



DEBATES
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DAILY HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

3 February 2026

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 **Friday, 20 February 2026**.

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

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

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

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

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

Bondi Beach attack Motion of condolence

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

That:

This Assembly express our deep sorrow and offer our condolences to the families and loved ones of the 15 innocent victims murdered at Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025.

We condemn the atrocity which stole their lives, an act of terrorism, deliberately targeted at Australia's Jewish community.

We honour the courage, composure and quick action of all the police officers, first responders and healthcare workers whose dedication and skill saved lives, and express deep admiration for the heroes of Bondi, everyday people who showed extraordinary bravery and selflessness, including those wounded and killed saving others.

I move this motion today on behalf of this Assembly with profound sadness. We share the grief felt across the nation. We offer our deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of the 15 innocent people whose lives were stolen in a horrific terrorist attack at Bondi Beach on 14 December last year. We acknowledge the deep sorrow carried by those who are mourning, and we stand with them in solidarity, compassion and respect during this devastating time. Though no words can ease their pain, we offer our support and our commitment to honouring the memory of their loved ones.

We condemn unequivocally the act of terrorism that targeted Australia's Jewish community. This atrocity was an assault not only on those individuals and families but also on the values that we hold as a nation. Yet, in the midst of terror, we witnessed acts of immense courage. We honour the police officers, first responders and healthcare

workers whose swift actions saved lives, and we also pay tribute to the community members who displayed extraordinary bravery—everyday people who placed themselves in harm’s way to protect others.

Antisemitism and hatred have no place in our community, and, in times of profound grief and fear, we must choose unity over division, compassion over anger, and collective resolve over despair. Strengthening cohesion in our community is a collective responsibility. This week, we will introduce legislative reforms to strengthen firearm laws and improve community safety, in line with commitments that we and every Australian government made at national cabinet. These measures are guided by a single purpose: to protect lives and to reduce the risk of such tragedies ever occurring again.

Since the tragic events of last December, ACT Policing has increased protection for Jewish community sites across Canberra. This has been important to offer visible reassurance at places of worship, cultural centres and community events. This presence is intended to provide comfort and safety to those experiencing heightened fear and distress. Police and Access Canberra continue to closely monitor events, vigils and protests, to safeguard public safety and ensure respectful community conduct.

ACT Policing has maintained a strong operational focus on antisemitism since October 2023 and continues active engagement with Canberra’s Jewish community. Through the Countering Violent Extremism Strategy, we continue to support individuals vulnerable to radicalisation, with early and person-centred interventions. This radicalisation stems in most regard from unmet social or emotional needs, and our programs aim to address these respectively and proactively. Partnerships with law enforcement and national agencies further strengthen our preventative efforts and ability to protect our community.

Canberra is a city of diversity, and we know many in our community feel personally connected to Sydney, to Bondi and to the victims. The grief that we share here in the ACT extends far beyond borders. The events that day have shaken us all deeply, but they do not define us. Acts of violence seek to create fear and isolation. Instead, we must draw on compassion, resilience and unity.

The ACT strongly supports a nationally consistent approach to strengthening social cohesion in our country and remains committed to strategies that foster trust, connection and community resilience. One of our city’s greatest strengths is that we are a welcoming city. We have been accredited through the Welcoming Cities network, which recognises Canberra’s success in fostering economic, social and cultural inclusion.

We have, as a parliament, implemented the Multiculturalism Act, representing the importance of an equitable, progressive and unified community which benefits from the vibrant diversity of cultures, language, privileges and spiritual beliefs. Our strength lies in how we care for each other in difficult moments. By continuing to build on what connects us, we can work to ensure that everyone in our community feels grounded in respect, inclusion and peace.

The ACT supports this national approach to social cohesion, and we will continue to engage with other governments to build on the wellbeing foundations of identity,

cooperation and trust that are embedded in our territory's wellbeing framework. Addressing the drivers of declining social cohesion is a whole-of-nation effort, and we acknowledge it requires enhanced coordination between all sectors of government, increasing civic and economic participation, building community capacity and connection, and championing the successes of our community as a multicultural and multifaith society.

Strengthening community resilience and fostering social cohesion is a key priority, particularly as communities continue to navigate these very challenging times. We recognise and thank ACT Policing for the essential role they play in maintaining social cohesion, working closely across our community, particularly in recent years with the Jewish community and multicultural communities more broadly. ACT Policing is working hard to provide reassurance, to build trust, to offer advice to strengthen resilience across the territory, and to ensure people feel as safe as possible.

The Bondi tragedy understandably renewed concerns about safety and firearms regulation, and this government, together with all Australian governments, is committed to strengthening our legal frameworks whilst remaining steadfast in our commitment to human rights. Protecting community safety enhances rather than compromises the fundamental rights of our people.

We are committed to acting swiftly to ensure that our legal frameworks can respond appropriately and work to prevent incidents like those that occurred at Bondi. In this context, I want to reinforce that the ACT is and will continue to be a progressive human rights jurisdiction, and our response to this terrible tragedy must be guided by these principles. It is important to observe that the protection of community safety should not be seen as at odds with the promotion or protection of human rights. Indeed, measures directed at ensuring community safety will enhance the enjoyment of human rights, and we will continue to have those considerations at the forefront of our minds as we progress work in this space as a parliament.

There will be bills introduced to strengthen firearm laws and to promote community safety in the ACT. The first of these bills will be an initial step towards delivering on the expectations of the national cabinet agreement in the wake of the Bondi attack. The government will also consider further opportunities to support this objective as discussions with colleagues in parliaments across the country continue to occur in the coming months. We have committed to participating in the National Firearms Register, and work is continuing to replace the current paper based registry system into a digital system which will support the National Firearms Register.

The government has also signalled that we will seek to continue to strengthen community safety through accelerated work on hate crime and vilification laws, including enhanced protections for the LGBTIQ+ community and measures to combat antisemitism. And we will seek community and parliamentary support over this year to strengthen the territory's anti-vilification laws. Strengthened laws against hate speech could include increased civil penalties and, in extreme cases, criminal penalties.

We do this because we support laws that support social cohesion by making it clear that disagreement must never become dehumanisation and belief must never become a weapon against others. Well-designed anti-vilification laws with broad coverage help

draw a clear line in a diverse and democratic society that there is no place for dehumanisation, intimidation or incitement against others because of who they are or what they believe.

Anti-vilification laws are not about silencing debate or legitimate criticism. They are about stopping conduct that crosses into harassment, incitement and the promotion of violence or exclusion. This builds on the existing framework we have in the ACT. We have a strong framework, but it does need to be reviewed. We note the Assembly has taken action in the past, such as with the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 which prohibited the physical and online displays of Nazi symbols in public and empowered police to remove such symbols from display.

We are committed to reviewing and strengthening hate crime and serious vilification laws, and we intend to seek the parliament's support for that. But reforms must include a careful consideration of human rights impacts and close consultation with law enforcement on the construction of offences and opportunities for improvement. The government clearly supports the ability of people to attend peaceful protests. We are satisfied that the existing legislation is sufficient to safely manage protest activity and that this supports human rights protections to gather and protest, with police powers to manage inappropriate behaviour.

Our aim in light of this terrible national tragedy is to draw a firm line against harassment, incitement and dehumanisation, while safeguarding freedom of expression and legitimate public debate. Our response must be guided by compassion, unity and an unwavering commitment to the safety of our community. Members of the government continue to work through national processes—national cabinet, the Police Ministers Council and the Standing Council of Attorneys-General—to bring forward reforms that are coordinated, effective and grounded in care for all.

I want to reaffirm today that the wellbeing of our people is the government's highest priority. Every Canberran deserves to feel safe, valued, included and supported. Good health, good education, housing, good jobs, a healthy environment, and a strong sense of inclusion, belonging and connection across the community all make this a safe place in which those objectives can happen. Our community's wellbeing will continue to frame the way we make decisions this year. In the face of this awful tragedy, as a territory we must stand together, committed to dignity, to compassion and to unity.

MR PARTON (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition): I thank the Chief Minister for bringing this motion forward today. I also thank him for his words of optimism and hope. As we stand here today on a very sombre occasion, I would expect nothing other than complete unity and collective grief, but also collective optimism and hope that we can move forward from this event.

We live in a wonderful, peaceful country, but it is not a perfect country. Sadly, there is racism and intolerance. No nation is free of that. On any global measure, Australia remains an exceptionally tolerant, cohesive, welcoming and safe society, but in recent years that sense of peace has felt a little more fragile. The tension has been rising. Much of it is external to us; it is not of us. It does not belong here, but it has reached our shores, and on 14 December 2025 it shattered our national sense of safety in the most devastating way imaginable.

On that terrible day, when families gathered for what should have been a joyful, harmonious celebration, 15 innocent people were murdered in an act of blind hatred. This was a crime so grotesque in its scale and its intent that Australians could scarcely have imagined it, even in our darkest nightmares. Fifteen Australian lives were cut short for simply doing as many Australians do every week: they came together as a community to openly live their faith. That can never, ever happen again in this country.

This was an unspeakable tragedy for every victim, for every family and for every community that now carries a loss beyond what words can hold. Like a lot of Australians, whenever I hear about or whenever I read about or whenever I see a picture of Matilda, I cannot help but cry. I cannot fathom what the family has gone through. Her innocence, her joy, her limitless potential was taken away in an instant. I heard her father being interviewed in the last couple of days, talking about crawling along the ground as the shots rang out, trying to find his girl. No parent should ever know that kind of pain. No family should ever walk that path.

Among the other victims on 14 December were mothers, fathers, grandparents, great-grandparents and volunteers who delivered meals to the vulnerable. There were musicians whose creativity brought joy to others. There were teachers, there were carers, and there were people of deep faith and service. These were people who made Australia better and these people should still be with us today. Some died shielding their children. Some died trying to stop the gunmen. Some died protecting complete strangers. Their quiet, instinctive and profound heroism reminds us of the very best of who we are.

Today this Assembly acknowledges their lives, their contributions and the immeasurable grief felt by those they leave behind. We pause in sorrow and in solidarity to honour them. A tragedy of this magnitude forces each of us to pause and reflect on its significance and how everything is often taken for granted in Australia, but it can change in an instant.

Sentiments shared by all Australians are that an attack on people of faith is an attack on the entire Australian family, and that our nation must remain steadfast in resisting hatred, division and extremism. They reminded us that our diversity is not a weakness, it is a strength, and that the free exercise of religion is a foundational value. It is not negotiable. Every Australian should be free to fully embrace their faith on every day and every moment that they wish to.

In that same spirit, we honour not only the victims but also the first responders who ran towards danger—police, paramedics, medical staff and emergency workers—and showed the most extraordinary courage, professionalism and compassion under the most horrific circumstances. They are owed our everlasting gratitude.

The date of 14 December changed this country. It forced us to confront the fact that hatred, when left unchecked, can metastasise into violence. It reminded us that social cohesion is not self-maintaining; it requires leadership, it requires vigilance and it requires moral clarity, and it demands that every level of government examines what must change to ensure that this can never happen again.

Amid the horror, we also saw the overwhelming decency of the Australian people. We

saw communities of every faith come together. We saw thousands gathered to grieve, to support, to reject hate and to affirm the basic truth that every single Australian has the right to be safe, to worship freely and to live without fear.

Today we honour the 15 lives taken, we commit their names to our national memory and we reaffirm our responsibility as leaders, as Australians, to defend the peace and the unity that have always defined this nation at its best. May the victims rest in peace, may their families find comfort and may this tragedy strengthen, not weaken, the bonds that hold us all together. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong): On behalf of my Greens colleagues in the Assembly, our staff and the entire Greens membership in the ACT, I express in this formal setting our heartfelt condolences to everyone who lost someone in the horrific massacre at Bondi Beach on 14 December, whether that person was a family member, a friend, a workmate or simply a familiar face in their community. The word “community” is important here. In looking through the details of each person who lost their life, community involvement stands out.

Dan Elkayam played for his local soccer club. Edith Brutman was the vice-president of the New South Wales anti-prejudice and anti-discrimination committee of the Jewish community service organisation B’nai B’rith. B’nai B’rith is the oldest such Jewish organisation in the world, just 17 years away from its 200th anniversary. Marika Pogany worked as a volunteer, delivering meals and services to older Jewish people in her neighbourhood. Peter Meagher managed the Randwick District Rugby Union Football Club. Eli Schlanger and Yaakov Levitan were rabbis. Several who lost their lives were simply enjoying the local community event or getting out and about in the neighbourhood. In the background there would have been many volunteers working for weeks ahead of the event, purely so that other people in the community could come together for joy and connection.

Heroism stands out too. In addition to the widely recognised heroism of Ahmed al-Ahmed, three others, Boris Gurman, Sophia Gurman and Reuven Morrison, courageously attempted to disarm the gunman, thinking of others ahead of their own safety. Tibor Weitzen died shielding his wife and trying in vain to shield Edith Brutman.

The best and worst of humanity was on display at Bondi that evening. A huge part of “the worst” is the ongoing strain of antisemitism that has run through history for 2,000 years. I send my full support to every member of Australia’s Jewish community who feels less safe now and feels the creep of fears that have passed down from generation to generation, with all too much justification.

It is vital that Australia’s Jews feel supported, not abandoned, betrayed or let down. We must acknowledge that for Jewish communities, both here in the ACT and across the nation, life was irrevocably changed by the events of 14 December. The impact of that night extends far beyond any one place or community, reminding us how deeply interconnected we are and how harm directed at one group is felt by us all.

I believe we all lost something on 14 December. We lost comparatively trivial things, like the bright, sunny connotations around the very idea of Bondi Beach. We lost intangible things, like our justified sense of national pride and our strict and sensible

gun laws. And we lost something that I think we used to have once, and that is a sense of national unity in the face of a shared tragedy.

For me, this has been a particularly troubling aspect of this tragic event: the idea that we could lose, are losing or perhaps have lost a willingness in every one of us to put difference aside and speak with one voice in a situation like this; the idea that there are people who will manoeuvre, are manoeuvring and have already manoeuvred to use this tragedy for their own ends, to create a wedge or a talking point or a manufactured outrage, to build power, to make money or to spread hate.

I and the Greens refuse to jump on that band wagon. I speak for all of us. I will not stand by and let this terrible event make our country worse in any way—more hateful, more divided, more suspicious, more intolerant. As Mr Parton touched on so clearly, a 10-year-old child named Matilda lost her life at Bondi. For every child around the same age, a bit older, a bit younger or yet to be born, I want to see a better Australia emerge out of this, not a worse one.

That brings me to “the best” of our shared humanity. In Jewish tradition, Hanukkah marks the miracle of light, enduring even through the darkest of times. It reminds us that goodness persists and that life, while resilient, must be protected and shared. This message resonates strongly with the values so many Australians hold dear. In the aftermath of the Bondi attack, we saw these values lived out. Strangers stepped forward to help people they had never met and first responders worked tirelessly, through confronting and heartbreaking circumstances, to save lives. Across the country, people came together in grief and support, from candles lit at nightfall to flowers lining Bondi and countless Australians generously giving blood. These quiet acts of kindness reflect the Australia we know and deeply care for.

I would like to think that, when we reflect on this gaping tragedy, it strengthens the resolve in all of us to be as courageous as Ahmed al-Ahmed or Boris and Sofia Gurman, in small things as well as large ones, and to be as kind and generous with our time, our energy and our emotions as Marika Pogany or Yaakov Levitan. I believe that kindness, wisdom, understanding and generosity can be more contagious and more effective than cruelty, selfishness and hate. I believe it is just as realistic, but it is in fact more realistic to focus on the best in humanity, not the worst.

To our Jewish community, I want you to know that you are not alone. Your safety here in the ACT and across Australia matters deeply and must be upheld. Everyone deserves to feel safe, respected and valued in their community, regardless of their faith, heritage or identity.

We hold in our hearts the 15 Australians who lost their lives and extend our deepest condolences to their families and loved ones. Each life is precious and every loss is felt by many. We also hold those who were injured. They survived that terrible day, but they are permanently marked by it.

We cannot take our shared humanity, kindness and peace for granted. We must protect it, fight for it and share it. I implore us all to reach out to those who are hurting, no matter who they are. Hold them close, because only by doing so can we ensure their collective light is never extinguished.

Using the hashtag “One Mitzvah for Bondi”, the New South Wales government has called on all of us to embrace the Jewish tradition of performing a mitzvah—a practical act of kindness, compassion or morality, or a good deed, as we would commonly call it, in memory of those who suffered under the Bondi attack. This is a wonderful idea for strengthening our bonds of humanity and bringing light back into our hearts. We can take it far beyond a single mitzvah.

To honour the memory of those who died and suffered on 14 December, I hope everyone in this place and everyone in this country will commit and recommit to embracing, building and celebrating the best in ourselves, and will commit equally to resisting, repudiating and extinguishing the worst—not just one mitzvah for Bondi, but mitzvahs for life.

I thank the Chief Minister for bringing this motion forward and offer deep condolences on behalf of myself and the ACT Greens members of the Assembly in light of this terrible event.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong): I rise to speak in support of this condolence motion and reflect the sentiments shared by other members and extend those condolences to the victims, their families and all Jewish Australians.

I remember watching news reports of this horror, struggling to comprehend what I was seeing—the death, terror and fear and also the acts of heroism, courage and bravery. Like many Australians, I found myself wondering what I would have done if I had been there. I recall a terrible thought briefly entering my mind: I would not have been there because I do not celebrate Hanukkah. Just as quickly, that thought was replaced with a thought of the thoughts that had to be in the minds of every Jewish Australian, “I could have been there. That could have been me.”

In that moment, I realised the deep sense of dread felt by Jewish people across our country. With the Bondi massacre, every Hanukkah celebration suddenly felt like a target. Every Jewish Australian felt targeted. This is the terror caused by indiscriminate violence that discriminates only insofar as it targets a particular group of people for their beliefs or for their race, culture, gender or background.

