



DEBATES
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DAILY HANSARD

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29 October 2025

This is an **EDITED PROOF TRANSCRIPT** of proceedings that is subject to further checking. Members' suggested corrections for the official *Weekly Hansard* should be lodged in writing with the Hansard office no later than **Monday, 17 November 2025**

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Wednesday, 29 October 2025

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

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

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

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

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

Mr Greg Cornwell AM
Motion of condolence

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

That this Assembly expresses its deep regret at the death of Mr Greg Cornwell AM, former Member of the Legislative Assembly from 1992 to 2004, who served as Speaker from 1995 to 2001, and member of the previous House of Assembly from 1975 to 1986, and tenders its profound sympathy to his family, friends and colleagues in their bereavement.

It is a genuine honour to be paying tribute and moving a motion of condolence for Gregory Gane Cornwell today. It is wonderful to see support here in the gallery today—his wife Margaret, Jane, Megan, family and friends. Thank you for being here today.

There have been many members of this place, and there will be many more to come, but none of them will be quite like Greg Cornwell. Greg joined the old House of Assembly in 1975, aged just 37. He served for 11 years in that place, the entire life of the institution. Before joining the Legislative Assembly as a member for Molonglo in 1992, he served for another 12 years in the Assembly, for a total of 23 years as an elected representative. Remarkable.

For half of his time here in the Assembly, when the Canberra Liberals were in government, Greg served as Speaker. Greg was profoundly conservative, but his conservatism was often a prudent, pragmatic conservatism. It was a conservatism which grew out of a deep respect for our institutions and a deep love of the Canberra community. He believed in personal responsibility, practical public administration and the importance of community safety. He was a dedicated, devoted representative of his constituents.

As Speaker, it is fair to say that he revered the institution of parliament and worked tirelessly to affirm the order and the dignity of this place. In 2004—he was then aged 66—Greg chose not to recontest his seat of Molonglo. If anyone had earned his right to

retire, to take it easy and to enjoy the city he had dedicated himself to building, it was Greg. But, of course, Greg did not rest on his laurels or take it easy. He continued, as he always had, working hard in the service of the Liberal Party, the city and the people that he loved.

Whether it was the Civic library, the Old Parliament House rose gardens, contributing to publications like the *Australasian Parliamentary Review* or to his own series of fictional novels, Greg was not a man to do things by halves. He was, in addition to everything else, a true giant of the Liberal Party. Here in Canberra, we are lucky to have known him, to have called him a friend and to have had his support. For so many Liberals, he was a source of great wisdom, advice, support and encouragement, and I hope he knew how grateful we all were.

I reflect on Greg, and the very last Liberal meeting that we were at. He attended as many as he could. He always was there and, whether you were having a good day or a bad day, if you needed a bit of a buck-up, Greg was the one to encourage you and to tell you that you were doing a great job. I hope he thought it as well, but he was always there to say, “Keep going, you’re doing well.”

On both of my preselections, the first two, I will never forget getting a hand-typed letter posted to me that covered all manner of things, like how to answer a phone as an MLA, how to run your office as an MLA, and “make sure you have a spare pair of pantyhose in your top drawer, because you just never know”. It was just the most considered thing. “Please don’t change your hair.” “Your corflute was this. Stay the same way.” It was really amazing, practical help; I got that both times that I was preselected. He was true to his word, and he was always a great encouragement to me.

I have been asking other people for stories about Greg because, unfortunately, I never worked here in the Assembly with him. I reflect on some stories that Mr Duncan has shared with me. I will read these out because these are Greg, through and through:

As Speaker, Mr Cornwell was able to attend the annual conference of Presiding Officers and Clerks, and the last one he attended, to which I accompanied him as Deputy Clerk—

That is Mr Duncan, here—

along with his wife Margaret, was in Wellington, New Zealand, in July 2001. Prior to the conference commencing, delegates were offered a tour of the building and, when we arrived in the New Zealand Parliament chamber, the tour guide explained that there was a mace and that all Australian parliaments had a mace. At this point, Mr Cornwell indicated that the ACT Legislative Assembly did not have a mace.

Later in the week, there was a meeting of the Australian region of the CPA and on the agenda for that meeting was a gift for the Parliament of Tonga, who also did not have a mace. The then President of the Senate, who was also at the conference, moved an amendment to the motion for a mace for Tonga to the effect that the Australian Parliament also buy a mace for the ACT Legislative Assembly.

Mr Duncan says he was unsure whether Speaker Cornwell had had a word to the Senate President, but between the two of them, they ensured that the mace we currently see before us was given to us by all other Australian parliaments in July 2004.

It is well known that Greg and Margaret loved to travel. The other story that Mr Duncan has shared is that, in Greg's office, when he was Deputy Speaker to Wayne Berry—it is actually now Mr Cocks's office—on the wall was a map of the world, with many coloured pins stuck to various locations in the world. When Mr Duncan inquired what the different coloured pins were, he explained the red ones were for the places where they had travelled and the blue were for the places where they intended to travel. There were many red pins, but there were also lots of blue pins for where they intended to travel to. After leaving this place, I believe that he did make a dent in that travel. It was always a joint effort and a beautiful relationship that I have observed between Margaret and Greg. It is something to aspire to, a love of the ages, and it is a special thing to have known Greg.

When he gave his valedictory speech in this place 21 years ago. Bill Stefaniak, who is also in the gallery with us today, called him an excellent Speaker and a great member of this Assembly, and called his departure the end of an era. It is hard not to feel the same today, at Greg's passing. Vale, Greg Cornwell, and thank you.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade): I rise today to speak on behalf of the government to pay tribute to a man whose life was defined by service, conviction and a deep love for the territory, Greg Cornwell AM.

Greg was a prominent figure in the political landscape of the ACT, and his contributions to the development and governance of our territory as an elected representative spanned more than three decades. His legacy is woven into the fabric of our self-government, and his influence continues to be felt in the institutions and traditions that he helped to shape.

Born in Sydney in 1938, Greg's political journey began early. He joined the Young Liberals in 1956 and went on to lead the Ashfield-Croydon Young Liberals as president in 1963, demonstrating from the outset a great passion for civic engagement and public service. Only a few years later, Greg moved to Canberra, a city that would become his lifelong home and the centre of his political career. It was here that he and his beloved wife Margaret and their two daughters built a life together, one marked by mutual support and shared commitment to community.

Greg quickly became an active member of the Canberra Liberals, leading the Canberra Young Liberals as president in 1966. As we have heard, he maintained an incredibly strong connection to the Liberal Party for the rest of his life. Even in his later years, he remained a respected and engaged presence, offering wisdom and guidance to younger members, even occasionally to members of the Labor Party, continuing to advocate for the values he held dear.

Greg was a tireless proponent for self-government in the ACT. He was a founding member in both the ACT Self-Government Campaign Committee and the Movement

for Home Rules—organisations that played pivotal roles in the campaign for the political autonomy of the territory. Greg believed deeply in the right of Canberrans to govern themselves. He worked with determination and integrity to make that vision a reality.

He served with distinction as the representative for Fraser in the then Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly, which was later renamed the ACT House of Assembly, from 1974 to 1986. He then went on to represent the great electorate of Molonglo in this place from 1992 to 2004, a career spanning three decades as an elected representative.

As a member for Molonglo in this place, Greg served on the standing committees for social policy, planning, development and infrastructure, and finance and public accounts—a wide-ranging brief across those important policy areas. He served as presiding member on the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure and held various other parliamentary positions, including being the Liberal Party spokesperson on education, training and housing, and planning and development.

However, he is probably most well remembered for his time as Speaker of this place. First becoming Deputy Speaker in the Second Assembly, Greg later served as Speaker during the Carnell and Humphries governments. Greg was naturally suited to this role, having those two essential qualities that are necessary for a good Speaker: firstly, a strong sense of duty; secondly, and perhaps most importantly, a loud, booming voice.

One of the highlights of his speakership was welcoming Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh to Canberra during the 2000 Royal Visit—a moment that reflected both his pride in the territory and his reverence for its political institutions.

In his valedictory speech in this place, Greg spoke movingly of his wife Margaret, acknowledging her unwavering support throughout his career. He reminded his fellow members of their responsibility to serve their constituents with honesty and with dedication—a message that remains as true today as it was then.

In 2008, in a fitting recognition of his outstanding service to this place and to the Canberra community, Greg was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia.

As we have heard, his talents extended well beyond politics. He was also a gifted writer, authoring a series of crime novels, amusingly titled *Order in the House*, which blended political intrigue with mystery and showcased his wit and imagination. Outside public life, again, as we have heard, Greg was known for his love of travel, his passion for writing and his enthusiasm for sport, particularly the great sport of cricket. He was a patron of numerous sporting organisations, and he was a committed member of the Lord's Taverners, the Neighbourhood Watch and the Canberra Business Council.

He was a man of many interests, whose warmth and intellect enriched the lives of all who knew him. I know many of our predecessors on the Labor side, although disagreeing with him on many issues in this place, always respected his passion, commitment and integrity.

Greg Cornwell leaves behind a great legacy of public service, civic leadership and personal integrity. His passing is a profound loss for the Australian Capital Territory, and he will be remembered by all as a person of great respect, and he will be remembered with that respect and affection.

On behalf of the government, the Australian Labor Party and all the members who were part of this Assembly with Greg during his time here, we offer our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong): I rise today on behalf of my ACT Greens colleagues in the Assembly to offer our condolences on the passing of Greg Cornwell AM on 22 June this year, just three days after his 87th birthday.

Greg's service to our community has been noted in the remarks already made this morning. He served extensively in public life, first elected to the ACT House of Assembly, representing the electoral district of Fraser, from 1975 until 1986 for the Liberal Party, and in this place from 1992 until 2004, in the seat of Molonglo, as it then was.

In comments made after his passing, he was variously described as a "much-loved member of the Liberal Party", "a rock for the party", a "staunch conservative" and a "classic conservative". His commitment to the Liberal Party, which he joined many years earlier, is widely recognised and appreciated, as well as his deep interest in politics and public affairs, and his commitment to serving his community and constituents.

Whilst our time in the Assembly did not overlap, I met Greg a number of times over the years at community events and public meetings. While our political perspectives were evidently different, the conversations we had on those occasions underlined Greg's keen interest in all manner of issues of the day and his conviction to make Canberra the best it could be.

In that vein, members will no doubt recall Greg being a frequent writer of letters to the *Canberra Times*, usually in the "In Brief" section, where he would succinctly deliver his reflections and, on occasion, barbs. His advocacy for dying with dignity was another example of his active contribution to public life and public debate.

One shared trait we did have was having been the Speaker of this place, a role Greg held for two terms, from 1995 to 2001. His photo sits above the mace which we have heard about this morning, among those who have served as Speaker, just outside the door of this chamber.

Like anyone in public life, Greg had a range of interests outside politics. His efforts as an author have been spoken about already this morning, with his series of crime novels, *Order in the House*, featuring a Legislative Assembly backbencher called John Order. The various titles included *Order and the Suspect Suicide*, *Order and Mrs Cohen's Conviction*, *Order and the Abandoned Body*, and *Order and the Merimbula Mystery*, which seems a particularly Canberra thing, with its focal point being on the South Coast. Mr Speaker, if you want to explore these books, my research reveals that you can purchase them on Amazon, which, in itself, I believe, is a mark of success.

Greg was also described as an obsessive traveller. Again, we have heard the details of that this morning. He visited 137 countries with his wife Margaret, which is an extraordinary amount of travel and, no doubt, a lot of learning, wisdom and cultural exchange. We have also heard about his keenness for reading and a love for watching cricket.

Mr Speaker, by any measure, when you listen to all those elements of his story, you can reflect and say that this was a life well lived, a life focused on service and a life focused on his community.

Once again, on behalf of my ACT Greens colleagues, I offer our sincere condolences to Greg's wife Margaret, his daughters, Jane and Megan, and his wider circle of family and friends.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I will give you the call shortly. I want to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of former members of the Assembly—former Chief Minister Kate Carnell, former Leader of the Opposition Bill Stefaniak and former MLA Louise Littlewood. On behalf of all members, I welcome them warmly to this chamber.

Members, one of the great things about Mr Cornwell—and there were so many—was that, if you were at a large Liberal gathering—I would not expect, Mr Barr, you to have ever been to one—and you were looking for Greg, you did not have to look for long because you could always hear him. You could just walk into the room and that big, booming voice was an audible lighthouse that would lead you to him.

Greg Cornwell always had sensible, worthwhile things to say. He said them with conviction, and he said them loudly. He did not need a microphone. He did not need a bullhorn. He had that voice, that deep, baritone delivery, and that combination of authority and human warmth.

It was mentioned by Mr Rattenbury that Mr Cornwell's photograph sits above the mace in the room just outside the chamber. Speakers that are waiting to come in to preside over proceedings when the bells are ringing eyeball Greg. He was, of course, the third Speaker of this Assembly. It is an enormous privilege for me to follow in his footsteps and be the eighth.

Greg Cornwell was a great man. It was a pleasure to have known him. Like most Liberal members in this place, I can very clearly say that I learnt many things from Mr Cornwell. I was most pleased that, during the last sitting week here—although I do not know that Mr Hanson will share my views—I had the opportunity to refer to a previous ruling of Mr Cornwell as Speaker of the chamber. It was most pleasing to be able to bring one of his rulings into the 21st century.

One of the things that blew me away at the funeral was to hear the fact that Mr Cornwell never possessed a pair of denim jeans. I love that. I love it! We all loved Greg Cornwell, and he will be deeply missed by all.

In closing, can I say that the thing that you were most likely to hear from Mr Cornwell at a Liberal Party meeting—and everybody who has been to one will know this—is that

if someone stood to speak and they spoke with a quiet voice, he would be the one who would say, “Speak up; speak up! We can’t hear you.” I think that it is a testament to the fact that Mr Cornwell wanted everybody’s voice to be heard. Greg Cornwell was a great man, and we will all miss him.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee): Well said, Mr Speaker. I would like firstly to acknowledge Margaret, Jane, Megan and all of Greg’s family and friends who are here in the gallery today. Welcome. I thank Ms Castley for moving this motion. I also thank Mr Barr and Mr Rattenbury for their generous and kind comments. I think you did get that ruling right, Mr Speaker. I did withdraw, as you will note, out of respect for you and Mr Cornwell.

Greg was a great friend to me and to lots of other Liberal MLAs and candidates. Certainly, when I was first elected in 2008, he was the first person to offer advice and support, and he provided me and others with a guide on how to be a good local member. As Ms Castley—

Ms Castley: Pantihose.

MR HANSON: I did use much of his advice, but he never gave me the pantihose advice. Maybe that is where I went wrong!

To me, Greg was the epitome of a compassionate conservative. He had strong, well-thought-through views which he articulated eloquently and, as Mr Speaker said, loudly. He was a man of convictions, and he was not afraid of unpopular positions if he thought that that was the right thing to do.

He remained very interested in ACT politics and committed to the Liberal cause well after his retirement. He offered me regular policy advice and often asked quite thoughtful questions in party meetings and elsewhere. Even when his body failed him, his mind remained bright, and his interest was keen. We had a great chat when I visited him in hospital earlier this year with Margaret, and I greatly treasure the conversation that we had. It was a lovely time that we spent together.

We also had a lovely church service for Greg—Mr Speaker, you talked about that—back in July. Megan delivered a lovely eulogy which I reckon would have been written by Greg. She delivered it very well. With her indulgence, I will quote extracts from that so that members can get a sense of who Greg was as a man, as a husband and as a stepfather:

Gregory Gane Cornwell was born in Sydney on the 19th June 1938, the third and last child of Seviour Mary and James Wellington Stanley Cornwell.

The family lived at Henley on the Parramatta River and Greg’s education was at Drummoyne Primary and High Schools.

On leaving school Greg joined P & O, the shipping company, beginning a lifelong love of ships. The move to work saw a falling away from the local Methodist church in which he held some prominent youth positions.

This confidence building activity stood him in good stead when in 1956 at the

invitation of Greg's senior junior—

apparently, that is a real thing—

—at P & O he joined the Ashfield-Croydon branch of the Young Liberals.

Encouraged by generous discounts, Greg took his annual leave sailing on P & O cruises around the Pacific which inevitably led to a wish to travel further.

After touring western Europe from Scandinavia to Gibraltar in a mini minor with three others, Greg returned home, broke. He started work the following Monday with P & O, and was president of the Ashfield-Croydon Young Liberals in time for the 1963 Federal Election.

Greg's fond memory of this time was leading the flying wedge for Prime Minister Menzies safely from Ashfield Town Hall. He captained the Young Liberals' booth in the electoral victory in the then seat of Evans.

Greg's free-spirited friends were getting married, settling down, so it was with a sense of adventure he accepted a posting to P & O's small Canberra office in 1966.

Little wonder return to Sydney in 1969 held no appeal, but it did lead to his return to Canberra shortly before the closure of P & O's office.

Greg joined George Kerr at International Public Relations where he remained for 17 years. Greg continued his interest and involvement in the Liberal Party, until a six month stint as Jim Leedman's deputy on the ACT Advisory Council gave him a taste for practical public politics.

Following the abolition of the Advisory Council in 1974, Greg stood and won a seat in the part-time ACT Legislative Assembly where he served for 12 years until it too was abolished in 1986.

Greg's Liberal Party involvement was very hands-on, setting up a branch in North Canberra, attending party functions and encouraging as many people as possible to join.

And we could do with him now—

One such activity in 1971 led to a carefully contrived blind date with a widow with two young daughters, Margaret Lewis. Friendship blossomed from that first meeting and they married in 1979. The marriage was successful and the two young daughters, Jane and Megan, welcomed their stepfather—as did Karl, the dog.

Following the abolition of the advisory Legislative Assembly in 1986, Greg worked tirelessly and enthusiastically with a small band of colleagues, including Trevor Kaine and Harold Hird, to achieve ACT self-government.

In 1989 this came to fruition however Greg was not elected, and those who remember the shambolic first Assembly would count him lucky. He spent some time back in private enterprise until joining Trevor Kaine's staff and following the old political maxim "Don't get mad, get even" was successful in the 1992 election.

He was Education spokesman—a job he enjoyed—and Deputy Speaker for three years. Greg became Speaker of the ACT Legislative Assembly in 1995 upon

election of the Carnell Liberal Government and retained the position until 2001 when the party again went into opposition. Greg retired from the Assembly in 2004 having completed another 12 years of political service.

He was not finished there though:

Retirement saw him join committees of various community organisations: Australia-Britain, Friends of the National Library, Neighbourhood Watch and Old Parliament House Rose Gardens. He was the recipient of the 2005 Liberal Party's Federal Distinguished Service Award for the ACT, a 2003 Centenary Medal and subsequently in 2008 a member of the Order of Australia ... In 2018 Greg was awarded the Margaret Reid Outstanding Service Award by the Canberra Liberals.

For those who are not members of the Liberal Party, it is our highest award. The eulogy continued:

He became increasingly interested in world overpopulation, ACT overdevelopment, and voluntary euthanasia.

He also enjoyed writing and while there are still manuscripts gathering dust in the garage, he self-published eight novellas featuring John Order, an MLA of the ACT Legislative Assembly and part-time sleuth.

It was travel which became an increasing passion with age. Margaret and Greg already had travelled widely through the Assembly duties—always paying Margaret's way themselves—

well done; hear, hear—

and their quest saw them visiting exotic and unusual countries including the old Soviet Union, Burma, North Korea, Tibet and Bhutan.

Greg was uncompromising in his views, never owned a pair of jeans—

Ms Castley could take note—

nor rode a bicycle and as his family would attest, he was not a good driver and was mechanically illiterate. On the other hand, he had his great loves, reading, writing, a gin and tonic or two, and cats.

The success and satisfaction that came later in life to Greg can be placed squarely at the feet of his beloved Margaret. Her help to him throughout his political career was unstinting and unqualified. She campaigned, pamphlet dropped, manned polling booths and attended community and party functions with him, always as a team, and as a team they lived their life together. Indeed, on the rare occasions Greg was somewhere alone he could expect a mildly accusatory question: "Where is Margaret?"

