeranong, I hope you can forgive us for being somewhat sceptical about what this will actually deliver for the people of Tuggeranong. When you look at Labor's record in Tuggeranong, it is one of neglect, decline and broken promises. It is all talk and very little action.

It is now the year 2025, but the story I am about to tell goes back at least 13 years to 2012, when the Canberra Liberals first put forward the need to duplicate Athllon Drive, to help Tuggeranong commuters get to where they need to go sooner and safer. By 2016, the Labor Party had come around to the idea, agreeing that duplication was perhaps a worthy pursuit after all. Duplicating Athllon Drive became part of their 2016 ACT election platform—even promising \$141 million to get the job done.

That was more than 10 years ago, almost a decade ago. Did they get the job done? Unfortunately, for the people of Tuggeranong, no, they did not. Tuggeranong was once again thrown to the back of the pack, while the ACT Labor-Greens government pursued other pet projects. Instead of honouring their commitment and putting their money where their mouth was, they poured Tuggeranong ratepayers' money into their one true love. I will leave it to you, Mr Assistant Speaker, to take a guess at what that one true love could possibly be.

Of course, with an election looming in 2020, their broken promise to duplicate Athllon Drive was revived, only this time they had a "concept draft" and a \$75 million commitment for the project, with then transport minister Chris Steel promising it would save more than 14,000 Tuggeranong vehicles that travelled along the road about two minutes in travel time.

Labor won the election and got straight to work delivering on their two-time election commitment to duplicate Athllon Drive. Wait; hang on. That is the wrong script. That is not actually what happened. Despite government assurances that the project was on track, Tuggeranong was once again left behind, with Labor failing to deliver for the community.

But all hope was not lost. And why is that? Because, of course, there was another election on the horizon, the 2024 ACT election. This time, ACT Labor had grand promises and visions for Tuggeranong. Their commitment for Tuggeranong, more than 10 years after it was first floated, was to duplicate Athllon Drive. How amazing! We could not see that coming! This is clearly a government who cares for its people!

In all seriousness, they were actually very serious—so serious that they put up a brand-new sign to replace the old and decaying road sign, signalling that the ACT government was going to duplicate Athllon Drive. And that brings us to today. Here we are, 13 years later, on the other side of another election. Maybe this time it will be different. Let us wait and see.

If this is the treatment that ACT Labor gives to a major arterial in Tuggeranong that caters to tens of thousands of Tuggeranong commuters every week, what hope do those smaller, less populated transit routes have of ever seeing some investment and maintenance thrown their way? There is little hope, I am afraid. You need only look at Smiths Road, south of Tharwa, on the ACT side of the border, to see why.

Anyone who has travelled on Smiths Road will understand why it is considered to be one of the most dangerous roads in the ACT. The road is predominantly gravel. It is peppered with blind spots and crests. Your car literally feels like it will fall apart, while it thumps and shudders along this dangerous stretch, even at the slowest speeds.

Local residents cannot get emergency services because of the road. One resident who had experienced a heart attack had to wait more than six hours for an ambulance to reach him using New South Wales roads; the ambulance crew on the ACT side could not reach him because of just how dangerous the road is. Residents say it is just a matter of time before someone is killed.

Just like the very sorry story of Athllon Drive, more than a decade ago, in 2011, this

government promised that they would seal that road. They promised to act. But here we are, in 2025, and three kilometres of that road remains a death trap for anyone who travels along it. Now they are saying that they have no plans at all to seal the road. Perhaps that is because, despite promising to seal it, the ACT coffers have been rapidly drained of money to pay for the tram, and the ACT government thought there was very little advantage to them, and no votes in it for them to fix Smiths Road.

I appreciate that many of these issues pre-date Ms Tough's time in the Assembly, and I hope that she is genuine in her attempt to deliver for Tuggeranong, but she does belong to a party that has, for decades, neglected and betrayed the people of Tuggeranong. The betrayal is entrenched within the Labor model.

While we will be supporting this motion, we remain very sceptical about what it will actually deliver for the people of Tuggeranong.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (3.22): What a fascinating little motion from Ms Tough. If I were to summarise this motion in a sentence, I would say that it says this: "Hey, Tuggeranong, you know how you guys were feeling like the poor, neglected cousins of Canberra? Well, you kinda are." That is pretty much what it says. "You know how we said in the Our Canberra newsletter that light rail was coming to Tuggeranong? Well, we didn't actually lie, but we sorta did, because it's a hell of a long way away. In reality, although we trumpeted that the tram was the transport solution for Tuggeranong, we don't mean for anyone who is currently alive in Tuggeranong. It will be for their descendants. It'll be great for their descendants; it'll be a great solution for them. But in the meantime, we've got to cobble some other stuff together." Although the transport minister constantly tells us that the government is getting on with the job, they are not really getting on with the job. It is a snail's pace disaster.

I actually have a suggestion for the untold thousands of people that are watching the live stream.

Members interjecting—

MR PARTON: Members may laugh. The live stream is going gangbusters for numbers; we are pretty much breaking the internet. There is nothing like watching the Assembly with your drinking mates. Can I suggest that, if you were ever having a drinking game associated with the viewing of Assembly proceedings, the trigger to scull your drink, when the transport minister is speaking, are these words: "We're getting on with it." That is his most overused phrase.

It is one of those examples that shows that, if you say it enough, even you will believe it. Clearly, they are not really getting on with it, as evidenced by this motion. Let us count how many times Mr Steel goes with the phrase in today's speech, although he may now remove it. If he does, the secondary phrase that you should go with is, "Unlike the Canberra Liberals." I think those suggestions may set up some fun afternoons.

This motion clearly states that Tuggeranong is officially, under Labor, going to wither on the vine. Ms Tough stated that there would no growth, ever, down in the workers' valley. There will be no growth down there. The people of Tuggeranong wonder why we cannot have nice things. I would point out that Brindabella was the only electorate

in the most recent ACT election that cracked it for a Liberal primary vote over 40 per cent. Of course, my friend Mr Smith went within a whisker of losing the unlosable seat. I think that Labor have heard what it is that we are saying about them. To paraphrase Andrew Barr, “Did you think I wouldn’t hear all the things you said about me?” That is why we cannot have nice things down south.

In parts, this motion looks like it borrows from the transport policy brought forward by the Canberra Liberals at the last election, with a focus on rapid buses, and more of them, and we cannot argue with that. We will not be opposing this motion, but we just need to call it out for what it is. Ms Tough is saying, “The tram is not getting to Tuggeranong until 2070. I’m happy to go with that, and you will be paying for it with your skyrocketing rates and charges. Over the next 50 years, we might need to plan a few things to keep pretending that we’re moulding a different Tuggeranong.”

Parents are not supposed to have favourite and least favourite children, but this motion solidifies the irrefutable position that Tuggeranong is the least favourite child of this government.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (3.26): I support Ms Tough’s motion, and I agree with her that Tuggeranong is a terrific district and more housing is appropriate. But I have to share our experience with Athllon Drive, because we too have it. After many years of having a big sign outside Phillip saying that it would be duplicated, we got duplication for where the buses will go in and out of the new bus depot, and the rest of it was not duplicated.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (3.27): I welcome the opportunity brought forward by Ms Tough to speak today on her motion and particularly talk about housing and development in Tuggeranong, which is something I do not think I have heard any other member except for yourself, Ms Tough, mention in this debate.

The government is committed to enabling 30,000 new homes by 2030. As we work to deliver these 30,000 new homes, we are focused on providing people with well-located housing that is close to transport and services. A key action of the Transport Strategy since 2018 continues to be investigating opportunities for higher-density development within future urban intensification locations in order to inform prioritisation and staging of future development, land release and infrastructure, social and physical, and investment options—specifically, investigating locations that meet the criteria of within frequent bus network corridor of around 800 metres, or an average 10-minute walk; a light rail stop within 800 metres, or an average 10-minute walk; city and town centres within 1,000 metres, an average 15-minute walk; and group centres within 800 metres, or an average 10-minute walk.

The ACT government is now developing our approach to transit-oriented development—or TOD, as it is known—by integrating our transport planning with land use planning. This approach is reflected clearly in the machinery of government changes that the Chief Minister has announced. Transport and planning will be brought together into a single directorate to ensure that transport and planning are tightly integrated.

Similar to the work that New South Wales is undertaking as part of its transit-oriented development program, the ACT is developing our own approach to transit-oriented development along key transport corridors, being our future light rail stages and established in future Rapid bus routes. However, the ACT's approach will differ in scale to New South Wales. Similar to European cities, we will consider reforms which allow for larger-scale, medium density housing in certain well-located areas close to services, shops, and transport. This is intended to support human-scale housing that will promote access to public transport, renewal of shopping centres and the public spaces around them.

The district strategies already identified several key opportunities for transit-oriented development based on the approach in the Planning Strategy; however, further detailed work is now required in key areas of the city. The transit-oriented development approach will involve further planning changes to implement the city and northern gateway design framework and begin development on the southern gateway planning and design framework as we progress with the planning and approval processes required to extend light rail to Woden. The southern gateway framework will guide development and incorporate transport, housing, infrastructure and community facilities to support the growing population, unlock the full potential of the future light rail mass transit route and provide a guide for a staged and integrated approach for investment and transformation in the corridor.

Following this work, the motion proposed that we will continue through to Tuggeranong, particularly looking at Athllon Drive. Already, we have established a Rapid bus route running along this corridor, connecting Tuggeranong into Woden and the city and is identified in the District Strategy as the potential future route for light rail, which is, of course, known as light rail stage 4. Further, Rapid routes are planned to better connect the Tuggeranong Valley with other parts of Canberra, and we have brought some of those commitments to the election. The Athllon Drive corridor will serve as a spine for transit-oriented development, encouraging medium-density and mixed-use projects that bring together residential, commercial and recreational spaces.

The District Strategy also identifies opportunities to improve connections into the local and group centres listed in this motion to encourage their growth and renewal. Complementing this is the work that is already underway by the government in reviewing planning controls around our local shops and group centres to encourage more mixed-use development and shop-top housing, with a particular focus on the under-utilisation of land in these areas. Enabling this form of development will not only help achieve our housing targets but also revitalise these precincts by introducing a diverse range of activities and services. By integrating housing with retail and commercial spaces, we will create lively, walkable neighbourhoods that can cater to the needs of our growing population.

As the government encourages more housing at shopping centres, we will also be looking for shop owners and developers to do their bit in those areas in terms of investing in modern, well-designed shopping precincts for Canberrans. Constructive conversations have already been occurring with some of the commercial centre owners in Tuggeranong to explore what opportunities might be available, which I am sure would feed into the development of a transit-oriented development plan as well.