Like many people watching on in horror on 14 December, I thought surely this kind of thing was unimaginable in Australia. For many Jewish Australians, though, it was not unimaginable. Antisemitism is a reality that Jewish people have faced throughout history and continue to face today, and we must acknowledge and accept that this reality exists here in our country. It must be named and it must be confronted, while also acknowledging that it does not stand alone. We must recognise the connections between different kinds of hatred and work tirelessly to create a world where all are respected and valued.

Thankfully, I think that we as a country have responded to this horrific event not as if it is a problem only for Jewish Australians but a problem for all Australians. If we are wise, it is in these moments of darkness that we realise that things that mark us as different—our race, religion, cultural practices and backgrounds—are in fact markers of the very humanity that unites us. This tragedy tore a little hole in the foundations of

who we are as Australians and how we see ourselves as Australians. I am grateful to have seen a response from everyday Australians that recognises that our strength as a nation lies not in division but in diversity, while also fearing that some of the responses we have seen among some leaders in other parts of this country have not shown the kind of political maturity required to ensure a tragedy of this kind never occurs again.

This kind of tragedy cannot be explained away through slogans or blame. It cannot be fixed by simple rhetoric. It must not be politicised for political gain. It cannot become the ground for further hatred and division. Violence and terror of this kind can only be addressed through compassion, care and humility, through connection, a willingness to reach across the political divide and embrace our shared humanity and a commitment to work against all forms of repression, hatred, fear and violence. It is heartening to see that sentiment shared across all parts of the chamber today.

On behalf of the Canberrans I represent, I too offer my condolences to those whose loved ones were taken on 14 December. I honour the memory of those lives lost and sit in grief with all affected by this tragedy.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee): I rise to join my Assembly colleagues in expressing my immense sorrow for the loss of 15 innocent people in the attack at Sydney's Bondi on 14 December last year, an atrocity that has rightly sent shockwaves through the nation, the ACT and within my electorate where the Canberra synagogue sits. To those who have suffered and lost loved ones as a result of those evil actions, I send my deepest condolences. To members of the Jewish community: I acknowledge your grief.

I was at the Hanukkah celebration at the synagogue on that day, and I noted the security, security that was needed before the tragedy at Bondi that evening. It has reinforced my understanding that I need to work ever harder to support a unified and respectful community in which we can all feel safe and in which you know you are home, because no Australian should face hatred or violence as a result of their religion or race.

I also join in recognising the bravery of the emergency responders, healthcare professionals and bystanders who saved lives, including those who selflessly headed towards danger. We as a community are grateful for those who serve, protect and care for us all, especially in our darkest times.

Those who were targeted had gathered at an iconic place to celebrate the first night of Hanukkah, which is about life overcoming darkness. That is a message and a challenge that we need to take forward as a community to ensure that we remember those 15 innocent souls who lost their lives at Bondi and, in their memory, come together as a community, as neighbours, respectfully and in harmony. May their memories be a blessing. I thank the Chief Minister for bringing forward this motion.

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): Members and friends, we gather here today under the weight of profound sorrow. On Sunday 14 December, our nation was shaken by a devastating terror attack. Chanukah by the Sea should have been a celebration of light over darkness, but it was so cruelly and senselessly targeted with unspeakable violence. Fifteen lives—15 stories of family, friendship, hope and

contribution—were cut short. Their absence will be felt not only by those who loved them but also across the broader fabric of our country.

In the weeks since the attack, we have all reflected on the scale of this loss—the empty seats at family tables, the photos that will no longer be updated and the moments that loved ones will never again share. These are reminders that tragedies like this do not end when the headlines fade; they leave ripples that move through families, neighbourhoods and communities for years to come.

Yet, even within the darkness of that day, Australians showed extraordinary bravery. First responders, bystanders and members of the public acted instinctively and selflessly, stepping forward to help others under the most confronting circumstances. Their actions reflected what has been described as shared humanity, a reminder that courage is not rare in our community; it is deeply rooted in the fabric of what makes us who we are as Australians, bound together by compassion, resilience and an unwavering commitment to one another.

Let me state clearly and without hesitation: hate has no place in Australia and no place in Canberra—not antisemitism, not racism, not xenophobia. We reject discrimination in any of its forms. An attack on one community is an attack on all of us. We come together here today as leaders, as people, as Canberrans, to publicly condemn the attack and affirm that no community will be left in darkness or left to face grief alone. This message matters. Our government and our community stand firmly with the Jewish community and with all communities who have experienced fear or trauma in the wake of this tragedy.

At its heart, this moment reminds us of the vital importance of social cohesion, the understanding that our safety, our resilience and our strength depend on the bonds we build across communities, the respect we show one another and the shared commitment we make to stand united in times of hardship. As we reflect on this moment, we are also reminded of the need for strong and effective frameworks to prevent racism, protections that uphold the dignity of every person, safeguard communities from harm and reinforce the fairness and equality that keep our society cohesive. The Jewish community are an important part of our multicultural society, contributing to our civic life, our culture and our shared sense of community. Their strength, resilience and commitment to social cohesion enrich the very identity of Canberra.

But our responsibility extends beyond words; we must continue to foster a community where every person feels safe, valued and respected. Part of that commitment is recognising the richness of our multicultural story. Our diversity is our strength, one that enriches our culture, broadens our understanding and deepens our collective resilience. Every community brings with it traditions, languages, perspectives and experiences that weave the fabric of who we are. When we learn from one another, we grow; when we listen to one another, we build trust; when we embrace our differences, we build unity.

This attack sought to divide us. But we have shown again that we refuse to be divided. The strength of our multicultural community lies not only in coexistence but also in connection, and the willingness to stand up for one another, to reject hatred and to reaffirm that there is no place for discrimination here. As we honour those whose lives

were taken, let us also honour the values that bind us. Let us choose compassion over fear, unity over division, and understanding over ignorance. Let us commit ourselves to standing against hatred wherever it emerges and to nurturing a society where every person, regardless of faith, culture or background, has the opportunity to live in safety and dignity.

Today, we remember 15 people whose lives were cherished and whose loved ones carry a grief that words can never fully heal. We hope their families may find comfort in the support that we stand with them in unity. We will honour the victims by building a future defined not by fear but by unity, strength and unwavering humanity—drawing on the resilience of the Canberra community, a community that stands strong and unified and one that continues to show what it means to remain proud of who we are, even in our darkest hours.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform): I thank the Chief Minister for bringing this motion to the Assembly. I too rise to extend my deepest condolences to the people who lost their lives on that day and to those who were injured, to their friends and family and to the Jewish community in Australia. No words can truly capture the grief and fear caused by such a devastating attack, but we stand with you in sorrow and in solidarity.

Discrimination of all kinds has no place in our community. When people think of Australia, they think of a peaceful society where people are respected, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, religion, cultural background and sexuality. We will fight to foster a community where everyone feels safe. The horrific events at Bondi pulled at the fabric of our society. The hatred that we saw from the perpetrators does not reflect what Australian society is nor the values we strive to uphold. In moments like this, we must reject the hate and recommit ourselves to compassion, unity and care for one another.

In the darkest of times of our nation, we saw the Australian spirit shining through, with the incredible bravery of ordinary members of the community protecting their fellow community members. We need to come out of this as a stronger and more unified community, where hate and discrimination cannot propagate, but instead we grow together to ensure Australia remains a peaceful place where all are welcome.

In the aftermath of the attack, Minister Pettersson and I visited the National Jewish Centre. To the Jewish community of the ACT: we stand with you and we welcome the vibrancy that you bring to our community.

I would like to honour the courage of the New South Wales law enforcement and emergency service personnel and health workers, who faced unimaginable terror on that evening. They stared hate and terror in the face and prevailed. When our police and emergency services start their day, they never know what they will be faced with. I would like to thank our ACT Police and Emergency Services in the ACT for the critical role that they play in community safety and social cohesion. I would also like to thank the leaders of the ACT multicultural community, who have been very outspoken in rejecting the horror and terror that was caused at Bondi. The calls from the community

have been of shared values of unity, compassion and peace.

As a member of this Assembly and a member of our community, I will not accept a future that makes people feel unsafe, unwelcome and targeted for who they are. I am committed to ensuring the ACT remains a place that everyone can call home, a home that is safe, welcoming and proud of its diversity. These are not just values we speak about; these are values that we will defend.

MS MORRIS (Brindabella): The wonderful thing about Western liberal democratic values is that they build national unity around the concept that every individual has inherent worth, that every individual shall be free and that every individual should have opportunity, dignity and respect, regardless of faith, ethnicity or background. These are Australia's values.

On 14 December 2025, those very ideals that lie at the heart of our nation were gunned down on the iconic shores of Bondi Beach, along with little Matilda, Edith Brutman, Dan Elkayam, Boris and Sofia Gurman, Alexander Kleytman, Rabbi Yaakov Levitan, Peter Meagher, Reuven Morrison, Marika Pogany, Rabbi Eli Schlanger, Adam Smyth, Boris Tetleroyd, Tania Tretiak and Tibor Weitzen—fifteen innocent lives brutally taken by a radical ideology that fundamentally opposes the Australian belief that all individuals have inherent worth and deserve dignity and respect. We mourn for every life that was stolen that day, and our hearts go out to those who were injured and to those who have been psychologically traumatised by events that they should never have to witness. We also honour those members of the community and the first responders who bravely ran towards danger.

We need to be honest about what happened. It was not a random attack; Jewish Australians were clearly targeted, and it was a culmination of hatred that has been openly promoted since 7 October 2023. It was a public demonstration that there are people in our society who do not share Australian values and who do not believe that every Australian has the right to be safe, has the right to be free and has the right to have their human dignity respected and protected.

We cannot allow this to happen again to any Jewish Australian or to anyone who calls Australia home. We must act with clear determination against those elements within our society that seek to undermine our social cohesion and that do not share our values that make Australia one of the most prosperous and harmonious nations in the world. Today we mourn the victims of the Bondi attack. Today we stand in solidarity with all Jewish Australians. But that is not enough; every day we should honour their memory by defending the values that define our nation.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra): I want to thank the Chief Minister for moving this important motion. When hatred finds an opportunity, evil consequences flow. When hatred finds an opportunity, evil consequences follow. What happened on 14 December last year at Bondi Beach has shocked our nation, as it should have. I hope that it also awakens our nation to be more vigilant, to look at legislative reform, to look at cultural messaging, and to look at how each of us engages with all parts of our community, to make sure that we are part of a solution, so that something like this never happens again, certainly not in our city.

I think 14 December last year at Bondi will be something that will be lodged in our memory, nationally, culturally and, for most Australians, individually. I suspect most Australians will know where they were, with whom they were, and what they were doing when they realised that 15 people were being slaughtered at Bondi Beach on 14 December. In my own case, as Ms Carrick mentioned, I was one of several MLAs at a Hanukkah celebration at the Jewish centre that afternoon, an event of joy, an event that had families celebrating together, an event to acknowledge a special moment for our Jewish community—as has been said, a celebration of light, hope and faith.

I got home a bit after 6 o'clock that evening and, as is my practice on a Sunday, I called my mother in the Hunter Valley. It was around 7 o'clock; I called my mum, and I think the first thing she said to me was, "Peter, isn't it horrible, what's happening at Bondi?" I was not aware of anything happening at Bondi until I saw the news. I will remember where I was, with whom I was speaking, what I was doing and where I had just been for the rest of my life.

At Bondi Beach, an iconic Australian location, people had assembled for a joyous celebration. The shocking reality is that the hatred that drove these killers meant they thought that was the best place to send their horrific message to both our nation and the world. It was a deliberate choice on their part.

I look forward to the workings of the royal commission. I look forward to seeing what legislators around our country will do to address this, not only with legislative reform but with messaging to our community, a messaging—as I think we are all committed to—for a commitment to a harmonious, peaceful and tolerant community, where hatred is identified and ways are found to address that hatred.

No matter whether it is in your home or in your community group, no matter where you are, do not let hatred grow towards any of our community, whether they identify ethnically, by faith or by culture. We do not want what happened to our Jewish community on 14 December to happen to any part of our community in this nation, let alone in this city. It is my plea to our community—and I acknowledge that all of us really have the same heart and commitment; I really do believe that. Setting the politics aside, we know what sort of society we want, and we do not want that type of event happening ever again in our nation, and certainly not in our city of Canberra. I give my own commitment to that cause.

I found it comforting this morning, when I attended the ecumenical worship service for the opening of the federal parliamentary year at St Paul's Manuka. I was very encouraged and comforted that a very special part of that service involved prayers and support for our Jewish community, in the light of what had happened at Bondi.

I want to thank the Chief Minister and all those who have spoken. As the leaders of the Canberra Liberals have said, it is our commitment, as a team and, I am sure, as MLAs together, as we are out in our community, to encourage a spirit of harmony, tolerance and peace, and do what we can so that when hatred is identified, we find a way to stop it manifesting into evil consequences.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport): 14 December is a day

that we must never forget, a day when the values at the heart of the Australian way of life that we know were attacked, and we were forced to confront a horrific tragedy.

Fifteen people lost their lives in the Bondi terrorist attack, and many more were injured. What should have been a celebration on the first night of Hanukkah turned to horror, grief and unimaginable loss. A community gathered on the shores of Bondi Beach, a place synonymous with the laid-back Australian way of life. So quickly, it became a scene of devastation. Families were torn apart and futures were stolen, in an act of evil that is hard to comprehend. The pain felt by those who lost their loved ones is shared by every Australian. The shock is reverberating, and the mourning has only just begun.

Yet even in our darkest moments, Australians at the scene showed their best. On that day, we saw heroic acts of bravery—acts that reflect the very best of Australia and Australians. Members of the public put their lives at risk to confront the terrorists. First responders rushed towards danger. The community sheltered those with nowhere else to go. Sydneysiders queued en masse to make blood donations, as they did here in Canberra. An outpouring of support came from across the country. These acts of courage and the countless acts of kindness in the days since remind us all of the Australia that we love, the Australia that we aspire to live in.

I say to all Jewish Australians that we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you. An attack on our Jewish community is an attack on all of us, on the values and ideals that define what it means to be an Australian. While the terrorists sought to divide us, to sow fear and hatred, we seek unity, connection and compassion.

As the Jewish community in Bondi began to mourn, they talked of a meaningful old tradition, the idea of the mitzvah, a Hebrew word meaning an act of goodness. These acts, no matter how small, compound and strengthen our communities and, through these mitzvahs, these acts of kindness, we create change. We deepen our understanding of one another, and we fortify what the terrorists tried to tear down.

Anti-Semitism is a scourge, diametrically opposed to the values of Australians. This must always be a country where people of all faiths, all cultures and all identities are welcomed, valued and celebrated. Nowhere more so than Canberra can we see how this diversity strengthens and elevates our community—something that we will all celebrate together this week, at the National Multicultural Festival.

With this condolence motion, in mourning those that have been lost, and by standing united, we can find a path forward. This act of horrific violence sought to divide us, but we have seen the opposite. We must confront anti-Semitism wherever it appears and root it out in all its forms. Hate can never be the answer, and this Assembly has a responsibility to ensure that it never is.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee): At 6.50 pm on 14 December 2025, two men parked their car by the footbridge at Bondi Beach and unloaded three guns, multiple pipe bombs and a tennis-ball bomb before opening fire on a community gathering. On 14 December 2025, terrorism came to Bondi Beach in the form of a targeted attack on members of the Jewish community in the middle of a religious celebration. Two men, subscribing to a corrupted ideology of hate, shot and killed 15 people—men, women and children. Australians were hunted and shot for who they were, for their religious

beliefs and for their ancestry. They were shot simply because they were Jewish.

In Australia, we rarely need to contend with the notion of evil. We are not perfect but, by and large, we usually assume that most people here have good intentions. But this was true evil. The perpetrators, cowardly and from a distance, murdered without hesitation. They saw families, old women and men, they saw children, and they pulled the trigger. They knew who they were targeting, and they shot, anyway.

There is no room to make apologies for these perpetrators. It is okay to attempt to understand the twisted paths that lead to atrocities, and it is important. We need to understand, so that we can stop them ever happening again. But we cannot let explaining become explaining away. Nothing, absolutely nothing—no ideology, no politics, no grievance—justifies or excuses the monstrous actions of the men who decided to take innocent lives for a twisted cause.

The day after the attack, I happened to be on a long-haul flight out of Sydney. I was seated right by a family—mother, father and their son, a young man in his teens. As that flight progressed, it became clear that, for them, things were not as normal or comfortable as they were for the rest of us. The mother did not look up from the news feed for the whole flight. The young man said nothing. Later on in the flight, I learnt that this was an Australian Jewish family on a flight less than 24 hours after an anti-Semitic terrorist attack had targeted their community.

We were just learning that Islamic State flags had been found, and that explosives had been involved. But the rawness for that family was not clear until we landed. There was the moment when the young man, who had been silent for the entire flight, was told gently by his parents that it was time to get up, as they needed to catch their connecting flight. He responded—stridently, confidently and with deep, barely contained anger—that they should not be going anywhere. He declared that they should be with his friends and their community on Bondi.

I wish I could convey the sense of betrayal and hurt expressed by that young man and felt by so many Australians like him—people who have become targets and who had been trying to raise the alarm. How do you respond to that, because we should mourn, and we should be angry? We should be angry because no-one should have to walk down the street and be faced with graffiti that says that you are less than human. No-one should have to change their name because their culture is being persecuted at their university. No-one should have to fear for their lives, or the lives of their families, simply because of their heritage.

Our Jewish community has faced all of this and, while they are targeted, they have been told to be the bigger people, not to respond to hate with hate. This is the pain that our Jewish community still faces, and how do we stop that pain transforming into something worse? How do we go from hate to hope?