True. The eulogy continued:

Wife, friend, soul mate, they were very compatible where it counted, their individual interests not conflicting or quietly tolerated. Perhaps mature marriage helped but they also were fortunate they could enjoy their mutual interests, especially travel, for so many years together, the girls now adults with their own

careers, families and friends.

Thanks, Megan, for letting me use your words and Greg's. Certainly, I would echo those comments about Margaret. At every Liberal Party meeting, Greg was there waxing lyrical, and Margaret was at the front, quietly doing her knitting—the ever, ever-loving and tolerant wife.

I will miss Greg, and I thank him for his service to our ACT parliament and to our community. I again pass on my condolences to Margaret, Jane, Megan and all of Greg's loved ones and friends. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee): I join with everyone who has spoken already to convey my condolences, especially to Margaret. Unusually, I did not get to know Greg, to start with, in that context of being Margaret's constant companion. I did not get to know Greg as a party member or a hopeful candidate meeting a former MLA and Speaker. I got to know Greg sitting around a boardroom table. It was some years ago now that there were changes made to Canberra's electoral laws that, apparently, while being based on the structure of other major parties, strangely did not quite reflect the structure of the Liberal Party, and that meant that someone needed to step up and act as honorary general secretary. The person who stepped up was Greg.

I think that is something that could probably be said of his entire career. Any time that he was needed, any time there was a cause that needed his support, he stepped up. What I got to see, sitting around that boardroom table, was a man who could turn his mind to any subject before him, consider it through intellectual, moral and ethical frameworks and then articulate clearly and unambiguously a position or a solution. It is not a common trait, and it absolutely set Greg apart not only around that boardroom table but in all walks of life.

When I did become a candidate for Bean it was for the 2019 federal election and Greg and I sat down in his living room and he took me through the issues. He let me know in no uncertain terms exactly what his community—in Yarralumla at that time, having lived in many areas around Canberra previously—were concerned about. Greg knew, because he was actively engaged in his community, always. So he could tell me in no uncertain terms exactly what the community thought of the Yarralumla Brickworks. He could tell me in no uncertain terms where the community did not always agree with each other.

In that conversation, he also articulated to me just how important it is—and I am sure everyone has heard this from him—to represent your community. At the heart of everything Greg did, I believe, was that commitment to service. Surely it was that commitment to service which drove Greg's commitment to self-government in the ACT. If anyone wants to go and have a search through Trove and have a look at the many, many, many references to Greg over the years, in the 1970s and 1980s you will find his strong advocacy for self-government or self-rule for Canberra. As the Chief Minister pointed out, his influence is woven through the fabric of the ACT.

I downloaded a couple of references. One was an article, "People still have no say". When the ACT finally was granted its own budget and the right to borrow and invest money like the states, Greg stepped up again and made sure everyone knew that we still

had not moved to full self-government; eighteen people in the ACT at that time did not have a say in the people making the decisions that would guide the direction of the ACT.

Another reference was from 1988. The year 2000 was not, in fact, the first time that Mr Cornwell engaged with the Queen. Indeed, in 1988, Mr Cornwell was petitioning the Queen about self-rule. Not content to keep the discussion to the ACT, not content to keep it to influencing within the Australian territories, Mr Cornwell took the cause of self-rule for the ACT to the highest possible place he could. I think that commitment to causes is a genuine standout for Greg. It was visible in every engagement that I had with him throughout the time that I knew him.

It would be remiss of me not to mention Greg's passionate defence of the cause of voluntary euthanasia. This is an issue that we did not agree on. But Greg let me know in no uncertain terms exactly where he stood and exactly what he believed the case was, because Greg, once he committed to a cause, was all in—and the causes were not just one at a time. We have talked about the Liberal Party meetings that Greg attended, and it was not just to encourage people; it was to tell us exactly where he believed we should be acting. I think the last policy suggestion that he made—again reflecting his community focus and reflecting some discussions from this week—was that the Canberra Liberals should absolutely be more ambitious in standing up for dog parks in the ACT.

I have been incredibly lucky to have had—and I will always be incredibly grateful for—Greg's leadership and his guidance. To Margaret: I will be always grateful to you for sharing Greg with us.

MS LEE (Kurrajong): I add my voice to the tributes to Greg Cornwell. I first met Greg over a decade ago when I was a new member of the Canberra Liberals and he was a party stalwart—a man who was well known for his booming voice, his great height—although everyone seems pretty tall to me—and his generosity in sharing advice, sometimes unsolicited, to budding Liberal politicians. Greg was a constant presence at Liberal Party meetings, and no-one could miss him because, as you alluded to, Mr Speaker, his booming voice was used very well by the party branch chairs to call “Order” for the rowdy rabble when we needed to get on to business.

Greg was always accompanied by his ever-faithful wife Margaret, who I acknowledge is in the chamber today with her daughters Megan and Jane. On Margaret's contributions, I know that her knitting skills have been talked about but no-one has mentioned yet her very famous homemade jam. I remember it was a great delight that, in one of the very first Liberal Party meetings that I attended, I had the chance to win one of Margaret's homemade jams at a raffle, and I enjoyed that very much.

Greg was a proud Liberal who was devoted to public service, and he made an outstanding contribution to the ACT. He was a passionate politician who never shied away from speaking his mind, even if his views were out of step with his colleagues. Indeed, many of Greg's views were different to my own. But, even though we disagreed on many things, Greg always treated me and my views with the utmost respect, and for that I will be forever grateful.

As many of you know, Greg was a prolific writer to the editor and opinion pieces over the years. In preparing my comments for today's motion, I took the time to read a couple of them again. It is a really eclectic collection, with everything from road safety, public housing, homelessness, graffiti, the ACT budget and health funding to, of course, voluntary assisted dying, the size of the Assembly, elections, law and order, and the list goes on. Whatever your views on Greg's opinions, which he did express so eloquently in these contributions, no-one could question his intellect in articulating his views and the respect that he always showed others in his writings.

In his later years Greg was, of course, a strong supporter of a national approach to voluntary assisted dying. In fact, he released his own novelette, *Twilight: A Nursing Home Mystery*, as a unique way to raise awareness for the need for a nationally consistent approach to voluntary assisted dying laws. In promoting the novel, Greg actually said:

It should be read by anyone who believes competent sick old people have the right to die at a time of their own choosing.

Upon Greg's passing, I took the time to read his valedictory speech when he left the Assembly in 2004. What struck me was that, unlike many politicians who use that opportunity to talk about what they have achieved in their time in politics, Greg spoke about the Assembly, how it serves Canberrans and how sometimes it fails to serve Canberrans. Many of Greg's comments, which he made over 20 years ago, are still relevant today. In his speech, he said:

Care and responsibility need to be exercised, I believe, by the government and especially by the Assembly itself in the imposition of more and more rules, regulations and laws upon the people of the ACT.

He went on to say:

I would ask members to consider whether a legislative proposal will be beneficial to most people or simply another legal impost to satisfy the desires of some minority group or a vehicle perhaps to provide personal media publicity.

These are comments that we would all do well to remember when we are in this place.

I also want to talk about something that has already been raised by Ms Castley and Mr Hanson, in that Greg took the time to write you a personal letter when you were first elected. I, indeed, received one and along with a bit of practical advice—like the pantyhose and keeping your hair the same, which I also got—was very practical advice about how to keep in touch with your constituents. It seems to be so obvious and yet something that I think many members can forget if they have been in this place for a long time.

When I became leader, I took the time to read that letter again. Whilst, of course, you take on that additional role, it is a really, really good reminder to me that, first and foremost, you are always going to be a local member. He impressed upon me the importance of being accessible and staying in touch with the issues that matter to your community. Each sitting day, I walk down this corridor and I walk past Greg's portrait—which, of course, hangs in the Gallery of Speakers—and it is once again a

reminder about his sage advice.

In closing, I pass my sincere condolences to Greg's wife Margaret, daughters Megan and Jane, his many, many friends and family who have gathered here today, including former Liberal Party leaders Kate Carnell and Bill Stefaniak, and many of Greg's branch members, and acknowledge that he will be sorely missed. Thank you, Greg, for your service, your guidance and your friendship. Vale.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) I want to thank the members for their endorsement of a life well lived—and that is what we have heard about this morning. As has already been mentioned by Ms Lee and Ms Castley, when I was elected in 2020 I received a beautiful handwritten letter of practical advice, and I follow many of those steps of advice to this day. I will have to check the correspondence to see if there is a mention of pantyhose, just to make sure I got the correct letter. It is an honour to be here in company with so much goodwill for a person who was so easy to like and, indeed, to love.

I only knew Greg during his time as a party member, not as an MLA, but he was so approachable. He would approach with practical and wonderful advice based on his own experience and his observations also of me as an individual. I really appreciated his generosity in giving advice and tips, because his intention was to make me an effective member of parliament.

I do keep the "Order of Thanksgiving service" from early July in my office. It sits on the top shelf in the bookcase just behind my desk so I have a sense that he is still watching over me and guiding me. As I was looking at the order of service this morning as I brought it down from my office, I did note that he was quite a handsome man as well.

So a life well lived, a life that we can learn from, a life of dedication and service: Vale Greg Cornwell AM. I thank and acknowledge family and friends for being here in support of this motion.

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): I too rise to acknowledge the profound loss of Greg Cornwell. Certainly when I joined this place, I did not think that I would ever be speaking about Mr Cornwell in this place. But it is fair to say that there was clearly an issue that we were firmly aligned on. Indeed, reflecting on parliament as a whole, I think we acknowledge all the time that it is a funny place. You can be diametrically opposed on almost everything, but then there can be that one thing that brings you together. It was voluntary assisted dying for me and Greg Cornwell.

As you have heard, Mr Speaker, if you were not approaching Greg, he was going to approach you. He would always be seeking someone out, especially if he thought there was a way that he could help or mentor or if he thought there was an issue that you could help him with in progressing, and so it was for Greg and myself on voluntary assisted dying.

I am pretty sure the first time I ever met Greg was at an event. We were in a big crowd of people and this looming figure of a man approached me with a loud voice. It took

me a moment to work out who this was and he thrust into my hand a business card that simply said, “Greg Cornwell”. I think it had his phone number on the back, because I am I am pretty sure he would use Margaret’s email to send out any correspondence. He clearly wanted to talk to me about voluntary assisted dying and how potentially we could be doing some things together but at the very least that he wanted me to know that he was available to talk—and to scheme—at any time. It did not matter the person, the time or the place when it came to an issue about which Mr Cornwell felt strongly. I think what is quite unique about where we met and had that first conversation about voluntary assisted dying is that the event was a funeral.

From then, Greg has been both quietly and loudly in the ACT’s corner with his personal encouragement of me but also, of course, his very clear convictions and statements in the *Canberra Times* and, indeed, through the his 16,000-word novelette entitled *Twilight*, set in a rural nursing home where the elderly are dying and believed murdered. The book follows steps taken by one member of the home’s board to unmask the killer. So it is not just MLAs who are sleuths; it is board members too. Perhaps he took some inspiration from you, Mr Cocks.

The novelette was an appeal for federal legislation—similar to that following the same-sex marriage plebiscite—for the national law to be changed so all Australians are able to make a choice in life and death decisions. I received a copy of that book. In fact, I think Greg sent it to every Dying with Dignity organisation in the country—I think at that stage only Victoria had passed its legislation and maybe WA, but that was it—and any other associated organisation. My staff were beyond confused to get a handwritten envelope, “Greg Cornwell from Yarralumla”, with this book inside it, and I had to explain what our connection was.

Greg was a fan of not just writing prolifically to the *Canberra Times*—again, “Greg Cornwell of Yarralumla”—but also providing submissions to committees. That included on the election and on our end-of-life choices committee, and we were able to have him appear before us and question him. In all that has happened since with voluntary assisted dying, sometimes the work of that committee can be a little bit forgotten. Yet it was that committee—as much as Mrs Dunne hated that there was anything like this in there—that really set out a framework for what voluntary assisted dying could look like in the ACT. That was really the beginning of the bones of the legislation for me, and Greg certainly had a part in that.

We have heard throughout today that Greg was essentially the definition of principled, disciplined, consistent and kind. Sometimes the kindness was not always welcome, but he always, always meant well. He had a firm belief that, even if you did not see the advice he was giving you at the time, eventually you would realise that he was right.

I would note that his time as Speaker really reflects a maturity of this place. I was very young and was not in the ACT in those early years. But you can see that the number of rulings on parliamentary language got a real big uptick when Mr Cornwell became Speaker. He was bested only by Wayne Berry, which I do not think would surprise anyone either. Not only was he the third Speaker; he is the third-longest Speaker, and I think there is something really quite special about that.

Finally, while Greg and I did not have an enormous amount in common other than

voluntary assisted dying and events and a good glass of champagne or other alcohol—anything is fine—it was his love of Margaret that I think we have heard throughout the speeches today. It is and remains renowned. It sets a standard, I think, for all of us in this place in all of our relationships about teamwork to support each other in our professional lives and also support each other after this place.

Through you, Mr Speaker: Margaret, what you gave Greg—and we knew, because he made sure we knew—really set the standard. It gives me chills to talk about. It was a personal honour for me to know Greg and, as much as I felt affronted at a funeral to be talking about voluntary assisted dying, I am so, so grateful that he approached me and I deeply miss him already.

Motion agreed to, members standing in their places.

At 10.56, the sitting was suspended until the ringing of the bells.

The bells having been rung, Mr Speaker resumed the chair at 11.10.

Land—indicative land release program

Ministerial statement

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (11.11): Today, I am pleased to update the Assembly on the Indicative Land Release Program outcomes for 2024-25. The Indicative Land Release Program is the blueprint for Canberra's contribution to the private residential housing market, as well as new land for commercial, industrial and community use. It is also an important pathway for social and affordable housing through public, community and affordable targets.

The 2024-25 program sets ambitious targets to release land for 5,107 dwellings across the financial year. Throughout the year, the ACT government, primarily through the Suburban Land Agency, released land to enable the development of 325 single residential homes and 3,577 multi-unit dwellings across six sites. In 2024-25, the Indicative Land Release Program set targets to release land for 608 affordable, community and public housing dwellings.

Over the course of the year, land was released to enable 451 dwellings against these targets, including 84 affordable and 367 community housing dwellings. Unfortunately, land for 157 dwellings was unable to be released for a range of reasons. The land release included 52 affordable housing, 40 public housing and 65 community housing targets associated with the release of the Molonglo town centre and the Gungahlin town centre.

As I have said before, the Indicative Land Release Program is just that: an indicative plan to inform the community about the pipeline of land to be taken to market. Land development is challenging. One recent example of an unexpected challenge arising is the discovery of a koala in Jacka, which has delayed the release of 189 dwellings. While environmental due diligence is undertaken for all sites on the ILRP before and during the design of our future places, sometimes new issues come up in the course of bringing the land to market. The environmental issues that impact development need to be

worked through carefully because the consequences for getting it wrong can be significant. The deferral of 700 dwellings at the Molonglo town centre from 2024-25 to 2025-26 was due to the need to work through site complexities, which include preserving remnant trees, box gum woodland and habitats for endangered species.

Just as the government is taking a careful and considered approach in Molonglo, it is also working through a range of complexities and competing priorities in the Gungahlin town centre. The Gungahlin town centre is a key growth area for Canberra, and its development is critical for housing supply and economic activity in the north. The 2024-25 target of 350 dwellings as part of a build-to-rent development in the Gungahlin town centre was deferred so that government could make sure a development of this nature is in the ideal spot. These sorts of decisions have lasting impacts on the liveability of places, and the government is committed to ensuring that all corners of Canberra are wonderful places to live.

With that in mind, Madam Assistant Speaker, I would like to tell you about just one of the fantastic outcomes achieved in the last financial year. Two sites, one in Gungahlin and one in Moncrieff, were released alongside financial assistance from the ACT government's \$100 million Affordable Housing Project Fund. The aim of this integrated land and funding round was to support community housing projects, especially those with Aboriginal community controlled organisation involvement. While negotiations are still being finalised for the Moncrieff site, which can accommodate 100 affordable dwellings, I can confirm that the Aboriginal community controlled organisation SEARMS will deliver the Gungahlin site. This site will be home to around 80 new affordable homes and will support the expansion of ACCO-led housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans.

Madam Assistant Speaker, if you follow my Facebook page—it is not compulsory—you might have seen me out and about almost every week last year, turning sods and cutting the ribbons on new social and affordable housing projects. Many of these projects were facilitated through land releases. Targets set for 2024-25 were the highest indicative targets we have ever published. That ambition reflects the scale of the housing challenge.

But the ILRP is not the only tool the government has to meet its broader housing goals, especially with the commitment to enable 30,000 new homes by 2030. That commitment rests on a broader foundation, including planning reforms, infrastructure delivery, direct and commonwealth investment in social and affordable housing projects, and strong partnerships with the private sector. With the ACT's population set to reach half a million people by the end of the decade, the ACT government will continue to balance short-, medium- and long-term priorities to ensure Canberra remains the best place in Australia to call home.

I present the following paper:

Indicative Land Release Program—2024-25 Outcomes—Ministerial statement, 29 October 2025.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.17): I thank the minister for providing an update on the status of the 2024-2025 Indicative Land Release Program. I understand that the work of land release is complex and involves many moving parts. There are environmental, community and planning considerations involved. But, at the same time, when we get to the stage of identifying land that should be included in a government document, I would expect to have a reasonable idea about the constraints that might impact on that land and whether it can be released. By that stage, I would expect the government to have advice from experts on environmental, ecological, geotechnical, and road and utilities construction elements, and that the advice would have been used in establishing the targets.

If you look at the land identified for public, community and affordable housing, overall 74 per cent of the identified land was released. None of the public housing sites were released. Only 85 per cent of the community housing sites were released. The Assembly often hears about the housing crisis and how hard people are finding it to buy or rent a house. We hear about many of the levers that the government are pulling to address the housing crisis, and we constantly hear about the need to provide community, affordable and public housing so that the number of people on our public housing waitlist stops increasing. That public housing waitlist has not stopped increasing. At the start of this term, there were 2,975 households on that public housing waitlist. At the last update we received in June, the number had risen to 3,402 households on the public housing waitlist.

I am sure the community will appreciate the update, but I think the community would also want to hear how many of the sites that have been released have been taken up, why public housing sites are not being released, and what we are doing to manage the gap between the ambition that we need and the delivery that we are getting.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, Disability, Carers and Community Services, Seniors and Veterans portfolios—government priorities—update Ministerial statement

MS ORR (Yerrabi—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (11.19): A year following the 2024 ACT election, as others have, I am taking this timely opportunity to update the Assembly on some key government achievements and work underway across my portfolios. Before I address specific programs, policies and initiative achievements, I acknowledge the work of my predecessors across all portfolios. As a minister, I have been able to build on some incredible work and now have the privilege of working with the community and public officials, as well as a range of community and environment organisations and groups, to further advance this progress.

The ACT government remains committed to working in genuine partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to promote self-determination and

actively work to close the gap. This includes working with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and local community to implement the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

This year, the ACT government has opened a new purpose-built facility to support the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation to meet the needs of the children, young people and families in the growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. We have also rolled out the ACCO Establishment and Expansion Fund, providing an alternative funding source focused on supporting the establishment, capacity and capability-building activities for the Aboriginal community controlled organisations in the ACT. Like many in this place, I acknowledge there is more work to be done across government, which is why we have established the new cabinet Closing the Gap Subcommittee to drive the next phase of the ACT's work on closing the gap. A year in, it is a privilege to have the opportunity to continue working with the community and the Elected Body as Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

The ACT government continues to lead the nation on environmental protection and sustainability. We are taking progressive action to address climate change, bringing our community with us and ensuring that all Canberrans benefit from the transition to net zero. This week, I commenced consultations on the ACT's next Climate Change Strategy to continue reducing emissions and supporting the city and community to adapt to a changing climate. While the ACT has made significant progress on our energy transformation, members of this place will know that decarbonising our electricity sector is integral to meeting our climate goals. We have continued to work productively with the Australian government, securing a \$12.9 million investment to establish a virtual power plant on ACT social housing properties. This project will install rooftop solar and batteries on up to 7,500 social housing properties, reducing electricity bills for thousands of tenants and supporting grid stability.