We have invested and we will continue to invest in the Tuggeranong Valley and the Tuggeranong district. The government has never been of the view that our population forecasts for the decline in population of the Tuggeranong district are a fait accompli. With planning changes like transit-oriented development and the missing middle reforms, we can build more housing and accommodate more people and families in the Tuggeranong area. In my discussions with Ms Tough and Mr Werner-Gibblings about the future planning reforms and the need to reverse that decline in population in the Tuggeranong Valley, we have agreed that Tuggeranong should not miss out on new housing, renewal of shopping centres and better public transport.

Part of the reason why Ms Tough has brought this motion here today is to get the Assembly's agreement that this is an important direction for reform as we undertake this transit-oriented development work. We want every district of Canberra to have more housing choice, with good access to transport along key transit corridors, and provide the opportunity that this creates to build vibrant, walkable and sustainable neighbourhoods that support the renewal of aging shopping hubs that benefit both existing residents and the new residents that might have the opportunity to live closer to these services.

This motion requires some further work to be undertaken, looking at a range of studies around housing, employment, community and recreational facilities in the Tuggeranong district. This motion importantly sequences this piece of work so that we can undertake the initial work on the southern gateway planning and design framework first, which will set some important parameters and principles for transit-oriented development in the city so that we can then continue on down to Tuggeranong and undertake the further piece of work there. We are looking forward to updating the Assembly as this work progresses.

Our approach is focused on delivering better outcomes for the Tuggeranong community, including housing, which is a whole-of-government priority at the moment. I have to say that I am pretty disappointed with the opposition's approach to this motion—not taking it seriously, a condescending and patronising approach where they have completely missed the point of the motion, which is focused on housing and development opportunities in Tuggeranong. They have been talking about road projects, which the government is continuing work on, and it is funded in the budget with design underway also funded by the federal government. Of course, that will continue, but this is about making sure that, as we undertake that investment, we are doing so in a way that is integrated with land use planning and making sure that there are opportunities for more housing along the route, the opportunity to renew public spaces and services around these key transport corridors and the opportunity that provides to not just increase the population of Tuggeranong but also deliver better outcomes for the residents, both existing and new.

Our government is continuing to deliver for Tuggeranong and the south side. We brought a range of commitments to the election. What this motion shows today is that, in stark contrast to the opposition, we have a vision for this part of the city, and we are prepared to do the hard work to engage with the community to make sure that it is not left behind when it comes to delivering on our housing priorities, our transport priorities and our broader priorities to upgrade local shopping centres and make other

improvements in the Tuggeranong Valley.

I am looking forward to working with the members in this chamber who are actually supportive of the substance of this motion. We are getting on with the work, and we look forward to updating the Assembly on the planning work that is required to deliver the outcomes in housing and in better infrastructure for this important part of our city.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS (Brindabella) (3.37): I am going to start my short contribution with a lot of thankyou's and then go to a few disagreements. My first thankyou is to you, Mr Assistant Speaker, for coming down and taking the chair when I promised it would be a short statement. It was, but then everyone got up to speak in front of me. I appreciate you making this contribution possible. Thank you, obviously, to my colleague, Ms Tough, for bringing this motion forward and giving us the opportunity to talk about it and for the lovely words she spoke at the end. I did not write them for you; they were for real. I am very, very grateful, and you do have my support in the work that you are doing on behalf of Brindabella. Thank you to the minister for his response and support for us as representatives of Brindabella and for his larger guidance on the vision that the government has for the south side of Canberra, in this case Tuggeranong. Thank you as well to my colleagues Ms Morris and "Lord Speaker" Mr Parton for their contributions.

Members interjecting—

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Yes; it is a thing. To begin my, I guess, disagreements that I would like to put on the record: I do have a favourite child. I think parents tend to have favourite children. It changes day to day and week to week. Sometimes one is really well behaved; sometimes one is appallingly behaved. What we do, though, is we look to give the child who needs the most support the majority of our intervention. It is not a favouritism thing; it is a rational approach to parenting—we have X amount of time and we have X amount of resources, and this child or that child needs that amount of support. That is how you have to go about it.

I disagree with Mr Parton's characterisation that the result that shook out in the electorate of Bean was as a result of what Labor has been doing in the electorate. Quite the contrary, in the federal election, Labor, David Smith, held onto almost all of the votes, including the swing that he won in 2020. What happened was that the Liberal vote in Bean evaporated—gone. That is the problem, and that might be because of the lack of vision for Brindabella that is characteristically absent from interventions or motions like this from across the other side and federally. It is snark. It is cynicism. It is "Canberra's on fire" or "Brindabella's burning", but there is no vision. There is no explication on what they plan to do, why it is better and why people should vote for the Liberals. Instead it is, "This is all bad, but we do not have any suggestions."

The final disagreement that I have with Mr Parton is his characterisation of his opening sentence as a summary of the motion. One sentence is not 150 words; that is a paragraph. For Christmas, I am going to get him a full stop so that his sentences can be shorter and his summary is far more pithy. An issue that I have is with the way that Tuggeranong is characterised—to be fair, not by the other side, but it certainly was in the media last year. It was an issue that was raised in Ms Tough's motion—that is, that one of the projections for Tuggeranong is that the population will not grow. I read that

last year in the media as “stagnant”. That is quite a pejorative word for a really, really lovely place to live. “Stagnant” means “inert” or “lifeless”.

Genuinely, nothing could be further from the truth about Brindabella. When you come over the Erindale gap, you cannot see the suburbs for the trees and the mountains in Tuggeranong. There is life; there is energy; there is opportunity. It is an extraordinarily important part of Canberra, and that is why it gets the attention that it needs. We do not need all the intervention that the newer parts of Canberra have received. I would not say that “stagnant” is the right word. I would suggest, as Ms Tough mentioned, that there are some people in Tuggeranong who feel that we are in a perfect state of equilibrium potentially. We have schools that can accommodate all our kids. We have roads that can bear all our cars. Our parks and ovals foster our recreation. We are in a good state in terms of the resources we have and the population that use them.

However, Canberra is going to keep growing, and there is room in Tuggeranong, with good planning, as Ms Tough calls for in this motion, to help Canberra grow. Particularly in the missing middle and particularly in and around the shopping centres—Erindale, Wanniasa, Kambah—there are places where people will be able to live who are looking to downsize or who are looking to get a first home. Tuggeranong will be a perfect place for that to begin.

I think an excellent example of the success of urban infill in Tuggeranong and a demonstration of the time it takes for that sort of infill to begin to have an effect is Anketell Street. In 2016, Anketell Street was not an exciting place. Despite the fact it is only 200 metres from the lake and directly looking at Mount Tennent, there was not a lot going on. However, since the 2016 campaign, there hundreds of apartments have gone up down the southern end of Anketell Street and with them has come foot traffic and, with the foot traffic, has come many more cafes and much more sizzle. It is not yet perfect—Anketell Street is not Lonsdale Street—but, from where it was 10 years ago to where it is now, it is far different. There is much more excitement. It is one example of the opportunities that can be taken advantage of by business, by new residents and by government to revitalise and renew areas in Canberra.

I think the way that Ms Tough phrases this motion, speaking about the importance of ensuring that the work on the southern gateway planning and design framework is done that leads then to the transport corridor, and calling on the government to report to us in the Assembly about where it is up to, what progress has been achieved and what the next steps are is a critical way of approaching the task in front of us, both as policymakers but also as residents of Tuggeranong. Again, I commend Ms Tough for bringing the motion—and, again, thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (3.44), by leave: I move the following amendments together, in my name:

1. Insert after paragraph (1)(g):
“(h) in March 2025, the Assembly agreed to set an urban growth boundary this term and, as part of this consideration, consider the need to preserve land of environmental value and the future land needs of the Territory;”.
2. Omit all text after paragraph (3)(a), substitute:

- “(b) consider how the plan could improve nearby shopping centre precincts, including Kambah Village, the Wanniasa Group Centre, Chisholm Village, Calwell Shopping Centre, Tuggeranong Town Centre and Lanyon Group Centre, through mixed development including ‘shop top’ housing to help achieve the housing target;
- (c) ensure this development plan includes targets for public, community and affordable housing;
- (d) provide an interim update to the Assembly on progress by the last sitting day of 2025;
- (e) report back to the Assembly on progress by the last sitting week in November 2026.”.

I want to thank Ms Tough for bringing forward this motion to the Assembly and for her engagement with my office, which has, true to form, been nothing short of delightful. We will be supporting this motion. I will be getting on with it and my amendments in one go for the sake of time and member sanity.

It is no secret that Tuggeranong is significantly more disconnected than the other parts of Canberra. We wear our travel-hardiness like a badge of honour. If you are like me and you do not live along the Rapid 4 or 5, you are looking at almost an hour travel into the city by bus, when driving is less than 30 minutes. Unfortunately, I am not a hardcore enough cyclist like Ms Clay or Mr Parton to brave the Monaro Highway or the Tuggeranong Parkway if I wanted to get to the city with daylight to spare.

If we do not have good public and active travel options, we leave the folks in Tuggeranong with no choice but to buy a car. We know cars are expensive to buy and maintain and, compared to other forms of travel, they are far, far worse for the environment. They are a lot less efficient than a good bus. When you look at the statistics, here in the ACT, most journeys are made by car and less than four per cent, I believe, are made by public transport. But there is a better way. If we are smart with the way we use our space, we can become a compact city. We can build more housing on and near transit corridors, near your Rapid buses and your light rail. We can build close to services, like your GPs and your local primary schools and grocery stores.

I have a confession to make—and I hope Ms Tough blocks her ears. For two years of my adult life, I joined the dark side and lived in a townhouse in Harrison. It was incredible. I would jump out of bed, stumble to the kitchen, pour myself a cup of ambition and yawn and stretch and be at the light rail stop not 50 metres from my house. That would take me to groceries and gym in seven minutes, work in 23 and uni in 30, even on a Sunday. I did not own a car. It did not occur to me that I would need one. I had about four square metres of garden bed to kill and the complex’s shared garden out the back for the real gardeners. I am talking about the zoomer’s dream, minus the rent that was half my income.