Gun legislation and hate legislation will not fix the problems that made the Bondi attack possible. The only things that take us in the right direction are the words and the actions of the Australian people, and of our communities—actions like those of the heroes who did step into harm's way, as Mr Rattenbury was describing. The tales of that heroism in those first hours and days were an anchor and have become an anchor—a reminder

that good people do still exist.

The actions of those people have become something that our community can rally around, and it is the community that has led in the time since the attack. The steps of the Bondi Pavilion became a place of mourning, not because any government proclaimed it, but because that was where people came together. The world saw thousands of surfers, swimmers and community members form a massive, moving circle in the ocean at Bondi in a powerful, emotional and symbolic paddle-out vigil. And here in Canberra the interfaith forum came together for their vigil.

Ordinary Australians across our country came together because, no matter your politics, this attack struck at Australian values. It was a betrayal of our community. It targeted our neighbours and our community.

Things are not fixed, and we will always face disagreements. But disagreements are not division, and the Australian community has shown time and again the resolve to come together in the face of tragedy and acts of evil. What I see gives me hope that that that will be where we shall be for a long time to come.

Question resolved in the affirmative, members standing in their places.

Petitions

The following petitions were lodged for presentation:

Parking—Theatre Lane car park closure—petition 72-25

By Ms Lee, from 809 residents:

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

The following residents of the Australian Capital Territory draw to the attention of the Assembly:

- That the ACT Government intends to fully close the Theatre Lane car park from 2025 to 2028 during construction of the Lyric Theatre;
- That this car park provides essential access for people with disability, theatre patrons, staff, and local businesses;
- That similar large-scale projects in Canberra were delivered while keeping public car parks partially or fully open;
- That a full closure for three years is excessive, harmful to local businesses, and unnecessary to ensure safe construction.

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

1. Adopt a partial access model for Theatre Lane car park, maintaining at least 60% of spaces throughout construction;
2. Guarantee disability and short-stay parking in the Civic cultural precinct

- during the build;
3. Accelerate the re-opening of the section of car park closed due to light rail works;
 4. Publish monthly public reporting on construction progress and spaces retained.

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petition, having at least 500 signatories, was referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and City Services.

Margaret Timpson Park—petitions 76-25 and 7-26

By Mr Cain, from 307 and 135 residents respectively:

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

This petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention of the Assembly that the ACT Government intends to develop Block 45 Section 54 Belconnen, adjacent to Margaret Timpson Park, for social housing.

The Belconnen community strongly supports the need for more social and affordable housing although believes this particular site should instead be incorporated into an extension of Margaret Timpson Park: a long-standing and widely supported community priority. Extending the park would preserve much-needed green space in a growing town centre, enhance community wellbeing, and reflect the vision set out in the Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan.

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

1. Rezone Block 45 Section 54 Belconnen to public open space for the purpose of extending Margaret Timpson Park;
2. Identify and prioritise alternative, more suitable sites for new social housing within Belconnen; and
3. Commit to meaningful community consultation on the design and future use of the expanded parkland.

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

Ministerial responses

The following responses to petitions have been lodged:

Business—Garema Place outdoor dining rules—petition 47-25

By **Mr Barr**, Chief Minister, dated 11 December 2025, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Parton concerning Garema Place outdoor dining rules.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

I refer to E-PET-047-25 Change the restrictive Garema Place Outdoor Dining rules, lodged by Mr Mark Parton MLA. The petitions draw the Assembly's attention to the Places to Dine Outdoor Dining Toolkit for Garema Place. The Government acknowledges the concerns raised by the petitioner and the sponsoring member, particularly around Canberra's winter weather and the importance of engaging with businesses.

Small businesses are the lifeblood of our city. Their presence and offerings are what make the City Centre an appealing destination for Canberrans and visitors alike. Garema Place is home to a mix of popular local retailers and hospitality venues, including Landspeed Records, voted Australia's Best Record Store, and Bar Beirut, voted Canberra's Best Cocktail Lounge/Small Bar, among many other innovative and popular local businesses.

Garema Place upgrade and outdoor dining permits

Work is concluding for the Garema Place upgrade, which will deliver a welcoming, open and functional pedestrian plaza. The project delivers an accessible and connected public space with new paving, better lighting, garden beds, trees and less clutter.

It will be an open, versatile space that supports both everyday activities and special events. The project will improve not just the functionality of Garema Place, but also how people experience and perceive the City Centre, with a particular focus on safety and accessibility.

Consistent with the terms outlined in outdoor dining permits, the City Renewal Authority asked businesses in Garema Place to remove their outdoor dining setups to enable paving improvements on public land.

Under the *Public Unleased Land Act 2013*, a permit is required to use public land for commercial purposes such as outdoor dining. The ACT Government provides general information to support permit applicants in [A Guide for Using Public Land for Outdoor Dining Purposes](#), accessed through the Access Canberra website. Where a more complex installation is proposed, such as a marquee, a building approval (BA) or development application (DA) may also be required.

Access Canberra categorises outdoor dining setups on public land into three types based on how complex they are to install and pack away. These are defined on the Access Canberra Outdoor Dining Permits webpage as:

1. **Simple:** Everything is packed away. Everything on outdoor public land is packed inside a shop-front or removed from site at the end of trading hours. For example, furniture, planter boxes, umbrellas, heaters and bins are all packed away.
2. **Medium:** Some objects stay outside. For example, chairs and tables are stored away but umbrellas and planter boxes are left outside after trading hours. The elements left outside are secured or bolted to the ground. These items are able to be removed with limited mechanical assistance within 48 hours.
3. **Complex:** Objects and structures permanently remain on premises, for example a marquee and stage. The objects are fixed permanently to the area

and involve construction of some kind, for example a stage or marquee. These may also require a Development Application for complex use of the space with the Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

The Places to Dine – Outdoor Dining Toolkit is not a set of rules or regulations; it is a guide designed to support businesses to apply for outdoor dining that is consistent, attractive and functional. It was produced to support the broader objectives of the Garema Place upgrade in alignment with other pre-established government policy including the *Planning Act 2023*, the *Public Unleased Land Act 2013* and the *Building (General) Regulation 2008*.

The Toolkit is intended to guide ‘simple’ and ‘medium’ outdoor dining set-ups, which are preferred for Garema Place as a highly pedestrianised public space and allow for a simplified approval process outlined in the Toolkit.

The Toolkit is to be read along with Access Canberra’s outdoor dining guidance and does not prevent business owners applying for Complex Outdoor Dining Permits. It guides them on the requirement to engage with the City and Environment Directorate to ensure an appropriate approval is in place under the *Planning Act 2023*.

If a business wants to apply for a Complex outdoor dining set up, it falls outside of the Toolkit’s remit. Complex proposals need to be lodged with the City and Environment Directorate (CED) for a Development and/or Building Approval.

Toolkit origin and business consultation

Outdoor dining guidelines are widely used across Australia, with many jurisdictions adopting similar frameworks to achieve the same goals the Government is pursuing.

The Toolkit was developed in response to strong community feedback during consultation for the Garema Place upgrade, calling for high-quality and consistent outdoor dining. It supports businesses by outlining how to implement great outdoor dining while maintaining the needs of the community. It aims to balance the requirements of public spaces, the interests of local businesses, and the goals of the Garema Place upgrade.

The Toolkit outlines the available public space for businesses to operate outdoor dining and practical guidance that:

- Improves design quality without privatising public land.
- Activates public spaces, improving safety and accessibility.
- Provide businesses with equitable access to public land for outdoor dining to increase their operating area, foot traffic and visibility.
- Supports the broader objectives Garema Place upgrade project.
- Supports a streamlined permit process, helping businesses get their outdoor dining up and running quickly.

The Toolkit was not created in isolation. It was created through collaboration with experts, incorporating best practice urban design, and shaped by feedback from Garema Place hospitality businesses.

Development of the Outdoor Dining Toolkit involved multiple rounds of consultation with Garema Place businesses including two dedicated workshops, as well as business visits, phone calls and emails.

- **March–May 2023:** Public consultation on the Garema Place upgrade highlighted the need for inclusive furniture, weather protection, cleanliness, and a consistent outdoor dining design across public and private spaces.
- **October 2023:** Targeted engagement on outdoor dining began, with 16 businesses providing feedback through visits and surveys.
- **January and April 2024:** Two Outdoor Dining Toolkit workshops were held at King O'Malley's, focusing on business needs and design principles.
- **September 2024:** The final toolkit was published online and delivered to 15 Garema Place hospitality businesses.

Engagement records, which have been previously released under a Freedom of Information request, show that Via Dolce was informed of the Garema Place upgrade before they installed their structure, most notably on 29 March 2023 when a meeting was held between City Renewal staff and the owners of Garema Place businesses. In 2024, Via Dolce was invited to participate in development of the Outdoor Dining Toolkit on several occasions.

Despite repeated outreach, Via Dolce did not engage or provide feedback. While I respect the right to participate or not, it is important to acknowledge that meaningful consultation requires mutual engagement.

Since the removal of Via Dolce's structure on Garema Place and the launch of the petition, businesses have continued to express their support for the removal of enclosed structures from Garema Place. Of 26 traders surveyed by the City Renewal Authority during the petition period, 23 supported the toolkit's objectives and its role in the upgrade project. Two traders expressed a neutral stance, and one business supported the objectives of the toolkit but expressed a desire to seek permission for a complex outdoor dining set-up for further weather protection.

When asked about the removal of outdoor dining structures and the goals of the Toolkit, businesses in Garema Place requested that their responses remain anonymous.

Industry and community groups—including the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects ACT and Public Transport Canberra—have expressed their support for the Toolkit's objectives. Statements from these groups have been included at the end of this written response.

Shelter from Canberra's climate

Canberra's winters are harsh. Freezing temperatures, cold winds and rain are conditions where people typically choose to dine indoors. However, it's important to distinguish outdoor dining and enclosures that privatise public land.

To help manage both heat and cold, the Toolkit does support overhead shelters such as fixed and portable umbrellas and awnings, planter boxes to reduce the impact of cold wind, along with misters to keep customers cool in summer and heaters to keep

them warm in winter. There are a multitude of outdoor dining set-ups across the Territory that have followed and successfully implemented these principals.

Outdoor dining is intended to create open, inclusive, and flexible spaces that enhance the public realm—not replicate indoor environments. The Toolkit ensures equal access to the public realm by businesses and inclusivity by creating a welcoming and accessible public realm.

While large, enclosed and permanently fixed structures may offer shelter from the inclement weather, they also obstruct pathways, reduce visibility and lighting, complicate maintenance and hinder emergency vehicle access.

Recognising Garema Place as a busy thoroughfare and the safety and accessibility objective of the upgrade project, the Toolkit is intended to support businesses with ‘simple’ and ‘medium’ outdoor dining applications. ‘Complex’ applications require an approved development application and therefore follow an alternate pathway.

Supporting fixed and enclosed outdoor dining structures for increased weather protection in Garema Place risks:

- Privatising public spaces
- Restricting access and egress, including for pedestrians and Emergency Services vehicles
- Impacting sightlines (lines of clear physically uninterrupted sight) and visibility
- Reducing pedestrian movement through the public space

The Government has a responsibility to ensure public land serves the public. When used for commercial purposes, access must be fair, equitable, and consistent for all traders. No single business should dominate public space that should be shared with the community and neighbouring tenants.

Conclusion

The Government’s approach to outdoor dining in Garema Place reflects the need to balance commercial activity with the broader public interest. Public land must remain accessible, safe, and inclusive for all users.

The Outdoor Dining Toolkit provides practical guidance for traders while safeguarding the integrity of public land, ensuring that outdoor dining contributes positively to the City Centre’s functionality, appearance, and accessibility.

This guidance is intended for ‘simple’ or ‘medium’ outdoor dining set-ups. Businesses may apply to implement ‘complex’ set-ups that offer enhanced weather protection. These applications are managed by the City and Environment Directorate through the development and/or building approval process.

This government has listened to feedback, engaged directly over multiple years, and acted transparently. The Toolkit is the result of collaboration, not imposition, supporting business operations, public safety, and the long-term vision for Garema Place.

Crime—offences committed while on bail—petition 41-25

By **Ms Cheyne**, Attorney-General, dated 12 December 2025, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Milligan concerning ACT bail reform.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter about petition E-PET-041-25 ACT Bail Reform (the Petition), lodged by Mr James Milligan MLA, proposing reforms to ACT Bail laws “to strengthen risk-based decision making, reduce reoffending and support vulnerable young people and families”.

This letter and the attachments form the ACT Government’s response to the Petition.

The Government notes the matters raised in the Petition relate to:

- community concerns around reoffending while on bail;
- erosion of public trust in the bail system;
- the need to support vulnerable young people and families to stop the cycle of reoffending;
- the need to improve community safety;
- support for early intervention and rehabilitation; and
- the importance of having a system that protects the community while upholding the rights of both the accused and victims in accordance with the Human Rights Act 2004 and the Children and Young People Act 2008.

The Government has a role in ensuring the legislative framework for bail strikes the right balance between the rights of the victim, the rights of the alleged offender and the protection of the public; and putting in place services that support the operation of bail.

Bail is a key concept in the operation of the criminal justice system and is a consideration from the beginning of proceedings, when a person is in police custody, through to final contact with the courts. The Bail Act 1992 (the Bail Act) provides the legislative framework, but the overall operation of bail involves a much broader service system. Both the legislative framework and supporting bail services are informed by government policy decisions.

Bail decisions have a high impact on defendants, victims, witnesses and the broader community’s perceptions about the justice system. There has been ongoing public discussion about the need for bail reform in the ACT, with key community and stakeholder concerns being around:

- victim and community safety;
- the rights of the defendants;
- trust and confidence in the justice system;
- addressing high rates of remand and recidivism; and
- reducing overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system.

Bail policy underpins both the formulation of the legislative framework and the provision of services to victims and offenders. The policy must be multi-purpose as it seeks to address the complex challenges involved including:

- the need to protect victims and the wider community;
- failures to attend court in answer to bail;
- compliance with bail conditions;
- offending while on bail;
- the impact of the bail system on specific cohorts of alleged offenders such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, women, children and young people, and people with a disability; and
- the numbers of detainees on remand, as opposed to sentenced.

Ministerial Statement

On 2 December 2025, I made a Ministerial Statement in the Legislative Assembly in relation to Bail matters, announcing planned reforms to the ACT's bail legislative framework, and other work underway in relation to bail initiatives and support programs.

The statement covered concerns raised and proposals made in the Petition. A copy of that statement is attached (Attachment A).

I have also attached a copy of the statement I made in May 2025 (Attachment B) in response to the Assembly Resolution on Justice-bail law reform which:

- signalled the ACT Government's intention to modernise bail laws;
- encouraged contributions to a Discussion Paper, released the day before on the YourSay consultation website, entitled Review of decision-making criteria in the Bail Act 1992 (the Discussion Paper); and
- provided an update on work related to Recommendations 4, 8, 9 and 10 of the Bail Inquiry.

Bail Reform consultation

The Discussion Paper posed 19 questions, focussed on options for how the framework guiding judicial decision-making in relation to bail could be improved. In doing so, it was made clear that the ACT Government respects and would maintain the independence and discretion of the courts. Submissions in response to the Discussion Paper were accepted until 17 July 2025.

There were 39 submissions to the Discussion Paper:

- 12 submissions from community and advocacy organisations,
- seven from government entities; and
- 20 from individuals.

The submissions received ranged from personal accounts of interactions with the bail and criminal justice system, to more technical/legal responses. As such, a diverse range of views were expressed, highlighting inherent tensions between the

interests of the victim(s), interests of the accused, and interests of community safety and justice integrity. This emphasised the need for a government response to reforming the Bail Act that carefully balanced these interests, while upholding human rights, maintaining procedural fairness, and judicial independence and discretion.

The Justice and Community Safety Directorate continues to work with criminal justice stakeholders on legislative reforms and other issues arising out of the Discussion Paper submissions.

Legislative Reforms

As per my December 2025 Ministerial Statement, the Government intends to introduce a Bail Legislation Amendment Bill in the Legislative Assembly in early 2026. The Bill will include amendments to the Bail Act to:

- provide greater clarity to decision-makers about what considerations are to be taken into account when deciding a bail application;
- maintain the independence and discretion of decision-makers when deciding a bail application;
- maintain procedural fairness and consistency with the Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT); and
- elevate the concept of do no further harm to both the alleged victim(s) and the accused person when deciding a bail application.

Petition proposals

The Petition raises a number of proposals, both legislative and non-legislative. My December Ministerial Statement addressed some aspects of the Petition, and Attachment C provides more information in response to each of the proposals raised in the Petition.

The ACT Government acknowledges the concerns raised in the Petition and community concerns in relation to bail matters.

I trust that the information in this response reassures the community that their concerns have been carefully considered and that the Government is committed to a bail system that strikes the right balance between the rights of the victim, the rights of the alleged offender and the protection of the public; and includes services that support the operation of bail.

Roads—Canberra Avenue—petition 48-25

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 18 December 2025, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Emerson concerning an overpass on Canberra Avenue.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petition E-PET-048-25, lodged by

Mr Thomas Emerson MLA regarding the installation of an overpass on Canberra Avenue.

The Road Safety Action Plan commits ACT to a number of road safety principles including the Vision Zero (which means no deaths or serious injuries on our road transport network). The Road Safety Program has expanded on the Australian and ACT Governments' commitment to Vision Zero.

The concerns about pedestrian safety along Canberra Avenue have been raised since 2020. The ACT Government reviewed the safety of pedestrians in 2022 and 2023 and identified potential improvements to footpath connections, updating signs and median bollards to prevent illegal parking in the median. While path improvements were completed, the installation of bollards was subject to the National Capital Authority (NCA) approval and were not implemented.

A feasibility study into the crossing facilities near St Edmund and St Clare's college was undertaken in May 2024 and one of the objectives was to explore different type of pedestrian crossing facilities at this location including overpasses and underpasses.