The government continues to work to protect vulnerable ecosystems and threatened species in the ACT. We have committed \$4.5 million over four years to prevent the extinction of the Canberra grassland earless dragon, with \$2 million already committed to expanding the captive breeding and insurance colony at Melbourne Zoo, paving the way for reintroductions from early 2026.

I am proud to have the support of my Labor colleagues to develop the first landscape plan for the ACT. This approach will build on the work of the newly established City and Environment Directorate to ensure that our natural and urban environments thrive and Canberra remains the bush capital Canberrans love. As a basis for the plan, we have completed the first stage of mapping conservation values across the landscape, which will support future planning and restoration strategies.

The Biosecurity Act 2023 came into effect on 15 May 2025, unifying biosecurity laws in the ACT. The new legislation enhances the ACT biosecurity system by addressing gaps in the previous laws, establishes the principle of shared responsibility, and facilitates a nationally consistent approach to biosecurity. It will provide a safer environment for territorians, businesses and visitors by protecting the ACT's environment, economy and community from biosecurity risks.

We continue to work to improve water quality in the ACT's lakes and waterways. As a bit of a head's up: tomorrow our public consultation will begin on the next stage of the 10-year Healthy Waterways Plan for Lake Tuggeranong, aimed at reducing algal blooms that sometimes prevent Tuggeranong residents from enjoying the lake.

I recognise and thank the many dedicated Canberrans who volunteer their time to protect and restore our environment. In September, the ACT government awarded \$360,000 to 20 community-led projects through the 2025-26 ACT Environmental Grants Program. These projects support local environmental conservation, stewardship and education efforts, contributing to the overall wellbeing of our community.

Respect and inclusion are at the core of ACT Labor's values, and this extends to people with a disability, carers, seniors, veterans and members of the LGBTIQ+ community. The ACT government is committed to realising the vision of a community where people with disability can participate in all aspects of community life and the ACT government remains committed to the implementation of the ACT Disability Strategy. This year we have progressed significant work under its first action plan. The ACT's Disability Inclusion Act commenced earlier in the year and provides a legislative framework for the inclusion of people with disability in the ACT community. We thanked the outgoing members of the ACT Disability Reference Group and undertook an appointment process for members to the newly established Disability Advisory Council.

The ACT government has also continued to work with our federal colleagues and our state and territory counterparts on comprehensive disability reforms. We consistently advocate for Canberra's needs and for a service system that is locally connected and based, informed by and responsive to our community. The ACT government, alongside Carers ACT, is working to ensure carers' experiences are considered, valued and incorporated in the context of these national reforms. Through our ACT Carers Strategy, the ACT government recognises the immense contribution carers make in ensuring everyone in our community is supported.

Labor governments play an important role in providing the services and supports our community needs, and we proudly work with our community partners to achieve this. This year, we have delivered a \$10 million funding boost, recognising the vital role the community sector plays in our city and to provide supports for these organisations while we lead important reform work.

We are working locally and as part of national efforts to strengthen and make our safeguarding and protections for children, young people and vulnerable adults more consistent through the review of the Working with Vulnerable People screening scheme. I also acknowledge the important work that ACT Official Visitors play to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

The election feels like both yesterday and forever ago. It is an honour to have been a member of the Legislative Assembly for nearly a decade, even if it is a bit scary to say that. I would like to thank people of Yerrabi for trusting me to represent them in this place. I would also like to thank the community and the Assembly for endorsing ACT Labor and our progressive agenda. It is a privilege to hold the portfolios I do. As do all my colleagues, I hold multiple, diverse portfolios. When I meet people who comment

on the breadth of my responsibilities, I acknowledge that, while each one is unique with their own set of challenges and opportunities, all are centred on people and the environment and all involve a lot of work, often behind the scenes. I cannot express my gratitude enough to the dedicated public servants and the incredible volunteers who deliver incredibly important progress and better policy outcomes.

Supporting the community and caring for the environment are areas Canberrans are deeply passionate about. I look forward to continuing delivering both in the Labor way, driven by values shared by many in our community.

I present the following paper:

Achievements of the 1st year of the term—Ministerial statement, 29 October 2025.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**Business, Arts and the Creative Economy, Children, Youth and Families, Multicultural Affairs, Skills, Training and Industrial Relations portfolios—government priorities—update
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) (11.28): Just over a year ago, our community went to the polls and endorsed ACT Labor's comprehensive suite of progressive, practical and proven policies. In the past week, we have heard from some of my colleagues about the progress this government has made in delivering this vision, and I would like to add to this by updating the Assembly on what has been achieved in my portfolios.

The ACT government is investing in sustainable and connected arts facilities and precincts that support quality, engaging and innovative art that is accessible to all and enlivens Canberra's public spaces. Major capital investments at the Gorman Arts Centre and the Tuggeranong Arts Centre will improve the usability of both sites to foster arts practice and community arts activities. Two million dollars has been invested in the Tuggeranong Arts Centre theatre. Works included improvements to back-of-house storage, cross-stage access and toilet facilities, as well as the replacement of theatre sound and lighting systems. These are the most substantive refurbishments since the 1990s. New theatre seats were installed in August 2025 and a fresh, revitalised new theatre opened just last month.

We also pledged to provide more support for local artists and arts projects. Over the next two years, we will invest \$2.3 million to help more local artists bring their ideas to life, which represents a 50 per cent increase. Additionally, arts project grant funding will increase to \$1.5 million per annum to support more high-quality projects, including those that enhance arts and cultural outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

artists.

Thanks to the recent sponsorship from the ACT government, artist Melissa Hammond was able to represent Canberra both nationally and internationally in the arts, including through a residence in France. Out of 18,000 submissions worldwide, her artwork was selected for the biggest annual art event in the UK, the Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition in London. She was one of only two Australians selected for the exhibition.

The strength and vibrancy of Canberra's arts scene is not just demonstrated through excellence on national and international stages; public art is also an important way for our community to engage with art every single day. We have delivered on our commitments by developing a public arts trail for both Civic and Tuggeranong, and we are commissioning more public art. Members may recall that, earlier this year, I announced that we have commissioned Louise Skacej to create a public artwork honouring Stasia Dabrowski OAM, affectionally known as Canberra's "soup kitchen lady". This commission will honour an iconic Canberran and help address the under-representation of women among those commemorated through public art.

We have also delivered on our commitment of creating an artist registry. This database, launched earlier this year, helps connect businesses or individuals looking to engage local artists for paid opportunities. Canberra artists across all artforms are being invited to self-nominate to be included on the platform through the ArtsACT website.

We are continuing to deliver our Small Business Strategy, including by extending vital supports like the Canberra Business Advice and Support Service. Through the service, businesses can access tailored advice specific to their business, regardless of their industry or where they are in the business life cycle. The budget also included investment to extend the Social Enterprise Grant Program, providing more support to businesses that put community good above their own profits.

I would also like to acknowledge the impact that construction to deliver the critical city-shaping light rail project has had on some businesses, particularly hospitality businesses. This is why the government put in place an additional package of measures that makes it easier for customers to access these businesses and provide targeted fee relief where it is most needed. I encourage all Canberrans to get out there and continue shopping, eating and enjoying the nightlife on offer in our city centre.

In my children, youth and families portfolio, we are leading the nation through practical and progressive reforms, clearly underscored by our work to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility. On 1 July 2025, the ACT became the only jurisdiction to raise the age to 14 years old. This reform acknowledges that children and young people engaged in antisocial behaviour need a therapeutic and trauma-informed response that is commensurate to their age and developmental stage. That is why this government has invested in the Therapeutic Support Panel which, under Dr Justin Barker's leadership, connects these young people with the services they need.

Another key milestone, following the Custodial Inspector's report into the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre and other reviews, I announced the development of an ACT Youth Justice Strategic Plan. The plan will be aimed at establishing a five-year roadmap to strengthen the youth justice system, with a commitment to closing the gap at its core.

The strategic plan will also consider the findings and recommendations of the Jumbunna Institute's final report of its independent review into the over-representation of First Nations people in the ACT and align reforms underway in Children, Youth and Families and through Next Steps for Our Kids 2022-2030.

In the past year, we have also increased investment in our out-of-home care services, with an additional \$13 million allocated to a range of services to assist some of our most vulnerable children and young people. The services provide accommodation and support to children with very complex presentations and are unable to have their needs met through other services. This includes at least 20 children with severe disability and/or co-morbid mental health conditions.

One of the highlights of my multicultural affairs portfolio is delivering the National Multicultural Festival. At the election, we promised to make the festival bigger and better, and the 2025 festival certainly delivered on both of those metrics. This year's festival extended further into the south of Glebe Park, supporting more community participation in a diverse entertainment program across eight stages and more than 250 stalls. The headline performers for the 2025 festival were chart-topping Gamilaraay singer and songwriter Thelma Plum and soul and R&B sensation Thndo. Thelma Plum attracted a large crowd, filling up the south of Glebe Park on Sunday afternoon.

In the most recent budget, we also committed an additional \$4.6 million to ensure the 2026 festival remains a vibrant celebration of Canberra's multicultural diversity. We have also partnered with the City Renewal Authority and Infrastructure Canberra to offer a microgrant program to support city businesses to activate as part of the 2026 festival. Coincidentally, today marks 100 days to go until the 2026 National Multicultural Festival, from 6 to 8 February. So, members, mark your calendars because I hope to see you all there. The festival is a celebration of what makes our community great, and efforts like this to promote social cohesion are needed now more than ever.

In recent years, we have seen a rise in extremist ideologies across Australia and the world. While we have been fortunate that Canberra has not seen the worst of these behaviours, I acknowledge there are people in our community who may not feel as safe as they once did or as they should. This is why we legislated a new positive duty to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and unlawful vilification. The duty commenced for ACT government agencies earlier this year. The positive duty means that duty holders must take proactive, reasonable and proportionate steps to eliminate discrimination.

One year in, we have also continued to deliver on our commitments in my skills, training and industrial relations portfolio. In industrial relations, we have continued to deliver workplace laws that support fair workplaces and provide support to workers and their families in times of need. Silicosis is a debilitating disease. The ACT is proud of the work we have undertaken to protect workers through our response to engineered stone products. However, we know that for too many the damage has already been done. That is why, earlier this year, we implemented promised reforms to provide statutory payments to persons with an accepted compensation claim for silicosis. This reform provides faster and clearer support for workers and their families where they have this disease and an alternative to a long, costly common law claim.

For those who find themselves in the unimaginable position of having lost a loved one at work, we recognise that this is a devastating blow. As a government, we cannot reduce the grief and pain, but we can go some way to alleviating the other immediate pressures faced by families. One of those is financial, and this is why we have legislated immediate support payments to family members following a workplace death. Through these reforms, we will ensure that spouses and dependents receive payments within seven days of the workplace death compensation claim, providing upfront support at a time when the overall claim can take months to be finalised.

Complementing our work on building fairer workplaces is our investment in skills and training for Canberra. We know that investing in people's skills is investing in their future, and our delivered commitments in this space reflect this. No delivery has been more noteworthy than the completion of CIT Woden. This landmark investment in our public TAFE provider has provided Canberrans with a worldclass vocational training facility. Featuring cutting-edge learning environments, it contains a full student-run restaurant, a hair and beauty salon, and a full TV sound stage and music studio. These facilities provide students with practical, real-world experience that gives them a competitive edge in their career. It leaves CIT well positioned to make the most out of our participation in the National Skills Agreement. I am proud to say that CIT is the home of two TAFE Centres of Excellence: the Electric Vehicle TAFE Centre of Excellence and the Cyber Security TAFE Centre of Excellence. These Centres of Excellence lead TAFEs nationally in developing best practice training for their field of study. To have two based in a single institution is a demonstration of CIT's abilities and leadership across TAFEs nationally.

The Electric Vehicle TAFE Centre of Excellence is at the forefront of standing up an entire new field of work in our automotive industry, providing everyone from apprentices through to experienced industry veterans with a place to learn the latest technology in EVs. The uptake of EVs only continues to grow and initiatives like this Centre of Excellence will be essential to ensure that we are meeting the skills needs of the future. The Cyber Security TAFE Centre of Excellence that I recently launched with the federal Minister for Skills and Training, Andrew Giles, is our newest Centre of Excellence at the CIT. It will leverage the CIT's deep partnerships with our university sector to meet the training demands in our cybersecurity workforce.

Finally, one of the biggest investments we have made in skills this year is in our construction industry apprentices. In the budget, we increased funding of apprenticeship fees to 90 per cent of the cost for seven critical construction trades. This funding will directly support construction businesses to bring on an apprentice and represents our commitment to ensuring the future workforce needs of our construction sector are met. These investments demonstrate our commitment to the skills needs of the ACT and will remain a priority of this government into the future.

This is just some of what we have achieved in the past 12 months. I am proud to be a member of a government that is getting on with delivering a practical and progressive vision for our city. We have achieved so much in the first quarter of this term and we are just getting started.

I present the following paper:

Achievements of the 1st year of the term—Ministerial statement, 29 October 2025.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.40): I rise to speak a little bit about the arts content of the minister's statement. I want to start by once again thanking him for his genuine and deep engagement with the sector. They have very much enjoyed seeing him at various performances and meeting with him. I know that he has taken seriously many of the commitments of and the work that was started by Minister Cheyne last term and followed those through.

There are some really great Labor commitments in there, including the statement of ambition for Canberra to become the arts capital of Australia and the fair remuneration principles for artists. These are great ambitions. Canberra should be Australia's arts capital and, of course, artists are workers. Like other workers, they are skilled, they engage professionally and they should be paid fairly for their work. But, unfortunately, we have not yet seen Labor come forward with the economic settings to realise these really, really worthy ambitions that we have for the sector.

It has always been hard to make a living as an artist, and it is getting increasingly hard. It has gotten much, much harder since COVID, and we are now seeing and hearing more problems. We recently heard about difficulties with public liability insurance, particularly in the live music sector. That also came through pretty strongly in federal Senate inquiries recently. So there are more problems stacking up than there are solutions.

Greens took an election commitment to double the arts grant budget, which sounds enormous. It is quite a small overall funding pool. We could pretty much double the arts budget by redirecting the horseracing funding. There are many ways around that problem, and we are not too fussed on how we fix it. We are really pleased to hear the minister restate that the arts grants have increased by 50 per cent. That is great to see. I understand that that increase has only been committed for two years, despite the fact that the economic conditions are not changing. Unless we get a whole lot of other action that has suddenly and miraculously changed the entire sector, I think we are going to need long-term commitments there, not just two years. So we are very much hoping that that is not simply a two-year commitment.

What we have not yet heard is the other commitment that we managed to negotiate with the Labor Party, which was the increase of 25 per cent plus indexation for the arts organisations. Many of those organisations are getting very close to the edge of viability now. We are seeing that some of those very longstanding players have had to cut their programs and budgets. I know a lot of them are looking very hard at what services they can offer government and what services they can put in their long-term contracts and tender on the basis of the funding they have.

The application process for that longer-term funding is being run at the moment. I understand there is no clear guidance. I have not seen any clear guidance on what the overall funding pool is, and we still do not know if that overall funding pool will have

the 25 per cent plus indexation in there. So it is very, very difficult for organisations and for the sector to work out what they should be bidding for and what services, programming and arts they can provide for Canberra to become the arts capital, without any certainty on that.

If we are serious about following through on the Labor Party's commitments for making Canberra the arts capital of Australia and for making sure that arts organisations can pay their workers fairly—which is, of course, admirable and now required under the fair remuneration principles—we need to make sure that we have the practical economic settings in place to be able to do that.

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (11.44): I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the work of artist Melissa Hammond, who the minister mentioned in his statement. I first met Melissa a few years ago through my work with Endometriosis Australia, where we sat together at a breakfast at Parliament House talking about endometriosis and women's health. She had come along to support a friend as a last-minute invitee to this breakfast. Melissa herself is no stranger to chronic health problems, women's rights and medical misogyny. She uses her art to reflect chronic health, invisible disabilities and women's rights. She has used it to reflect climate change and her activism. It is just incredible to see her work was exhibited at London's prestigious Royal Academy of Arts earlier this year.

I had the pleasure of catching up with Melissa about two months ago in my office, and we reflected together on what the last 12 months has been for both of us and the changes we have both been facing. We had that moment to talk together about how things change and how great our paths have taken us. We talked about where her art is taking her and what she has been able to achieve with the support of ACT government arts funding and arts programs, and the support she has felt she has had in doing what she loves and turning her passion into a full-time endeavour for her—from her residency in France to London, to the work she has planned next, advocating for invisible illnesses and chronic pain. Well done, Melissa. I look forward to what you do next with the combining of art and advocacy together to get a message across. The ACT arts sector is thriving, and you are a brilliant representative for it. Well done, Melissa.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (11.46): I would like to highlight the fact that Woden, Weston Creek and Molonglo do not have an arts centre. While it is an admirable objective for Canberra to be the arts capital of Australia, it should not be at the expense of community art and culture.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Legal Affairs—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 12

MS BARRY (Ginninderra) (11.47): I present the following report:

Legal Affairs—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 12, dated 27 October 2025, together with extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings—

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MS BARRY: Scrutiny report No 12 contains the committee's comments on proposed amendment to two bills, one government response, 18 pieces of subordinate legislation and four regulatory impact statements. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MR SPEAKER (Mr Parton) (11.48): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure.

In its report No 13 of the Tenth Assembly, the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure made the following recommendation:

The committee recommends that, given the issues raised in the report of the Commissioner for Standards, and noting the Assembly's sanctioned e-petition website, the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure of the 11th Assembly investigate the use of Members' private websites and other means to promote e-petitions that would be deemed out-of-order.

At its meetings on 20 October and 27 October 2025, the Eleventh Assembly committee discussed the implications of restricting the use of out-of-order petitions. The committee was of the view that any impediment to the use of non-Assembly website petitions would limit a member's ability to canvass or otherwise obtain the views of their constituents.

The committee also notes that there is an opportunity for any member to suggest possible changes to the petitions standing orders when the Assembly reviews its standing orders during this term.

Legal Affairs—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MS BARRY (Ginninderra) (11.49): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs relating to the Inquiry into the Civil Law (Wrongs) (Organisational Child Abuse Liability) Amendment Bill 2025. This inquiry reported on 16 September 2025.

It has been brought to the committee's attention that some organisations in the stakeholder list for the inquiry were accidentally not included in the committee's email inviting submissions to this inquiry. The invitation was, however, also extended to a wide range of sporting, charitable and religious organisations. The committee received one confidential submission from a religious organisation as well as other confidential submissions from victims.

While information about inquiries open for submissions are openly advertised on the

committee's webpage and through a media release, the committee immediately addressed the oversight by inviting missed stakeholders to provide comments on the report in the interests of ensuring that members had access to a wider range of stakeholder views prior to resumption of debate on the bill. These comments were due by close of business Friday 24 October 2025.

The committee received comments from three stakeholders, including one not originally identified in the stakeholder list. Issues of concern raised in these comments relate to retrospectivity of application, impacts on community groups and action ahead of the development of a national approach and noted the existence of existing redress measures available to victims. Some of these issues mirror issues raised by other stakeholders in their submissions, which are referenced in the report.

The committee asks members to note matters raised in their comments on the committee webpage for the inquiry. The comments are published under the submissions tab on the inquiry website.

Government Procurement Amendment Bill 2025

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

Title read by Clerk.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (11.51): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to present the Government Procurement Amendment Bill 2025 to the Assembly. This bill refines two key pieces of procurement legislation. It supports certified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entities and small and medium enterprises based in the Canberra region to more readily access procurement opportunities, enhances the operation of procurement legislation and provides greater transparency in government spending.