I moved back down to Tuggeranong, as the lord intended, and immediately had to buy a car because it was now 40 minutes to work by bus—if I got the right bus—and it was an hour and a half anywhere on weekends. Grocery shopping was still okay, because I lived right next to the shops. Therein lies the idea of the whole missing middle and transit-oriented development, right? If we could provide affordable housing within 10 minutes walk of Rapid transport and crucial services, we would unlock so much time

for people to get out to the services they need but also do the things they love doing with the time that they save. The ACT Greens were this Assembly's earliest advocate for missing middle—the OGs, if you will—and we are so glad that Labor has hopped on board.

I welcome the development of this plan, but I also wanted to put forward amendments that reflect the way the discussion of urban growth has progressed through the Assembly and where the ACT Greens firmly believe our priorities for urban growth should sit. Just as recently as March this year, the Assembly supported my Greens colleague Ms Clay's motion to set an urban growth boundary this term. While Ms Tough's motion refers to the 2018 ACT Planning Strategy's target of at least 70 per cent development within the urban footprint, the Greens have always been calling for more.

We took a position to the last election that we needed to set a hard urban growth boundary, a position that was vindicated by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment in her 2023 *State of the environment* report. So we thought it was important that this motion reflected the most up-to-date resolution of the Assembly when it comes to setting limits on urban growth and urban sprawl. We know we can have our cake and eat it too. Canberra is a spread-out city, and we absolutely can have housing development and densification while preserving the beautiful nature of the Namadgi national parks and the Murrumbidgee corridors that we are so lucky to have in Tuggeranong.

We have also inserted a new call to ensure that the kinds of development that Ms Tough has been describing include public, community and affordable housing. Transit-oriented development should not be an exercise in gentrification, and I do not think for one moment that Ms Tough intends for it to be. But if we truly expect to solve the housing crisis, I think we should be really explicit in including homes that people can afford if they are living on a low income: your students, your older folks, people living on the disability pension.

We also got overexcited, and we wanted to make sure all the major shopping centres around Canberra were considered for the kind of shop-top housing and transit-oriented development that this motion is calling for. Our old faithful R5, the party bus, dutifully travels to most of these shopping centres anyway and I would hate for them to miss out. So we have added Calwell, Chisholm and Kambah shopping centres to the list for good measure. And RIP Benchy McFail. If you know, you know.

Our last amendment gives an interim reporting date at the end of this year, because we would expect the ACT Labor government to have honoured Ms Tough's request and got cracking on drafting the transit-oriented development plan for Tuggeranong by then. I would be very eager to see what the development of this plan could mean for my constituents in Tuggeranong if we do it right. I think the rest of the Assembly may be similarly interested. With my amendments, we will be supporting Ms Tough's motion. I am glad that Tuggeranong is getting some TLC that we deserve. Thank you.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (3.51): I had not planned on speaking to this motion but I was inspired after listening to the contributions from Mr Steel and yourself, Mr Assistant Speaker. I obviously do not live in Tuggeranong, but I did have the privilege of visiting

Tuggeranong on a number of occasions during the election campaign. Without doubt, the most common thread that came through from people who would talk to us was how neglected they felt. That came through time and time and time again.

In fact, even the Chief Minister actually admitted after the election that it was clear that ACT Labor did have to listen to the people of Tuggeranong and that they did speak loudly at the ballot box at the 2024 election. So it is something that has been on the radar for quite some time. In fact, you took all of the advantages of talking about how a fresh voice for Tuggeranong is exactly what this Assembly needed. So you yourself are very aware of how Tuggeranong has been neglected for a long, long time.

Mr Steel stood up and said, “How dare you, members of the opposition, to be so condescending and not taking this seriously; how insulting to the people of Tuggeranong.” If he wants to see what condescending is, perhaps he needs to reread his speech, because after decades of constant crying to have a little bit of support in Tuggeranong, to have the minister stand up and basically say, “We have been doing great things for Tuggeranong,” is the greatest insult. If he wants to see someone who is condescending and not taking this seriously, then I would suggest that he goes and has a look in the mirror. But I will give him credit for one thing. After Mr Parton pointed out the very silly drinking game that you could all play, when he says the words, “We are getting on with the job,” he did have the creativity to change it to, “We are getting on with delivering for Tuggeranong.” So there is some credit where credit is due.

You yourself, Mr Assistant Speaker, spoke about the favourite children and how you need to make sure that you deliver for the child that needs it most. I might not disagree 100 per cent on that, but how long does this child in need have to cry out for support before a parent will act? Is it a year? Is it four years? Or is it 24 years and counting? It is all very good to stand up and say, “Yes, we are calling for things in Tuggeranong because it has more need than the newer parts,” but how long have the people of Tuggeranong been calling out for support from this government?

I am optimistic, because I think it is clear with two new Labor backbench members, that you are at least trying to raise the topic in this place—because, by golly, after decades of two Labor members who were ministers, they did not get much at all. Ms Morris laid out beautifully, time and time again, how many times this ACT Labor government has broken its promises when it comes to delivering for Tuggeranong on the duplication of Athllon Drive. I do not think a single person was in any doubt about the timing of all these announcements. It happens to coincide with when there is an election coming and all the local candidates and members can get up and say, “Look at this; this is what we are going to do.”

I will point out that there is one thing that I disagree with in Mr Parton’s contribution. He spoke about Tuggeranong and the electorate of Brindabella being the least-favourite child or the most neglected. I will have to disagree and say that it must be Oaks Estate, in my own electorate. As we saw once again, after decades of neglect, after putting down once again on the record all of the things that they supposedly have done for Oaks Estate, the proof is of course in the pudding. Once again, we look at a motion that is brought by the Labor Party to be seen to be doing something. So, while of course there is support from the Liberals on this motion, once again the proof is in the pudding, and I have no doubt that Ms Morris and Mr Parton will be holding the Labor government to

account.

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (3.55): In closing, I will start with a few thank-yous. I thank Ms Morris for her contributions. I appreciate that her love of Tuggeranong is as strong as mine. I am glad she is back to living with us in the best region in Canberra: Tuggeranong. It is a wonderful place and I am glad she loves it as much as I do. I appreciate Ms Lee's contributions and for jumping in at the last moment. It was great to see her in Tuggeranong so often last year. I really want to thank Mr Parton for his theatrics. I know he just cannot help himself. I know he was so excited to see my motion on the notice paper yesterday and to have a crack at the government, because he is threatened that someone else in here cares about Tuggeranong, but, to quote him, they are "getting on with it" and are talking about what can be done in this place to help Tuggeranong now and into the future.

I am proud this motion ended up having all members of Brindabella speaking on it. How great is it that we can all come together to support housing and development in Tuggeranong and support better shops and public transport, although some of us are more supportive of actually achieving this reform—increasing housing and public transport in Tuggeranong—than others.

I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for defending our beautiful community in this chamber, standing up for Tuggeranong and touching on how positive planning changes and investment in our community can be for the better, such as what has happened on Anketell Street over the last 10 years. It is a vibrant, buzzing place. I was lucky enough to spend some time there on Mother's Day, having brunch with my family and enjoying sitting in such a vibrant part of our community, and that is because of investment in missing middle housing, investment in our open spaces and investment in our community.

I thank Miss Nuttall for talking about the importance of public transport and urban density to bring our community together and sharing her experience of how rapid transport improves the community, even for those working nine to five! We need to make sure the residents of Tuggeranong, now and in the future, have the right housing for their circumstances—whether it is large family homes, small apartments or shop-top housing in town or group centres; whether they own their own home or rent public, social or community housing. No matter where they live or what kind of housing they live in, they need to have access to decent public transport and the housing they need in a community that has everything they need. I also thank Ms Carrick for her contributions and for acknowledging how great Tuggeranong and the south side is, and for standing up for the south side in here.

I am really looking forward to working with Minister Steel going forward. I thank Minister Steel for his work on this motion, his work on planning reforms, his work on missing middle homes, his work on transport and his acknowledgement that this is something that all of Canberra needs, across the entire city, and for ensuring Tuggeranong is part of the discussion. I thank him for his work on improving housing options and better public transport for the Tuggeranong community.

And I am sorry to say this again, Mr Parton, but let's get on with it. Let's continue with our investments, just like our investment in Tuggeranong in health care, in green spaces

and playgrounds, in education, in renewal, in transport, in missing middle housing, and in our community. I am so glad this motion, with the amendments from Miss Nuttall, has the support of the entire chamber. I thank everyone. I commend my motion.

Amendments agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Macquarie—swimming pool

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.00): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) Big Splash opened in 1969 as the Macquarie Pool;
- (b) Big Splash has a 50-metre pool, kids pool and waterslides that have been very popular with the Belconnen community for decades but did not open for the 2024-2025 season;
- (c) in December 2024, the Minister for Sport and Recreation received a letter from Translink Property Management, the owners of Big Splash, noting they are undertaking significant rectification and maintenance works, which delayed the pool's opening;
- (d) vandalism at Big Splash is visible with broken windows, holes in the fences, graffiti, and items trashed;
- (e) the Crown lease permits an aquatic and indoor sports and recreation centre and unlicensed family restaurant;
- (f) in April 2025, the Minister for City and Government Services advised that Access Canberra was attempting to contact the owner of Big Splash to request them to address immediate safety issues at the site;
- (g) the community is concerned that Big Splash will close and a recreational pool in the Belconnen region will be lost, with rumours that the land will be sold to developers; and
- (h) a Bring Back the Big Splash community petition was tabled in the Legislative Assembly in March 2025 and ACT Government will be tabling a response by 26 June 2025;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) the population of Belconnen is expected to grow to 128,000 people by 2041 with greater demand for new and updated sport and recreation facilities;
- (b) Macquarie Section 53 Block 1 is listed as PRZ2– Restricted Access Recreation Zone under the Territory Plan;
- (c) Big Splash is part of the Macquarie Group Centre which provides a range of key services and facilities for the Belconnen community; and
- (d) the longer Big Splash remains closed the greater the likelihood of vandalism occurring and more costs being incurred by the owner, and the longer Belconnen residents do not have access to an outdoor swimming pool; and

- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) commit to taking compliance action in accordance with the provisions of the Crown lease for Macquarie Section 53 Block 1, the *Planning Act 2023* and *Planning (General) Regulation 2023*, so that if it is possible, Big Splash is open to the community for the 2025-2026 season;
 - (b) outline any further steps that the Government is taking to ensure Big Splash will be opened for the 2025-2026 season and beyond;
 - (c) commit to keeping the community informed of action on Big Splash, including tabling a further update report by 16 September 2025;
 - (d) commit to maintaining the current PRZ2– Restricted Access Recreation Zone zoning for Macquarie Section 53 Block 1; and
 - (e) commit to ensuring future development proposals are assessed with regards to policy outcomes to be achieved for the PRZ2– Restricted Access Recreation Zone in accordance with the *Territory Plan 2023* that will retain a pool on the site.