These facilities were not considered as feasible options due to the following reasons:

- The large footprint of the structure will prevent meeting accessibility requirements, particularly the buildings on the northern side of the road (opposite St Clares) significantly impact the ability to achieve the pedestrian path of travel and adequate levels for accessibility, as in order to achieve a safe grade for the ramp a minimum length of ramp will be required;
- The impact on the utilities, services and existing trees on both sides of Canberra Avenue; and
- Security concerns from the nearby buildings and the structure where any overpass would encroach into the adjacent building line.

In addition, surveys around the world have found that pedestrians will always favour at grade intersections and won't use overpass or underpass facilities at times with low traffic. These facilities would not necessarily achieve desired level of patronage and pedestrian injury prevention.

The provision of a school zone was ruled out at the time, as Canberra Avenue is classified as an arterial road with around 20 thousand vehicles per day in both directions, with about 10% of the volume of traffic in the school pick up or drop-off times. The mean speed is about 60km/hour and based on the available information, signalised midblock pedestrian crossing was considered the most reasonable and practicable solution at the time.

The time it takes to cross a road is a major decision factor for pedestrians. If safe crossing facilities can be made easy to access and provide minimal delays, many studies have shown that they are more likely to use them. The proposal to install pedestrian activated traffic signals on Canberra Avenue, will not only provide a safer way to cross the road, but will also result in minimal delays to pedestrians wishing to cross the road. Upon pushing the button, pedestrians will be provided with a green walk signal in less than 20 seconds.

The unfortunate event from 28 March 2025, where two students from St Edmunds College were hit by a car whilst waiting to cross Canberra Avenue due to antisocial behaviour of a driver in a stolen vehicle, prompted the Government to commit to a new signalised midblock pedestrian crossing on Canberra Avenue. This project will be jointly funded by the ACT Government and the Australian Government through the Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program (SLRIP).

The Preliminary Sketch Design has been finalised at this point of time and the completion of the signalised crossing on Canberra Avenue east of Burke Street is anticipated by the end of 2025-26 financial year. It is also noted that Canberra Avenue is also subject to planning approval by the NCA and the design will be submitted to them for approval in the coming weeks. Further, any other future treatments in the corridor would require their approval.

I am pleased to inform you about the development of this significant project, and I trust this information is of assistance to the community.

Yarralumla—footpaths—petitions 56-25 and 68-25

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 18 December 2025, in response to petitions lodged by Ms Carrick concerning the construction of Weston Street path in Yarralumla.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petition E-PET-056-25 and PET-068-25, lodged by Ms Fiona Carrick MLA regarding the Construction of Weston Street path in Yarralumla.

City and Environment Directorate (CED) receives many requests for new paths from the community to provide improved connectivity within ACT's active travel network. Requests for new community paths are assessed using parameters such as proximity to shops, bus stops, terrain and overall impact to the path network and the community.

The request for a path along the southern verge of Weston Street between Hopetoun Circuit and Guilfoyle Street has been added to the list of active travel projects to be considered for future active travel infrastructure programs.

An assessment of the proposed path has been conducted by CED, and the overall analysis has found that the works are not an immediate priority. However, the community path priority list is dynamic; it changes as works are completed, and new requests are received.

I trust this information is useful.

Banks—dirt bike or pump track—petition 58-25

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 18 December 2025, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Parton concerning a bike pump track/dirt track

at Beau and Jesse Park in Banks.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petition E-PET-058-25, lodged by Mr Mark Parton MLA regarding a Bike Pump Track / Dirt Track at Beau and Jessie Park, Banks.

The ACT Government, through the City and Environment Directorate (CED) is responsible for the management of public space across the ACT, this includes skateparks, learn to ride centres, bike tracks, dog parks, community recreation parks and play spaces. The ACT Government is committed to safe, varied and inclusive play for young people within the community.

Investment upgrades and new capital works infrastructure initiatives will continue to be targeted primarily towards the broader community population. Broader community consultation provides basic indications of the need of the community and assists the Government to streamline the planning of new or improvements to recreational facilities. Current projects within the Tuggeranong District include play space upgrades at Bonython, Conder, Gilmore, Isabella Plains, Kambah and Wanniasa.

Requests for new or improvements to public recreational facilities are assessed and prioritised annually and considered for future improvements. The ACT's Play Space Strategy helps guide a strategic approach to investment across the ACT with pump and bike skills tracks considered to be play spaces. Feedback from the community through consultation on the Play Space Strategy has highlighted a greater desire for investment in higher quality, larger play spaces in central locations.

For this reason, a key focus area includes prioritising district and central play spaces for refresh and major upgrades.

Beau and Jessie Park, Banks is classified as a local neighbourhood park. At this stage there are no immediate plans for the ACT Government to build a bike pump track at Beau and Jessie Park. However, the CED 'Bumps and Berms Volunteer Program' is a way for the community to add additional play value to neighbourhood spaces across Canberra by designing and creating dirt bike tracks. These tracks are typically short, with features such as jumps and ramps (bumps) and banked turns (berms). A case study is provided with ACT's Play Space Strategy for Community-built bike tracks, which provides further information.

Further information regarding the 'Bumps and Berms Volunteer Program' can be accessed on the City Services website at <https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/public-spaces-and-facilities/play-spaces/bumps-and-berms>. The City Services website also includes a fact sheet regarding site suitability, planning considerations for track design and details to register as a volunteer. Members of the community should please feel free to contact the program manager via email at tccs.bumpsandberms@act.gov.au where they can arrange a site visit with ACT Government officials to review the location.

I trust the information provided above has been helpful.

Roads—safety—Charnwood—petitions 34-25 and 60-25

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 18 December 2025, in response to petitions lodged by Ms Clay concerning safer streets in Charnwood.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petitions E-PET-034-25 and PET-060-25, lodged by Ms Jo Clay MLA regarding safer streets in Charnwood.

The ACT Government takes road safety seriously and encourages all road users to share responsibility for road safety. The management of speed is a critical factor in reducing crash incidence and severity. As such, traffic management measures such as speed humps have been implemented in suburban areas in the ACT to address non-compliance of speed limits by motorists and the risks that this behaviour poses to other road users. These measures, together with enforcement efforts by ACT Policing and the Traffic Camera Office, are intended to reduce the level of speeding in the ACT.

Cartwright Street is a minor collector road that links fifteen other local streets, forming a network of connecting collector roads as well as providing residents with limited access to their properties. Footpaths are provided along the whole length of the street, where a default speed limit of 50km/h applies.

A 40km/h school zone has been provided in the vicinity of the Charnwood Dunlop School together with traffic calming to further calm the traffic movements. The most recent traffic surveys on Cartwright Street shows that it carries approximately 926 vehicles per day travelling at average speeds of around 46 km/h, which are within acceptable limits for the road environment.

Traffic calming measures such as speed humps and chicanes, are generally installed on road sections where high speeds by the majority of motorists are identified as major safety concerns. This has not been the case on Cartwright Street.

Given the above, there are no immediate plans to install any traffic calming measures on Cartwright Street. I have been advised that the City and Environment Directorate (CED) will continue to monitor the road and act where necessary.

I have also been informed that CED officers will reach out to the principal of the Charnwood-Dunlop School to discuss any road safety concerns they have for the area around the school.

Roads ACT has recently drafted guidelines for setting speed limits that now includes potential for a 30km/h speed limit. These guidelines reflect national best practice and are modelled on the guidance recently released in NSW.

A potential trial of a 30km/h speed limit, including calming features to manage vehicle speeds is proposed for Sherbrook Street in Ainslie. This potential trial is subject to consideration and funding for the construction works. If supported, monitoring of the scheme will be undertaken both before and after the scheme is in place.

It is recommended that the outcomes of the Sherbrook Street 30km/h speed limit be assessed before any further 30km/h speed limits are considered.

Roads—safety—Cotter Road—petitions 43-25 and 59-25

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 18 December 2025, in response to petitions lodged by Ms Carrick concerning the installation of traffic lights and bus stops on Cotter Road at Amberfield Village.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petitions E-PET-043-25 and PET-059-25, lodged by Ms Fiona Carrick MLA regarding the installation of traffic lights and bus stops on Cotter Road at Amberfield Village.

The ACT Government takes road safety very seriously and will continue to meet with representatives of LDK Amberfield to assist with addressing matters including potential traffic lights at the Cotter Road entrance to LDK Amberfield (Fryer Road), the provision of bus stops and active travel infrastructure connections.

The safety concerns raised through petitions (E-PET-043-25 and PET-059-25) along with the potential impact through ongoing site development have led to investigations regarding the adequacy of access at the intersection of Cotter Road and Fryer Road.

The Cotter Road corridor is within a Designated Area and forms part of ACT's Main Avenues and Approach Routes under the National Capital Plan. The Amberfield retirement village is located on Blocks 864 and 1151 Weston Creek. Blocks 864 and 1151 Weston Creek are also within a Designated Area, however, this Lease is administered and regulated by the Territory.

The Crown Lease for Blocks 1151 and 864 Weston Creek includes details for the Lease item of 'Costs for Access' and lists the following clause (3b):

That the Lessee shall pay to the Territory any and all reasonable costs associated with any upgrade to Cotter Road to enable adequate access to the land upon its redevelopment for use as commercial accommodation, community facility, scientific research establishment or tourist facility (not including a service station). Such upgrade/s shall be carried out in accordance with a traffic study prepared by a suitably qualified person at the cost of the Lessee. All reasonable costs and expenses incurred by the Territory in carrying out the work on behalf of the Lessee shall be paid by the Lessee to the Territory on demand and from the date of such demand until paid shall for all purposes of this lease be a debt due and payable to the Territory by the Lessee.

Clauses of the Lease for Blocks 1151 and 864 Weston Creek, including the cost for access clause, apply for the duration of the Lease. The Lease conditions continue to apply following National Capital Authority's (NCA) Works Approval (WA102455).

Whilst this petition (E-PET-043-25 and PET-059-25) calls on the ACT Government to install traffic lights and install bus stops, this upgrade work for access associated with the development would be subject to NCA Works Approval with the costs being a matter for negotiation between the Territory and Amberfield Village.

As ACT's road network manager, Roads ACT considers the need to balance traffic flow, accessibility and safety for all modes of transport. The Cotter Road corridor is already experiencing significant congestion during peak periods, with demand regularly exceeding capacity. In addition, Cotter Road is a key inter-town public transport corridor, which is intended to support bus priority. Therefore, any future installation of a new set of traffic signals in that corridor would need to be carefully assessed and would be considered as part of the NCA's planning process.

Roads ACT has discussed the safety concerns associated with right turn movements into and out of Amberfield Village with LDK representatives. In addition, short-term or temporary traffic management measures are actively being investigated and discussed between Amberfield Village and Roads ACT whilst construction works are underway to improve road safety and minimise disruption for all road users.

To assist with identifying longer term solutions Roads ACT has recently developed a SIDRA Traffic Model for the Cotter Road / Fryer Road intersection to test potential intersection treatments. Preliminary intersection assessment and traffic analysis has been undertaken for five options and discussed with LDK representatives, including:

- Ban right turn out from Fryer Road.
- Ban all right turns.
- Traffic signals with no pedestrian crossing.
- Traffic signals with pedestrian crossing.
- Traffic signals with pedestrian crossing and eastbound bus jump lane.

Preliminary investigation by Roads ACT has highlighted that signalisation with the provision of pedestrian crossing facilities is forecast to result in increased delays and queuing during morning peak hour when compared to the existing geometry (current baseline). Queuing could also interfere with the operation of the Tuggeranong Parkway / Cotter Roads interchange.

Banning of some turning movements would improve safety at the intersection but result in u-turning manoeuvres at other nearby locations – possibly requiring modification to nearby intersections so that crash risk doesn't increase at other locations.

With respect to the petition's request for bus stops, the City and Environment Directorate (CED) would not support the installation of bus stops on Cotter Roads adjacent to the development unless a safe crossing facility can be provided by the Lessee. The ACT Government is willing to consider options put forward by LDK Amberfield that may facilitate this need. Alternatively, other non-infrastructure options should also be considered with an example being a shuttle bus service run by the Amberfield retirement village.

Next steps include:

- Roads ACT will continue to discuss and assess short term options proposed by Amberfield Village, potentially through temporary traffic management arrangements whilst construction works are underway at Amberfield Village.
- LDK Amberfield intends to submit a potential infrastructure upgrade option to the NCA and ACT Government for future consideration. Roads ACT have suggested that this option also consider a path connection to the existing Cotter Road path underpass, further to the east.
- The feasibility of LDK's preferred infrastructure solution/s would then need to be assessed and discussed with the NCA and CED to support progression through NCA's planning system.

The ACT Government takes the concerns raised seriously. I trust this information is useful.

Roads—collisions with wildlife—petition 31-25

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 18 December 2025, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Clay concerning a virtual fencing trial in Canberra.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petition E-PET-031-25, lodged by Ms Jo Clay MLA regarding a virtual fencing trial in Canberra.

Canberra's proximity to the bush makes Canberra a special place to live. Unfortunately, this also leads to unfortunate incidents where our wildlife is affected by proximity to city infrastructure.

In 2024-25, there were 4,464 macropod-related incidents reported by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, of which the vast majority were kangaroos struck by vehicles. This is considerably higher than the average of 2,995 reported annually since 2016-17, and represents a considerable safety, cost and animal welfare concern.

Virtual fences are single solar power devices installed along roadways that emit sound and light at night when a car approaches. The sound and light emitted by the virtual fence are designed to alert wildlife to an approaching motor vehicle. Virtual fences have been trialled at various locations across Australia in an attempt to reduce the frequency of collisions between wildlife and motor vehicles.

A report commissioned by Transport for NSW in December 2024 titled "Using technology to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions – Literature review and directions paper" discusses virtual fences and provides an overview of the research trials to date. These trials have shown mixed success and the experimental design of some studies has been criticised. The report also notes that most claims of high success rates lack scientifically robust data. Based on currently available research, there is no strong evidence to suggest virtual fences are an effective method for reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions.

The report concludes that virtual fencing should not be trialled further in its current form.

The report states:

“Virtual fencing, in its current state, is not recommended for in-situ trialling on roads or railways in NSW or Australia. (Section 5.2.1.1). Wayside deterrents have limited effect because the effectiveness of the specific auditory and visual stimuli at alerting different species is unknown, the ability of target species to hear the stimuli above traffic noise and other disturbance is also unknown, and the ability of the system to trigger the appropriate response of targets species is unknown. Further development and testing of biologically relevant stimuli is recommended as a next step.” (page 58).

A pilot study conducted in Queensland has shown that Eastern Grey Kangaroos do respond to the sound emitted by a single virtual fence device by showing increased vigilance behaviour, but further research is required to determine the effect of the lights on kangaroos and how kangaroos respond to virtual fences in a roadside setting. Based on this information and at this early stage, it would seem premature for the ACT Government to consider a trial until a greater understanding of the specific impact and response of target species to auditory and visual stimuli is obtained. This is something that a research institution would be best placed to design and undertake.

The ACT Governments Road Safety Strategy is targeted at achieving the ‘Vision Zero’ that seeks to prevent death and serious injury to people. While kangaroo crashes can cause injury and death to kangaroos, and considerable damage to vehicles, such crashes seldom result in serious injury or death to people.

The latest crash records for Erindale Drive between Long Gully Road and Sulwood Drive, show that in the past seven years (January 2018 to December 2024) a total of 23 crashes were reported. Six were reported as collisions with animals with none of those six requiring medical treatment. The crash record for Erindale Drive does not indicate a road safety concern related to wildlife and so this location would not be a priority for wildlife collision mitigation measures on the basis of road safety crash reduction alone.

During the same period, Parks and Conservation Service rangers attended approximately 170 macropod-related incidents along that stretch of road, most of which were Eastern Grey Kangaroos. Additional collisions are likely to have gone unreported. This highlights a welfare issue for macropods and for the people involved in or witnessing these collisions. However, while this location does experience a high number of kangaroo-vehicle collisions, there are other roads with higher collision rates and decisions about installing mitigation measures at this site must be considered strategically within the context of collision rates across the whole of the ACT.

While virtual fencing may appear to be an attractive solution and I can appreciate why the petition received such strong support, the available evidence does not yet provide a strong basis to warrant support.

The ACT Government remains committed to actively engaging in the development and implementation of technologies that enhance road safety and promote animal welfare, particularly in relation to mitigating wildlife collisions. Wildlife collision mitigation measures such as underpasses and fencing have been

installed on various roads in the ACT and research has been undertaken to understand the factors influencing wildlife collision rates and to identify collision hotspots. The ACT Government will continue to consider options for reducing kangaroo collisions through the new Buru (Eastern Grey Kangaroo): Controlled Native Species Management Plan which is currently open for public consultation.

I trust this information has been of assistance.

Ecosystems—understorey planting—petitions 28-25 and 61-25

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 18 December 2025, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Braddock concerning habitat development in urban Canberra.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter regarding petitions E-PET 028-25 and PET 061-25, lodged by Mr Andrew Braddock MLA regarding habitat development in urban Canberra.

The ACT Government shares the commitment to enhance biodiversity and ecological resilience. We acknowledge the value of understorey planting and habitat enhancements, which are key actions under the ACT Urban Forest Strategy. These efforts are supported by projects such as the Urban Forest Ecological Advice initiative, the Tree Health and Biodiversity Restoration guidelines, and the Connecting Nature, Connecting People program, which delivered 20 demonstration sites in collaboration with community groups in 2024-25.

Mowing remains necessary in many areas to manage bushfire risk, maintain visibility, support access and control weeds. Crews avoid mowing directly under tree canopies to protect tree health and an unmown buffer is left around water bodies to prevent erosion and filter runoff into the water body. Some areas of conservation significance are not mown as regularly, or at all, to ensure conservation values are maintained. Barriers are put in place to protect these areas to keep mowing away from conservation areas. The City and Environment Directorate (CED) continues to seek ecological advice from across ACT Government to explore opportunities to further reduce mowing in suitable areas, while balancing safety and other amenity needs.