Substantial changes to the Government Procurement Act 2001 and Government Procurement Regulation 2007 commenced on 1 July 2024. These changes delivered a legislative framework that is contemporary, reflects best practice and aligns with community expectations that procurements are conducted with transparency, fairness and rigour. With these changes having now been in place for more than a year, the government has identified opportunities to refine the act and regulation.

This bill builds on the strong foundations established in 2024 to consolidate and extend the benefits already achieved. The changes in the bill are informed by broad consultation across government and industry as well as supplier feedback on the operation of the changes made last year. The bill enhances the act and regulation to improve efficiency and strengthen transparency. It supports effective and robust procurement outcomes, while maintaining value for money as the central and unaltered tenet of the ACT Government Procurement Framework.

Part 2 of the bill amends the act to promote the participation of suppliers responding to ACT government procurements. Clause 5 specifies that a written contract will no longer be required for procurements with a total estimated value of less than \$500. This reflects the reality that a written contract may place a disproportionate administrative burden on suppliers and officials for procurements of low value, scale, scope and risk. As with all procurement, of course, the requirements to achieve value for money and maintain appropriate procurement records will continue to apply.

Clause 6 clarifies that confidential text includes both personal information about an individual and the name of an individual, other than the name of an individual supplying goods or services in their own name. The ACT is the only jurisdiction in Australia that proactively and routinely publishes the text of notifiable contracts. Current drafting provides that personal information is confidential text. However, in some instances an individual's name may not be personal information—for example, if a person has a common name. This creates the risk of inconsistent treatment of individuals' names referenced in procurement contracts. An individual's name, including witnesses to signatures, does not necessarily provide insight into the decision-making process for a procurement. Outside of individuals' names, the existing record-keeping framework and contract notification requirements in the procurement framework will continue to play a key role in promoting transparency and accountability in government procurement by making key information about procurement contracts publicly available in a timely manner.

Clause 8 of the bill clarifies that annual compliance reporting obligations will capture details about compliance with the act and regulation. This ensures that annual compliance reporting captures the most important obligations and is consistent across all territory entities.

Part 3 of the bill amends the regulation to clarify application definitions, and to further promote the participation of suppliers responding to ACT government procurement opportunities, consistent with part 2 of the bill. Clause 14 clarifies that only a single oral quotation is required for procurement with a total estimated consideration of less than \$500. It does not alter the quotation requirements for procurement of \$500 or more. Current drafting requires at least one written quotation for any procurement under \$25,000. Consistent with clause 5, this change supports the efficient conduct of very low-value procurements, which are typically of low scale, scope and risk. It significantly reduces the administrative burden for suppliers responding to procurements under \$500, making it easier for them to supply to government. It also improves practicality for officials making minor routine purchases. Again, the requirements to achieve value for money and maintain robust records for all procurements continue to apply.

Importantly, this bill acknowledges the contribution to the ACT economy of certified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entities and small and medium enterprises based in the Canberra region. For limited value procurements, clause 15 permits a territory entity to seek a single quotation from a certified Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander entity or an entity that is both a small or medium enterprise and based in the Canberra region. Current provisions allow an exemption to be sought from the usual requirement to obtain three quotes for limited value procurements, requiring additional

administrative steps that a territory entity must take before directly approaching a certified Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander entity or a small and medium enterprise based in the Canberra region.

The proposed change will remove the need to seek an exemption and give territory entities a pathway to directly engage a capable, certified Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander entity or small and medium enterprises based in the Canberra region. It reaffirms the ACT government's commitment to using its purchasing power to increase the economic participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entities and aims to increase the opportunities for such entities and small and medium enterprises to win government procurement contracts. These changes will also better position territory entities to meet addressable spend targets under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy.

Clause 21 seeks to clarify the procurements that require review by the Government Procurement Board, while not substantively changing the categories of review. The categories specified will continue to reflect procurements of a higher scale, scope and risk. The changes allow the board to discharge its functions and fulfil its purpose more efficiently, supporting value-for-money decision-making. This clause also preserves the ability to refer procurements for review by the board. Clause 21 balances operational efficiency with the need for enhanced assurance for higher value, higher risk procurements.

In closing, this bill reflects the ACT government's commitment to continuous improvement in procurement, streamlining procurement practice, strengthening transparency in government spending and making it easier for suppliers to engage with the ACT government. Together, these changes reaffirm the government's commitment to managing public resources with integrity and efficiency, while ensuring procurement continues to deliver real value for the Canberra community. While the bill does not specify a commencement date, I expect to set a date of 1 July 2026, to align with the financial year and existing procurement and annual reporting cycles. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Sitting suspended from 12.00 to 2.00 pm.

Questions without notice

Canberra Health Services—elective surgery waiting times

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. CHS had a target for 2024-25 of 430 patients waiting longer than clinically recommended for elective surgery. The actual outcome was 2,020—more than four times higher than the target. Minister, how is it that this target has been missed so badly?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Castley for the question. As we have talked about before, we have achieved the highest number of elective surgeries ever, by a very long way, in 2024-25, with more than 16½ thousand elective surgeries compared to the previous highest of just over 15,300 elective surgeries. We were somewhat short of our target, for multiple reasons. However, this backlog was created some years ago both by

the COVID-19 pandemic interruptions and also the fire at what was then the Calvary Public Hospital Bruce theatre complex.

We have not changed the target for the number of people overdue and awaiting elective surgery for some years. We chose to leave that target the same because, obviously, that is where we would like to get to. We have been seeing very significant efforts to increase the amount of elective surgery that we are getting through, and those efforts are starting to have an impact on the number of people waiting for elective surgery and the number of people overdue.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, has there been any accountability for such a severe failure, being that it is four times higher than the target?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: As I just said in response to the first question, we have actually explained on multiple occasions how we started the year with a backlog and we finished the year with a backlog but we had in fact achieved an absolute record number of elective surgeries in 2024-25, more than 16½ thousand. We have set a target, which is exactly the same as the target the Canberra Liberals set at the last election in 2024, of 70,000 elective surgeries over the next four years from this year. We are very confident that we will meet that target, which, as I said, is exactly the same target that the Canberra Liberals set at the last election.

MR HANSON: Minister, at what point will you take responsibility for your failure to ensure Canberrans can access elective surgery on time?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I take responsibility here in this place and on radio regularly, and I am accountable to the community for the performance of the ACT health system. We know that every health system around the country was impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic and saw increases in elective surgery waiting lists and impacts on the throughput of elective surgery. Unfortunately for us, this impact was compounded by the fire in the theatre complex of the former Calvary Public Hospital. That public hospital is now operating above the rates of elective surgery that it was previously. We are getting through our elective surgeries, both in our public system and in partnership with our private partners, and we have delivered an absolute record number of elective surgeries in 2024-25, at more than 16½ thousand.

Canberra Health Services—elective surgery waiting times

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. AIHW data on elective surgery waiting times shows almost one-quarter of category 1 patients were not admitted within the clinically recommended wait time in 2023-24. This compares with just 0.4 per cent in New South Wales. Minister, why are Canberrans 58 times more likely to miss out on urgent surgery on time?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: There will be various reasons across different specialities as to why category 1 elective surgeries would not have been completed on time. I will take the detail of the question on notice so I can come back to Ms Castley and the chamber with some more detailed information in relation to the various factors that impact that.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what is the New South Wales government doing to be so

much better at serving their communities than you are at serving ours?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I reject the premise of that question. There is a regular joke among health ministers that we all run the worst health system in the country, because that is the headline on all of our papers around the country—that we are, for whatever reason, the worst in the country. I think if you look at some of the headlines in NSW you would identify ambulance ramping, you would identify industrial issues under governments of both persuasions and you would identify a range of issues where the data and the commentary would indicate that the ACT is doing better than New South Wales. There are other areas where New South Wales is outperforming the ACT on specific data points in specific years, but I absolutely reject the premise of Ms Castley's question.

MS BARRY: Minister, are those headlines the reason so many Canberrans are losing confidence in your administration and are seeking health care in New South Wales?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Again I reject the premise of Ms Barry's question. I am not sure that she has any evidence of what she has asserted. We certainly do know that in the private system people do go and seek health care in New South Wales because they pay less of a gap in New South Wales. We know that in the ACT private hospital care tends to be both more likely to have a gap, out-of-pocket expenses, for people using their private health insurance and that that gap is larger. That is one of the things that creates significant pressure on the ACT's public health system as well. So it is true that people go to New South Wales, people go to Sydney, to seek care in the private system but the same reason that they do is also what creates additional pressure on the ACT public system.

Drugs—decriminalisation

MR HANSON: My question is the Attorney-General. Attorney-General, we were promised that if the ACT decriminalised ice, heroin and cocaine we would fix clogged-up courts and police activity. This is despite only eight people being charged and convicted of illicit possession as a standalone offence in 2021-22, which was the year immediately before decriminalisation.

Now the DPP is saying that they may have to turn away cases due to the sheer volume and being overworked. Has decriminalising hard drugs failed to clear up the court system?

MS CHEYNE: I did not hear the beginning of what you said, Mr Hanson, but—

MR SPEAKER: Would you like the question repeated?

MS CHEYNE: Not really! I will take it as a preamble. Let's see how I go. If you want to 118AA me, then so be it!

I thank Mr Hanson for the question. I think that is a false equivalence, quite honestly. By making drug use very firmly a health issue rather than a criminal issue, all the evidence has shown us that the sky has not fallen in and that, in fact, diversion has been a better outcome. In terms of the DPPs workload, I would not suggest that the workload

has ever been under pressure in relation to drug possession, necessarily. I would say that it is a combination of things.

Mr Hanson: We were told that is why we were doing it—

MS CHEYNE: Mr Speaker, if Mr Hanson wants to interrupt, I am happy to have a conversation.

But, certainly, what we want to do is divert people from the justice system, because all of the evidence shows us that as soon as they have contact with the justice system that becomes, itself, a criminogenic factor, and they will likely have contact with the justice system again.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, you have asked your question.

MS CHEYNE: Mr Hanson would know, if he actually read the DPP's annual report, especially the opening statement from the DPP, that there is increasing complexity in the cases—increasing complexity in terms of the matters that are being brought to the DPP, especially as they relate to domestic and family violence.

MR HANSON: I will try and read my next question slower so you can hear it, Minister.

Ms Cheyne: Just louder.

MR HANSON: Louder?

Have drug-related charges increased or decreased since hard-drug decriminalisation has taken affect?

MS CHEYNE: I would not have the policing data in front of me, but I think there is a question about, again, the difference between drug-related charges when we are talking about possession versus trafficking versus the sale, and so on. So I think that bringing it all together as one is a bit of a red herring from Mr Hanson.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, how is the government seeking to ease the pressure on the court system after the decriminalisation of heroin, ice and cocaine has already failed?

MS CHEYNE: This is a very odd logical piecing together. To go directly to the question—as much as it is breaking my brain!—we have been successfully diverting people out of the criminal justice system for personal possession of different drug types. In terms of the DPPs workload, we have been focusing on supporting the DPP with some of the decisions that she has taken, especially as they relate to regulatory matters.

Without wanting to announce policy through question time, Mr Milligan can look forward to the bill I introduce tomorrow.

Treasury—act of grace payments

MR RATTENBURY: My question is for the Treasurer. Treasurer, the *Act of Grace Policy and Procedures Guide* sets out how you can authorise the payments if you consider it appropriate to do so because of special circumstances—ordinarily if the territory has a moral obligation that warrants authorisation of the payment. Given applications for the payments are often sought by people who have already experienced harm occasioned by the territory, how do you prioritise them?

MR STEEL: I will take the question on notice.

MR RATTENBURY: Treasurer, what are the reasons that it could take close to one year to tell an applicant about the outcome of their act of grace payment application?

MR STEEL: Each application is different. There will be a range of different considerations that may exist for some cases and not for others. Treasury, obviously, has limited resources to be able to look into every single one but does need to provide me with advice on every single claim that is being made. Some of those require comprehensive investigation of the issues before that advice can be given to me.

MS CLAY: What support is available to applicants for act of grace payments who are harmed by lengthy delays while they wait to hear the outcome of their application?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. Where possible, communication is provided to them to give them an expectation that it can take some time for those matters to be considered, and there is certainly no guarantee that an act of grace payment will be made. It needs to be considered, and I do so against the criteria that we often provide to them so that they have an understanding on what basis the decision will be made.

City and government services—lighting

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services. Four months ago, the Assembly passed an amended motion which called on the ACT government to continue to roll out the implementation of gender-sensitive urban design across the ACT and, among other things, advocate for and collaborate with the National Capital Authority to address lighting issues and ensure women feel safe while exercising in commonwealth-owned areas like the Lake Burley Griffin perimeter. The NCA has since replaced or repaired 48 lights and installed 223 new lights around Lake Burley Griffin. Minister, can you provide a rough indication of how many new lights the ACT government has installed in high-traffic public spaces in the last four months?

MS CHEYNE: I will take the actual number on notice. I would note two things that are part of the ACT government's streetlight maintenance improvements and enhancements. One is filling in the gaps where we have requests for lighting, particularly as it relates to areas that people might be traversing regularly, and they want better lighting in place. The other is where we are improving the streetlight network overall, when it comes to the types of lights. We are undertaking an enormous program through our contractor in terms of streetlight replacement. I will get the specific numbers for Mr Emerson, and I expect they will be broken down in that way.

MR EMERSON: Minister, when can we expect to see a detailed timeline for rolling out the ACT government's gender-sensitive urban design framework across the

territory?

MS CHEYNE: I will take that on notice.

MS CARRICK: Minister, what has been the extent of the ACT government's engagement with the NCA regarding lighting and footpaths around the Lake Burley Griffin perimeter since the Assembly motion in June?

MS CHEYNE: As I pointed out at the time, the NCA manages its land, and we manage our land. I am glad to hear that the NCA has taken note of the lobbying that, in the first instance, was directed towards us. It certainly has seemed, from much of the commentary that we have had, that it is NCA-managed land where lighting improvements need to be concentrated.

I will have to take on notice whether there have been any conversations with officials, but I expect there have been, at least in the broader context of the NCA's upgrades, the strengthening of the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge and any utility movements that we have had to undertake.

Overall, I think it is still worth stressing that lighting certainly is a big part of feeling safer, but women are always unsafe at the moment in any circumstance, day or night. It is based on behaviours of people that make women feel unsafe, and if those behaviours start to change, some of these conversations would not necessarily need to be had.

Sport and recreation—bowling clubs

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation about the potential closure of the Weston Creek Bowling Club. Minister, in the last 10 years, four lawn bowls facilities have closed, including the Canberra City Bowling Club, the West Deakin Bowling Club, the Southern Cross Bowling Club in Phillip, and the South Canberra Bowling Club in Griffith. Bowls clubs are where people go to socialise. It is important for people's mental health for them to get out of the house, connect with others and participate in activities. In 2019, the ACT government commissioned a strategic facility review of bowls in the ACT, and, in its 2021 response, the ACT government stated that opportunities to assist the industry included:

- Consideration of support for capital works projects which can demonstrate a longterm positive impact on the provision of bowls facilities in Canberra (i.e. covering greens, conversion to synthetic playing surfaces) on a case-by-case basis.

June 2025, Region media reported that the Weston Creek Labor Club is set for post-Christmas closure, including the bowling club.

Minister, is the government willing to work with the Labor Club and its bowling club to support a capital works project that includes covered greens so they can be used all year round and at night, to facilitate the financial viability of the bowling club, or are we going to lose another sporting and social facility?

MS BERRY: I would say to Ms Carrick that I acknowledge the advocacy of the bowling club members in this space; however, I cannot make decisions about providing

projects to privately owned organisations outside the government's budget or grants processes. Clubs all have opportunities to access grants should they require them to have infrastructure upgrades. Then the ACT government would work with them in implementing those grants and ensuring the upgrades of their sporting infrastructure.

MS CARRICK: Minister, should the Weston Creek Labor Club close, what will the government do to ensure there are community facilities in that area, in Weston Creek?

MS BERRY: I know Ms Carrick is the champion of every privately owned business in the ACT that closes and calls on the government to take it over, but it is just not possible. However, in saying that, I would work with individual sporting clubs, should they decide that they want to open a sporting venue in the ACT, and see whether there are opportunities for them within the ACT government's land release program or any other opportunities that we might have with privately owned organisations. That is not always the case, but, where it is appropriate, the government can, in those circumstances, work with those groups.

MR EMERSON: Minister, have there been any discussions between the ACT government and the Canberra Labor Club about the future of the Weston Creek Bowling Club site?

MS BERRY: I have not. However, I have had contact from the bowling club user groups, which I am yet to meet with. I am not aware of other ministers' diaries in that respect.

Sport and recreation facilities—planning

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. Minister, I understand that SGS Economics and Planning has completed a report titled *ACT community sport and recreation facilities needs assessment*. Will this report be taken into account when determining the uses for community facility land at Gowrie, Chapman, Richardson and Isaacs?

MR STEEL: I am sure that it will. It has been well known that we have undertaken that work, which will help inform a range of different planning policies as we continue to look at opportunities for land release but also through zoning reforms, the work that we are doing on transit-oriented development and the development of a new Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework. As part of that, we do want to consider what the community's needs are, particularly around recreational facilities and community facilities to inform that work and further consultation with the community.

The exact land uses have not yet been determined for the blocks that have been identified in this year's land release program for community facilities but will be in the future, and that will take into account any needs assessments that have been undertaken. As indicated during estimates, it is the intention of the City and Environment Directorate to undertake a briefing ahead of the release of the next round of community facility sites to gather feedback as well.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, when determining the uses for the community facility land in Chapman, Gowrie, Isaacs and Richardson will there be consultation with the

local community like your colleague Minister Stephen-Smith has initiated for the Wakefield Gardens site?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. Obviously, we have a range of different organisations that have already listed their interest in the release of blocks and potentially being able to apply for those through the expression of interest process. We have a process for that that tests the community's appetite for applying for land. That is fairly open to a range of different organisations, on that list or beyond, who may wish to develop a community facility. So, yes, we will be testing that with the community through that tender process. But we will also be undertaking, as I said, an industry and community stakeholder briefing on the sites, so that there is a clear understanding about what the process is and the opportunities on those sites.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, when will this report be released on the City and Environment Directorate website?

MR STEEL: Once I have had a chance to read it.

Canberra Airport—international flights

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, could you please provide an update on the status of the Canberra Airport's international connectivity?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Tough for the question. The government continues to work closely with Canberra Airport with a simple objective: to make it cheaper and easier to travel to and from Canberra. We are pursuing that objective by working with the airport to enhance the frequency of services and to see more competition, so more airlines flying to Canberra. We know that our international visitors deliver 21 per cent of our total tourism spend in the economy. They are very, very important to thousands of jobs across Canberra. It is therefore vital to our tourism economy's growth prospects that we continue to grow international tourism and we can do so through greater, direct connectivity.

We are, of course, very much looking forward to the return of daily Qatar Airways flights in December, with Boeing 777's operating daily to Doha via Melbourne and then onwards on that airline's network which has a global list of more than 170 destinations. The return of Qatar Airways and the success of Fiji Airways offerings are clear indications of Canberra's aviation future, reinforcing our objective of improving trade, education, tourism and business links internationally. Through our trade program we will continue to work closely with Canberra Airport and airlines on other potential international links with a particular focus on the key markets of New Zealand and South East Asia.

MS TOUGH: Chief Minister, could you please provide an update on the status of the Canberra Airport's domestic connectivity?

MR BARR: Canberra Airport is now directly connected to more domestic destinations than at any time in our city's history and they continue to work in partnership with the territory government to bolster that domestic connectivity, maintaining direct services to all major domestic capitals as well as key regional centres. In recent times we have

seen the commencement of two new routes, Canberra to Geelong through Avalon Airport, flying on Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays, and Link Airways flying between Canberra and Coffs Harbour. That is a seasonal service so running through the summer period of 2026.