I am really pleased to talk about Big Splash today. It is such a special place. I grew up in Weetangera. Big Splash was the nearest pool and it has long been a special place in our community. The slides were amazing and unlike anything else we had. They were so cool that we made up wild stories about them—about what happened to a friend of a friend of a friend or a visiting cousin that no-one had ever met. The big orange tower with the long twisty slide was an urban legend waiting to be told. Canberra had a reputation for being a bit too serious and a bit too staid, but those slides were out of this world. There was grass outside where you could sit with your friends and big outdoor screens where movies were shown in the evening. When we were at Big Splash, we felt like we were in one of those movies. Until recently, Big Splash still held that place for kids in Belconnen.

Macquarie Primary School and Canberra High School held their school carnivals there. It was so close that they could walk. It is really important to give kids access to pools and swimming lessons. It has always been important in a country like Australia, with a culture like ours where swimming and going to lakes, rivers and the beach are classic summer activities. So many tragic drownings would have been avoidable if people were taught the skills they need. Big Splash was not just a pool for Belconnen. People came from all over Canberra because it was iconic and unlike the other pools that we have.

A lot of things have changed about Canberra. We have a much larger community and we have a much more diverse community. Belconnen's population alone has grown 30 per cent since 2001. We have a lot of apartments and townhouses around Jammo now too, which is great. It is one of our missing middle developments. I watched as it was being built. Building a bunch of three- and four-storey apartments and townhouses there makes so much sense. It is close to the shops, Canberra High School and Macquarie Primary School, ovals and sportsgrounds, and lots of bike paths. It is a short ride into town and you can go off-road, past paddocks and the lake, if you do not want to ride near traffic. This is how we should build our suburbs: near shops, schools and services, and with good active travel and public transport links. It is exactly how we should reclaim them for the next generation of Canberrans.

Belconnen now has 106,000 people. We have the most populated district in the ACT,

and by 2041 we expect to have 128,000 people. It is a huge community. We cannot grow like that and create an inclusive, cohesive and stable community if we do not provide people with what they need for daily life. We need to give people access to nature and a sense that we care for our natural world in a way that means it will still be there for future generations. We need schools, health care, community centres, great public infrastructure and jobs. We need all of this connected by great public and active transport, and we also need arts, sports and recreation facilities.

There are many differences between the world I grew up in and the one my daughter and her friends are growing up in. One of the biggest is how far climate change has progressed. In the 70s and 80s, a hot Canberra summer might have had some days in the high 30s. One single day, 24 January 1982, made it to 40 degrees. There was one single 40-degree day in a decade. That seems surreal now. Now January regularly has multiple days in a row over 40 degrees. I have a sign in my office made by a 16-year-old Canberra High student. The sign says, “By the time I’m 40, Canberra won’t have a winter.” I thought about that sign today as I rode into town in fingerless gloves in May. This is the world our young people are growing up in.

Big Splash did not open this summer. This may seem like a little story in the context of a boiling climate and the floods and fires that come with it; in a housing and cost-of-living crisis that is seeing more and more Canberrans living close to the edge or being pushed over it; in the context of genocide and the political instability we are watching all around the world—a small story, a local story, an unimportant story. It is not. This is a piece of joy that we can no longer share. It was a place where people could cool off and mingle on the hottest of summer days. We need as many bits of joy like that in our lives at the moment. I really want to help make sure my community can keep those bits of joy.

Big Splash did not open this summer. There were social media posts from the owners saying that it would be delayed, and then it did not open at all. A lot of us have reached out to get better and more direct information from the owners themselves, because you never know what is going on in a business. You do not know what is going on in people’s lives that lead to temporary setbacks, and most of us try to act with kindness and compassion, but no-one is getting any solid intel. There has now been a spate of vandalism and damage on the site. The police have asked our community to stay out of the area because it is not safe. Please respect that. But the community would like their pool back for next summer. They would like to know what is going on with the site, and they particularly want to know if they will still have a pool there in a few years.

Publicly accessible pools are having a difficult time right now. My colleague Ms Carrick has been working on Phillip pool for some time. Big Splash did not open this summer. Gungahlin Pool was shut down for two years because of water leaks. Swimming pools all operate under different business models. Some were started with significant funds from the government. In fact, Big Splash was not always called Big Splash. In 1969 it was called Macquarie Pool and it was built and operated by the government. Some of our pools have requirements in their lease to operate in certain ways. They are not all purely private, and they did not all spring up purely from the market with no government support. That is because running a pool is a difficult business model to run.

According to a 2022 report by the Royal Life Saving Society, community pools are facing changing demographics; increasing energy, building and maintenance costs; and the impacts of a changing climate. The report also highlighted that, in the next 10 years, up to 40 per cent of public aquatic facilities across Australia will need serious refurbishment or replacement, at a national cost of \$8 billion. All of this is why some councils operate pools directly. Operating a pool is expensive and making it available for community use at a rate the community can afford is really tricky. But there are also, of course, risks with government stepping in to run facilities like pools.

Batemans Bay has a new aquatic centre, and I understand almost half of the funding came from the federal government. I gather that their council is still making a loss on pool visits. It was a controversial project at the time for many reasons. Amongst them, it was seen to be a replacement for an outdoor pool that the community lost. It costs a lot more to build a brand new facility than to maintain an existing one. The centre there is very different to Big Splash. It is a large indoor and combined recreational centre. That is not what Big Splash has ever been, and not likely what we need there. That story is a good demonstration of how some other councils and governments are stepping in to ensure communities have access to pools and how, untended, the market and the planning system are not really giving us the community facilities that we want, like pools. But it is also a cautionary tale.

A lot of people are asking us: “What is happening with Big Splash? Will we have it next summer? Will we have it in future years?” This is a topic of concern in our community, and concern without information leads to rumour and anxiety. It is not helpful for anyone. It is not helpful for the people of Belconnen, it is not helpful for the operators, and it is not helpful for government. Today is a really great opportunity for government to do what it can to get the pool reopened for next summer and to give our community some certainty.

A lot of people here have spoken about Big Splash because it has come up a lot in community conversations. I was really pleased to sponsor a community petition on it earlier in the year. We ran that petition last summer when the pool would still maybe open, and it got a lot of interest, even though it was a busy time of year. People really wanted to know what was happening in our local area. The petitioner, Dani Hunterford, called for the government to investigate all options to keep the pool open and guarantee that the zone would remain parks and recreation land, which is what it is at the moment. Those calls are just as relevant now as they were six months ago.

We understand that it is a difficult time in the budget at the moment. How we got here and what we are going to do about that is a reflection for another day. Calls for large amounts of public funding need careful thought and preparation. They need business cases and consideration of existing infrastructure and program funding. There needs to be a good look at all of the other projects and all of the other calls and needs that we have in our community. I am still shocked at the way some of our leaders tackled the public conversation over a billion-dollar sports stadium at a time when it must have been clear that our budget was tight and basic funding for public needs like health care was becoming an issue.

At a different point in time, the Greens may well have called for the groundwork that might lead to a public buyback if the case for that stacked up. I am not sure that is the

right call at this point in ACT budgeting and ACT's history. We need to make sure that we have public access to a community facility like a pool, and we need to make sure that we are maintaining that and giving people reassurance about that. There is a lot that government can do. There is a long history of shops and commercial businesses that shop-squat or land-bank in our area—that hold onto a site or a lease without offering the services they are meant to offer our community. This is something that really riles Canberrans, and it is something that we can avoid here. I imagine that the issue of shop-squatting, lease-squatting and land-banking is a problem anywhere, but, in a quickly growing city like Canberra, to see something occupied but absent without government action is a real problem for people. Last term, I chaired an inquiry into Giralang shops. That was a different case. In that instance, a developer had held onto a site for almost two decades without setting up the shops and cafe that the community expected.

Government does not simply hand out leases and walk away. Every lease is granted with a purpose. For the Big Splash site, the purpose of the lease includes operating an aquatic and recreation centre and a restaurant. Government also has the ability to require a leaseholder to maintain a facility safely. That might include better fencing, keeping it in good repair and clearing up any litter or vandalism. Today, I am asking government to enforce these conditions. The government should take all steps it can and use the existing powers that it already has to help reopen Big Splash next summer. Our community wants reassurance that the government is involved and taking this seriously, and that we will not have another 20-year Giralang shops saga playing out at Jammo.

We need clear, direct updates for the community. A lot of the angst now is coming from rumours and a lack of clear information. Tell us in Belconnen what is going on and what steps the government is taking to try to get this pool back open. The Greens and the Belco community look forward to the government's response to the community's petition. We will be getting that by the end of June. We put in the motion today a request for a further update in September, because that will give us the best information we can have about whether the pool is likely to be open again for next summer.

We have also asked the government to publicly commit to keeping the zoning as it is at the moment. This area is zoned as parks and recreation land. Jammo is an excellent area for new apartments and townhouses, and it is really important that we make new homes, but, while we are doing that, it is so important that we keep community and recreational facilities for the people living in those homes. This particular area is parks and recreation zone land, so let's keep it for that purpose.

If, for whatever reason, there is a changeover in operations, we have also asked the government to publicly commit to assessing any future development proposals in a way that retains a pool on the site. So, if somebody else is going to operate this facility, let's make sure that there is still a pool available for the local community in Belconnen. We have seen a lot of abrasive community debates about pools in Canberra and about pools closing. I think it is a lot easier to get in front of those debates and ask government to commit to maintaining a publicly accessible pool and providing really good open information at the outset. That is what our community expects.

I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (4.13): I thank Ms Clay for bringing forward this motion. As well, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Mr Cain. Before he actually gets up to speak, I thank him for speaking about the compliance element of this motion. I also thank Mr Cocks for speaking about the community aspect. Today, I will address the sport and recreation element.

I remember a time when I, my better half, Katrina, and our son would go to Big Splash for the day. The first thing that we would do is set up camp. We would set up our picnic rug on the ground under a tree, and then our son would head off with a bunch of his mates to go up and down the waterslide and swim in the pool. We would next see them when they came back for lunch. They would want hot chips and a drink. They would eat and then they would head off again. We would spend the whole afternoon there. At the end of the day, we would finish with a Bubble O'Bill ice cream. We certainly have many good memories of attending Big Splash.