Felled timber is reused in nature reserves and selected urban spaces to support habitat and nature play but is only retained in high-use parks where it can be installed and managed to not pose safety or access concerns.

The ACT Government recently undertook community consultation on the draft Urban Wood Reuse Plan which outlines how the ACT Government plans to reuse harvested wood and achieve the best environmental, economic and social outcomes for the Canberra community.

CED also works with Urban Parks and Places volunteer groups, and groups who have received an ACT Environment grant, to facilitate safe and appropriate use of salvaged urban logs in projects achieving weed control, habitat restoration and site revegetation.

The ACT Government recognises the value of understorey planting as part of a healthy urban forest. This is a key focus of the Urban Forest Strategy and is supported by a range of initiatives, including the Urban Forest Ecological Advice project, Tree Health and Biodiversity Restoration guidelines, and the Connecting Nature, Connecting People program. These efforts are helping to restore habitat, improve connectivity, and strengthen the resilience of our urban ecosystems. Progress against these actions has been documented annually since 2021 in the Urban Tree Canopy Coverage Report, which can be found on the City Services webpage.

However, careful consideration of individual sites is essential prior to installing understory vegetation, as there are necessary limitations within inner asset protection zones.

The arrangement of fuels is important for effective bushfire management. A combination of surface and near surface fuels (litter and long grasses) and elevated fuels such as shrubs in combination with tree cover leads to much greater risk. Work from Wollongong University has shown that well maintained ground cover such as mowed grass and patchy shrub cover (rather than continuous shrub layer) under trees can reduce risk substantially. This is reflected in the way fire fuels are assessed by bushfire managers, where overall fuel hazard is strongly influenced by the presence of multiple vertical fuel elements and not just the canopy layer.

In an urban context, where mowing, pruning and other management activities occur, the amount of litter and groundcover, coarse woody debris and shrubs that provide a “fire ladder” to the tree canopy are reduced, or entirely absent, minimising potential crown fires.

Gravel surfaces are commonly installed in road median strips and similar locations where regular maintenance, such as mowing, weeding and tree maintenance, is unsafe or impractical. These areas often present challenges due to steep ground slopes, limited access, historical chemical use, and safety risks to maintenance crews. Additionally, Austroads guidelines restrict planting in certain median locations to maintain visibility and reduce hazards. The placement of services in medians can also be an impediment to planting. In such cases, gravel or granite is selected as the most suitable solution to ensure safety, reduce maintenance needs, and maintain a clean, low-risk urban environment.

The petition aligns with many current initiatives, and I thank the principal petitioner and signatories for their advocacy.

Scullin—play space upgrades—petitions 45-25 and 67-25

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 13 January 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Mr Cain concerning the upgrade of Duigan Street Park and Playground in Scullin.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petitions E-PET-045 and PET-067-25 regarding the upgrade of Duigan Street Park and Playground in Scullin.

You may be aware that the ACT Government manages over 500 playgrounds across the ACT. It does so in accordance with the objectives of the ACT Play Space Strategy, which are to keep playgrounds safe and welcoming for better health, wellbeing and connectedness of the ACT community.

The ACT Government's Play Space Strategy helps guide a strategic approach to investment across the entire play space network to ensure Canberrans have equitable access to a mix of district (larger, destination playgrounds like John Knight Memorial Park), central (play spaces located near community hubs, like at Holt or Cook shops), and local playgrounds (play spaces near homes with basic structured play equipment).

Feedback from the community through consultation on the Play Space Strategy highlighted a greater desire for investment in higher quality, larger play spaces in central locations.

In particular:

The ACT community supports a 'quality over quantity' approach to improving the play space network. In the Canberra Destination Play Space Study, 84% of participants said they would prefer fewer but higher quality play spaces in their suburbs. This support for quality reflects how play spaces are used across Canberra, with many more people visiting district and central play spaces than local play spaces.

The citizen-led Better Suburbs Statement 2030 concluded: "The focus should be on quality over quantity in play spaces and... we should use the existing budget to concentrate efforts on a smaller range of better facilities." This recognises that simply seeking to maintain all ageing, under-used play spaces does not enhance the play value within our network or help us to meet community aspirations for quality play experiences.

ACT Play Space Strategy, page 27

For this reason, the key focus area for the ACT Government is prioritising district and central play areas and spaces for investment, including refresh and major upgrades. What this looks like is continuing to strengthen the quality and availability of public amenities around district play spaces, prioritising delivery of central play spaces to older suburbs that currently do not have these, and generally directing investment in local play spaces towards safety maintenance and minor refurbishments.

The *ACT Labor—Belconnen Regional Plan* outlines the commitments the ACT Government took to the election, including in relation to new and upgraded playgrounds. The commitments outlined in that plan form the work program for new and upgraded playgrounds to be delivered across the four-year term of Government for Belconnen (that is, until 2028). Those commitments for Belconnen include:

- A new playground, toilet and other facilities at Margaret Timpson Park (central);
- A new water play area at Emu Inlet in Belconnen Town Centre (central);
- A new Florey all-abilities playground (central);

- An upgrade playground at Umbagog District Park (district); and
- A new playground in McKellar (local).

Duigan Street Park and Playground was not included for improvements in the Regional Plan. Because of this, I regret to advise that upgrades are not currently planned for Duigan Street in this term of Government.

The Duigan Street Park and Playground in Scullin play space is classified as a local neighbourhood play space within a local neighbourhood park. Consistent with the ACT Place Space Strategy, investment is directed towards safety maintenance and minor refurbishments.

That said, I recognise that there may be future opportunities to increase the number of central play areas in and around Scullin and existing local neighbourhood play spaces would be considered as part of that work.

Any urgent maintenance or safety issues may be registered through Fix My Street portal at www.act.gov.au/fixmystreet or Access Canberra on 13 22 81. This system enables reports and requests to be tracked, logged and followed up in a timely manner.

Government—investments and procurement—petitions 55-25 and 69-25

By **Mr Steel**, Treasurer, dated 22 January 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Mr Braddock concerning divestment from the economy of genocide.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter about petitions E-PET-055-25 and PET-069-25 lodged by Mr Andrew Braddock MLA in the Legislative Assembly on 22 October 2025 about Divestment from the Economy of Genocide.

The ACT Government remains committed to a responsible investment framework and ongoing and regular reviews of the Responsible Investment Policy to ensure a cohesive, reliable and robust framework continues to be applied to investments the ACT makes.

As the Assembly would be aware, on 31 January 2025, I wrote to you with the ACT Government's response to a similar petition E-PET-034-24 about Human Rights and Palestine. This followed on from the response tabled on 29 August 2024 by the former Treasurer, Mr Andrew Barr MLA, to the Assembly's 7 February 2024 motion about Human Rights Incompliant Companies Divestments.

While I note that since my last response in early 2025, in September 2025 the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) updated its database (the first since 30 June 2023), the ACT Government continues to consider this database, or lists such as the companies mentioned in the report released by the UN Special Rapporteur, Francesca Albanese, are not an appropriate tool for inclusion in the ACT Government's Responsible Investment Policy framework.

As previously noted, the Responsible Investment Policy assessment already includes Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) controversies research methodologies and rating assessment processes, which are comprehensive, robust and consistently applied across all listed company investments. Importantly, the ESG-related controversy assessment framework is supported by independent research, clear, consistent and transparent methodologies and processes, with the assessment criteria aligned with accepted international norms and conventions.

The ACT Government Procurement Framework incorporates requirements which support Territory entities to address transparent and ethical engagement and fair and safe conditions for workers throughout the procurement lifecycle, including: the *Government Procurement (Charter of Values) Direction 2020*, which codifies the ACT Government's commitment to ensuring that ACT Government procurement is transparent and ethical through the 'Transparent and Ethical Engagement' procurement values.

Further restrictions on the sale and procurement of goods and services from the particular location may be inconsistent with Australia's obligations under various free trade agreements, agreements which the Territory is bound to comply with being part of the Commonwealth of Australia. The Legislative Assembly's competence to enact a ban may also be impeded by the Commonwealth Constitution. Respectfully, the ACT Government considers that this issue would be more appropriately directed to the Commonwealth Government.

With respect to the application of the *Human Rights Act 2004* (ACT), the human rights issues raised by the petitioners are also more appropriately directed to the Commonwealth as it is the Commonwealth that is the 'State Party' to the international human rights conventions and upon which obligations are imposed.

I acknowledge the requests of the petitioners, and as advised previously, these matters are complex and pose a range of significant legal and jurisdictional questions. The ACT Government is not in position to address these matters, which are more appropriately dealt with by the Commonwealth.

I thank the petitioners for raising these matters with the Legislative Assembly. I trust this response is of assistance.

Motion to take note of petitions

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

That the petitions and responses so lodged be noted.

Margaret Timpson Park—petitions 76-25 and 7-26

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (11.09): I speak briefly about the petition I sponsored regarding the expansion of Margaret Timpson Park, which I note, for the Assembly's attention, received 307 electronic signature supports, and yesterday morning I lodged 135 signatures on paper versions. Unfortunately, my office received in the mail this morning, 33 signatures on paper petitions that had been mailed in to my office.

I realise that there is a proposal for some community housing there. I say to the

government, and also to the Greens, that with so much densification happening around Belconnen, including yet to be developed land to the other side of the Belconnen mall, there is so much opportunity for community housing around Belconnen. We have an increasing population. I spoke to a family at the park—a representative of a family at the park—who want to live in an apartment with their young family, and they would love to see a bigger park around where they live to have their children have some more space near where they live.

I am appreciative of the opportunity to speak on two occasions to the Belconnen Alliance of High-rise Apartments, which, effectively, are a resident representative body for apartment dwellers around the Belconnen town centre. Surprise, surprise, they would like to see a bigger park!

So I do urge the minister to consider the expansion of this park—not a significant expansion, I might say—and to provide more green space for so many reasons, not just for families and residents: for a green space in an urban heat island that is growing in its intensity of development, and for a growing population to have greater amenity and greater openness near where they live.

I particularly urge the Greens to review their position, because I will unashamedly call you the anti-green-space Greens if you maintain your opposition to a slightly increased green space in an increasingly densified town centre. I am really shocked by their position, and I do hope and open the conversation for them to amend that.

Roads—safety—Cotter Road—petitions 43-25 and 59-25

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (11.12): I rise to speak regarding the government's response to the petitions lodged by Ms Carrick regarding the installation of traffic lights and bus stops on the Cotter Road at Amberfield Village.

It is always disappointing when things are incorrectly reported in the media, and I believe this has, unfortunately, been the case regarding the government's petition response and the government's position on the traffic lights on the Cotter Road and Fryer Road, providing access to LDK residents.

The government's response from the Minister for City and Government Services has, in fact, not ruled out a signalised intersection at this location. Minister Cheyne has, in fact, said that the future installation of a new set of traffic signals in that corridor would need to be carefully assessed and would be considered as part of the NCA's planning process.

To inform this, Roads ACT has recently developed a SIDRA traffic model for the Cotter Road/Fryer Road intersection to test potential intersection treatments. Preliminary intersection assessment and traffic analysis has been undertaken on five options and discussed with LDK representatives, including: banning right turns from Fryer Road, banning all right turns, traffic signals with no pedestrian crossing, traffic signals with pedestrian crossings, traffic signals with pedestrian crossings and an eastbound bus jump lane.

Of these, only the options for traffic signals with pedestrian crossings were problematic. As the government's response notes, the investigation by Roads ACT highlighted that signalisation with the provision of pedestrian crossing facilities is forecast to result in increased delays in queuing during the morning peak hour when compared to the existing road geometry. Queuing could also interfere with the operation of the Tuggeranong Parkway/Cotter Road interchange.

The government understands that LDK Amberfield intends to submit a potential infrastructure upgrade option to the NCA and ACT government for future consideration, such as a signalised intersection without a pedestrian crossing. Short-term or temporary traffic management measures are also actively being investigated and discussed between Amberfield Village and Roads ACT, whilst construction works by LDK are still underway, to improve road safety and minimise disruption for all road users. I would like to thank the residents of LDK Amberfield for their support for this petition. I look forward to engaging further with them on this issue.

Parking—Theatre Lane car park closure—petition 72-25

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (11.15): I rise to speak on the petition that I have tabled with respect to access to Theatre Lane car park. First, I sincerely thank and acknowledge Danny, Nesh and many of the hardworking local business owners who have driven this petition, who have driven this issue, and who spoke to me about their concerns last year and have done so consistently. Their persistence reflects just how deeply this issue is affecting their day-to-day operations and the viability of their future.

Mr Milligan and I brought a motion on this very issue last year and we did so because these business owners were desperate. They felt ignored, dismissed and, frankly, abandoned by an increasingly arrogant Labor government that has shown little interest in listening to the people most affected by its decisions. These businesses have endured disruption after disruption—the upheaval of light rail disruption, the closure of nearby car parks, the redevelopment of Garema Place and now the complete closure of the Theatre Lane car park.

But the fundamental issue here reaches well beyond construction inconvenience. It goes to the heart of a government that refuses to meaningfully consult with Canberrans whose livelihoods are impacted—a government that sees consultation as a procedural tick-in-the-box hurdle, not a genuine responsibility. Last year, during debate on the motion that Mr Milligan and I brought, the Chief Minister said:

We will continue to undertake regular, substantive and ongoing consultation with businesses impacted by the construction projects.

That simply does not align with the experiences of the people that we are talking to. Small business owners, residents, ratepayers, community groups all tell us the same thing: that this government's version of consultation is a box-ticking exercise and far too often happens after decisions have already been made. Some business owners told us that they were blindsided by the closure of Theatre Lane car park. Others learnt of the closure through the media or word of mouth, not from their own government, despite having elected to receive regular updates. That is not consultation; that is disrespect.

Let's be clear: genuine consultation gives the community the chance to influence outcomes before they are finalised. It means listening to the people who understand the issues the best and are able to articulate the impacts—sometimes the devastating impacts—an issue has on their livelihood. In this case, it means respecting the expertise of local business owners, who understand better than anyone how people move through their precinct and what their customers need.

The Chief Minister went on to say in response to concerns raised about the lack of genuine consultation with the very businesses who are being significantly impacted:

I accept there has obviously been a failure here and will endeavour to do better.

Do better? The car park has already closed. The Chief Minister has made it very clear he will not consider a partial reopening, which is what the businesses have repeatedly asked for. So I ask again: what will he do better on? The decision has been made, the damage is being felt and local businesses are left to pick up the pieces once again. So, after nearly a quarter of a century in power, if this government has not yet learnt how to conduct real, respectful, two-way consultation, why should any Canberran now believe that it will do better?

More than 800 people have signed this petition. They are not asking for the Lyric Theatre construction to stop. They support measures to make improvements in our city centre. They want the livelihood that will come with a construction project of this kind. What they are simply asking for is that this government take seriously their concerns when they say, time and time again, that it is having a devastating impact on their businesses. These are the people who have put their livelihoods on the line. These are people who have put mortgages on the line. These are people who do not stop at 5 pm. These are people who are thinking about their businesses 24/7—and this is having a devastating impact on them.

This is a serious issue. Local businesses rely on accessibility. They depend on convenience for the customers to find them. If you take away their closest, most practical parking option, you take away customers and that means you take away their business—you take away revenue, you take away stability and you take away the viability of their business entirely. These are real people, hardworking Canberrans, with staff and families depending on them for support—and, once again, this is a government that has let them down.

**Government—investments and procurement—petitions 55-25 and 69-25
Ecosystems—understorey planting—petitions 28-25 and 61-25**

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (11.20): I wish to speak to the Palestine divestment petition, which the government has responded to. Frankly, it is deeply disappointing response not only because of what it says but also because of what it refuses to confront. We know that peace does not arrive by accident; it is built through choices, through courage and through the willingness to act when injustice is clear. We have a role to play in bringing about peace and in helping to bring it sooner. This petition asked the government to recognise that responsibility.

The requests before the Assembly in this petition were not radical. They were clear, practical and grounded in established legal fact and definition. Yet, for the second time, this government has found a way to dodge its responsibilities. The petition called for a full divestment from firms and institutions identified by the United Nations—an impartial and respected third party, as being complicit in human rights violations. It also asked, explicitly, for new legislation to ban the sale and procurement of goods and services derived from Israeli settlements, settlements that are illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention. That is not just an opinion; that is international law.

International law, including the provisional measures and advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice, obliges all levels of government to take steps to prevent genocide and to avoid aiding or assisting serious human rights violations. That obligation is both moral and legal. It does not disappear at the border of the ACT. It does not vanish because the task is politically uncomfortable. Current ESG criteria are plainly inadequate if they allow public money to be invested in companies linked to genocide or illegal occupation. Ethical investment cannot simply be a branding exercise; it must reflect real human consequences. Otherwise, the words “responsible government” lose all meaning.

Here in the ACT we have an opportunity to demonstrate leadership and lead the nation on this issue. It is clear that the people of this city want that leadership. More than 1,300 Canberrans signed this petition. Countless more showed up to protests week after week. Canberrans of all faiths and identities are telling us they do not want their government to be complicit in war crimes or genocide. They want their taxes and their public institutions to stand on the side of human rights.

It is time we showed those Canberrans that their government cares as much as they do about the suffering that is going on right now in Gaza. It is time we showed some political will to fix a problem that is not abstract but measured in shattered homes, starving families, and thousands of lost lives. I want to extend my sincere thanks to the hardworking people at the Palestine Action Group of Canberra who made this petition possible and, in particular, Tamara, Lama and Mussa, who have poured countless hours, energy and heart into this effort. Their commitment reflects the very best of our community. This chamber can choose to listen to them or it can continue to look away.

I also wish to speak briefly to the second petition that I lodged which the government responded to relating to habitat within our city. I would like to thank the principal petitioner, John Giacon, behind that effort. I particularly enjoyed the opportunity to explore with John the work he has done to beautify parts of Belconnen, turning what were essentially mowed grasslands into vibrant ecosystems full of different types of vegetation and flora and fauna.