We will continue to work with the airport, with the Qantas group—broadly Qantas, QantasLink and Jetstar—and Virgin Australia and the smaller regional airlines on further direct connections to capital cities. So increasing the frequency of those services, as well as establishing new direct routes to major population centres that we currently do not have direct services to. There are two Queensland markets that are particular priorities at the moment, being the Sunshine Coast and Cairns.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Chief Minister, why is the ACT government's focus improving connectivity so important?

MR BARR: In simple terms, this is about jobs and a bigger economy. Through the government's investment in the Aviation Stimulus Fund we aim to achieve economic development outcomes, job creation, trade engagement, tourism expansion and education links, nationally and internationally. By improving access through Canberra Airport, we make the ACT a more competitive destination. It means more visitors, more students, more business delegations, more trade in Canberra, increased investment, more activity for small businesses, bigger and better events and more jobs and revenue through our hospitality and tourism sectors. This is big picture, aligning our economic development and tourism agenda with our education agenda and with our inbound investment agenda.

In the simplest of terms, the return of carriers like Qatar Airways, the establishment of Fiji Airways services and the growth in domestic services demonstrate that the government's focus in this area generates real and tangible outcomes, particularly for our tourism and hospitality economy, which contribute to expanding the territory's economy, creating thousands of new jobs, diversifying our economy and making Canberra an even better place to visit and to live in.

Vocational education and training—enrolments

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research found that the ACT had a decrease of 16.6 per cent in government-funded VET students for the first half of 2025. This was the largest decrease in Australia. Minister, can you explain what has led to this decrease?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mr Milligan for the question. I direct Mr Milligan to similar questions he has put in this place, and the answers I have provided to him. We have seen a decrease in enrolments in vocational education; we have seen a decrease in enrolments across all higher education. I would observe that the particular dynamic that is occurring here in the ACT is that we are currently experiencing one of the tightest labour markets in the country—and we have for some period of time. In this climate, there is not necessarily the need to engage in study to gain employment, which I think is a direct link to a decrease in enrolment numbers.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why has the ACT government allowed Canberra to be the worst performing state or territory in Australia when it comes to supporting VET students?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mr Milligan for the question. I reject the premise; we are not. This government is committed to supporting students in vocational education. Through this budget, we are supporting students with \$250 cost-of-living payments. For first year students, we are supporting them with a further \$250 payment to support them in securing their tools.

We believe that Canberra is a growing city that needs skills. Through the National Skills Agreement, I intend to work with colleagues across the country to deliver the skills that the country needs. Here in the ACT, we have identified a range of areas where we think we have a growing need for that workforce into the future: construction, renewable energy and the care sector. We will diligently target our priorities to ensure that we have the workforce that we need for the future.

I also caution Mr Milligan about simply looking at commencements or the number of students as a sign of successful system. What is also important is that we are getting good outcomes for—largely—young people. There are young people that commence their studies but do not necessarily complete them, but that is because they go into gainful employment. That is still a good outcome. Our system needs to respond better to that in how it records data.

MR COCKS: Minister, when do you plan to achieve a rebound in VET student numbers?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank the member for the question. That work is underway and has been for some time. Enrolment numbers are guided not just by the actions of any one individual provider but by the wider system they exist within. It is imperative for the future of the ACT that we have the growing skilled workforce that we need, which is why this government will continue to invest in vocational education in our city, which the Canberra Liberals will not.

Lakes and waterways—water quality

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Lake Burley Griffin is administered by the National Capital Authority, which operates in accordance with the *ACT Guidelines for Recreational Water Quality*. Does the minister believe the lake's water quality meets with community expectations? If not, has the minister considered updating the guidelines?

MS ORR: Ms Castley has asked me if I “believe”. I believe that that is asking me for an expression of opinion, which would make the question out of order.

MR SPEAKER: I do not “believe” that we can suggest that asking you as the minister—

MS ORR: Maybe you could ask Ms Castley to rephrase the question. I would not mind having her repeat it so that I can hear it again, anyway.

MR SPEAKER: Let us just repeat the question. In view of the point of order that was raised, if it is possible for it to be delivered in a different way, feel free, Ms Castley. And perhaps we can stop the clock on this one.

MR CASTLEY: Is the lake's water quality meeting community expectations? If not, has the minister considered updating the guidelines?

MS ORR: I have not received an information or briefing to me that would go to the point that Ms Castley is making, or indicate that there are concerns that would require me to look at the guidelines, noting it is also Lake Burley Griffin and the management is done in conjunction with the National Capital Authority. I can take the substance of the question on notice and come back if there is anything further to add.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, will you update the guidelines, which have not been revised since 2014, to improve water quality and Canberrans' enjoyment of our lakes? They are 10 years old.

MS ORR: I will take the substance of the question on notice. I would, however, point to previous discussions on the topic of water quality in our lakes, particularly within the last estimates period, where we did canvass this topic. As we discussed during that conversation, there is work going on around studies and looking at our water quality. We are continually looking at how best to manage these issues.

MR MILLIGAN: How much engagement have you had with the NCA in relation to water quality?

MS ORR: Again, a lot of the engagement will occur at official-to-official level. I can take the substance of the question on notice and seek advice from the officials.

Mr Cocks: The question was you.

MS ORR: While some people may have the view that I have to do everything individually without any assistance in my role as the minister, we know that the public service is there to support the minister. It would be unrealistic for me to be doing absolutely everything within the detail of every single last part of my portfolio.

Southlands Mawson and Cooleman Court—upgrades

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. Minister, on 20 August 2024, your government promised to “upgrade the shopping precincts at Southlands Mawson and Cooleman Court”. Treasury costings show that you promised to spend \$2.5 million, starting in 2026. Minister, has that money been put in the budget for these projects, and will you guarantee that these upgrades will not be delayed or cancelled, like so many others in this year's budget?

MS CHEYNE: This is for me. I will take it on notice. I do not have it in front of me, but I can easily find it.

In terms of our shopping centre upgrades, yes, we have committed to a large range of

upgrades right across the city; it is the same with playgrounds and toilet upgrades. We have announced a good chunk of those through the budget process. In our forward planning, we have looked to provision that money as best we can. Going to the question that Mr Hanson asked, about whether we expect there to be delays, not in terms of the funding allocated, but given all the changes, influences and disruptions on construction and other flows of goods and labour over the last six years, I do not think I can guarantee strict timelines on anything anymore.

MR HANSON: Minister, you will probably take this on notice: can you provide details of exactly what these upgrades will do?

MS CHEYNE: I certainly can, if they are part of the envelope provisioned in this year's budget. If that is the case, I would be expecting that, if it has not already been done, we would soon be revealing some designs for that. Either way, I will come back with a specific answer.

MR COCKS: Minister, exactly when in 2026 will the upgrades commence?

MS CHEYNE: I expect it will be when the contract is signed.

Justice—bail

MR HANSON: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney-General, could you provide an update on the review of the Bail Act, including the time and scope of future reports and the finalisation dates and details of that review?

MS CHEYNE: I am not going to announce government policy in this place, but the update that I can give Mr Hanson is that in December I intend to provide a formal statement to the chamber about the direction of those reforms. We have a significant pipeline of reform underway, including a bill I flagged for introduction tomorrow in a related space, together with a suite of reforms that should support our justice sector. I know that people are looking forward to hearing about the direction that we are taking with our bail reforms. I have already made one announcement, as part of the release of the discussion paper, about what we would be looking at reforming. I have certainly provided direction to the directorate based on the feedback that we received in response to the discussion paper. Also, I think it is worth noting that we received many requests for late lodgement of feedback to that discussion paper, which we granted because it was from many of the key stakeholders that we wished to hear from. So, while it may seem, on the face of it, that it has been some months now since that period closed, after that, for another few weeks—I think up to a month—we were still receiving submissions, and we wanted to consider them.

MR HANSON: Minister, will the review provide a comprehensive dataset on bail in the ACT, including applications for bail by type of offence, breaches of bail, and offences committed while on bail—information the Canberra Liberals have been asking for, for well over a decade?

MS CHEYNE: As Mr Hanson knows, and has known for longer than I have—I have certainly become very aware of the courts' reliance on paper. This is something that I desperately want to do something about. It is why we are quite reliant on ACT Policing

data whenever there are questions on bail. In terms of what the review will show, again this is about legislative reform to the operation of the Bail Act, not necessarily the operation of the courts and how we are able to provide data. But I would assure Mr Hanson that any time the Canberra Liberals, or indeed anybody, asks us about data that relates to bail, we do our very best to provide the information that we can—

Mr Hanson: That's not true. We've had a series of motions and you haven't provided that information.

MS CHEYNE: Not to me.

MS BARRY: Minister, do you agree that presenting comprehensive and accurate data on the operation of bail in the ACT would improve the review's analysis and recommendations?

Mr Pettersson: Point order: asking for an opinion.

MR SPEAKER: I will uphold that in the interest of questions being written in that way. That is the message that I would send to the opposition. I am ruling that question out of order.

Health—Southside Hydrotherapy Pool

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, I understand the hydrotherapy pool opened on Monday, 25 August in Tuggeranong. Can you tell the Assembly about the facility?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the question. I went to the Southside Hydrotherapy Pool on 11 August and was joined by Minister Stephen-Smith as well as Ms Tough to announce the completed construction and the opening of the pool. I want to acknowledge and thank Minister Stephen-Smith for all the work that she has done in bringing this important facility to the community.

This new hydrotherapy pool, which is located in Canberra's south, can be found at the Tuggeranong Lakeside Leisure Centre. The facility complements the hydrotherapy pool at the University of Canberra Hospital, ensuring Canberrans can access hydrotherapy services close to where they live. This new hydrotherapy pool has been designed in line with the Australian Health Facilities Guidelines standard to ensure accessibility, safety and comfort for all users.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, why is this facility important?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the supplementary. Hydrotherapy is a powerful tool for recovery, rehabilitation and pain management. The new pool provides people with mobility issues to access an important form of recreation. It also supports people to better manage chronic pain caused by illnesses such as cancer, migraine, osteoarthritis and arthritis and those recovering from injury or surgery.

Importantly, the facility also includes a Changing Places facility, which is a specialised, accessible public toilet for people with disability who have high physical support needs.

It transforms the pool from a standard health amenity into a truly inclusive space, one that supports carers, promotes independence and aligns with our commitment to equitable community infrastructure.

In 2022, the ACT government held a series of public consultations to inform the development of the new ACT Disability Strategy. During these conversations, the community expressed a strong need for more Changing Places facilities in the ACT to enable greater participation of people with disability with high support needs, their families and their carers.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what does the facility include?

MS BERRY: The key features include additional accessible and standard parking spaces; ramps to access the centre and the pool; underfloor heating and water temperature regulated to be at 33 to 34 degrees; accessible bathrooms and changerooms; and safety and accessibility support features like handrails, a bariatric rated hydraulic hoist to assist with transfers to and from the pool and slip-resistant flooring; and storage for mobility aids, including wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

I am also happy to let the Assembly know that, for the month of September, the Southside Hydrotherapy Pool had a strong attendance utilising the facility, with re-occurring bookings from community and other user groups.

Light rail—option to extend to Mawson

MR BRADDOCK: My question is for the Minister for Transport. Minister, I refer you to the draft environmental impact assessment for light rail stage 2B. The draft EIS does not show the option for a light rail extension to Mawson, despite the work done by the government to investigate this option. Why is an optional extension to Mawson not shown in the draft EIS?

MR STEEL: Because, as far as I am aware, it does not require an EIS, Mr Speaker. The environmental issues are not as significant in that area. If there is further planning work that is required once the government actually makes a decision about whether it wants to undertake that extension, which will be part of the business case decision-making process, then we would undergo the necessary planning approvals, but they are not on the critical path in the same way that the EIS and EPBC process is for stage 2B from Commonwealth Park to Woden.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, what would be the benefits of extending light rail stage 2B to Mawson?

MR STEEL: Well, they would be considered as part of the business case. That is the purpose of a business case, to look at what the benefits of a project are and how they can be maximised through the implementation of the project. The government has not yet made a decision to extend light rail down to Mawson but we will consider it as part of the business case process, which will also look at the costs of that extension.

Of course, the obvious benefit is transport benefits. It could provide access to a greater portion of the population in south Woden who live up to one kilometre from that light

rail corridor, particularly on Athllon Drive and in the area around Mawson group centre. It may also provide stabling opportunities in the future for the broader light rail network—so having a stabling yard at the southern end of the line so that you do not have to wait for light rail vehicles to come from the Mitchell depot in the morning to start their run. There may be a range of land use benefits along the corridor that will be considered. We will be looking at that already as part of the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework, which will extend down to Beasley Street in Torrens and Farrer—looking at the land use opportunities along the route and that will inform the consideration of the business case.

MISS NUTTALL: What is the government's target date for releasing the final version of the EIS?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question and I refer her to the timeline that I outlined in the Assembly and tabled in a previous sitting week this year, where I did update the Assembly on a slightly longer timeframe for the finalisation of the EIS, but that did not affect the overall timing of the project being delivered.

Transport—Belconnen transitway

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, I note the government's commitment to the Belconnen transitway, including undertaking design and construction of stage 1 for immediate bus priority measures, following the conclusion of a feasibility study jointly funded by the commonwealth government.

Minister, what is the latest status of this project, and is the feasibility study on schedule?

MR STEEL: I will take the question on notice. I understand the study is underway.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, recognising that the North Canberra Hospital development is also a priority of the government and is also located on Haydon Drive, how is the government ensuring that the hospital project will not slow down construction of the transitway?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. I have not had any indication that there would be a direct conflict in the delivery of that. Of course, the delivery of any improvements to the Belconnen transitway will be subject to future budget processes and consideration around funding. I am assuming that at that point there would also be advice about the construction methodology and how it may link in with the broader precinct planning that is occurring at the hospital.

MS CLAY: Minister, is it still your current plan that stage 1 of the Belconnen transitway along Haydon Drive will be built before the end of the term?

MR STEEL: We will see what comes out of the feasibility study first, and that will inform decisions about future funding and delivery of the items in there. Until I have actually seen the content of that feasibility study, I cannot comment.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice

Woden town centre—Scentre Group

MR STEEL: When I was away last week, Mr Emerson asked a question, which was taken on notice by the Chief Minister on Wednesday 22 October, in relation to what interaction the inter-directorate Woden Town Centre Working Group had with Scentre Group prior to the release of their concept master plan for the redevelopment of Woden town centre. I have been advised by the City and Environment Directorate that Scentre Group have not yet had direct interactions with the Woden Town Centre Working Group at this stage.

Canberra Health Services—elective surgery waiting times

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I want to put on the record in relation to Ms Castley's question about the AIHW report and comparisons with New South Wales that the same report shows that people on ACT elective surgery waiting lists waited 15 days less at the 50th percentile and four days less at the 90th percentile compared with New South Wales, and these waiting times at the 50th and 90th percentile have been lower every year between 2019-20 and 2023-24.

Southlands Mawson and Cooleman Court—upgrades

MS CHEYNE: This is a bit piecemeal, but I thought I would try and give as much information as I have. I do not believe that the Cooleman Court upgrades have been funded in this budget, but the Mawson, Charnwood and Erindale are, and that is \$7.8 million set aside for those upgrades. We have earmarked Cooleman Court for an upgrade for funding in a future budget round in this term, and we have factored that into our broader planning considerations. The designs are still being worked through for the Mawson upgrade, but I would note that there is a project page, as predicted, and it does give information that I believe that Mr Hanson was looking for, including that:

Preliminary planning is currently underway. Once complete, design work will begin and the concept design will be shared with the local community in 2026.

That is a great page to bookmark, because that is where we will be providing further updates as the work progresses. I would also note, as was covered extensively, I think, by *ABC Breakfast* in their "Toilet Tuesday" segment earlier this year, one of my personal favourites, Mr Speaker—

Mr Hanson: Did you text him?

MS CHEYNE: I probably did. I think I did—certainly about toilet cleaning. As I said, I know a lot about toilets now. When I was listening, as I often do, to the breakfast radio program—

Mr Barr: Get a life, Ms Cheyne.

MS CHEYNE: I deserve that after the Menzies thing yesterday—swings and roundabouts. Mr Speaker, on a more serious topic, I think anyone who visited the Mawson shops knew that the state of the toilets there was diabolical. So we did find a

way to fund upgrades for those toilets prior to the broader upgrades that we have planned for Mawson. I think that those have been very well received by the community and certainly by our terrific City Services depot that operates out of Holder. They were the first people to raise it with me. In fact, when I visited them at the depot, they received a call through Fix My Street at the time, complaining about the smell at the Mawson toilets. They said, “The concrete is porous and we cannot get the smell out no matter how much we clean it.” That is why we were able to prioritise that for Mawson, and I hope the people who are enjoying Mawson shops are enjoying those toilet upgrades.

Lakes and waterways—water quality

MS CHEYNE: On water quality guidelines, I appreciate the question was to Minister Orr but it really falls across three portfolios. Our water quality guidelines in the ACT are, I believe, prepared by the Health Protection Service. I appreciate that they appear to be a decade old; however, they are based on the National Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Water. They were prepared in 2008 and, as far as I am aware, they have not been updated since. So, while time has passed, those documents do remain current.

In terms of the water quality, I suppose, at Lake Burley Griffin—and, of course, if Minister Orr has anything further to add to what she has taken on notice, I would welcome that—I think it really was covered extensively in the motion yesterday that Lake Burley Griffin, like our other lakes, was not designed primarily for recreation. I think people can see a major dam wall there—to assist with flooding and then with sediment control and other matters. That is its primary function. But it is terrific that it does have such wonderful recreational use. But, because of its primary function, that is why we need to test it when people are planning to use it recreationally.

Athllon Drive duplication—costs

MS CHEYNE: Finally, in terms of the question on Athllon Drive, which I took on notice yesterday—which was: “The project business case that went to cabinet for Athllon Drive outlined a cost of \$82.2 million,” and then, “The Built for CBR website now outlines it as \$98.6 million. How has it managed to blow out by 20 per cent?”—there has been no change to the value of the project funded through the 2025-26 budget. That figure of \$98.6 million on the Built for CBR website includes the \$82.2 million construction funding provided through the budget as well as the funding for design and early works provided through previous budgets and, indeed, that we had an announcement on during the 2024 budget.

In terms of the question, “What would the duplication have cost if it was delivered when it was first promised?” I undertook to try to get a figure from back in 2016. I do not think that has been able to have been located, certainly not by me. If I find one, I will let people know. But I would note that it would be pretty difficult to determine even if we had identified a figure at the time, because project investigations had not been undertaken to inform the design development, including identification of utility relocation requirements and pavement assessments.

We have had changes to government policy in the intervening years, and so additional project requirements have been identified through design development, and they were

not contemplated when the project was first announced.

Government commitments—order to table documents

Speaker's ruling

MR SPEAKER: Members, I want to draw your attention to a motion which appears on the notice paper tomorrow. Certainly my attention has been drawn to it. This is an Assembly business from Ms Castley. I want to point out that, on 4 September this year, the Assembly passed a motion calling on the government to:

...table a consolidated report on the status of each commitment made by Labor for the 2024 ACT election, including both costed and uncostered policies, or agreed to in a supply and confidence agreement with the crossbench.

Ms Castley's notice of motion, due to be debated tomorrow, calls on the executive to:

...table the most recent reports for every government commitment that is current or has been current in this term of the Assembly.

Standing Order 136 states that the same question may be disallowed. It states:

(136) The Speaker may disallow any motion or amendment which is the same in substance as any question which during that calendar year has been resolved in the affirmative or negative, unless the order, resolution or vote on such question or amendment has been rescinded.

There has been some discussion that has taken place between myself, the Clerk and the opposition leader's office, but I have to say that, at this stage, the notice appears to be the same in substance as the motion that was agreed to in September. I was anticipating some amendments, but they have not been forthcoming. So, as outlined on page 138 of the *Companion*, such notices have previously been removed from the notice paper, and I accordingly direct that the notice in Ms Castley's name be removed from the notice paper. Ultimately, it is up to the opposition if they want to seek leave to move a motion tomorrow. I will leave that up to you.