Moving the focus a little bit, I recognise that Big Splash is a seasonal business. I have a bit of background in working in such an environment. Post year 12, I worked as a waterskiing instructor for four or five years. Naturally, it is a summer sport. During winter, no-one is waterskiing. Obviously, it is too cold. We really had to diversify what we did as a business to survive all year round. We decided to contract with New South Wales Maritime Waterways to take care of all of the navigation systems of the Murray River, from the start and all the way to the Murray Mouth.

So I understand the challenges that Big Splash is going through, because it is a seasonal business. At the end of the day, it can only operate for a certain period of the year. What this motion is calling on today is for the government to do whatever it can to support the continuation of Big Splash because it provides a very important resource for the community, and provides, as I indicated earlier, experiences and a history for families.

Recently, Ms Berry publicly said that there is little that the government can do to influence private business operations. What I am asking for the government to do is to stop saying that there is little they can do and actually tell us what they can do. Could they please do that? We would love to see Big Splash restored to its former glory. While that may not be a reality at this point, we say that the government have a responsibility to the community and to business owners to do all they can to allow it to continue to operate.

The Canberra Liberals will be supporting this motion today. It is important to support an asset to the Canberra community. As I indicated earlier, Mr Cain will talk to the compliance side of it and Mr Cocks will talk to the community aspect of it.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (4.17): I thank Ms Clay for bringing this matter to the Assembly. I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues Minister Berry and Minister Cheyne for the work that they have undertaken around Big Splash as well. We will be supporting today's motion as we want to see an aquatic facility operating on this site in Macquarie: section 53, block 1. We will be providing a detailed response to similar matters raised in e-petition 049-24 and petition 010-25, sponsored by Ms Clay and tabled in the Legislative Assembly in March.

The subject site is a privately leased block and therefore it is open for the lessee to utilise the site in accordance with the lease, the Territory Plan and the Planning Act 2023. The crown lease for this site, however, requires the lessee to maintain, repair and keep in repair the premises to the satisfaction of the Territory Planning Authority. The lease permits the authority to enter the premises to undertake necessary repairs and recover costs from the lessee.

I can advise the Assembly that the compliance team in Access Canberra has certainly been engaged with this particular block and the lessee. We are aware of the closure of the site, some of the break-ins that have occurred and vandalism. They have inspected the facility and sought to make contact with the lessee, but were initially unsuccessful in doing so. Access Canberra conducted inspections in October 2024 and March and April 2025, and undertook urgent repairs to the perimeter fencing earlier this year to address immediate safety and security risks, because they could not get in touch with the lessee.

The lessee was notified of this work. I understand Access Canberra eventually got in touch with the lessee. The lessee will be footing the bill for the work that Access Canberra had to do to secure the perimeter fencing. Since then, Access Canberra has been in continued contact with the lessee to advise them of the safety risks to the public and remind them of their obligations to maintain and repair the fencing as a matter of priority.

I have directed both the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate and Access Canberra to provide me with advice on further regulatory options that may be available for the site. The site is currently zoned as PRZ2, a restricted access recreation zone which attracts specific policy outcomes in the Territory Plan that any future development proposals will be assessed against. In particular, this includes accommodating facilities that meet the recreational needs and demands of the community and provide for a range of sport and recreational facilities and uses, whether in public or private ownership.

Whilst I have been advised that the Territory Planning Authority has not been approached regarding any other plans for the site, I would like to thank Ms Clay and her office for working with us and for agreeing that the best way to preserve its current use into the future is to maintain the current conditions for Macquarie, section 53, block 1, under the Territory Plan.

The ACT government has no plans to change the zoning of this site. It is worth noting that, whilst Jamison has been identified for both planning and non-planning initiatives to support the shopping centre's ongoing viability and its role as a community meeting space, I hope that this motion today, if it is supported by the Assembly, sends a very clear message that this site is for recreation facilities like a pool and that the ACT government has no plans to change the zoning of the site into the future.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.21): The future of the Big Splash water park has caused deep concern to many in my electorate of Ginninderra. The permanent closure and demolition of the Big Splash water park in Macquarie would be terrible for Belconnen residents and, indeed, for those who travel more broadly to enjoy the facility.

Big Splash has long been a treasured part of Canberra's summer landscape. Opened in 1969 as a public swimming pool, the Jamo pool is a place of wonderful memories for families across many generations. It was the introduction of the waterslides in the early 1980s that cemented Big Splash as an iconic Canberra institution. How many Canberrans have enjoyed summer days at Big Splash, swimming in the pool and riding the slides? How many schoolchildren celebrated the end of the school year with a visit to Big Splash with their classmates and teachers? I know that my own children and grandchildren have thoroughly enjoyed their visits to Big Splash.

Big Splash is a quintessential experience for so many Canberrans, young and old, and it would be a terrible shame for our city to lose such a major water park. Belconnen would be losing more than just a landmark; it would be losing a point of pride for us north siders. As the north side continues to grow, we will need to ensure that this type of facility remains available to residents.

As the motion points out—and I thank Ms Clay for bringing this to our attention—Belconnen is expected to grow to 128,000 by 2041. The Jamison group centre is already a hub of retail activity and residential opportunities. A functional and fantastic Big Splash is necessary to serve this ever-growing area of the ACT.

Unfortunately, the current state of the Big Splash site is simply unacceptable. The ACT Labor government has turned a blind eye to the present owners allowing the site to deteriorate into an eyesore. As evidenced by social media influencers and so-called urban explorers, the facilities at Big Splash are in a state of disrepair. Windows have been smashed and graffiti is scrawled across walls. Debris, from wheelie bins to fire hydrants, has been littered into the empty pools. The main pool now resembles a dumping ground. The rampant vandalism at Big Splash is so disappointing. Vandalism does not help this situation at all, as it takes Big Splash back many steps.

As of now, the owners must not only take care of the necessary maintenance works but also repair the damage that has been done to the facility. I hope all of those that have participated in vandalising this once terrific facility reflect on their poor actions and are held appropriately accountable. The actions of these vandals have hindered, not helped, their own community—a community that is frightfully concerned that Big Splash will close, and that we will lose yet another publicly accessible recreational pool in the ACT.

It may not be of the same quality and extent as the Wet 'n' Wild or WhiteWater World water parks on the Gold Coast in Queensland, but Big Splash is our water park. It is Belconnen's water park. It is Canberra's major water park. Community amenities, especially one as unique in Canberra as our water park, are too important to let fall into further disrepair. Once it is gone, it is gone.

While Mr Steel and ACT Labor may be keen on seeing apartments built on the site, to abut stage 3 of light rail to Belconnen, Mr Steel seemed to pull back from that a bit in his speech today. We will be seeing that he remains consistent and follows through with this.

Belconnen residents want Big Splash. I want to thank my Canberra Liberals colleagues Mr Milligan and, I believe, Mr Cocks, who is due to speak as well, for their work and advocacy in this space. I call on each and every one of us in this place to reflect on the

wonderful roles Big Splash has played in our lives, or that of our children's lives. Let us keep Big Splash operating. We will be holding the minister to account for the comments he has made this afternoon, where he seemed to suggest that that is their commitment. We will be watching, Minister, to make sure you follow through with that.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (4.26): I share the concern of Ms Clay and other members in this Assembly about the future of Big Splash. Last week I asked the planning minister what the government would do if the proposed new 25-metre pool that Geocon is building in Woden was not commercially viable. His answer was that it would be a matter for Access Canberra. That was not reassuring.

Yet again, we can see with Big Splash how ineffectual the government is at enforcing lease conditions for privately owned public facilities. We saw the same lack of effective action from the government when the Phillip pool was closed for a year during COVID, and again failed to open for the following season, because the owners had chosen not to undertake necessary maintenance. A letter was sent, and no sanction was applied.

It is clear that the private ownership model is a difficult model for public pool facilities. We have seen the Oasis pool in Deakin shrink from 50 metres to 25 metres and cease being available for lap swimming. I fear that we will see the same outcome with Geocon's proposed 25-metre pool in Phillip.

Public pools have been critical community facilities for towns and cities across Australia for many decades. They have provided much-needed relief from our long, hot summers—summers that are only getting longer and hotter. They also provide community connections, which we are already losing.

The Telopea Swimming Club, Canberra's second oldest, has just announced that it is folding after 60 years. The club says that uncertainty over the future of Phillip pool was the final straw. It was unsupported by the ACT government, which oversaw the loss of the 50-metre Oasis pool and now the 50-metre Phillip pool.

Canberra already has one of the lowest ratios of public pools to population in Australia. We cannot afford to lose any more in any part of Canberra. I believe the ACT government needs to urgently develop an aquatic strategy that ensures that the needs of all users are catered for, with facilities equitably distributed across all of Canberra's districts. The government needs to ensure the future of Big Splash as a public pool and develop a policy to address the issues with the private sector providing public pools.

I would like to thank Les Barclay from the Telopea Swimming Club for his years of service under difficult circumstances. I will be supporting this motion.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Minister for Homes and New Suburbs and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (4.28): I am happy to speak in support of this motion today. I want to update the Assembly on work that I have been doing, as a local member and as Minister for Sport and Recreation, in Belconnen with regard to Big Splash.

Members will know that, in the early days, a decision was made by the pool not to open

their slides, but they had committed to opening the pool. Eventually, the pool did not open, either. In order to find out exactly what was going on, I sent a letter to the owners. Initially, I took their response as written—that they had a plan to bring the pool back online. Unfortunately, that has not come to pass, and the site has deteriorated and has been vandalised. I cannot see how the damage that has been done there could be repaired so that it is brought back to what it used to be, at least in its original state.

Of course, time has passed since I wrote that letter and since they made that commitment, so I wrote a second letter, in order to get an update. I hope to receive a response from the owners and share that with the community going forward. I did that because I could see the social commentary and people saying things about the site without having any facts at hand, without contacting the owner, and without any realisation of what was actually happening on that site.

Whilst I am not always the best of friends with big developers in this town, I do like to consider, first of all, that they will do the right thing. That is why I reached out to the owners of Big Splash to find out if that was the case. I did the same thing with Geocon, recognising the rumours that were going around. I wrote to Geocon and said, “Hey, are you going to keep the ice-skating rink and the pool open until we build something else in Tuggeranong for ice skating?” To their credit, they met with me and confirmed that they would not do anything until we had a replacement facility for ice skating in Tuggeranong. Again, we are taking them at their word that that is what they will do. If things change, we will change our response to that; but, at the moment, they have made that commitment, and I will take them at their word initially.