Whilst talking to John, he expressed the importance of changing the culture within City Services to be more open to the style of revegetation and enabling the habitat within our own city urban limits that allows flora and fauna to thrive, to allow diversity and to move from the default of just mowing everything to making the default “no mow” and actively bringing in where the mowed areas could be as a way of changing that culture within City Services to allow greater embracement of that urban habitat.

Roads—collisions with wildlife—petition 31-25

Roads—safety—Charnwood—petitions 34-25 and 60-25

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.24): I would like to speak to two of the responses tabled to petitions today. I want to thank the community members who brought those. I want to thank Dave, who brought the safer streets in Charnwood petition—thank you, Dave—and Aisha, who brought the virtual fencing trial in Canberra petition.

It is disappointing that the ACT Labor government has ruled out trialling virtual fencing. There were 1,350 Canberrans who asked for a trial along one part of Erindale Drive, which the government recognises as a hotspot for kangaroo-vehicle collisions. Canberra experiences a high rate of wildlife vehicle collisions, with kangaroos being one of the most affected. Rangers commonly report over 1,000 kangaroos called in as dead or injured by the road each year, and it is estimated that collisions might be twice as many as the reported sightings. Those incidents not only harm the wildlife but also pose significant risks to motorists.

Virtual fencing is a non-invasive and relatively inexpensive technology designed to prevent wildlife-vehicle collisions by alerting animals to oncoming traffic. Virtual fencing emits high-frequency sounds and flashing lights when they detect the headlights of approaching vehicles at night or in low-light conditions.

I understand the government's response. They have said they will not trial this because there have been some instances where virtual fencing has not worked out for the community and there is some mixed evidence on how effective it is. There are a number of success stories nationally, like in Eurobodalla in New South Wales, where a virtual fencing trial led to a 90 per cent reduction in kangaroo fatalities along a known hotspot. On Victoria surf coast, a virtual fencing trial has halved the number of vehicle collisions with macropods.

Canberrans asked for this trial to see if it works, and I think that is the best reason to run a trial. If you are not sure if it works and if you have mixed evidence, that is a really good reason to run a trial and see what happens in your local conditions. If it did work, it is something that we could roll out more broadly and we could spare people the horror and distress of accidentally hitting a kangaroo. It is a relatively cheap intervention. So it is one that we could test out and see if it works here in Canberra. If it is successful, it will mean that wildlife does not unnecessarily suffer. It will spare our people, our wildlife carers and our rangers, from the trauma of dealing with injured animals.

We are disappointed that there is no ambition from the government to trial and test virtual fencing here in Canberra—but the community is not giving up hope. They will continue to advocate alongside their friends, neighbours and colleagues to see if we can still have a virtual fencing trial here in the ACT.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Pools—swimming pools and aquatic facilities
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) (11.27): I rise today to talk on the aquatic strategy. I want to update the Assembly on ACT-owned aquatic centres and the work that has taken place across our facilities over the past year as well as to provide an update on the ACT aquatic strategy.

Infrastructure Canberra is the custodian of seven of the territory's major aquatic facilities—the Canberra Olympic Pool, Dickson Pool, Gungahlin Leisure Centre, Lakeside Leisure Centre, Manuka Pool, Erindale Leisure Centre and Stromlo Leisure Centre. Across all centres, the government works closely with our operators—Big Island at Manuka Pool and Belgravia Leisure over the remaining facilities. Together we manage daily operations, respond to planned and unplanned maintenance needs and progress upgrades that keep these facilities safe, modern and welcoming for all Canberrans.

Our public pools are incredibly popular. Last year, there were over one million visits to Canberra's public pools. With continued improvements, we expect to see strong visitation again throughout this year. Last year was a huge year for our public pools. The ACT government opened the new hydrotherapy pool at Lakeside Leisure Centre, a facility that has been embraced by the community. We also completed upgrades across Stromlo, Dickson, Manuka and Lakeside pools and smoothly transitioned management of the Erindale Leisure Centre to Belgravia. Some of the key upgrades included new lockers and splash park repairs at Stromlo, major investment at Dickson Pool, almost \$1 million supporting a new filtration system, improved drainage to reduce energy use, landscaping and café enhancements. At Manuka Pool, a suite of upgrades improved safety, staff facilities and ensured the pool remained family friendly. At Lakeside Leisure Centre, members told us what mattered to them, and we responded with new gym equipment, energy efficiency improvements as well as refreshed changerooms.

Supporting the community remains at the heart of what we do for our aquatic facilities. The ACT government continually monitors the condition of our pools, responds to changing safety standards and takes on board the feedback we receive from staff, members and visitors. Our annual Customer Experience and Relationship Management Surveys provide valuable insights that help identify areas for improvement.

Members will recall that I said publicly a number of times last year that the ACT government would develop a new ACT aquatic strategy, and I wish to provide an update to the new aquatic strategy today. The current Aquatic Facilities Planning Framework has been in place since 2013 and saw the construction of the Gungahlin Leisure Centre in 2014 and the Stromlo Leisure Centre in 2020 as well as our newest pool on the southside, the hydrotherapy pool, in August last year.

As with many long-term strategic documents, periodic review is necessary to ensure relevance and responsiveness to community needs. It is time. After listening to and meeting with key stakeholders last year, I am excited to lead the government's development of the new aquatic strategy, to provide a clear direction on aquatic facility needs across our city as it continues to grow. I know how much Canberrans love our public pools. I love our public pools. Like many of you in this room, they were part of my upbringing and my children's, and it is a priority to keep that alive for future generations to come, especially because we are an inland city.

Early project planning has started and preparation for procurement activities is

underway. The new aquatic strategy will investigate a range of requirements for the future of pools in Canberra, including a new 50-metre outdoor public pool in Woden to complement existing and planned facilities. The strategy will also look at options for the provision of competition and recreation dive facilities, including use of these facilities for other deep-water aquatic sports. Also, we will consider the need for new aquatic facilities in growth areas of Canberra, such as West Belconnen. But we are not just looking at new pools; we are also undertaking a condition audit of the existing public pools we know and love, which will provide guidance on operational maintenance and standards.

To ensure this strategy reflects expert advice and best practice approaches, the ACT government intends to engage a suitably qualified consultant to assist in its development. This process will include active engagement and consultation with key stakeholders, building on recent community input provided during the Canberra Aquatic Centre design consultation, which is available via YourSay ACT.

The ACT government is committed to ensuring Canberra's aquatic facilities continue to meet the needs of our growing and diverse community. I look forward to keeping the Assembly informed as this work progresses and to engaging with all stakeholders and the community as we shape the future of Canberra's aquatic facilities together.

I present the following paper:

Pools and aquatic strategy—Ministerial statement, 3 February 2026.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (11.33): While I am pleased to hear the discussion of the ACT aquatic strategy, I cannot help wondering what the Canberra community would feel when they hear the words, "It is now time to act on this." The thing is that they have been telling us it is time for quite a while now. I am really keen to see this aquatic strategy give our community the access to quality pools that they deserve.

The Canberra community have made it very clear that access to public pools is critical, and the heatwaves this summer only highlighted the further need for our government to get our aquatic facilities up to scratch. Pools remain one of the most accessible, reliable forms of heat relief and, as we continue to cop hotter summers as the climate changes, they will only become more and more important to Canberra.

We have seen our pool petitions overflow with signatures, including the two that my colleague Jo Clay MLA sponsored about Big Splash. The first received over 500 signatures, and the second, which only began last week, I believe has almost 3,000 signatures. That is pretty damn good. People want to ensure there is public access to these facilities. Ms Fiona Carrick's save Phillip pool petition, with over 6,000 signatures in 130-odd days, only served to demonstrate this point further.

The update provided by the minister points to some steps for the future, but we also know that folks are worried about pools which are already closed or soon will be, like

Phillip pool and, of course, Big Splash. Our community also want a dive pool at the new proposed Commonwealth Park facility. It looks like the government currently has no plans to do that, either.

The community's concerns are not only about losing access to these facilities but also about the lack of clarity around decision-making. I believe we have yet to see any needs analysis for the Phillip pool, despite previous indications from the minister. It has been frustrating for many people to see some pools get prioritised while others are ignored, so I am really hopeful that the new aquatic strategy can give everyone greater clarity on this.

It was good to hear the minister express her intention to consult the community in the upcoming aquatic facilities strategy. However, I want to raise my concern about the absence of co-designing with the community in what has been outlined. I am worried that the use of a consultant, as mentioned, without explicit community co-design could see the aquatic strategy fall short of meaningful community inclusion, and we know that will be essential if this strategy is to work for the user groups.

Again, we have had so many signatures from people in our community who clearly care a lot about access to their local pools. We know the minister was approached by a number of aquatic sports groups, asking to work together on a new aquatic strategy. There is literally no better time to get the community fully involved.

The ACT Greens' expectations of consultation and genuine co-design are much higher than what we have heard from the minister's statement today. We look forward to understanding how she will involve the community.

MR PARTON (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (11.36): The statement from the Minister for Sport and Recreation is not one that she wanted to make. Like the Chief Minister's announcement in recent days on the provision of a public 50-metre pool in Woden, the Deputy Chief Minister was dragged kicking and screaming to this place in acknowledgment of a massive problem—

Ms Berry: Can I call a point of order?

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Cain): A point of order?

Ms Berry: It is on the language that Mr Parton used just now. I have to say that I am particularly concerned.

MR PARTON: What is the point of order?

Ms Berry: Following the conversation we had this morning about being kind to people, I immediately get attacked, and there was a gendered description of the way I was—

MR PARTON: A Gendered description?

Mr Cocks: There has been no point of order raised.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Minister Berry, would you isolate the particular word

or phrase that you are concerned about?

Ms Berry: The description of “kicking and screaming” is, in my view, a gendered one, and I want to call it to the attention of the Assembly.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I will refer this to the Speaker and have a look at the transcript, but there is no point of order at the moment.

Ms Berry: Can I clarify that you will be coming back to the Assembly with a decision on that?

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I will be speaking to the Speaker to get his view on the transcript.

Ms Berry: Thank you.

MR PARTON: This statement is full of wildly optimistic spin, and I kind of like that about Ms Berry, because she is an optimist. The Canberra community is not as optimistic, as evidenced by the overwhelming cacophony of loud voices saying that enough is enough. I applaud Ms Clay and her work on the Big Splash petition. I applaud the work from Ms Barry and Mr Cain on Big Splash. I applaud the work from Ms Carrick on Woden pool, because she is just the Energizer Bunny. She never stops.

I thank Miss Nuttall for her collaboration on today’s motion on the Active Leisure Centre at Erindale. To quote from the statement, Ms Berry says “and smoothly transitioned management of the Erindale Leisure Centre to Belgravia”. If you reckon that has been a smooth transition, I would hate to see what a rocky ride looks like. We look forward to that debate later today, and we let it be known that we are all watching very closely.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (11.38): I would like to thank Minister Berry. I am very happy about the government’s commitment to a 50-metre pool in Woden and an aquatic strategy. Thank you. This is a great outcome for the Woden Valley community. It is not only the Woden Valley community; it is all people living within a five-kilometre radius around the town centre. It takes in Weston Creek—it is their town centre—and parts of northern Tuggeranong and the inner south. It is a great outcome for all these people and for the Save Phillip Pool group, who have been advocating tirelessly for the retention of a 50-metre pool in the Woden town centre.

The ACT government has finally listened to the concerns of the broader Canberra community, who made over one million visits to Canberra public pools last year and who have invested hundreds of hours in calling for action and investment in Canberra’s aquatic future. Now, it is important to identify where there are gaps in the provision of aquatic facilities to make sure that everyone across Canberra has appropriate access.

The process and criteria to identify these gaps need to be transparent in order to gain community trust. To maintain community trust, the ACT government will need to progress its commitments in a timely manner and invest in genuine consultation throughout the development of the scope of the pool in Woden and a fully costed, budgeted and endorsed aquatic strategy.

I understand that the 27 groups that wrote to Minister Berry calling for an aquatic pool and urban swimming strategy—including the Friends of Manuka Pool, Save Phillip Pool, Save Big Splash and the Friends of Civic Pool—still intend to host their planned workshop to discuss the needs of the aquatic community. These stakeholder groups are calling on the ACT government to engage in genuine co-design, produce a transparent and fully costed strategy, and ensure that the strategy meets the needs of competition, exercise and social use, includes urban swimming, keeps the current dive pool open until a replacement is delivered, and embraces inclusivity for all Canberrans.

I am keen to understand the options that the government are considering for the pool in Woden and the criteria they will use to assess the options to ensure that it meets the community's needs and is fun. I am also keen to explore whether the dive pool can be accommodated in Woden. I look forward to working with the government on a great outcome for Woden and for all pool users across Canberra.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.40): I thank the minister for her statement. We have seen that Canberra does care about our pools. We have heard from colleagues, including Miss Nuttall, that two of our recent biggest community petitions in the Assembly have been about pools. Ms Carrick got over 6,000 signatures for her Phillip pool petition, and it looks like we are seeing some movement there, and we are up to around 3,000—or maybe over 3,000; we have paper signatures as well—for the Big Splash petition that began last week.

Overwhelmingly, what I have heard from the community in Belconnen is that what people really value on that site is a 50-metre pool and a water park at Big Splash. There are a lot of different facilities that would probably go well there, too. We have seen architect designs, and we have seen people in the aquatics industry pitching other ideas that would fit in well there, such as a hydrotherapy pool and a sports centre. There are a whole lot of ways in which you could put together a really great site there.

There is a lot of hope that the government might be able to get that site back. If they get that back, there is a real desire to see the issues move forward, and there are a lot of different ways in which that could progress. We are keen to see the outcome, on about the 20th of this month, I believe, to see what the next steps are. I think that a lot of people in Canberra are genuinely interested in what the role of government is and what it should be.

We note that a lot of our pools in Canberra have received some funding. CISAC was established with \$10 million of ACT government funding. The Southside Hydrotherapy Pool was established with \$8.5 million of government funding. The ACT government is spending \$5.8 million in the budget this year on their seven pools managed by organisations like Belgravia. The new Canberra aquatic centre pool was announced as a \$138 million project jointly funded by ACT government and commonwealth government.

A lot of people have recently sent me details of a similar project, the Adelaide Aquatic Centre, which has around the same price tag as our new Canberra aquatic centre project, and they are getting a lot of value from that project. They are getting a 50-metre pool, a 25-metre pool, a hydrotherapy pool, slides, a splash park, a gym, a sauna—a whole

lot of community facilities. People are very keen to see what facilities we will have across the spread, what our value for money will be, and exactly what the role of government is in these different facilities.

There are lots of different pathways that we could take for Big Splash once we get that site back. I have heard many people talk with enthusiasm about whether you could have a commercially viable facility there, whether it could be one supported by government, or whether it would be some kind of public-private partnership. I do not know what the options are, but we are very keen in Belconnen to see what they are.

Amelia Tattam and the community group Save Big Splash have done a really great job of gathering up some of the community's views on this issue. They are hosting a community meeting at the Labor Club on 19 February. I think that a lot of us are really looking forward to hearing more from government and the community about what is possible there and what the community would like there.

I am pleased to hear today that the government is looking at what facilities are needed for west Belconnen. West Belconnen, of course, comprises around a tenth of Canberra's population. We are growing really fast out there. We will grow more, with Ginninderry and a future CSIRO development in that area. It is really important that we are looking at the spread of facilities around there, and it is important that we keep, maintain and support these pools.

As various colleagues have noted, we are in a changing climate. It is getting hotter. There are not that many places that you can go to in Canberra to cool off, mingle and gather. There is not a lot for our teenagers to do in Canberra. I think that is the value of a water park like Big Splash. We have plenty of things for small children and adults to do, but there is not an awful lot in between. I think that those options are often being taken away. We are a densifying community, so it is really important that we have fun recreational spaces where we can gather together, where we can enjoy our community together, where we can celebrate what life can be, and celebrate some of those small, pleasant moments, particularly in the really hot weather that we are seeing.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (11.45): I would like to welcome the statement from the minister today and contributions from other members on matters that are relevant particularly to their electorates, and very much congratulate Ms Carrick on securing this commitment after a lot of hard work over many years. Let us see how we go this afternoon with getting more for Woden.

I welcome the commitment to a new aquatic strategy. This is something that has been called for by our community, by community members and other members of this Assembly. I will be curious to see the extent to which that will influence outcomes.

In considering that, I think it is instructive for us to look at the existing strategy, which the minister mentioned in her remarks, the ACT Government Aquatic Facilities Planning Framework 2013-33. It still has some years to run, but I suppose the new strategy will be replacing it. In that strategy from 2013, a city aquatic facility in the CBD had been established as a high priority, which was very good news for people in the city. At that time the population of the ACT was 374,000 people. It was projected to reach, by 2033, 465,000. We are already at over 480,000, so the population has been

growing faster than this planning framework strategy had predicted.

Interestingly, on page 32 of the strategy, regarding a new city aquatic facility—presumably, it is the one that we are now talking about, in Commonwealth Park—the task was to complete planning activities for this facility in 2013-14. Another task was to “finalise design and commence construction for a central Canberra City Aquatic Facility” in 2015-18, so we are behind on the timeline for the construction of that facility. The reason I am raising this is that there has been a conversation about not including diving facilities in the extent of the amenity of the new pool. Let us see what the options study from the 2013 planning framework had to say about that. On page 34 it said:

The recent Canberra Olympic Pool Long Term Options Study together with research for this planning framework has confirmed demand for a City Aquatic Facility to be provided as a high priority to meet the greater needs of the ACT.

Those needs, we now know, of course, have grown even more than the government anticipated 13 years ago. It continues:

Some aquatic sports needs are not adequately provided for ...