MS CHEYNE: Mr Speaker, I would seek your clarification—just for my MGB future understanding. I would have thought that you would not be ruling this out of order until it was going to be brought on. I am just seeking clarification, Mr Speaker; it is not a reflection on your ruling—but that there would be opportunity this afternoon before the notice paper for tomorrow is reissued for the motion as it currently appears to be amended on the notice paper.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Cheyne, I appreciate the advice, genuinely.

Ms Cheyne: No; question.

MR SPEAKER: No, genuinely. But, in the past, this chamber and the Presiding Officer have assessed notices of motion such as this at the time that they have appeared. Given that this is on the notice paper and also given that there has been genuine discussion, I feel the need to follow that precedent and remove it from the notice paper.

Health—cardiac arrest

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS (Brindabella) (3.03): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the critical importance of early intervention in cases of sudden cardiac arrest, when every minute without CPR and defibrillation significantly reduces the victim's chance of survival;
- (b) that accessible Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and the presence of community first responders willing and able to assist in these circumstances have been proven to save lives;
- (c) that there were 1,401 adult cardiac arrests in the ACT between 2014 and 2024, according to the Productivity Commission's 2025 Health Services "Report on Government Services";
- (d) that ambulance jurisdictions in Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and New South Wales are successfully using Public Notification Applications, which alert volunteer community responders to nearby emergencies;
- (e) that Ambulance Victoria has been using the GoodSAM Public Notification Application since 2017, and released research in June 2025 finding that patients in cardiac arrest were 37 percent more likely to survive to hospital discharge when volunteer community responders alerted by a Public Notification Application arrived before paramedics;
- (f) that the ACT is well-placed to adopt innovative, community-based healthcare solutions like Public Notification Applications to empower citizens and support emergency services to deliver better community health outcomes; and
- (g) that this type of capability could also be leveraged across other emergency services; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) consider implementing a Public Notification Application to support improved community health outcomes;
- (b) explore how a Public Notification Application could assist the ACT Ambulance Service, other emergency service providers and relevant community health organisations such as St John Ambulance;
- (c) explore how a public education campaign can raise awareness of heart health and CPR skills to empower citizens to support our emergency services; and
- (d) report back to the Assembly by the last sitting day of 2026.

Between 2014 and 2024, there were 1,401 adult cardiac arrests in the ACT. That is 1,401 families, friends and communities impacted. If there is something we can do in this chamber to help improve the chances that even one of those lives might be saved, it is absolutely worth doing. Out-of-hospital cardiac arrest is one of the leading causes of death in Australia. It is a public health emergency that does not discriminate. It can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time.

Around 80 per cent of these cardiac arrests happen in the home. That means the chances of any one of us needing to help a neighbour, a friend or even a loved one are very real. Every minute that someone suffering a cardiac arrest goes without CPR or defibrillation reduces the chance of survival by 10 per cent. That is why early intervention is critical.

In New South Wales, if you suffer a cardiac arrest in a public space, you have a 16 per cent chance of survival. In a private residence, that drops to just nine per cent. These numbers are confronting, but they also point the way towards a solution. We know that early intervention from volunteer responders can dramatically improve survival rates, and that is where my motion comes in.

I am calling on the ACT government to explore the implementation of a public notification responder app that connects volunteers to nearby cardiac arrest emergencies, or even emergencies in general—an app like GoodSAM, for instance, which is the app of choice for many jurisdictions around Australia. These apps are already saving lives in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. I believe it is time for the ACT to consider joining them—joining the cutting edge of early intervention health care.

Canberra is home to a strong network of first aiders and health professionals. We have a resilient volunteer culture. We can be giving them the tools they need to help save lives.

I would like to take a quick moment, Mr Assistant Speaker, to talk you through how a public notification responder app works. When someone calls 000 to report, for instance, a cardiac arrest, the app sends an alert to nearby registered responders. Once accepted, the responder receives the location of the patient and the nearest automatic external defibrillator. They can begin using CPR and use the AED if they need it during the critical minutes before a paramedic arrives.

Ambulance Victoria studied over 9,000 cases of out-of-hospital cardiac arrests over the past 5½ years. In June 2025, they released the findings of their study, which found that survival to hospital discharge was 37 per cent more likely when a volunteer responder using the GoodSAM app, which is used in Victoria, arrived before paramedics. In New South Wales, over 8,000 community members registered on the GoodSAM app, which is used in New South Wales, in its first year. In 2024, in that first year, 39 lives were saved due to the use of the app.

Earlier this year, I spoke with Martin Fisk OAM, who is the CEO of St John Ambulance ACT. He is not only supportive of an app being rolled out in the ACT; he is a user of the GoodSAM app. When he crosses the border into New South Wales, the app knows that he is ready if he gets an alert. Here in the ACT, he can see other users on the app, but he cannot yet use it. That is an opportunity ready for the taking.

I also want to acknowledge at this point the incredible work of St John Ambulance and their StreetBeat program, which is currently fundraising to place an automatic external defibrillator in every ACT suburb. I encourage everyone who can to support this year's fundraising effort.

I recognise that integrating such an act with emergency dispatch services is a significant

undertaking. Decisions around investment, procurement and resourcing rightly sit with the cabinet. But I am proud to start this conversation in the chamber today. The long-term benefits are clear. Lives are saved. The health outcomes improve. Hospital stays are shorter. Costs to the health system are lower. Once such an act is implemented, we can go further by incorporating, as New South Wales has done, a public register of AEDs into the app.

I want to thank Minister Paterson and her office for engagement and support on this issue. I also want to acknowledge David Dutton, the Chief Officer of the ACT Ambulance Service, who was Acting Commissioner of New South Wales Ambulance when they rolled out GoodSAM. His experience in this space is invaluable.

I would like to put on record that the ACT Ambulance Service do a terrific job in what is often incredibly difficult circumstances. This motion does not seek to undermine the valuable work they do every day. It seeks to give them the tools they need to do all they can to improve the outcomes for those in the ACT who need help. Public notification responder apps present an opportunity for the ACT to become a leader in early intervention health care. Hopefully, it will be a no-brainer. I expect it will be cost effective, it will be community driven and it will save lives.

I will take a moment to note the amendments from the Leader of the Opposition which were handed around the chamber at the start of question time. These amendments did come as a surprise because, despite my efforts and those of my team around the building over the past couple of days to find out the thoughts of the opposition about this motion, we heard nothing about anything that might be coming.

I understand the mission of the amendments. I think they are a long way from the topic of this motion. This motion is about apps, or an app, that connect responders to emergencies. In many instances, those responders will be a long way from defibrillators. Sometimes those responders will be neighbours next door to someone having a cardiac arrest. However, because I understand where the Leader of the Opposition's amendments are coming from—and thanks also to Mr Braddock, who has helped by providing his views—I will seek leave to move my own amendment to my motion which incorporates some of what the Leader of the Opposition is trying to raise and also acknowledges the work and thoughts of the Greens in this instance.

I seek leave to move the amendment.

Leave granted.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: I move:

Omit all text after paragraph (2)(c), substitute:

- “(d) explore options for mandating defibrillators in every ACT Government school and ACT Government workplace;
- (e) work with St John Ambulance ACT and their partners to increase the roll out of publicly available defibrillators beyond having one in each suburb and investigate options for defibrillators near sporting ovals, community facilities and public transport locations; and

- (f) report back to the Assembly by the last sitting day of 2026.”

I commend my motion and amendment to the Assembly.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (3.11): I would like to thank the member for Brindabella for bringing this motion on, and I support his call for greater access to life-saving medical treatment in our local communities. I am aware that the substance of this motion notes the use of public notification applications to ensure that volunteer community responders are notified of a possible nearby emergency, including people suffering from a cardiac arrest.

I would like to point out two things. Firstly, what is the point of having public notification applications for volunteer community responders when they do not have access to reasonably close automatic external defibrillators? It seems to be putting the cart before the horse. Secondly, why introduce extra or new applications when there are existing applications and services that could be better utilised with a bit more financial commitment from the government?

I would like to reinforce the ongoing and incredibly strong commitment by the Canberra Liberals to the greater accessibility of AEDs in the local community. At the ACT election, the Canberra Liberals pledged \$240,000 for extra defibrillators and an expanded education campaign. I also note my motion in 2022 which, amongst other things, called for the ACT government to introduce legislation to mandate that every ACT government school, workplace and building be fitted with a defibrillator. I remind everyone here that ACT Labor opposed that motion back in 2022.

I noted in my motion that extra defibrillators in the ACT community could save up to 100 lives each year. According to St John Ambulance, more than 30,000 cardiac arrests happen each year in Australia. It has an incredibly high death rate. Ninety per cent will die in just minutes. Only one per cent of all victims will be lucky enough to be defibrillated. It is a well-established fact that survival rates improve when a patient receives defibrillation within the first 10 minutes of arrest.

Why is the government opposed to mandating AEDs in ACT government schools and workplaces? Who knows? But I am pretty sure that it is tied up with the fact that the ACT government has run out of money. If you run out of money through higher deficits and record debt, there are two options; that is, stop providing essential services or slug ACT taxpayers to pay for the services. Both of these have occurred in this year’s ACT budget—higher taxes, less services.

I want to recognise that extra AEDs are being rolled out in Canberra, in the suburbs, but it is slow, and it does need to be widened. In many cases, this is happening through the private sector, local businesses and communities. As St John Ambulance noted, it is the first 10 minutes that matter. That means it is essential to have defibrillators in key locations and multiple locations.

In regard to public notification applications, I make this point: why would the government introduce more and more apps when there are apps already helping to provide rapid response notifications in emergencies? For example, St John Ambulance have a first responder app that has a number of features, including the location of

defibrillators in the ACT. Strangely, though, there is no record on this app of any AED in the Legislative Assembly, even though we know they are located in the building. Perhaps that is one update on which the government could assist St. John Ambulance; that is, locating all AEDs in the ACT. Furthermore, the app has a functionality for first responses, but it is only available if you are in Western Australia. Why doesn't the ACT work with St John Ambulance to build this feature in the ACT?

To summarise, the Canberra Liberals will support the intent of Mr Werner-Gibblings' motion; but, as with most things, ACT Labor have not fully thought it through. It is designed to save them money, and it is designed to provide less services.

I understand that there is an amendment from Mr Werner-Gibblings that I am happy to accept. However, I would like to continue with moving my amendments to the motion. Do I need to seek leave to do that, Mr Assistant Speaker? They have already been circulated.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Cain): You will need to seek leave to move your amendments together. We will debate Mr Werner-Gibblings' amendment first. You can then seek leave to move your amendments together.

MS CASTLEY: We cannot save lives if AEDs are not there. That is why I fought to have more AEDs across the ACT, and I would like us to have the ability to make the most of the features and functionality of apps that we already have, that people already use, without trying to waste more money on apps that are available and that might be able to be modified. St John Ambulance does a fantastic job helping to save lives in the ACT and we should be providing greater support, not less.

Ms Cheyne: Mr Assistant Speaker, could I speak to the procedural matters, so that we are all aware of what we are doing? It does not really matter who speaks and in what order, as long as the votes occur in the correct order. Ms Castley can then move her amendment. As you rightly said, Mr Assistant Speaker, we will deal first with Mr Werner-Gibblings' amendment, in terms of the vote. Once that has been affirmed, which I assume it will be, Ms Castley will seek leave to move the amendment that she has circulated. She would only be moving one of her amendments, not the rest. You do not need to recirculate it. To be clear, it is just one.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (3.21): I thank Mr Werner-Gibblings for bringing forward this important motion. I look forward hopefully to seeing the ACT align with other jurisdictions which, as Mr Werner-Gibblings notes, already have mechanisms for allowing qualified community volunteers to respond to cardiac arrest through apps like GoodSAM.

The ACT punches above our weight when it comes to volunteering. According to Volunteering ACT's 2024 report entitled *State of volunteering in the ACT*, 279,000 ACT residents contributed over 63 million hours of their time to volunteering in 2023, generating \$14.1 billion of value for the Canberra region. In the face of an increasingly stretched health system, it makes sense for the government and for our community to deploy the power of Canberrans' altruism to better respond to cardiac arrests and, ultimately, to save lives.

I also note that measures proposed by the ACT Heart Foundation—whom I met with earlier this year, as I am sure many other members have—would complement measures like the one Mr Werner-Gibblings is calling on the government to consider. I acknowledge that Ms Castley’s proposed amendments essentially brought those forward and go to this issue as reflected in the amendment that has now been moved by Mr Werner-Gibblings.

In the Heart Foundation’s 2025-26 budget submission, they asked for the government to mandate the installation of automated external defibrillators in key community areas such as schools, libraries, sporting facilities, prisons and more. They also called for the introduction of a local sports defibrillator grants program and asked for investment in a public awareness and education campaign to grow bystanders’ confidence in using AEDs. If the government were to implement these measures alongside public notification applications, it would save lives and money, and continue to demonstrate how strong and generous our community is.

I would also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the work of the StreetBeat initiative, launched by Service One Mutual in partnership with St John Ambulance ACT, and sponsored by Community Bank Canberra and Regions, as part of Bendigo Bank. This initiative hopes to see a defibrillator installed in every Canberra suburb, which would amount to some 120 new AEDs across our community; and, through their community fundraising model, draw on the same altruism that we would hope to see used in public notification applications. Initiatives like these are important commonsense measures that will have a number of positive impacts across our community.

Again, I thank Mr Werner-Gibblings for bringing this motion today and drawing the Assembly’s attention to this issue. In the same vein, I thank Ms Castley for doing so, not just today but in the past. I am supportive of the first of her proposed amendments, and I am happy with the amendment, as I indicated, that has been moved by Mr Werner-Gibblings, which captures her other concerns. I look forward to ongoing work on the part of the government and our broader community, in partnership in this area.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (3.24): I welcome the opportunity to support the motion put forward by Mr Werner-Gibblings. When someone has a heart attack, the first eight minutes are crucial. There are many occasions when members of the public who have first-aid training could provide CPR or a shock from a defibrillator in those crucial minutes before emergency services arrive. Doing so could mean the difference between life and death.

The GoodSAM app alerts people who have had first-aid training and registered responders when someone near them has a heart attack and calls 000. In the first year since the app was introduced in New South Wales in November 2023, 39 lives were saved as a result. It has been introduced in three other states, and it makes sense that the ACT government should consider implementing it here. Even one life saved in the ACT as a result of this initiative will have made it worthwhile. Engaging with the emergency services will be essential to make all of this work.

Another element that will be essential in enabling this initiative to save lives is to increase the number of defibrillators in the community. If a defibrillator is used on

someone who is in cardiac arrest within the first five minutes, it raises their chance of survival from 10 per cent to the 50 to 70 per cent range. But a registered respondent can only provide a shock from a defibrillator if there is one nearby, and more are needed in our community. We will be calling on the ACT government to invest more in order to ensure that this initiative is successful.

The Greens applaud the St John Ambulance ACT “Defib in Your Community” campaign to help local communities to fund life-saving, publicly accessible defibrillators. Ms Clay had the opportunity to join in the launch at Holt the other week and she found it a very worthwhile exercise. St John Ambulance are approaching local shopping centres in the ACT that have not yet installed a defibrillator and are asking shop owners and the community to help fund defibs to be purchased, installed and maintained by St John Ambulance ACT.

As outlined by Mr Werner-Gibbings, there is a great opportunity, in the combination of the call in the motion for a public notification application and a greater prevalence of defibs in our communities, to achieve health outcomes for our community.

We also note that prevention is better than cure, so if the government’s aim is to save lives—and I would hope so—it should also be sure to invest in preventive health measures. Preventive health services are currently underfunded in the ACT, but they are crucial to reducing the risk of having a cardiac arrest in the first place. Preventive measures can also include investing in active transport, which encourages residents to be active and healthy.

In conclusion, we will be supporting this motion and encouraging the government to do what it can to save lives in this manner.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform) (3.26): I rise to speak in strong support of the motion moved by Mr Werner-Gibbings and will discuss how public notification apps can support better community outcomes through early access to bystander CPR. Evidence tells us that, for people experiencing out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, administration of CPR prior to treatment by paramedics increases survival rates. Data from St John Ambulance suggests survival rates can be increased by as much as 75 per cent when bystander CPR is administered prior to paramedic arrival.

Over 54,000 Australians experience cardiac arrest each year, with over 8,000 of these resulting in death. This makes it one of the leading causes of death in Australia. In the ACT alone, ACTAS responded to 173 cardiac arrests in the last financial year. In Australia, approximately 80 per cent of out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur at home, and approximately 20 per cent occur in public spaces. Of those that occur out of hospital and were not witnessed by emergency service personnel, 38 per cent received bystander CPR, while two per cent received bystander defibrillation. Once the heart stops pushing oxygen around the body and to the brain, the survival rate significantly drops for anyone experiencing cardiac arrest. Every second without chest compression significantly impacts survival outcomes, and for every minute that passes without intervention the chance of survival decreases by 10 per cent. These statistics demonstrate how critical

early CPR intervention can be when someone is suffering from a cardiac arrest.

That is where public notification apps come in. Public notification apps provide a user-friendly emergency service platform already in use in other Australian police and ambulance services that enables real-time video streaming, GPS location-sharing and digital communication. This type of application will allow community members who are willing and able to assist in an incident to sign up and receive alerts of cardiac arrests within a predetermined distance from their physical location. Following the activation, community responders may choose to attend an incident while paramedics are being dispatched by the ACT Ambulance Service. The application can also provide publicly-available information on the location and accessibility of AEDs.

The idea of a public notification app was founded in London in 2013 and is used by a range of emergency service providers across Australia, New Zealand, the UK, the US and Canada. In Australia, these apps are currently used by Ambulance Victoria, NSW Ambulance, Ambulance Tasmania and the SA Ambulance Service. While the ACT has amongst the fastest-responding ambulance service in Australia, data shows that survival to hospital discharge was 37 per cent more likely after out-of-hospital cardiac arrest if smartphone-activated volunteer responders arrived before emergency medical services. This means the actions of ordinary people can be the difference between life and death of members of our community.

This capability could be leveraged across other emergency services, such as ACT Policing and other operational services within the Emergency Services Agency. ACT Policing has conducted an early scoping phase into the utility of public notification applications. The ministerial direction I released earlier this year supports the ACT to enhance digital engagement capability and technology to ensure ACT Policing continue to evolve in line with community expectations. By conducting this early scoping phase, ACT Policing are aiming to modernise their communications and situational awareness functions within the community by integrating digital capabilities into frontline operations. Public notification apps allow for the opportunity to provide ACT Policing members with a digital resource that can be utilised across numerous areas of response, such as search and rescue, multilingual messaging and missing persons.

The motion also calls on the government to run public engagement sessions relating to CPR skills and heart health. Each year on 16 October, Restart a Heart Day, we encourage the community to learn how to do CPR and how to use an AED. ESA held several community activations for Restart a Heart Day, including stalls at Westfield Woden and Belconnen, and CPR and AED demonstrations at the Burley Griffin parkrun. These small steps, combined with early intervention through public notification apps, can support the ACT to increase patient survival rates, as demonstrated in other jurisdictions.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank St John Ambulance. I met with them a few months ago and had a very interesting conversation about this issue. I put on the record one of the things that I thought was most interesting. As I said before, 80 per cent of cardiac arrests happen in the home. We are seeing more and more people living in high-rise buildings. The survival rate from cardiac arrest significantly decreases the higher up you live in a building. The limitations placed on emergency services to navigate buildings and take a lift to higher floors pose quite a significant risk if you are

experiencing a heart attack. That is again where apps like this would come into play, as well as having defibrillators in tall apartment buildings. As Marty from St John suggested, having them on every few floors would potentially increase the survival rate of someone experiencing a heart attack.