One of the other things that we have been talking about today around pools is summer, the weather getting hotter and people wanting to spend time in water facilities. It is true that pools are very expensive to run. I can confirm that, as minister for sport; I have learned a lot about pools and water use over the years. I have learned a lot about gas boilers and how much it costs, for example, to keep indoor pools heated at a certain temperature. They are not the most environmentally sustainable facilities; however, they are much loved by our communities, and there are different ways that they can be made more sustainable and, indeed, more viable.

Some of those ways include enclosing them, and having indoor pools, which is also a safer option, keeping people sheltered from changes to climate and sun exposure. There has been a lot of research done around melanomas and sun exposure with outdoor pools that do not have any shade or are not enclosed. It can make them more viable to have them enclosed because they can be used all year round.

While it is still very expensive to put electric heating in—gas boilers remain the most efficient and effective way to keep pools at a certain temperature—we are moving to electric systems, which can heat indoor pools and keep them at a warmer temperature, particularly in ACT winters. But they remain quite expensive at the moment and do not quite meet the needs of the Canberra climate, even within indoor pool facilities. That does not mean that they will not be an option in the future. It is something that we definitely should be considering going forward. Certainly, the government is considering that.

It is also important to note some of the work that has been happening in the background,

such as the letters that I have written, which I have tried to share with the community, to provide them with some assurance. I refer also to the work that Minister Steel and Minister Cheyne have done in their portfolio areas.

I was particularly concerned to hear Mr Cain basically threatening Minister Steel that he would be watching him, and making false allegations that Minister Steel had said that he would be building units on that site. That is completely untrue. I have never heard Minister Steel talk about building—

Mr Cain interjecting—

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Cain, can you please refrain.

MS BERRY: There has never been any comment from Minister Steel about building apartments on that site, and for Mr Cain to suggest that Minister Steel had said that is not true. He has misled the Assembly, and he should withdraw it. He should not threaten a minister regarding action that he is already taking in that space.

Mr Cain: We are watching.

MS BERRY: What happened to you to make you so mean, Mr Cain?

Mr Cain: A bad government.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Cain, I have asked you once.

Mr Cain: The ACT having a terrible government—

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Cain, I have asked you once to refrain. I am asking you a second time now.

MS BERRY: To finish, I thank Jo Clay. I also have many memories of Jamison pool before there was a slide. I had one of my first dates there, on one of their film nights, in high school. Like most people, my children and other people in our community, I do have very good memories of the place, but memories alone will not save the situation when it is obviously in a very distressing state.

The work that is happening by the government within our various responsibilities is the best way forward to get what is, hopefully, a positive outcome for this community. I know that we are all committed to making sure that that is the case, as we are with the Woden pool, although I understand Ms Carrick's objections to that. I know she will not agree with those comments, but that is the case.

Mr Hanson: Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw to your attention, on a point of order, that Ms Berry used unparliamentary language and accused Mr Cain of misleading the Assembly. I would ask her to withdraw that statement, please.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am not sure if I caught the exact words.

Mr Cain: "Misleading".

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will review the record, and we will come back to that question, Mr Hanson.

Mr Steel: On the point of order—

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please. Mr Steel?

Mr Steel: In reviewing Ms Berry's comments, could you also review Mr Cain's comments, in relation to whether they were misleading?

Mr Hanson: Mr Deputy Speaker, on the point of order, it is not for you to work out whether Mr Cain's debating points are misleading or not. You do not use unparliamentary language; that is the point of order. She should withdraw. Mr Cain has raised a debating point. If she wants to come back with a substantive motion, she is entitled to do so; otherwise she should withdraw. That is the form of this place. You should not be arguing it; it is the form of this place. You cannot accuse Mr Cain of not being courteous and then do the same.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, thank you.

MS BERRY: Perhaps I can assist, do everyone a favour and withdraw the comment that I thought that Mr Cain's comments were misleading of the Assembly. I would also ask, on that point of order, whether the language and threatening behaviour coming from Mr Cain, saying, "We'll be watching you," were parliamentary or not. I seek your advice on that. You do not need to give that answer today. You might need to go away and check it, and I would be happy with that.

Mr Hanson: On the point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker—

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson?

Mr Hanson: It was quite evident that Mr Cain was talking about watching Mr Steel's actions as a minister with regard to the sale and purchase or use of that land, and that he would be watching him. To suggest or intimate that that is threatening is again trying to inflame the situation. That, in itself, is somewhat disorderly. There is no point of order there.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, members. We will review the transcript and the video recording. If there are any examples of unparliamentary language that have been utilised throughout the debate, the Speaker will provide a ruling on that in due course. Ms Berry, you have the call.

MS BERRY: I have completed my speech today. I thank everybody for listening, and I look forward to providing the Assembly with updates within my areas of responsibility on the way forward for the pool at Jamison.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (4.38): I rise to speak briefly in support of Ms Clay's motion—perhaps to serve as a palate cleanser, at least for some in the chamber. It is heartbreaking to see facilities that have brought joy, memories and significant public

benefit to our community, like Big Splash, left in a derelict state. I understand running pools is costly, which, as Ms Carrick indicated, is why public pools are so important, and it is also why federal funding to support investment in public pools is vital.

During annual reports hearings earlier this year, I asked whether the ACT government had sought any funding for aquatic facilities from the commonwealth since 2017, given \$316.5 million in federal funding had been delivered or promised to states and territories for aquatic facilities between 2017 and 2022. The answer was no. The ACT is the only jurisdiction to have received none of that more than \$300 million in federal funding.

I wonder how such a situation, where a community is reliant on private facilities like Big Splash, could have been avoided. Could we perhaps instead have sought federal funding to reinvest in public facilities and help to meet community demand that way? I also note that, according to the 2013 ACT government aquatic facilities planning framework, which now seems to have been pulled down from the ACT government website—or, at least, from where it was previously posted—a new city aquatic facility was identified as a “high priority”.

It has been 12 years since that high priority was identified. Priorities are great; implementation is a lot better. It is encouraging to have seen recent commitments made for a new pool in Commonwealth Park. This, too, as the Chief Minister also indicated during annual reports hearings, came about because the commonwealth brought it forward as an idea to the ACT government.

As Ms Carrick often wonders, could we have been more proactive when it comes to planning for and delivering aquatic facilities across the ACT? Perhaps we could be, and perhaps we need to be. With places like Dickson Pool pumping during summer, and swimmers doing laps almost shoulder to shoulder, while kids bomb into the pool, it is pretty clear that, especially as our climate changes, our community does need adequate public pools.

I thank Ms Clay for her advocacy on this matter and for having drawn our attention to what I see as the risk of privatising services that provide a public good, as is borne out by what is happening at Big Splash. I hope, though, that the situation there can be turned around.

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) (4.40): I, too, thank Ms Clay for bringing this motion today. I am pleased to hear such strength of support from all of those contributions, as misguided as Mr Cain’s might have been.

The current state of Big Splash is atrocious; there is no other word for it. It is atrocious in the uncertainty it has created, and it is atrocious in that its ongoing closure denies Canberrans and Belconnen residents aquatic recreation.

Its state of dilapidation and disrepair undermines the many happy memories that it provided and, indeed, the vision of the Sarri brothers when they built and owned this water park. It was seen as quite a phenomenal addition to the landscape and one from

which other water parks took inspiration. I know that, for many Canberrans, the state of this water park and what its future looks like is very personal.

Mr Milligan said before that he was asking the government to be clear about what it can do. That is pretty odd, because I have been clear, repeatedly. Perhaps Mr Milligan could be a little bit more curious or undertake more than a cursory glance at the situation, and he might understand. Mr Steel, Minister Berry and I are happy to update him on what the government has done and what it can do, but if he wants to read the legislation and the Crown lease, of course, he can.

It was Minister Berry who took action in December, it was Minister Berry who wrote to the owners, it was Minister Berry who received a response and it was Minister Berry who posted a response that we all had to take at face value. From a straight read of it, it looked like there would be a genuine plan to reopen it. This was the first major step that anyone in this place had taken, and Minister Berry did it of her own volition, in the days before Christmas.

We were all hopeful that we could believe that response. I know that, in the time that followed, Ms Clay worked with the community on a petition, which drew more attention to this sorry state. I think everyone was hopeful that this sort of attention and pressure would result in a better outcome.

After the fences continued to be vandalised and I contemplated what more could be done, I thought I would get a copy of the Crown lease, to better understand the conditions of the site and the options for enforceability, which Mr Milligan would be across if he paid any attention to the Planning Act. I did not do this as the city and government services minister; I did it as a local member. I searched for the Crown lease, purchased it, downloaded it and read it.

It turns out that a little bit of curiosity goes a long way. It was enlightening, in that it made clear what the purpose of the site was; that is, as a pool and an aquatic recreation facility, and with an unlicensed restaurant. It was also clear that the leaseholder has obligations to keep it in a repaired state, and there are consequences if the leaseholder fails to repair it.

These clauses have allowed for action to be taken by the regulator, which Minister Steel referred to before. Access Canberra has repaired the fence, I believe twice now, but the cost of this will, and will need to be, recovered from the owners. What is not provided for in the Crown lease is for Big Splash to be open. I will not reflect on the Crown lease and when it was drafted; of course, this is putting the government in a very tricky position in terms of what it can do.

There is no provision, there is no clause, within the Crown lease that requires Big Splash to open. With respect to the efforts that the government can undertake, and with respect to putting pressure on the owner, notwithstanding all of our comments in this place that the owner may be dealing with something that we do not understand, quite honestly, we just want to support the situation and to get to a point where Big Splash can open.

There are clauses regarding termination. There are clauses regarding surrender. Even if

that were to occur—I am not saying that it would, but even if it were to occur—then what? It is an asset that is in a significant state of disrepair.

I am very hopeful that this continued attention and show of support right across the chamber, Minister Berry's and Minister Steel's leadership, and the efforts from across the community, and particularly Ms Clay, result in the owner paying attention to the enormous amount of community angst and making the call. Sell it; sell it within the conditions of the Crown lease. There will be no zoning changes. It is—

Mr Cain: Do you guarantee that there will be no zoning changes?

MS CHEYNE: Yes.

Mr Cain interjecting—

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Cain, I have twice asked you to refrain. If there is continued behaviour like this, you will be warned.