It then says:

... such as diving and water polo. These can be provided for in the future facility together with supporting health and community facilities to assist the viability of the larger format centre.

Under a heading “Findings for Potential Future Provision Mix”—and this is related to the new city aquatic facility—it says:

Consultation and research identified the following priorities for consideration in the provision for a redeveloped facility:

...

–25 metre and 50 metre pool with a boom, spectator seating, electronic timing, team marshaling and judging areas

– Water-polo facilities

– Indoor diving pool facilities

...

– Hydrotherapy / Spa and health pools

...

– A substantial dry fitness gym area ...

– Outdoor sports facilities, informal outdoor areas and provision of picnic areas and landscaped support areas ...

A lot of work went into consultation on and development of this plan, by the look of it, back in 2013, and we are here today revisiting the same conversations, with the population having grown by more than 100,000 people since that time, and with the \$138 million which Ms Clay touched on having been allocated for a new pool in Commonwealth Park in the city to replace the pool that we have, but with less amenity under current plans than the pool that we have.

The bare minimum, we know, must be a like-for-like replacement of Civic pool, and there is still time to change the approach on this matter. It is not good enough to investigate options for diving facilities elsewhere while proceeding with removing the facilities we already have. How can we be spending so much money to go backwards in the level of facilities provided, and while not having made a commitment to ensure that there is continuity of diving facility availability for people who rely on diving facilities to engage in their sports, and for all other users? It is obvious that it should be included in the Commonwealth Park pool. That is the only pool that is currently under development. It is the only pool where there is a tender document out and there is funding allocated to build the pool.

How could it possibly be the case, having regard to the government's other major infrastructure project commitments, including the new convention centre, that they would be able to identify a new site, agree on that site, seek and find funding for that site, and construct the new diving pool before removing the pool that we have?

I am flagging that concern here because community members have raised it as a serious concern for themselves and for aquatic sport athletes, for children who are in these sports and for athletes who want to be taken seriously. A petition is being brought to the Assembly. It has already received over 200 signatures. I would encourage members, and particularly members representing Kurrajong, who have a special vested interest in this issue, to look at that petition, share it around and see how many Canberrans agree.

We should have multipartisan support on this matter. That is obvious. It makes no sense to expend this level of funding on a new pool, on a new facility, that has less amenity than the facility that we have. I call on the government to please change their approach because now is the time to do it.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Early childhood education and care services—incident reports—order to table documents—withdrawal

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy) (11.51), by leave: I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) pursuant to the resolution of the Assembly of 24 June 2025, as amended 18 September 2025, in relation to Early Childhood Education and Care Incident records, documents were returned to the Clerk of the Legislative

- Assembly under standing order 213A on 24 December 2025;
- (b) documents provided to the Clerk under this standing order are taken to have been authorised for publication by the Assembly;
 - (c) it was subsequently identified that a number of approved targeted redactions required correction; and
 - (d) the incorrect documents have been replaced and removed from the public website; and
- (2) withdraws its authorisation to publish those identified documents and approves their removal from the records.

The motion does what it says on the tin. I have written the date as 2025. Obviously, I mean 2026. Most importantly, I wish to table the list of incorrect documents that I am seeking the Assembly's approval to withdraw from being Assembly-approved documents.

I present the following paper:

Early Childhood Education and Care Incident Records—Order to table—List of replaced documents, undated.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Public Accounts and Administration—Standing Committee Report 5

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (11.52): I present the following report:

Public Accounts and Administration—Standing Committee—Report 5—*Inquiry into Home Buyer Concession Scheme Administration*, dated 15 December 2025, together with extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

This report includes a dissenting report and additional comments. The report was circulated to members on 16 December 2025, pursuant to standing order 254C.

This is the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration for the Eleventh Assembly. The committee received 22 submissions to the inquiry and a public hearing was held on 15 October 2025. The report makes 15 recommendations. On behalf of the committee, I thank those who contributed to the committee's inquiry, particularly the individuals who shared their personal experiences with us through submissions and also at the hearing.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

I move:

That the report be noted.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Early childhood education and care services—incident reports—order to table documents—documents tabled

Pursuant to standing order 213A and the resolution of the Assembly of 24 June 2025, as amended 18 September 2025, **the Clerk** presented the following documents:

Early Childhood Education and Care Incident Records—Order to table—Copy of—

Index of returned documents—

Part 2(a) (Revised).

Part 2(b).

Interpretation of scope.

Privilege claimed on certain returned documents—Letter to the Clerk from the Chief Minister, dated 24 December 2025.

Returned documents (39 Folders)

Lakes and waterways—order to table documents—documents tabled

Pursuant to standing order 213A and the resolution of the Assembly of 28 October 2025, as amended 4 December 2025, **the Clerk** presented the following documents:

ACT Water Resources—Documents—Order to table—Copy of—

Index of returned documents (Tranche 1 of 2).

Interpretation of scope.

Returned documents (9 folders)

Legal Affairs—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 14

MS BARRY (Ginninderra) (11.55): I present the following report:

Legal Affairs—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 14, dated 27 January 2026, together with extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MS BARRY: *Scrutiny report 14* contains the committee's comments on seven bills, 23 pieces of subordinate legislation, proposed amendments to two bills, and four government responses. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

Environment and Planning—Standing Committee Report 4

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.56): I present the following report:

Environment and Planning—Standing Committee—Report 4—*Inquiry into Petition 002-25: Hawker Village shops redevelopment*, dated 18 December 2025, together with extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

This report was circulated to members, pursuant to standing order 254C.

Petition 002-25: Hawker Village Shops Redevelopment was referred to the committee on 6 February 2025, and on 19 February 2025 the committee took the decision to adopt an inquiry. The committee's report was released on 18 December 2025 and a government response is due by 18 April 2026. The committee received 71 submissions to this inquiry and held two public hearings, including a hearing at Hawker College, near the Hawker shops.

The committee's report makes two recommendations. It encourages the ACT government to undertake broad community consultation on the future of the Hawker Group Centre and reflect the outcomes in planning controls to guide future development in the area. It recommends that no direct sale application be approved until consultation is completed and the government response has been released.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the residents of Hawker and nearby suburbs and others who took the time to write submissions and appear at hearings for this inquiry. The evidence demonstrated that the local community has a strong connection to its local shops and seeks to be actively involved in decisions about their future.

I wish to acknowledge the collaborative efforts of my fellow committee members during this inquiry and the excellent support we received from our committee secretariat.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Report 5

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.58): I present the following report:

Environment and Planning—Standing Committee—Report 5—*Inquiry into DPA-B: Forrest Section 19 Blocks 5, 6, 9, 11 and 12*, dated 16 January 2026, including an additional comment, together with extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

This report was circulated to members, pursuant to standing order 254C.

This is the committee's fifth report for the Eleventh Assembly and the first review of a Territory Plan amendment since the commencement of the new planning system in 2023.

DPA-B was referred to the committee on 18 July 2025, and on 7 August 2025 the committee decided to adopt an inquiry. The committee's report was released on 19 January 2026 and a government response is due within four months. The committee received 11 submissions to this inquiry and held two public hearings, in November and December 2025.

The committee's report makes one recommendation, suggesting that all major plan amendments be accompanied by sufficient information to enable the community to fully understand the implications of the proposed amendment.

On behalf of the committee, I thank everyone who participated in the inquiry and took the time to write submissions and appear at our hearings. I once again acknowledge the collegial contribution of all committee members on this inquiry and the support we received from our secretariat.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

MS CARRICK(Murrumbidgee) (11.59): I would like to highlight the concerns I raised in my additional comments to this report. While I support the objective to increase housing supply on the site and acknowledge the report's accurate representation of submissions and witness statements, I wish to highlight my concerns about the ability of the commercial planning controls to address the concerns of the community in what is primarily a residential area. The commercial zones policy in the Territory Plan provides minimal assessment requirements for CZ5. They are limited to the maximum gross floor area being 1,500 square metres per retail tenancy.

The supporting documents, the commercial zones technical specifications, are only used to provide guidance for aspects of a development proposal. I trust the Planning Authority will give due attention to the community's desire to retain the character of the area by ensuring appropriate setbacks that support human scale and solar access, providing sufficient planting area to maintain a healthy tree canopy, and requiring adequate onsite parking to avoid overflow into the surrounding residential streets.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders—Standing Committee Report 3

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (12.00): I present the following report:

Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders—Standing Committee—Report 3—*Inquiry into the operation of the 2024 ACT Election and the Electoral Act 1992 - Interim Report*, dated 20 January 2026, together with extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

This report was circulated to members, pursuant to standing order 254C.

This is the third report of the Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders for the Eleventh Assembly. This inquiry was referred to the committee on 4 December 2024. The Electoral Commission's report on the election was published on 12 August 2025. Due to the delay in receiving the ACT Electoral Commission's report, the committee resolved to issue this interim report to address issues that could be resolved most quickly. The purpose of this approach is to minimise delays in progressing legislative reforms required before the next election. The committee has received 33 submissions and held two public hearings, in November and December 2025. The committee makes five recommendations in this interim report.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the Electoral Commission, the Attorney-General and all participants for their assistance to the committee and their significant contributions to this inquiry. I also thank Hansard and broadcasting staff for their work in supporting the committee. I thank the other members of the committee, Mr Andrew Braddock MLA and Mr Taimus Werner-Gibbings MLA.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Report 4

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (12.02): I present the following report:

Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders—Standing Committee—Report 4—*Inquiry into the June 2025 report of the Inspector of the Integrity Commission*, dated 20 January 2026, together with extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

This report was circulated to members, pursuant to standing order 254C.

This is the fourth report of the Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders for the Eleventh Assembly. The committee resolved on 19 August 2025 to inquire into the Inspector of the ACT Integrity Commission's report: *Investigation into a procurement by the ACT Integrity Commission*. The committee makes one finding and two recommendations in this report.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the ACT Integrity Commissioner, the Inspector of the ACT Integrity Commission, and those who made submissions to the inquiry. I thank the other members of the committee, Mr Andrew Braddock MLA and Mr Taimus Werner-Gibbings MLA.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Social Policy—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (12.04): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, relating to its inquiry into endometriosis and other pelvic pain conditions.

On 4 December 2025, the Assembly resolved to request that the committee undertake an inquiry into endometriosis and other pelvic pain conditions. The committee considered the Assembly's referral at its meeting on 5 December 2025 and commenced its inquiry on 8 December 2025. Submissions for this inquiry are due by 3 April 2026, and the committee will seek to hold public hearings later this year. The Assembly resolution requested that, should the committee adopt this inquiry, it reports back by the first sitting day in February 2027. At this stage, the committee intends to meet the reporting date requested by the Assembly.

Public Accounts and Administration—Standing Committee Membership

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Cain): Pursuant to standing order 223, the acting Greens whip wrote to the Acting Speaker on 11 December 2025, advising of a proposed change to the membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration. She proposed that, due to the change to the membership of the committee agreed by the Assembly on 4 December 2025, Ms Clay be appointed to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration. The Acting Speaker agreed to the change on 11 December 2025.

I present the following paper:

Public Accounts and Administration—Standing Committee—Proposed change—Copy of email correspondence between the Acting Greens Whip and the Acting Speaker, dated 11 December 2025.

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

That change to the membership of Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration, as proposed to and agreed by the Acting Speaker, pursuant to standing order 223 be adopted.

Sitting suspended from 12.06 to 2.00 pm.

Legislative Assembly—unparliamentary language Ruling by Speaker

MR SPEAKER: Before we move to question time, during the debate this morning a motion to take note of a ministerial statement was made by Ms Berry as Minister for Sport and Recreation. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Parton, made the following comment. Mr Parton said:

This statement from the Minister for Sport and Recreation is not one that she wanted to make. Like the Chief Minister’s announcement in recent days on the provision of a public 50-metre pool in Woden, the Deputy Chief Minister was dragged kicking and screaming to this place of acknowledgment of a massive problem—

Ms Berry subsequently took a point of order, suggesting that language used was unparliamentary in that the description of “kicking and screaming” was, in her view, a gendered one, and she wanted to call it to the attention of the Assembly.

The Assistant Speaker indicated that he would draw the matter to my attention for a review and a ruling. Standing orders 54 and 55 state:

Offensive words

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

Personal reflections

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

Standing order 57 also provides that:

Speaker to determine offensive words

57. When the attention of the Speaker is drawn to words used, the Speaker shall determine whether or not they are offensive or disorderly.

The words used by Mr Parton are not listed in the list of unparliamentary words that the Office compiles. I sought advice from the Clerk, and he has advised that a review of *Hansard* reveals that the phrase in question has been used more than 355 times. It is quite an interesting list—as to who is on it, since self-government. It is across all political parties for both male and female MLAs. I note that this is a phrase that also is used regularly by parliamentarians of all descriptions—federally and interstate.

Further, in the online Collins dictionary the phrase is described as:

If you say that someone is dragged kicking and screaming into a particular course of action, you are emphasizing that they are very unwilling to do what they are being made to do.

Members, having considered the matter, I cannot see anything in the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition that indicate that he has breached the relevant standing

orders, so I do not uphold the point of order; however, I would remind members always to be careful in their choice of words when referencing the actions of other members and to be mindful paragraph (B)(9) of the code of conduct, which requires members to treat each other with courtesy and propriety. Those are the proper standards of parliamentary conduct.

Questions without notice

Transport Canberra—bus frequency

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, yesterday marked the start of the grossly inadequate Network 26 bus timetable. The frequency of rapid routes has been slashed across Canberra, with the R4 changing from a five-minute peak frequency to a 15-minute peak frequency. Canberrans have shared their experiences of day one online, with some people reporting that buses left the Tuggeranong interchange full and had to skip stops because of this. Under the previous timetable there were at a minimum 780 available passenger spaces per hour, while the new timetable, even with the largest capacity articulated buses offers only 436 spaces. This represents nearly a 50 per cent reduction in passenger capacity on one of the busiest routes in the Transport Canberra network.

Minister, how many people were left behind on day one of the new timetable?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Of course, we have only had one and a half days of operation of the new network and timetable that has been put in place during the period of construction to ensure we have reliability of the network. The NCA bridge works have had an impact on our ability to deliver the frequency and capacity in our transport network, and we have had to prioritise reliability, given the expected delays.

We are monitoring the impact of both the real-world experience of the delays and also any capacity issues being experienced across the transport network, and we have already committed to making improvements in the second half of the year based on that real-world experience. We will only get a real sense of what the impact has been when we have seen at least a few weeks, if not months, of operation of the new network with the temporary traffic arrangements in place.

There is behavioural change, not just in the traffic network but amongst bus passengers, as well, in adapting to new routes that were not available before. For example, the R5 and R6 are now providing services to passengers into Belconnen interchange that were not available under previous networks, so we will see some passengers now starting to use those, but it may take some time for that behaviour change to occur—rather than them just relying, for example, on the R4, R2 and R3 routes from Belconnen.

We are monitoring that impact, and we will make adjustments where required, particularly with a focus on the second half of the year, based on the experiences of the impacts that we are seeing with the bridge closures.

MR PARTON: Minister, what is your plan to try and attract Canberrans back to the buses after such a disastrous start?

MR STEEL: The first part of the plan is reliability—to make sure that when a bus is timetabled it shows up. That is exactly what has been prioritised in this bus network, because it is fundamental to trust in the public transport system—to be able to plan your journey, you need to make sure that buses are showing up on time and that they can be relied on for trips around our city. That is why we put this in place, based on the best data and modelling that was available to us in relation to what would happen on the broader traffic network as a result of the construction work that is occurring in the city over the next two years. But it is a temporary network. It is a temporary network and timetable that is in place during that period of disruption. Of course, we will be returning to the high levels of frequency and some of the routes that were discontinued in the future, as well as continuing to implement our election agenda to introduce new rapid bus services and improve the frequency of existing services once the construction is over.

MR CAIN: Minister, will you apologise to Canberrans for so comprehensively botching this new timetable?

MR STEEL: This new timetable has only just been put in place. What I do apologise for is that the journey planner, in the morning yesterday, was not showing up in relation to the new timetable on the Transport Canberra website and the MyWay+ app. That was rectified for third-party apps by around 10.30 am and for the Transport Canberra website and app by around 3 pm yesterday.

Of course, in relation to the broader operation of the timetable and network, it is still too early to tell what those issues are. There will be things we need to look at, and those will be part of making an improved bus network and timetable for the second half of the year. We are keen to hear that feedback from passengers using the network.

Transport Canberra—MyWay+

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Transport. I refer you to yesterday's collapse of journey-planning features, as you mentioned, both on the MyWay+ app and on other platforms. Noting that there have been issues with virtual timetables for every network upgrade since MyWay+ went live, what lessons were learnt from those previous instances, and why were they not applied as part of this network update?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Of course, we have had network and timetable updates since MyWay+ went live in November 2024, and those actually went quite smoothly in the system, so this was a new issue that was picked up, and new controls will need to be put in place with Digital Canberra and NEC to ensure that this issue does not occur in future network improvements and updates to the timetable.

This was a data transmission issue. It was a new issue that was identified that meant that updated network and timetable information was unavailable for the journey planner through the MyWay+ app and the Transport Canberra website. Transport Canberra urgently worked with NEC to address the issue. Passengers were asked to look at the timetables available on the Transport Canberra website, which have been there for some time, and continued to be there yesterday, in order to plan their journey. The journey planner issue was rectified for the third-party apps by 10.30 am; then, ahead of the

afternoon peak, for the MyWay+ app and the Transport Canberra website journey planner, by 3 pm.