I would also like to thank our ACT Ambulance Service for the significant work they do every day in attending cardiac arrests but also being there for the community when we are most in need. They do an incredible job and I thank them for their service.

I again thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for raising this motion in the Assembly and outlining the benefits of a public notification app and what it would bring to the ACT community. I look forward to providing an update to the Assembly in response to this motion.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS (Brindabella) (3.33): I thank all members for their contribution to this debate. It is clear that there is strong support for improving outcomes through early intervention in cardiac arrest cases and other health emergencies. I will make a couple of points. A question asked by the Leader of the Opposition was: “What is the point of an app?” For this motion, the point is CPR: cardiopulmonary resuscitation. All the information that we have about the use of public notification apps and their success in Victoria and New South Wales is based on patients receiving CPR in the first vital minutes after a cardiac arrest. Every minute that a patient misses out on CPR leads to a 10 per cent greater risk of death.

The unique selling point of the public notification responder app used in New South Wales and Victoria is that it is integrated into the state’s emergency dispatch system. As soon as someone rings 000, an ambulance is dispatched and an alert goes out to anyone in the vicinity who is registered on the app. The more we have registered volunteers the greater the coverage of potential first aiders, and the more likely that someone in an emergency will get CPR as soon as possible the greater the chance that they will survive, whether or not an AED is in the vicinity.

As I said, around 80 per cent of cardiac arrests occur at home, not in public spaces. Most homes do not yet have automatic external defibrillators, but almost all homes have neighbours who might be able to come over immediately when they get an alert on the app. The intent of this motion is not to reinvent the wheel and ask the government to create something different. There are available apps, but there are procurement processes that should and must happen. This motion does not interfere with those processes.

Some members have flagged the idea of a public AED register. Once we have the foundation—a public notification app in place, integrated with the emergency dispatch system—these kinds of enhancements are absolutely possible. New South Wales included a public registry of its public AEDs into the GoodSAM app, but only some time after it launched the app and encouraged would-be responders to register. Who knows, perhaps other emergency services could integrate into the ACT’s public notification app in the future. Sadly, not everyone survives a cardiac arrest, but, for those where intervention can make difference, we must give them the best possible chance of survival, and that means empowering our community to act if they are willing and able to do so.

I am proud to bring this motion to the chamber today. It is about saving lives. It is about integrating existing tools to improve outcomes. It is also about making sure that, when someone collapses in their home, help is not far away—perhaps as close as next door. With that, I thank the minister and her team, Martin Fisk and St John Ambulance ACT, and all who make our ACT Ambulance Service help save the lives of everyday Canberrans. It is time to get on with it.

Mr Werner-Gibbings's amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Teachers—out-of-pocket costs

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.38): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that:
 - (a) the Australian Education Union's 2025-2026 ACT Budget Submission states that "88 percent of teachers currently pay for teaching resources out of their own pocket, spending an average of \$744 per year"; and
 - (b) the submission further states that "when extrapolated across the teaching workforce, this represents approximately \$2.6 million annually that public servants are personally contributing to the delivery of government education policy"; and
- (2) calls on the Government to provide ACT public school teachers with adequate resources to deliver high-quality education, without being out-of-pocket.

This motion is to support our teachers in the most direct and simple way possible. Teachers need to have the right infrastructure and they need safety, policies, people and classroom resources to do their job. Most importantly, they need those resources without having to pay for it out of their own pockets. This may seem too simple, given everything else that our teachers face, but it is because there is so much pressure from other sources that this is so important. It is important to do it now because we are heading towards the end of the year and teachers will be looking at finishing their classrooms. Let us not put them through another year where they are funding their ACT classrooms from their own pockets.

This motion follows issues raised in the Australian Education Union's 2025-26 budget submission. It states that 88 per cent of teachers currently pay for teaching resources out of their own pocket, spending an average of \$744 per year. Think about that for a moment: almost 90 per cent of our teachers are currently paying for classroom resources out of their own pocket. With all the stresses, demands and difficulties that they face, they have to stock the classroom with their own money. The submission goes further and states what this means across the system. It says that, when extrapolated across the teaching workforce, this represents approximately \$2.6 million annually that public servants are personally contributing to the delivery of government education policy. That is \$2.6 million coming from teachers' own money to this government to properly fund ACT classrooms. It is pretty outrageous.

The headline figure is not the full story. The Australian Education Union, both in their submission and in our discussions, to some extent highlighted the full problem. Their submission states:

Compared with other jurisdictions, the ACT Education Directorate offers relatively thin support to its schools regarding support in developing and implementing curricula.

Teachers and school leaders fill the gaps themselves. Our members report either designing their teaching materials from scratch or purchasing materials from external sources. Most of the teachers that the AEU office has spoken to have paid, or currently pay, for resources to use in the classroom. This particularly affects early career teachers.

It is plainly unacceptable that ACT public servants have to pay, out of their own pocket, for resources to do their job. It is also important that this is recognised as part of a bigger problem—that the ACT education system is being propped up by the personal sacrifices of our teachers. We called this out in December 2021. As we were raising teacher resources, we recognised the incredible work teachers add to the system. At the time, I said:

... I was shocked to see that nearly all respondents (97 per cent) said they work more than their maximum weekly hours, including weekends, evenings, periods of leave ...

The union report stated that 97 per cent of the 1,800 teachers and principals surveyed revealed that they work unpaid overtime every week, and even more hours when weekend work is included. The AEU report concluded:

The harsh reality is that ACT public school teachers subsidise the ACT Government's spending on education ...

Turning to the government's response to this issue to date, history shows us that, despite the efforts from the union and motions from the Canberra Liberals, this is still a problem. Part of the reason it is still a problem is that the government is denying there is a problem. I remind members of the following exchange in question time recently, on 24 September. I asked:

Minister, amongst school budget pressures, the AEU stated in their annual budget submission for this year that:

...88% of teachers currently pay for teaching resources out of their own pocket, spending an average of \$744 per year.

Minister, why are Canberra teachers having to pay for Labor's underfunding?

And Ms Berry's response was:

I do not agree with the premise of the question ...

She went on to say:

... there is no requirement for teachers to purchase items outside those supplied

by the school.

... my message to school teachers in the ACT is there is no requirement for you to supplement education supplies.

And she said:

It is not something that is asked of them or directed by the Education Directorate or others. ... if they see that they are needing to supplement, then they really should speak to their school principal through their own budget and through the Education Directorate ...

Minister, they have been speaking and they are speaking and they have been speaking for years, and they have been propping up the system for years, and, every time they raise it, it has been denied as an issue. It is not enough to listen to just the minister or the directorate; we should listen to the teachers.

A comprehensive report from the union titled *Under-staffed, under-resourced, under-appreciated* found the following. When asked whether they feel that the Education Directorate has the necessary resources to meet the demands of public schools, 85 per cent said no, including the majority in every classification. In that same report, 70 per cent of respondents said that schools are not sufficiently resourced to provide the consistent quality of education that their students need to succeed. Almost all principal respondents, 94 per cent, who have had the widest view of their school's budget and the impacts on learning conditions, said that the directorate lacks the necessary resources to meet the demands of schools.

It is a pretty simple call: provide teachers with the resources that they need so that they do not have to spend their own money to plan their classrooms. At the last election, the Canberra Liberals put forward a policy calling for vouchers to be provided, and that was costed at \$3.2 million for four years. That is one way of doing this. Alternatively, the minister could re-allocate a portion of the approximately billion-dollar budget of the education department and make sure that the resources are provided out of that budget for our frontline teachers. Whatever the method is, it must be done. The union has called for it, teachers need it and our children deserve it.

I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (3.45): I thank Mr Hanson for bringing forward this motion today. I am always happy for the opportunity to talk about ACT public schools and the incredible commitment of our schoolteachers and, more broadly, our school staff.

Our ACT public school funding is guided by the National School Resourcing Standard, which is based on student enrolments. I have said this many times before, but I will to explain to the Assembly again that the ACT has the best-funded public schools in Australia. That is a fact. It is the only jurisdiction in the country that not only meets but exceeds this resource standard for public education. We do this because we know that having a well-funded and supported education system is important and integral to a child's education.

The 2025-26 ACT budget makes a record investment in ACT public schools of more than \$1 billion. A key part of that \$1 billion investment goes to ensuring our teachers have access to the teaching materials they need to deliver high-quality education in their classrooms. Schools do have some discretion about how they spend their operating budgets in accordance with the Education Act and with the oversight and approval of their school boards. Schools will make these decisions themselves, but our teachers, school leaders and other school staff should never need to reach into their own pockets to source learning materials.

The Education Directorate is currently working with schools to manage their budgets and resources, which is necessary for the sustainability of our education system. But essential spending is not at risk as part of this work. Essential spending covers anything that is critical to school operations or curriculum delivery, including purchasing materials necessary for teaching and learning.

In addition to the funding allocated to schools for purchasing resources for teaching and learning, the government allocates significant funding for initiatives that also make a significant and positive contribution to student outcomes. One example of this is the Chromebook program, which is in operation across ACT public schools. Every year, as I report to this Assembly, all year 7s receive a brand new Chromebook to ensure that all students have equitable access to modern technology. It means that teachers and school staff do not have to troubleshoot across a range of different devices. It is a financial saving for families, and every student has the same technology to be able to access learning in a modern technological world. Last year, more than 4,800 new devices were issued to students starting high school and 3,300 devices were refreshed. Over 2,500 Chromebook devices were also deployed to primary schools last financial year. Not only is the Chromebook program great for families, as I said, but it is also a really important educational equity measure.

More recently, schools have also received additional funding for resources related to the Strong Foundations Program—for example, in the purchase of decodable readers. There was \$750,000 provided across our public schools to ensure that they could purchase decodable readers or other literacy and/or numeracy resources, if that was required, to deliver evidence-based literacy and numeracy education for public school students.

We continue to assist families across Canberra to meet the full needs of education through the government's Future of Education Equity Fund. So far in 2025, the fund has accepted more than 3,000 applications from families of students attending both government and non-government schools. More than \$3.5 million has been distributed and was further boosted in this year's ACT budget. This means support for an additional 1,000 students and their families with the cost of education essentials for school uniforms, school excursions and sporting equipment.

I am pleased to reaffirm to the Assembly and the community the ACT government's commitment to investment in public education to support our teachers, students and families. After health, education is the second largest investment in the 2025-26 ACT budget.

At this point, I want to address the part of Mr Hanson's motion which is focused on our teachers' personal expenditure on work-related costs. Like Mr Hanson, I did speak to the Education Union about their survey and their expectations coming out of this motion today—understanding that both Mr Hanson and I have both spoken about this question in this space previously. I think it is important that we continue to make sure that teachers are aware and know that they should never have to spend their own money on classroom resources.

The Education Directorate has provided advice to schools and teachers about this specifically—asking teachers and encouraging them to ask if they have questions or concerns about the funding and resources available to support their teaching. Recently, this message was reiterated to school principals and business managers as part of budget management information and guidance which has been provided to schools.

As the minister, I also want to reiterate the message that school staff should never have to use their own money to buy materials for our schools. Our schools and classrooms are well funded. Teachers do not need to spend their own money on teaching resources. However, I believe the reason that teachers spend from their own pocket comes from a place of generosity and care and a real commitment to the wellbeing of students within their responsibilities. I do not think it would matter how many times I or anyone else said, "Don't spend any money on resources in schools; that will be provided by the school", they would still do it because they have a deep commitment to their work and to their profession.

This is reflected, and people will see it, in the innovative and creative approaches teachers plan in their quest to develop their students' knowledge and love of learning. When striving to plan lessons that are engaging and rewarding, they may go above and beyond, and sometimes this involves choosing to source materials not available in their classroom or school. This is admirable—of course it is; that is why we love our public schools. It speaks to the character of the people who are teaching our children. However, again, I state that it is not a requirement. If teachers feel there are gaps in the materials that they need for their classrooms, I encourage them to raise this with their executive. I will continue to remind them and our schools at every opportunity that that is not a requirement of me or this government that they spend from their own pocket.

I also understand that, while the ACT government and our schools do everything that we can to ensure that they do not spend their own money, some teachers, as I said, will just simply continue to, even despite the number of times that they are encouraged not to. Again, I want to thank Mr Hanson for raising this matter. I would like to thank the Australian Education Union for their continued strong advocacy for their members and for their advice following my phone call yesterday. Our teachers truly are remarkable, and I will always support them in the work that they do. So I support the motion going forward today.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (3.53): To begin with, the ACT Greens will be supporting this motion. Of course, we will be supporting this motion; it is literally just a motion calling for teachers to not have to spend their own money on supplies for their students. There is no world in which I would not support that. There is nuance, though, and I do not want either ACT Labor or the Canberra Liberals to think I am entirely, 100

per cent, in their camp on this issue.

To start with, as much as Mr Hanson has identified a real issue, I cannot quite understand the timing he has chosen to bring this forward. What I am hearing from educators right now is that they are deeply concerned for their job security. I am certain none enjoy having to pay for their own classroom supplies, but the consistent message that I am receiving from educators is that right now there are bigger fish to fry. Sure, if this motion fixes that issue, I will be thrilled—I am sure we all will; however, I am not entirely convinced it will make a meaningful difference to the headline challenges in the education space. I certainly hope that I am wrong, but I am struggling to visualise what work might ensue as a result of this motion.

The Labor government are not without some responsibility in this area. Like us and, indeed, the Canberra Liberals, they signed the AEU pledge going into the 2024 election, which included the line: “If I’m elected to government, I’ll take action to ensure that no teacher will have to purchase material from their own pocket.” Considering where we are at with the education budget, it is not particularly surprising that this particular call has not been a priority, but we would definitely like to see steps towards change.

Teachers having to pay for the essential supplies that let them do their job is an injustice, but it is not necessarily an easy issue to resolve. You can imagine that, in a constrained school budget environment, teachers who currently spend more from their own pocket to provide high-quality materials or, indeed, to make their classrooms welcoming spaces might in fact feel the pressure to not use too much of their allocation in an effort to save the school money. That is a hypothetical, of course, but I provide the example by way of saying that the policy solutions to teachers paying out of pocket are worthy but they are not always straightforward. That being said, any steps towards removing the onus on teachers to have to pay for their own materials would be greatly appreciated by all ACT public school teachers, I am certain.

As I mentioned earlier, there are extremely pressing issues in education right now. More than anything, we have staff who want a guarantee that they are going to have a job in the next few years. We have classes being merged because of a lack of teachers. We have the prospect of bigger class sizes hanging over a lot of these discussions, and that would be a terrible outcome for all involved. It has never been an easy time to be a teacher. The very nature of the job is demanding, and we know that all the support on earth will never make the demanding hours, emotional intensity, and constant differentiation to different needs “easy”.

However, we definitely know that things have gotten worse—harder—in the past decade or so. With the teacher shortage, then COVID and then continued teacher shortages, students have more identified needs to adapt to than ever before. Not all community members engage with teachers in respectful and constructive ways. We are glad that the government has committed to ACT teachers being the best paid in Australia. But I do not think that I have ever met a teacher who has gone into the field for an easy payday, to put it mildly.

Teachers need support from the Assembly. While I think the motion is well intentioned, I am not convinced that it will meaningfully achieve that, but I choose to hope. Any way that we could potentially improve life for teachers is something I will pursue. The

ACT Greens would love to see teachers not have to pay for supplies, and we will support this motion in the hope that it ultimately achieves that. We would like to see the government outline a pathway to reach this goal. However, we want to ensure that we capture on the record that there are bigger fights to be had and that our focus in the education space should align with the priorities of educators, parents and, goodness forbid, the young people we are educating.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.57), in reply: I thank members for their contributions and support for the motion. I will be brief. I think that there is a bit of a dislink between what Ms Berry is saying and what is actually happening on the ground. It is important to raise these issues, and I do encourage her to continue to understand why it is that teachers are feeling the need to actually dip into their own pockets. We need a better understanding of that, because on the one hand we have, through their union, the teachers saying, “We’ve got to do this,” and, on the other side, the minister being told, “No, they do not.” So there is a dislink there somewhere. I would encourage the minister to continue with those conversations to make sure that teachers do not feel the need to dip into their own pocket—because, whether the minister thinks they should or not or whether the minister thinks there are sufficient resources, the advice we are getting is that they are.

In response to Miss Nuttall, we have had a previous motion in this place that talked about school resourcing and staff. I agree with you that that is a very important issue, at the front and centre in people’s minds at the moment. We had a motion in this place on 2 September, which you supported, and we had amendments from Mr Emerson which went to that point about school resourcing, and we all talked about staff—in particular, casual and temporary staff. As a result, the minister came back with a commitment to change it, because the initial position was that, essentially, unless staff are directly related to safety, that was going to be reviewed. That then changed and there was a commitment from the minister that I welcomed about staff.

I do not disagree with Miss Nuttall; I am just saying that we have had that motion, we have had that discussion and we have had that commitment and agreement from the minister. So, yes, I recognise that that is an important issue, but I think we can walk and chew gum at the same time. I think we can say in this place that jobs are important but, equally, there is another issue here, which is teachers having to dip into their own pockets. I do not think we should not talk about that issue simply because there is another issue to do with staffing, which we have addressed recently in a motion in this place. I would not want to be ruled out of order on one motion to have one that is the same topic.

I welcome the fact that there is a commitment, and it seems that all of us agree with what we need to do here. But I do think that there is a further bit of work that the minister needs to do to understand why it is that teachers are saying one thing and she is saying another. There is a dislink happening there. But I welcome the support, and I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Amendment Bill 2025

Debate resumed from 3 September 2025, on motion by **Mr Steel**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (4.01): This bill made me nervous when I first saw it. Move-on powers are laws that can be useful and productive in enhancing public safety when applied correctly, but around the world they do have a history of being poorly designed or misapplied.

As is brought to light in the explanatory statement and scrutiny report, there is a clear and genuine concern that move-on powers can be misused to disrupt what little comfort homeless people have, where they can find shelter in public places such as bus stops. For this reason, the Greens are very sensitive to the human rights considerations and safeguards that need to be built into the bill. I am glad to say that I have concluded that this bill meets the necessary standards. I would like to thank the minister and their office for the briefing that allowed us to talk through the bill and its implications.

There are sufficient safeguards in place that would make it difficult for the powers in the bill to be abused. In particular, while a move-on direction can be issued by a transport officer, it can only be enforced by a police officer, and the problematic behaviour must meet the standard of “aggressive or menacing”.

This will generally require that the alleged bad behaviour is ongoing for a period of time, which will in turn attract witnesses who can testify to the behaviour. If the aggressive or menacing behaviour stops, the move-on direction ceases to be relevant. If the person cools down, they can come back. No-one is permanently barred from catching a bus or denied access to bus stops under this bill. If anyone gets unreasonably moved on, I expect we will hear about it and we will be having a different kind of conversation. I can confirm that the Greens will be supporting this bill.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (4.03): I rise today to speak to the public passenger services bill. This bill is part of the government’s response to the very real safety concerns raised by Canberra bus drivers. Over the last few years, our bus drivers have been subject to some incredibly concerning behaviour. They have been abused, they have been assaulted and they have been genuinely afraid for their safety. No-one should have to tolerate this kind of behaviour in the workplace, particularly those who have chosen to serve the public. I can only imagine how frustrating it must be for drivers who did the right thing, raised their concerns through the appropriate channels and were fobbed off by the minister time and time again, while violent, abusive attacks on our drivers continued.

It is not a surprise that they got sick of being ignored and chose to take unprotected industrial action. The only surprise was that they were so patient with the minister. I am not sure how the minister would handle these conditions at work. That move was clearly the right one because it has forced the government’s hand, in publicly committing to implementing changes. Those changes include new transit safety officers, de-escalation training, physical barriers and new offences to protect drivers and passengers. Those commitments are welcome, but they were made almost 12 months ago.

It has taken Labor almost a year to prepare and introduce the legislation necessary to improve safety for drivers and passengers at bus stops, which is what we are talking about today. This is far too long for simple, straightforward legislation that creates a few new offences and is urgently needed. I would appreciate it if the minister could explain why it has taken so long. The Assembly deserves an explanation; more importantly, bus drivers and passengers deserve an explanation.