MS CHEYNE: I cannot foresee the future, but we have been clear today, in accordance with the terms of this motion, that there are no plans for high-rise, apartments or anything like that. We want this to be the recreational facility that it has been and should be, for generations past and generations to come. But a decision needs to be made. I call upon the owner to make that decision, so that some other steps can be taken and so that we get to a point at the end of this year where Big Splash opens, and those happy memories that everyone has spoken about are able to occur.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.47), in reply: It is really great when we can bring a community issue in here and have everyone engage with it from their fields of expertise and from their communities. It is really clear that, for lots of different reasons, and also for a lot of the same reasons, we all understand why the community want Big Splash to reopen, if that is at all possible, and we all understand why we want to keep a pool in this area.

I would like to thank Mr Milligan and Mr Cain for looking at this. It was really interesting to hear the perspectives from an operator of a seasonal business, and it has been a real pleasure to work with Mr Cain on this motion. Thank you for that. I would like to thank Ministers Berry, Cheyne and Steel. I know our local ministers have been in the position of taking a huge interest in it. I would particularly like to thank Minister Steel for being quite open and straightforward on the zoning in this area. There have been rumours. They certainly did not come from the government; they came from the community. I think people get anxious when they see change around them, and it was really good to have that clear discussion that we have a parks and recreation zoned area here and that it is for the purpose of operating a pool and that the government will keep that and also take whatever steps they can in terms of working with the current owners and working with the lease to enforce that so that we get the pool back as soon as we can. I think that has been a really useful conversation to have in here.

I would like to thank Mr Emerson for his words on this issue. It is clear that this is an issue that brings a lot of us together. I would also like to thank Ms Carrick, who has been working away on pools in Phillip for a long time and knows a lot about the social

place they have and also how important it is to keep them when you have them—and jump in front of these community debates and make sure that we are holding on to these.

I hope that this has given the community some reassurance. I am also hoping that the act of looking at this issue will bring about the outcome that we are all hoping for. That sounds like a strange thing for parliamentarian to say. I have actually seen that happen. We have seen that happen on a number of inquiries when enough scrutiny of an issue actually brings about the change that people want without necessarily a lot of difficult enforcement and difficult pathways to walk through. So here is hoping that we get this pool back for this summer. If we do, I hope to see you down there. I was really looking forward to taking my daughter there this year with a few of her mates, and we missed out. She is coming up to the teen years, and I think it is a really great place to head to. So, hopefully, we will see you down there in a few months. If not, we are very pleased that we will be keeping this place as a parks and recreation zoned area and as a pool area, working with government and working with the businesses in the area.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Motion to take note of papers

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

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

Statements by members

International Holocaust Remembrance Day

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.51): I rise to speak about the recent Yom HaShoah Holocaust Remembrance Day last month, on Wednesday 23 April. I attended this very special event at the National Memorial Jewish Centre in Forrest, along with many of my colleagues in this Assembly to commemorate this auspicious day. Yom HaShoah remembers the abhorrent murder of six million Jews during the Holocaust by Nazi Germany and its allies. This year, 2025, marks the 80th anniversary since the liberation of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps at the end of the Second World War. The Holocaust represented the very worst of humanity and, by remembering it, we must learn from the lessons of the past to counter antisemitism, bigotry and hatred.

I felt incredibly privileged to stand with Canberra's Jewish community to commemorate this Yom HaShoah, especially in these difficult times for our Jewish community around the world. My sincere thanks to the ACT Jewish Community—in particular, President Athol Morris, for his outstanding leadership of the ACT Jewish community. Never again.

Racism

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.52): I want to speak briefly about a couple of brochures in Florey. This unfolded a few weeks back now, but there was a full letterbox drop of the Florey suburb with an extremely racist and really vile flyer that a lot of people were

very upset by. I was particularly upset. We still do not know if this was targeted for particular reasons in Florey or if somebody just happens to live there and holds these views. I was particularly upset. We have a really diverse community in Florey. A lot of people send their kids out to clear the letterbox. So, for a lot of families, the first person who saw this brochure was one of their kids.

We put out a different flyer to let people know that the rest of the community do not feel this way and that everybody is welcome here. On 11 April we did a little coffee catch-up at Caesars. They do really great empanadas there. You should go try them out. Ms Barry joined me at that coffee catch-up, and it was really nice to check in with a few people who had received both brochures and check in on the pulse of that issue. I think it is a really small number of people in Canberra who hold these views, but I think it is also really important that we make it clear that that is not how we feel here in Canberra.

Art—Tracy Hall

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (4.54): I rise today to celebrate a local artist who is making a real impact in Lanyon, one fence at a time. Tracy Hall is a graphic designer and street artist who has transformed more than 75 metres of fencing along Woodcock Drive in Gordon into a vibrant mural featuring kookaburras, butterflies and bees. What began as an effort to cover up offensive graffiti on a busy intersection has become something much more powerful: a community project, a teaching space and a source of pride. I have talked in the chamber about Tracy before, but wanted to acknowledge the completion of the Gordon fence mural—all 75 metres of it.

Tracy's work is unpaid, often funded out of her own pocket, in her own time, with the help of GoFundMe and a contribution from the ACT government, and yet the impact is profound. One woman shared that her bedridden daughter found joy in watching the mural take shape every day. That is the kind of connection art can create. You can even pick up colouring-in sheets of the mural now at the wonderful Little Luxton Cafe in Gordon, just around the corner from the fence mural.

Tracy is not just painting over problems; she is offering an alternative, inviting students to learn from her and encouraging those who might otherwise tag to try something positive. I look forward to what Tracy brings to the Lanyon community next. I know she has some really big ideas. I am proud to support Tracy as she continues her work, and I encourage others to do the same. This is the power of community art, and Tracy's work reminds us that sometimes the brightest changes start with a single brushstroke.

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Crime—Flynn

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.56): I rise today to speak about a recent criminal incident that has been reported to me that occurred in the suburb of Flynn, Belconnen. And I am keen to bring this matter to the attention of the Assembly, as I believe it is indicative of broader issues of crime and community safety in the ACT. I will briefly recount the experience of this constituent, which occurred in recent weeks. This constituent reported me words to the effect of the following, and I do put this summary in first-person as presented to me by this constituent:

I was visiting my elderly mother, who is disabled with vascular dementia, at my parents' residence in Flynn in early May. I left my car there in the evening and went out to dinner, returning at approximately 9 pm. We then all went to sleep, and in the morning, at approximately 10 am, my mother noticed my car had been vandalised. All four wheels and tyres were stolen and the car placed on rocks, which damaged the frame and effectively wrote the vehicle off. The vehicle is currently under assessment by my insurer, who will likely write it off. It is a special and limited-edition vehicle of which there are only a few in Australia.

That morning, I placed a call to the police and was given a job number. I was told that the police would not attend unless I had camera footage or further information, even though a serious crime had been committed. I then noticed the alleged criminals had left a gold vape behind, which I called the police about later that morning and was told by them that it did not meet the forensic examination standard.

I subsequently talked to neighbours, which should have been the job of police, and determined the crime was committed between 12.30 and 1.30 am, when my parents' neighbours' camera was triggered, noting that my mother was sleeping less than 50 metres away, showing the automatic lights illuminated at my parents' neighbours' place next to the vehicle.

My family was violated by a brazen crime, and unfortunately the police did not attend, of which I am increasingly disappointed, though I understand that it is not the fault of the individual police, whom I commend for their service. Rather, this is more a symptom of institutional problems and resourcing which are obviously worth highlighting.

I end the summary of that first-person account of this crime. And I do want to thank this constituent for his courage and openness in reporting the situation to me and allowing me to speak about his experience this afternoon. My sympathy is also extended to his aged parents, especially his mother. And he is absolutely right: his experience is not the fault of any individual police officer. Police officers in the ACT are at their wit's end, trying to do all the jobs that are required of them with shoestring budgets. This incident is a symptom of institutional problems in the ACT, of how this ACT Labor government approaches crime and community safety and of the ineffective resourcing for those purposes.

It is clear that this very issue is prevalent across the ACT, as evidenced by the reporting in the *Canberra Times* today that thieves allegedly removed the wheels and tyres of cars in Belconnen and Curtin in recent weeks. These thefts are disappointing, as they instil doubt in the minds of all Canberrans that their vehicle may not be safely parked in the street or even in their driveway.

As many of my colleagues in the Assembly will know, I have been an outspoken advocate on the scourge of crime in our suburbs, especially in Belconnen. In April 2025, I tabled a community petition to increase police presence in Hawker, Page and Scullin, with over a thousand signatures. While in November 2023, I tabled a community petition to increase police presence at the Kippax group centre. Many other MLAs have lodged similarly themed petitions.

In closing, I do want to thank our wonderful and hardworking men and women of ACT Policing. They are the unsung heroes of our territory, and they do so much with so little that is provided to them. I do thank the constituent and his family for reporting this sad incident to me and wish them the best. I will say: Canberra Liberals will do better when given the opportunity.

Apology to Minister Cheyne

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (5.01): Mr Speaker. I rise to extend an apology to the Attorney-General, Ms Cheyne. Yesterday I was approached by media seeking my comments on the government's recently announced supports for our night-time economy. In my statements, I welcomed the government's announcement while reiterating calls for a dedicated night-time economy coordinator, which I see as an appropriate policy mechanism to better support our local hospitality sector and creative industries. This was reflected in the recommendations of the economics committee's inquiry into annual and financial reports which was tabled earlier today, and members may have noticed that I took the opportunity to make a statement in the chamber this morning in support of this policy proposal.

Yesterday, though, the media summarised my comments, with one article saying that, in holding both the Attorney-General and the night-time economy portfolios, I thought Ms Cheyne's attention was divided. This was not something I had said, but to my discredit I shared a photo including that excerpt from the article on social media. I want to emphasise in the strongest possible terms that I do not believe Ms Cheyne to be at all incapable of managing multiple portfolios. To the contrary, I believe she demonstrates immense dedication to her roles. I admire her work ethic and her confidence in staying across a wide, deep and evolving brief covering multiple portfolios.

While my intention was absolutely not to diminish Ms Cheyne's capabilities as a minister, my comments came across as condescending. I had aimed to make a constructive contribution to a robust policy debate and regret that it landed instead as a personal attack. I feel privileged to work alongside so many intelligent and capable women in this building and I will take care to be more considered with my words moving forward; to Ms Cheyne, I apologise.

ACT Nurses and Midwives Excellence Awards

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (5.02): I am rising to acknowledge that yesterday was International Nurses Day and to pay tribute to the nurses and midwives who were awarded at last week's excellence in nursing and midwifery awards for the ACT. It is always a privilege to attend these awards and to

participate in the awarding of the trophies and certificates recognising the work our nurses and midwives do every day throughout the year.

I want to start by acknowledging all of our nurses and midwives and the hard work they do, all of those who were nominated for the awards and all of the finalists in the awards. I am not going to have time to read out the citations of all of those who were awarded in the end, but I do want to list them all and acknowledge some in particular.

I will start with the excellence in educational practice award, which went to the Childbirth Education Team in Maternity and Gynaecology Outpatients at Canberra hospital.

The excellence in leadership practice award went to Deborah Booth from Jindalee Aged Care.

The excellence in management practice award went to Ruth Evans from the Women, Youth and Children Community Health Programs at Canberra Health Services.

The excellence in quality improvement or research practice award went to the Neonatal Skin Portfolio Nurses from the Neonatal Intensive and Special Care Units at Canberra Health Services.

The rising star recognition award went to Sarabjit Kaur from Wanniasa Family Medicine.

As you can see, Mr Speaker, already we have a range of health services represented in those awards.

The main awards of the evening are the Nurse of the Year, Midwife of the Year and Team of the Year. The Nurse of the Year this year is Aisling Smyth from the University of Canberra. Dr Smyth has demonstrated exceptional leadership in advancing research that benefits the ACT healthcare system. This includes co-leading a \$100,000 project to improve digital discharges between healthcare services and aged care facilities. Her extensive publication record and strategic focus on aged-care quality and safety highlight her commitment to evidence-based practice. Her work frequently appears in high-impact journals. Additionally, her leadership in the \$6 million Clinical Placements in Older People Project 2.0 and successful industry partnerships have significantly improved aged-care services and gerontological nursing education in the ACT region.

Tammy Souquet is the Midwife of the Year, from Maternity at Canberra Hospital. Tammy has significantly improved antenatal care by integrating self-collected cervical screening. This has led to higher screening rates and earlier identification of high-risk cases. Her evidence-based approach and collaboration with pathology services ensure timely follow-ups, and this has enhanced patient outcomes and clinician confidence. Tammy's leadership has created lasting changes by increasing cervical screening awareness of access and embedding quality improvement practices that benefit both midwives and patients.

The Team of the Year went to the Geriatric Rapid Acute Care Evaluation Nurses, or

the GRACE team, from North Canberra Hospital. The GRACE team provides exceptional person-centred and evidence-based care to acutely unwell aged-care residents. Over the past year, the team completed 5,268 outpatient visits, preventing readmissions and reducing unnecessary hospital transfers. The GRACE team excels in building therapeutic relationships and promoting collaboration among residential aged-care facilities, GPs, families, hospitals and community services. Their advocacy for better mental health services and compassionate patient-centred communication highlights their commitment to improving outcomes for residential aged-care facilities.

I forgot earlier the excellence in clinical practice award, which went to the Women, Youth and Children Community Health Programs at Canberra Health Services. I have run out of time tonight, Mr Speaker, for the consumer recognition awards, so I will be back tomorrow for part 2.

(Time expired.)

Mother's Day

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.07): On a more personal note, I just want to give a shout-out to my mother—not just because Sunday was Mother's Day, and I encourage anyone here who failed to call their mother where applicable to please ensure that you do so! I do so because today is also her birthday, and she turns 83 years of age today. I have so much to be thankful to her for, not just in terms of her raising four kids—and as you can imagine, in the 80s, we just ran wild over the suburbs, and it would have been quite the challenge—but also in terms of her continuing support. Even after she had managed to launch or, as she would put it, “tipped” her kids off, she then went back, retrained and had a successful career as a family therapist and did a lot of good work within the community.

As with a lot of politicians here, I know we rely a lot upon our mothers. Mine was pretty much the biggest volunteer I had last year. In terms of campaigning, she sorted and stuffed 8,500 envelopes. She stayed with my family for about three months to help take care of my children. I am extremely grateful for that.

I also recognise that our parents tend to be pretty much 50 per cent of the viewership of Assembly on Demand here, which is partly the reason why I am leaving this speech as a gift on Assembly on Demand! That will be a surprise for her as she sorts through my name and goes through all of my speeches. Thank you very much, Mum. I appreciate everything you have done for me and I love you so much! Thank you, Mum.

Mother's Day Classic—fundraising efforts

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (5.09): On Sunday, I had the privilege of taking part in the 2025 Mother's Day Classic here in Canberra, an event that continues to unite Australians from all walks of life in remembrance, celebration and action. While my family did not end up walking like we hoped, we enjoyed the many kids' activities, the barbecue—with Minister Cheyne working the barbecue—and the atmosphere.

This year, tens of thousands of Australians walked, ran, and rolled their way through parks, ovals and city streets to raise critical funds for breast and ovarian cancer research

across Australia. Since its founding in 1998, the Mother's Day Classic has raised over \$46 million for the National Breast Cancer Foundation, and now it has proudly expanded its mission to include ovarian cancer research through the Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation, which I talked about last week and the efforts I have made in the past in raising funds for the Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation. And that expansion is so important.

Thanks to research, we have seen real progress in breast cancer survival rates, increasing from 84 per cent to 92 per cent over the past two decades. That is a result of investment, advocacy and consistent community support. It is what happens when science is backed and women's health is prioritised. But we still have work to do, especially when it comes to ovarian cancer.

Tragically, there is still no early detection test for ovarian cancer. Treatment methods have barely changed in 30 years, and the five-year survival rate is just 49 per cent. That is not good enough, and it is why the decision to expand the Classic's fundraising efforts is so powerful. Because when we walk on Mother's Day, we walk for a future where those numbers change: a future where fewer women die from preventable, treatable disease; a future where women's health is properly resourced, properly understood, and properly valued.

On Sunday, I saw hundreds of families walking in honour of mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts and daughters they have lost. Teams wearing shirts with names and faces. Prams with photos tucked in the front. Kids walking with their nannas. Survivors walking arm in arm. And behind it all was a sea of pink and teal, symbolising not just breast cancer awareness, but ovarian cancer, too. It was deeply moving and an empowering thing to be part of.

Last week on World Ovarian Cancer Day I spoke about ovarian cancer and how it has touched my family, and on Sunday at the Mother's Day Classic I was able to share with the crowds how both ovarian and breast cancer have touched my family, just like it has touched so many others, and the impact it has had on my life and so many of those around me.

The Mother's Day Classic was founded by two women, Mavis Robertson AM and Louise Davidson AM, after seeing a breast cancer fun run overseas. They brought the idea back to Australia and planted the seed within the Women in Super network. That seed has grown into one of the largest community fundraising events in the country. From just over 3,000 participants in 1998 to over 1.7 million today, the Classic has become an annual ritual for so many families. It is how we start Mother's Day: with purpose, with connection and with a commitment to something greater than ourselves.

To the organisers, volunteers, and fundraisers: thank you. Your dedication has built something extraordinary. To every survivor: your courage lights the way. To every family who has lost someone: you are not alone. And to the researchers working toward better outcomes: your work is saving lives, one breakthrough at a time.

Mr Speaker, let this place echo what was felt across the country on Sunday. Women's health must be front and centre, not just on Mother's Day, but every day. Let's keep investing, let's keep walking and let's keep fighting until both breast and ovarian

cancers are stopped in their tracks. Thank you.

Energy—electrification

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (5.13): Today I want to tip my hat to three groups of people: Rewiring Australia, Renew Economy, and Parents for Climate. The context for this is that nearly two years ago the Senate economics references committee took up a referral from the Senate to look into residential electrification: the benefits, the drawbacks, the needed pace of change and the ways government could support the transition. The committee had six members: two Labor, two Liberal, one Green and one National. The latter was Senator Matt Canavan, who is pretty well-known as an open and unrepentant spruiker on behalf of the coal and gas industries. Just before the federal election, the Senate committee released its report, and now I get to my first hat tip.

Nobody expected this report to be released before the election, but Parents for Climate lobbied hard and successfully for it, and they were spot on. Australian voters had the right to know this stuff ahead of 3 May, so thank you Parents for Climate. We can now say unequivocally that a multiparty committee confirmed what the Greens and other serious advocates for climate action have known for a while: it is cheaper to go electric. This is across the board: home heating, water heating, stovetops, cars. The benefits increase if you have solar on your roof, but even without it, electric households are still ahead.

Now my hat tip to Renew Economy for the headline on their story covering this: “No more fossil ‘gasplaining’—going electric is past the tipping point and guaranteed to slash cost of living”. Firstly, that term “gasplaining” is just perfection. Remember Scott Morrison’s dreadful “gas-led recovery”?

On a more serious note, the fact that we have passed the tipping point on electrification is momentous, good news. Here is Matt Canavan back in July 2023, when Victoria followed the ACT in announcing a ban into gas connections in new dwellings and in government buildings. He said:

This is not going to do one thing for climate change or to save the planet ... This is all about control, it’s all about a group of politicians that like to control what you do—

in this case, how you heat your home. He also billed it as a cost-of-living issue—struggling Victorians; gas riding to the rescue! We now see this Senate report, which Senator Canavan was part of, that proves his outrage was simply wrong.

But it is genuine, important good news that we can lower our emissions and our household running costs at the same time. I am proud that the ACT has led the way and provided a blueprint for how to do it through our decision to electrify, our integrated energy plan to get us there, our partnership with Choice to help households work out what electric appliances work best for them, our EV purchase incentives and more.

Now my third hat tip to Rewiring Australia for giving us the detail in their own report. Here are some highlights. On hot water, a \$4,000 electric heat pump hot water system would use \$3,900 worth of grid electricity or \$1,000 with rooftop solar over 15 years.

Meanwhile, a \$1,900 gas hot water system would use as much as \$8,000 worth of gas in that same period. So the heat pump comes out at least at \$2,000 a head, and perhaps as much as \$4,900. On heating and cooling, this, of course, has a lot of regional variations, but electric heat pump air conditioners can save an average of around \$500 per year in bills compared to gas.

With cars, upfront costs are dropping all the time and EVs are now the cheapest way to drive. The Rewiring Australia report expresses the charging versus fuel component in an interesting and intuitive way. Solar EV charging is the equivalent of paying 13 cents a litre for petrol—13 cents a litre! Grid EV charging brings that up to 80 cents a litre. At the pump, we know what the prices are now, and it is a lot more than that. Depending on the week and the time in the week, it is a lot more than that.

As I said, this is a good news story. Now we need to get these benefits to more Australians as quickly as we can. Let's keep the ACT at the forefront of the transition, and let's get the word out to our constituents so that these reports actually translate to the ambitious level of change the world needs and important cost-of-living savings for our constituents.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.17 pm.