The delays are not just about legislative changes. It has taken too long for the government to deliver on other commitments, and it is too long for the government to commit to changes in the first place. Why isn't public transport safety a top priority for the government? What could be more important? I am concerned that the minister might simply be overwhelmed with the range of responsibilities he now has, that he is not able to prioritise what is important and, unfortunately, Canberra bus drivers are paying the price.

We welcome the legislation that is before us today and we will be supporting it, but we really should have been able to support this six months ago.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform) (4.05): I rise today to highlight the importance of this legislation in making our public transport system safer and therefore more accessible, particularly for women, girls and gender-diverse people. I thank Minister Steel for progressing this very important reform.

As Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, I will always stand by the fact that women and girls have the right to be and feel safe and respected at all times. This includes behind the closed front doors of their homes, while at school or work, while exercising and, importantly, while they navigate their way around our city, including on public transport.

In the 2025-26 budget, the government made an investment in improving safety for Canberrans using the bus network through the creation of transit enforcement officers working across the network as a deterrent to antisocial behaviour and to assist drivers and transport officers. With this legislation, the government is backing in this investment, taking practical, immediate steps to increase the perception of safety on public transport by empowering transport officers to direct people away from bus stops where they may be threatening the safety of others.

We know that, statistically, it is likely to be women, girls and gender-diverse people who feel threatened or who are, in fact, assaulted. Today, Minister Gallagher released the findings from the "Safe. Everywhere. Always." survey. This involved responses, ideas and recommendations shared by more than 2½ thousand women and girls from across our city. Very pleasingly, the survey found that 76 per cent of women feel safe most or all of the time. However, it highlighted that women are always negotiating their own safety.

Respondents point to areas of concern, such as public transport, where the feeling of safety is, at times, impacted. The reality is that you would struggle to find one woman—just one—who has not experienced harassment, threatening behaviour, been catcalled

or who has felt threatened in some way or other, when negotiating public transport either in our city or in others around the world.

The role of transport enforcement officers in protecting the safety of all public transport users is important, particularly around interchanges and bus stops. This legislation provides a clear foundation for these officers to take action to create a safer environment and encourage more people to use public transport with confidence.

As the new Woden interchange is developed, the application of gender-sensitive urban design principles is also helping to improve safety and comfort. Clear sightlines, open spaces and good lighting directly respond to concerns raised by women across Canberra, supporting safer journeys from the moment people arrive at the interchange through to their destination.

This work builds on ongoing efforts to embed the gender-sensitive urban design guidelines, along with the accompanying framework and implementation toolkit, into the design and upgrades of public spaces across the ACT. Achieving gender equality means increasing opportunities for women, girls and gender-diverse people to participate in all aspects of society. Reducing gender-based violence is key to this participation. This legislation is one piece of the puzzle, moving us incrementally closer to this goal.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (4.08), in reply: I am pleased to close the debate on the Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Amendment Bill in the Assembly today. This bill is a direct response to the unacceptable incidents of violence and threatening behaviour perpetrated towards Transport Canberra workers and, unfortunately, some commuters on the ACT's bus network.

Far from fobbing off the concerns of our drivers, when I met with them ahead of the election last year, we followed up that meeting with a commitment that we made, as the Labor Party, at the election to introduce reforms to our transport laws and to implement a new team of transit enforcement officers as a direct deterrent to antisocial behaviour on our bus network. The only party that fobbed drivers off was the Liberal Party, who did not commit to anything at all for our bus drivers and then came in here and criticised the government for taking action and delivering the commitments that we made to the workforce in consultation with the workforce.

As I advised members back in August, when I introduced the bill, it will amend the Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Act 2001, the Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Regulation 2002 and the Road Transport (Offences) Regulation 2005 to strengthen the legal framework for managing occupational violence in the public bus network by building on existing move-on powers that currently apply within buses, light rail vehicles and at light rail stops by expanding these to bus stops.

Bus drivers, Transport Canberra staff, commuters and all members of our community have the right to travel on our bus network or move through our bus stop areas without fear. The new powers being progressed through this bill will mean people who are trained and authorised to enforce the act will now be able to move a person away from

a bus stop if they are behaving in a way that is a direct danger to others.

While violent behaviour committed on the bus network is already illegal, the move-on powers in this bill will address a gap in the system where more immediate responses are required and as a control measure to respond to dangerous behaviour in bus stop areas and on buses before they escalate. Importantly, once a person has been moved on under the bill, they are still able to access public transport services, including boarding a subsequent bus, provided their behaviour is no longer dangerous.

This bill also allows an offender to calm down, assess the behaviour and re-enter the bus stop area after complying with a move-on direction, but it still provides a pathway which would allow police to remove a person if they fail to comply with the move-on direction and continue to behave in an aggressive or menacing way or interfere with the safety of others in the bus stop area.

The powers in this bill will not be given to bus drivers, so that they can continue to focus on their work of operating a vehicle. They will be given to authorised officers who have received appropriate training on the use of these powers. This is part of the balance that we needed to strike in a human rights jurisdiction to make sure that these powers were used proportionally by those who had the training to use them. This includes transit enforcement officers, the new team that is being recruited and onboarded, to make sure that we have a team of dedicated officers that can not only deter antisocial behaviour but also use these new move-on powers and the existing laws under the Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Act.

These new move-on powers align the ACT with several other Australian jurisdictions which have adopted similar powers as a means of addressing dangerous behaviour in public transport settings. As in other states and territories, people in the ACT who rely on public transport and people who work on the bus network are, unfortunately, at risk of physical and psychological harm due to violence committed by a small proportion of the community. This kind of behaviour can also lead to service disruptions, staff absences and a loss of public confidence in the public transport system. The new move-on powers in this bill will reduce these risks and promote public safety and safer working conditions.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to commend ACT bus drivers and other Transport Canberra staff for the vital work that they do on a daily basis. These frontline workers are dedicated to keeping Canberra running and ensuring that commuters and members of the public feel safe. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Statements by members

Hands Across Canberra

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (4.13): Tonight is the 2025 Hands Across Canberra charity dinner. The work of Hands Across Canberra reflects the values that define our city—compassion, inclusion and shared responsibility for one another’s wellbeing. We have seen in recent times that, in the face of difficulties, Canberra’s unwavering generosity and community spirit endures.

Nearly a thousand participated in the 2025 Canberra Day Fun Run to raise money for the Canberra Day Appeal organised by Hands Across Canberra. \$750,000 for charities was raised. I want to recognise Hands Across Canberra for their exceptional leadership and innovation in philanthropy. The recent success in launching the Whitlam charity house project alongside the MBA demonstrates how government, community and industry groups and business can unite towards a shared community benefit.

Given the previous success of charity house projects that Hands Across Canberra have been involved with, I am confident that this new project will provide a great benefit to our community, particularly to victim-survivors of domestic and family violence and their families. The initiative underscores the vital role of collaboration in addressing complex social challenges. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the board members, donors, volunteers and staff associated with Hands Across Canberra. Their dedication to improving wellbeing in Canberra has not gone unnoticed.

Lactation Consultants of Australia and New Zealand 2025 Conference

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.15): I was pleased, on a recent Friday, to open the Lactation Consultants of Australia and New Zealand 2025 Conference. It was fantastic to spend the morning with a group of women who are working so hard to look after our community and our women and birthing people, and to help our women and birthing people to bond with and breastfeed their babies.

There were a lot of amazing panellists who know a lot more about this field than I do, and there was a lot of discussion about the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative and how difficult it is to get funding and accreditation for that. There was a lot of desire for better, stronger federal regulation that supports breastfeeding, noting how important this is, as a great start to life, and the actual economic value of this for society. There was a great desire to make sure that we have good, strong federal regulation on the federal marketing of baby formula and some of the other aspects of our society that are undermining the ability for women and birthing people to breastfeed their babies.

It was a genuine delight to be at that conference. I hope they have had a great catch-up and have gathered their thoughts on how they can advocate next.

Rowing regatta—Golden Oar

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (4.17): I want to take a brief opportunity to draw the Assembly’s attention to a new event on Canberra’s calendar that is commencing this weekend, the inaugural Golden Oar. Run by the Red Shed, this event will be not only an innovative rowing regatta but also a festival of fun, music,

food and other activities at Black Mountain Peninsula. You might be interested in wild swimming in the lake, seeing some Olympic competitors from Australia and Olympic champions from Croatia competing in pro-am rowing events, or in having a bit of fun with the kids at this brand-new event. It is the inaugural event for what the Red Shed team hope to make an annual festival of rowing and a celebration of our fantastic lake and the iconic Black Mountain Peninsula.

I encourage everyone to have a look at the program for this weekend, 1 and 2 November, and to get out there and check out an incredible sport and an incredible, beautiful Canberra location.

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Lanyon Homestead

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS (Brindabella) (4.18): I rise today to speak on a matter that touches the soul of Tuggeranong's community: the preservation and celebration of our shared heritage through the ACT government's investment in Lanyon Homestead and the establishment of the Lanyon Art Prize, conceived and delivered by the dynamic team at the ACT government's Cultural Facilities Corporation.

The CFC does a tremendous job of promoting community engagement, supporting artistic innovation and contributing to Canberra's identity as Australia's arts and culture capital. Through exhibitions, performances, education programs and heritage conservation, the CFC fosters public participation and cultural appreciation. For me, Mr Deputy Speaker—and this may come as a shock—the jewel in the CFC's crown is undoubtedly Lanyon Homestead, a living, breathing canvas of Canberra's history—Indigenous, colonial, pastoral and artistic.

The ACT government's bold commitment of \$4.47 million to upgrade Lanyon Homestead is a visionary investment in Tuggeranong's cultural infrastructure. The funding will support the restoration of the shearer's quarters, transforming them into artist studios; the adaptive reuse of the Nolan Gallery into staff workspaces and collection storage; as well as an additional \$40,000 per annum to support acquisitions for the new permanent exhibition space at the homestead, bringing art and cultural exhibitions to the south of Canberra in a location of historic significance. Tree conservation works are also underway, ensuring that the natural beauty of Lanyon is protected for generations to come. The expected completion date is 2026-27, and I look forward to seeing this historic site becoming even more accessible and vibrant. These upgrades will create and improve spaces where creativity can flourish and where artists can be inspired by the very landscape that shaped our region.

This investment, which will be delivered by the CFC, is not just about preserving history; it is about activating it. It is about turning heritage into opportunity, and

nowhere is that more evident than in the Lanyon Art Prize. Launched in 2022 and returning in 2025, the Lanyon Art Prize is a biennial non-acquisitive art competition that invites artists from the ACT and surrounding regions to respond to the homestead through their work. With a prize pool of \$20,000, this initiative supports artists, musicians, crafts people and designers aged 18 and over to explore the cultural, historical and environmental narratives embedded in and around Lanyon. Finalist works are exhibited across the property, creating an immersive experience for visitors and inviting them to see Lanyon through new eyes.

I want to commend the then Arts Minister Tara Cheyne and the Cultural Facilities Corporation for their leadership in establishing this prize, and thank arts minister Pettersson for offering me the chance to announce the 2025 prize winners at the homestead in August. It is a powerful example of how government can support artistic expression while deepening public engagement with heritage. This is just what good policy looks like. It is not about only preserving buildings; it is about activating them. It is not just about funding art; it is about funding meaning. The CFC's work shows that our historic places are not relics; they are resources. They are spaces for learning, for reflection and for inspiration.

As a member for Brindabella, I am proud to see the ACT Labor government's budget investment in our region. I am proud to see Lanyon Homestead recognised not just as a site of historical significance but also as a cultural engine for the future. I am proud that the ACT Labor government supports the artists who are helping us see this place anew.

Pegasus Riding for the Disabled

MS STEPHEN-SMITH(Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (4.22): This past weekend I had the pleasure of attending Pegasus's Golden Gala, a celebration of five decades of remarkable impact—50 years of service to the Canberra community; 50 years of life-changing experiences; and 50 years of joy and inspiration.

The Golden Gala was not just a celebration; it was an important fundraiser and a call to action. Pegasus continues to rely on the generosity of the community as volunteers and as donors, funding essential parts of the program that cannot be covered by government or participant contributions. Every dollar raised at the gala will support the future of horse-assisted, mounted and unmounted programs for children and adults with disability. These funds help care for the remarkable horses who make this work possible, support accredited coaches and sustain incredible volunteers who show up every week. Most importantly, they help keep Pegasus accessible to the families who need it most.

As many of you will know, I have been involved with Pegasus in different ways for many decades and it remains close to my heart. The benefits of their work cannot be overstated. The physical, psychological, social, educational and recreational outcomes for children with disability can be life-changing.

Pegasus was one of the first Riding for the Disabled Centres formally established in Australia and began with an idea in 1973. A local horsewoman, Bid Williams, was

approached by Judith Burns, a therapist at Canberra Hospital, to see if some of the children at Canberra Hospital might be able to go for a pony ride. With two ponies offered by Forest Park Riding School and the support of Ruth Squair and Marcel Judd, a small weekly activity sparked something extraordinary. For about two years, riding continued once a week at Forest Park, and Pegasus became a formal organisation on 27 October 1975. Since then, thousands of lives have been transformed for the better.

Pegasus runs several programs for people of different ages and ability. Both mounted and unmounted programs are run, supported by the hundreds of trained volunteers. These sessions can do anything from reducing anxiety and building confidence to supporting communication in an inclusive environment, supporting learning and supporting physical development. The movement of a person's hips when they are sitting on a horse is very similar to the movement of hips when walking, and that is just one of the ways that riding provides physical therapy as well as emotional and psychological support and real confidence building for children with disabilities.

Pegasus is now an accredited facilitator in Horses Helping Humans, which is specifically tailored to support disengaged and at-risk youth through individual and small group sessions. I am aware, through my previous work as Minister for Children, Youth and Families, of some of the young people with extremely complex lives who have benefited from spending time with the patient, beautiful animals that are the Pegasus horses. This helps those young people to develop confidence and emotional regulation to assist them with the life skills that many of us take for granted.

On Saturday night, we heard inspiring stories from volunteers and participants whose lives have been touched by Pegasus's programs. More than \$350,000 of donated time is given by volunteers each year to support Pegasus deliver its important programs. I have worked at Pegasus, I have been a member of the board, I have been a volunteer coach, I have seen firsthand what Pegasus has achieved for our community, and I encourage any members of the Assembly who have not been out there to Holt and taken a look to get in touch and go out, have a look at their programs and learn what the wonderful horses and the incredible staff and volunteers deliver for our community.

Schools—bullying

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.27): I want to share some words from a young person in Canberra, Aurora Miranda Solares, regarding their lived experience and student perspective on the ACT's education system. Aurora asked that I read out a thorough, thought-provoking speech they had written on how deeply embedded bullying, racism, sexism and ableism is not just in our schools but also across our community. It was a fantastic speech but, unfortunately, we have a time limit; so I am only able to read out a few sections of Aurora's piece. These are Aurora's words:

High school should be a place where we learn not just academics, but respect, kindness and understanding. Yet, too often, it becomes a battleground where some students face discrimination, cruelty, and injustice, putting them in harm's way. We tell victims to 'be strong'—because obviously surviving abuse is a sport, not a cry for help.

Our schools are supposed to be places of learning and growth. Instead, they often mirror the worst parts of the society we live in—where outdated stereotypes,

hateful attitudes, and systemic inequalities are swept under the rug like inconvenient truths.

And not to forget to mention the endless political circus around school neglect—where speeches are as plentiful as empty promises and real action is as rare as a unicorn.

For decades, our dear politicians have been champions of *doing something* by carefully crafting reports, holding photo ops, and nodding solemnly in meetings that change absolutely nothing.

Why invest in fixing the problem when you can just talk about it endlessly, shuffle papers, and pretend progress is happening?

Meanwhile, students and teachers are left to fend for themselves while the political class enjoys its well-rehearsed performance of concern—applause, please, for the true masters of standing still.

I want you to stop and really think—when was the last time you truly listened to someone who said they were hurt? Not nodded, not offered a quick “that’s awful,” but *listened*—without dismissing, doubting, or trying to fix it with a slogan.

Think about the student who eats lunch alone because no one will sit near them.

Think about the girl who stopped raising her hand in class after one too many comments about her voice or her look.

Think about the boy who stopped talking altogether because every time he did, someone laughed.

Think about the kid who never came back to school—and no one really asked why. These aren’t statistics.

They’re people.

And every time we stay silent, every time we look away, every time we pretend it’s “not that bad,” we become part of the reason they stop showing up—not just physically, but emotionally. So before you shrug this off, ask yourself: would *you* feel safe in the school you claim to support?

Because if the answer is no—if deep down, you know you wouldn’t feel safe, seen, or supported in your own school—then that should terrify you.

It should light a fire under every conversation, every policy, every meeting. It should make silence feel unbearable and inaction feel like complicity—because it is.

We don’t need more posters. We don’t need another week of awareness. We need people who are brave enough to *interrupt* the status quo.

People who will call out cruelty, even when it’s subtle. People who will stand with the hurt instead of hiding behind rules and red tape.

Real change isn’t comfortable, and it isn’t quiet—but it is necessary. Because if we don’t start changing this now, then we are choosing to let another generation

be broken by a system that was always more concerned with control than with care.

If we don't fight for better schools, a better society, and a better future—who will?

Let's be the generation that stops accepting injustice and starts rewriting the rules. Let's make school a place where respect isn't optional, where cruelty isn't excused, and where every single voice actually matters. Where there is no place for negligence.

I would like to thank Aurora for those really carefully chosen words. I am very sorry that we could not have the entire speech read out, but thank you for your thoughts.

Playgrounds—accessibility

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (4.31): Today I wish to share a speech written by Audrey Nudelman, a 10-year-old girl from Theodore, who wrote to me earlier this year with her proposal for an accessible playground in her area that met the needs for all ages and abilities. Audrey and I met in person at her local playground, and she talked me through her design proposal. We also walked up to another playground together in Theodore and had a look at that as well.

Since then, Audrey has organised with her Cub Scout group to build and paint a free library at the Marlborough Scout Hall in Richardson after receiving a grant from ACT Children's Week. Audrey's plan for a free library comes from her love of reading and her recognition that not everyone can easily access or afford books. She hopes, that when completed, Audrey will receive a Messengers of Peace badge. So today I will read a speech Audrey wrote about her accessible playground. We are lucky enough for Audrey, her mum Rebecca and some friends to be with us here in the chamber today. I will begin her speech now.

My name is Audrey, and I am 10 years old. I live in Theodore with my brother George, who is almost 2. I attend Mulga Scouts as a Cub and as a part of completing my grey wolf (environment Special interest area) earlier this year I met with Caitlin Tough to talk about the playgrounds in Theodore.

My Little brother loves the park, when we go on walks to Tewksbury Circuit Playground, he sees the park and starts getting excited because he wants to go and play on the slide, but he cannot access the slide without parent help. In fact, there isn't much he can play on in the 2 parks in Theodore. This is why I designed a new playground that is accessible for all ages. From Teens to Babies.

Tewksbury Circuit Playground is not very suitable for babies and toddlers because the first playground equipment you see is a net fence with a large gap between the gaps and that's why he needs help to get up.

Theodore oval playground is in disrepair, parts of the playground have been duct taped together, and items have been taken away and not replaced, the slide and bouncer are very high off the ground and there is no footpath access to the playground.

This Playground is near a primary school so there are lots of children who could use it so I am asking you to upgrade our playground, so kids have a better, safer, and more accessible playground.

My Design also includes bathrooms, BBQ, bike track, sandpit trampolines to create a community for the 1011 children in Calwell and Theodore.

Thanks for listening.

I think it is safe to say that Audrey is a very impressive young Canberran who is already making incredible contributions to our community. I hope to see her around the Legislative Assembly more and doing more for the community in the future. Thank you, Audrey. Thanks for coming in.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.34 pm.