Assistance has been available to Transport Canberra customers, including through the use of the Transport Canberra customer experience team, by contacting them by phone, and we will be putting in place controls in the future to ensure that this issue is picked up, for further improvements to the timetable and network.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, does MyWay+ have a beta testing environment to test the deployment of patches and network upgrades? If so, how much testing happened with this network update?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Of course, they were not aware that there was an issue. I have offered Mr Braddock a briefing on the technical aspects of the issue. I am happy to continue to offer that, if he would like to take it up, to discuss the exact software issue, which is around the chain of data transmission between the HASTUS system and the ACT government's MuleSoft system, NEC and SchedGo, which is a third-party journey-planner vendor that we also used under the MyWay system. That issue is a new one that has been identified, and controls will be put in place in the future to address any issues so that it does not occur again.

MS CLAY: Minister, when will MyWay+ cease to have teething issues, become fully operational and work as it is intended to work?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. MyWay+ is functional. The patches that were put in place last year addressing issues, for example, with the validators have been working. The ACT government and Transport Canberra have been transparently publishing that information on the Transport Canberra website. As at January, with the latest update on the validator usability, it is at 99.88 per cent, so we are seeing good functionality of the MyWay+ system, and people being able to make payments to pay for their public transport. This journey-planner issue was a new issue. It was resolved within a matter of hours, but we do apologise to anyone using the journey planner ahead of the introduction of the new timetable and network yesterday. It is available today, and we will continue to work with NEC to put in place controls so that we can prevent those issues from occurring in the future.

Tuggeranong—land release

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Planning. Tuggeranong house prices rose 6.9 per cent in 2025 to a median of \$894,094, driven by demand for standalone housing. At the same time, aspiring locals cannot afford to buy near family because the government has not released any new land in the district for years. Minister, when was the last time a block of land was released in Tuggeranong for a freestanding home?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I am happy to come back on notice in relation to the specific date, but, of course, usually we will release new land for standalone houses in greenfield suburbs—for example, in an RZ1 zone. The conversation that we are having at the moment in relation to existing lease blocks is about the ability to have a duplex or a dual-occupancy arrangement through missing middle housing reforms. In certain cases, depending on the development, that would

enable people to have a freestanding home within the existing district of Tuggeranong on a subdivided block by allowing subdivision, for the first time, in RZ1 areas, which make up the large majority of areas within the Tuggeranong Valley. That is a matter that is currently before the Assembly's planning committee. We look forward to seeing the outcomes of their inquiry and any recommendations that will need to be considered by the Territory Planning Authority before they come back to the Assembly. It will be up to the Assembly to determine whether to support those changes.

That will enable people to have more housing choice, including standalone housing growing through subdivision, including a range of other missing middle housing typologies—terraces, townhouses and other forms of missing middle housing, like low-rise apartments, for example. We want to enable these sorts of homes to be built, as well as, of course, continuing to look at land release in greenfield areas, like Molonglo and Ginninderry, in the future. We set out, through the Housing Supply and Land Release Program, the release of land for 26,000 homes.

MS MORRIS: Minister, does restricting the supply of land drive up prices?

MR STEEL: We are not doing that. We are enabling 30,000 new homes over the next five years and we are setting out the range of reforms that we have already undertaken in the Housing Supply and Land Release Program. That recognises that, as the city grows and the availability of land in greenfield areas becomes more scarce, there is the need to look at existing lease land and opportunities there—for example, through planning reform and through direct investment in social and affordable housing. That is what the government is doing to provide a whole range of options for the community, including vulnerable Canberrans, to get into a home. We hope to get the support of the Assembly for those reforms. They include not just missing middle housing reforms but also transport-oriented development, including, based on Ms Tough's motion, work on a transit-oriented development plan for Tuggeranong—we are calling it the "Tuggy TOD". We are also working on shop-top and shop-adjacent opportunities, including looking at the group centres and the town centre in Tuggeranong for those opportunities.

MR PARTON: Minister, what do you have to say to young families born and raised in the Tuggeranong Valley who are now being forced across the border into New South Wales just to find a backyard they can afford?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. What I would say to them is that we are undertaking the most significant planning reforms in self-government to enable more housing and more housing choice in the territory, through missing middle development, through transit-oriented development, through shop-top and shop-adjacent housing, through land release, and through identifying land able to be released for housing in the territory. We are tackling this from all sides. We are undertaking the Construction Productivity Agenda to make it easier to build a home by streamlining, planning and building processes. We are undertaking work on the National Competition Policy as well with commonwealth government to address those issues, particularly in housing supply and the broader planning system.

Across all different areas, including in Minister Berry's portfolio and the direct investment that we are going to make in community-affordable and public homes, we are addressing the housing supply issue. Many of those things will come to the

Assembly, and it will be very clear what the parties' positions are and whether they support those reforms. Some of those are before the Assembly right now and others will come this year and into next year. It will be about enabling more homes so that people can live close to transport and close to services, in the communities they love.

Mr Cocks: A point of order, Mr Speaker: under standing order 118AA, I had hoped that we could get through this first question time without having to say this. It is my belief that the minister did not answer the first supplementary question, which was a very specific question about whether restricting the supply of land drives up price. While the minister went on to make all sorts of comments about what the government may or may not be doing, I do not believe that the minister answered that fundamental question.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Cocks, I was listening to his answers and I am pretty satisfied with what he said. I do not see a point of order. We will move on.

Hospitals—funding

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you provide an update to the Assembly on outcomes from the national cabinet meeting last week?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Tough for the question. As I am sure members will have seen from media reporting, last Friday the national cabinet met in Sydney and, after two years of negotiations, reached an agreement on a new five-year national health reform partnership, one that delivers important additional federal funding for state and territory hospitals and helps secure the long-term future of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The ACT government welcomes this agreement. It puts real investment into our public health system and builds on the commonwealth government's important work to strengthen Medicare. Under this new partnership, the commonwealth will provide an additional \$25 billion to state and territory public hospitals nationwide. This takes their five-year investment in this health agreement to around \$220 billion. For the ACT, it means that we are forecast to receive \$4.1 billion as part of the health agreement over five years to 2030-31.

Importantly, this partnership includes recognition, for the first time in the history of our Federation, of the challenges that the three smallest jurisdictions—the ACT, the Northern Territory and Tasmania—face in delivering health services at the National Efficient Price. So a further funding arrangement has been agreed, delivered through a Federation funding agreement, that is worth \$75 million annually to the ACT. This adjustment will be ongoing until the pricing authority's review of small state costs can be incorporated into the NHRA methodology.

National cabinet also agreed to extend the implementation timeframe for the Thriving Kids program. The rollout will now begin on 1 October 2026, with full implementation by 1 January 2028. As part of this, \$4 billion will be invested in the Thriving Kids program.

MS TOUGH: Chief Minister, how does this agreement address the challenges faced

by smaller jurisdictions like the ACT and what advocacy has the ACT undertaken to achieve this outcome?

MR BARR: Public hospital systems in smaller jurisdictions operate differently to those in the larger states. Quite simply, it is not possible for the small jurisdictions to deliver hospital services at the National Efficient Price. The commonwealth has now acknowledged the pressure that this creates, particularly for smaller jurisdictions like the ACT, where the fixed costs of running a health system are higher and economies of scale are much harder to achieve. This recognition did not happen by accident, though; the ACT, together with Tasmania and the Northern Territory, advocated strongly during the negotiations to ensure that these challenges were properly understood.

I warmly welcome this agreement, in that it responds to our advocacy and moves towards a more equitable funding model for the hospital systems in the smaller jurisdictions. I particularly acknowledge the tireless work of the Minister for Health in leading advocacy within the health ministers' forum on behalf of the government.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Chief Minister, what other commitments did the commonwealth make as part of this agreement to take pressure off public hospitals?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the supplementary. It is important to acknowledge that, in addition to this hospital funding, the commonwealth have also committed to measures designed to take pressure off public hospitals in every state and territory. That includes the rollout of Medicare Urgent Care Clinics. In the ACT, a newly-funded clinic in Woden is already operating and making a difference. The commonwealth are backing up their hospital investments, with an expansion of bulk-billing incentives—and we know how important that is for our community. On top of this, Canberrans can now benefit from being able to access trusted medical advice at any time by calling 1800 Medicare. Cheaper medicines are also making a real difference. From last month, the maximum cost of PBS medicines was reduced to \$25.

When you take all of these measures together, the investments in primary care, in mental health, in urgent care clinics and in cheaper medicine and the commonwealth's commitment in relation to aged care, they are all working well and are, I would say, the most significant investments in our public health system, wholistically, that I have seen this century. It is all about keeping people healthier in the community and, importantly, reducing pressure on public hospitals at a state and territory level.

ACT Public Service—safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. During public hearings for the inquiry into the Closing the Gap bill on 9 October last year, the then head of the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Brendan Moyle, said:

I have had a very long career in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. I have never experienced the level of lack of cultural safety as I have here.

Mr Moyle resigned shortly thereafter, as confirmed by officials during annual reports hearings in November. Documents released through a recent Freedom Of Information

request reveal that Mr Moyle had been raising these issues internally for over two years and showed obvious frustration at the lack of action in response to his concerns about insufficient cultural safety, excess cultural load and failure to follow through on the ACT government's Closing the Gap commitments.

Minister, when were you first made aware of these concerns and what actions did you take to address them?

MS ORR: I thank Mr Emerson for his question and I also want to acknowledge the contribution that Mr Moyle made in his time here. The issues that Mr Moyle raised were extensive and important. The government has provided responses to the substantive issues that came up through the inquiry and continues to work through them.

It is primarily a responsibility of the public service so I can on notice the detail of Mr Emerson's question and seek some advice from the public service. As to when Mr Moyle may have notified me individually I would have to go and check as to what may or may not have come to me, noting that it would not be usual for a public servant to raise these matters with a minister. They would be more likely to be raised internally through the standard processes, but I will go and double check, just to make sure that there is completeness to the answer.

MR EMERSON: For clarity, the question was when were you made aware of those concerns, not whether they were raised directly with you by Mr Moyle.

Minister, is the ACTPS employee survey results released last week showing that more than 40 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public servants do not feel culturally safe in their workplace evidence that the ACT government is failing to fulfil its commitments to promote cultural safety under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take that question as the Minister for the Public Service. I thank Mr Emerson for the question. Obviously maintaining a culturally safe workplace is a very high priority for the ACT public service, as it is for all of us as ministers in our roles supporting the public service. That is why we have established the Cultural Transformation Branch in the Chief Minister's Directorate. It was established in August 2023. I have certainly heard directly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in the ACT public service about the difference that it is making but also recognise that different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff have different experiences across the public service. We take the feedback from the surveys very seriously and it will inform the continued work that the Cultural Transformation Branch and leadership across the ACT public service do.

Cultural Transformation Branch currently comprises two teams. One of them is a dedicated Culture and Pathways Team that was established in April 2024 and it has a core focus of driving transformation across the public service in line with the priority reforms of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Key deliverables that will continue into 2026 include development of cultural safety care plans and a pilot program for directorates to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, development of a SES cultural capability program, development of a cultural integrity framework and development of systemic racism guidelines.

The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs obviously works closely with the Cultural Transformation Branch. It looks at the overarching systems, accountability frameworks and compliance with government commitments while the Cultural Transformation Branch plays a critical role in cultural capability and internal accountability in line with Priority Reform Three.

MS CARRICK: Minister, when were you first made aware of the cultural safety statistics in the ACTPS employee survey results and what actions have you taken since being made of these cultural safety statistics?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Can we clarify which minister she is asking the question of?

MR SPEAKER: I presume it is you, but do you want to clarify exactly which minister? I presume it is you Minister.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I have been briefed on the outcomes of the ACT public sector survey. I have regular conversations with the Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy, particularly about the work of the Cultural Transformation Branch. So I think that while the results are very distressing, they are in line with some of the feedback that we have received in terms of the work that needs to be done to improve cultural safety. That work really recognises that, while systems, structures and processes must be built along with partnerships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, we really do need to provide a focus on ensuring we have a broader understanding across the ACT public service, and particularly in senior leadership, of what cultural safety means and how we address systemic racism. The ACT government is not alone in undertaking this work and that is why one of the reasons that the Joint Council on the Closing the Gap, and a partnership working group that sits underneath that and a range of forums, are also really important so that jurisdictions can share their experience, the lessons they have learned and good programs that they have put in place to build cultural safety. We certainly do learn from other jurisdictions.

Whitlam—community facilities

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs, and it is about the Whitlam local centre. Minister, I have received correspondence from a resident of Whitlam raising concerns about the slow progress on construction of the Whitlam local centre. The resident wrote:

It appears as though the Govt may be too focussed on extracting what it considers to be value for money for the Whitlam Local Centre block, rather than delivering the best shops/hub for the community ... Whitlam residents paid high prices for our blocks of land and we pay high rates. To be frank, we deserve a Local Centre in decent time.

Minister, I understand that the first tender process for the shops was in 2022. What is the hold-up, and when will the residents of Whitlam get their shops?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Carrick for the question. The Suburban Land Agency works very closely with the Whitlam community and, in fact, the lessons that the Suburban Land Agency learned and took to the development of Whitlam, about having places

where people could communicate and join together, is the reason they have those community spaces that exist there right now—the little cafe that is operating up there—and that is why there is a really strong community-building network through the Mingle program up in Whitlam to ensure that they have opportunities to engage in the future of their suburb.

I am not aware that there is a hold-up but I will take that question and the level of detail on notice and provide some more information to the Assembly. But I note that Whitlam has been a really great example of the community-building that happens in new suburbs. Led by the Suburban Land Agency—through their Mingle program specifically at Whitlam because of some of the issues that were raised through Crace and Wright—having those places where people can come together, having a little shop like the cafe that is up there now, has made a huge difference to that community-building and neighbourhood-building which is so important within a new suburb.

MS CARRICK: Minister, what are the key criteria provided to the developer to ensure they deliver the best shops, the best hub for the community?

MS BERRY: I will have to take that question on notice. If there is information that I can provide early to the Assembly, then I will.

MR EMERSON: Minister, will residents of Whitlam get a community centre at the shops, as originally planned?

MS BERRY: Again, I will take that question on notice, but note that there are currently community spaces that are well used by the community at Whitlam. Of course, those spaces are temporary until more permanent facilities, community spaces and a shopping centre, can be built. I know that Whitlam school is very much being looked forward to by the community, and I look forward to updating the Assembly and the community in more detail on what is happening at the Whitlam school, as well, as part of that community building.

Transport Canberra—bus frequency

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Transport. ACT Labor’s election platform stated, “ACT Labor’s progressive and practical public transport plan will see more rapid services,” and “ACT Labor will also deliver additional rapid bus services, including a new rapid service to support growth in West Belconnen.” It was really good to see those election commitments, because we have almost one in 10 Canberrans living in west and north Belconnen. But we are concerned. How does cutting both rapid services to west and north Belconnen meet that election promise?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I addressed it in the earlier answer I gave in relation to the updated network and timetable. The ACT government and Labor party remain committed to delivering on our election promises, including the introduction of new rapid services that we committed to at the election. We will continue to do the work required to plan for those routes and undertake necessary community consultation ahead of those being introduced. But in the next two years, this year and next year, whilst we have the disruption associated with the construction of the NCA’s bridge works, we have got an updated timetable that is in place. It is for a

temporary period to make sure that we prioritise reliability, ahead of those improvements being made to the network. Those will be put in place during the term, and we will undertake the planning now so that we can make sure we are ready to do that once the construction finishes.

MS CLAY: Did you base the decision to cut the R2 and R3 on recent and accurate patronage data?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. The decision to make changes to the overall network has been about reliability. We know that when there are delays in travel times for buses running through the network, it can have cascading effects across the whole network. Those particular routes—the R2 and R3—are some of our longest in the network. They have large numbers of bus stops. When we see delays and reliability issues in one part of those routes, that will then ripple through the entire routes, to Spence and Fraser and back. So the difficult decision was made to split the routes to the R2, R3 and the 12 and 13.

Ms Clay: A point of order. The question was about patronage data, not about reliability. The question was: did you base it on recent and accurate patronage data? What year of patronage data did you base it on?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for the question. We had previous patronage data in relation to those routes. Also, we have drivers who are delivering those services each and every day who provide us with feedback, and we engage with the drivers in the development of the new network and timetable.

But the major decision-making point for the changes to the R2 and R3 was about reliability, and understanding that those routes are some of the longest in the network, with large numbers of stops. If there were not a change there, the reliability issues would spill on to every one of the stops through to Fraser and Spence and all the way back. So this new network arrangement preserves reliability, and it is a temporary arrangement that will be in place for the next two years. We will be looking at improvements—that we will be making in the second half of the year. We will certainly be looking very closely at how those routes are performing under the current arrangements and making any improvements.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, did you make your decision based on data other than anecdotal data or data that pre-dates MyWay+?

MR STEEL: I have said we made the decision based on the nature of the network. These are some of the longest routes in the network, with the largest number of stops, and if we did not make a change, the reliability issues would spill on to the rest of the rapid route. That was the major decision point: around preserving reliability. Then, of course, we have also looked at increasing capacity, particularly through to Belconnen through the extension of the R5 and R6 routes to Belconnen for the first time—

Mr Braddock: A point of order on relevance. The question was very specific. It was about what data the decision was made on and whether it was anecdotal data, data pre-dating MyWay+ or any other data the Minister might have that we are not yet aware of.

MR SPEAKER: Do you have anything further to add, Mr Steel?

MR STEEL: I think I have answered it.

Development applications—approvals

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. Canberra is in the middle of a housing crisis. The Labor government has set ambitious targets for new homes, but dwelling approvals are now less than half of what they were seven years ago and, with respect to completion, they are already 1,100 behind the target rate. Minister, how many development applications are currently sitting beyond their statutory timeframes?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. In relation to development approvals, what we have seen in the territory is that we are the only jurisdiction that is even close to meeting the national housing targets under the National Housing Accord. We are about a hundred off meeting it in the first year. We are constantly monitoring how we are progressing against our targets, and our broader target around enabling 30,000 new homes, which is about planning reform, land release, the 26,000 that we have already identified in housing, via the land release program, and the investment we are making in affordable and social homes.

The planning system is also important, in making sure that we streamline the planning for building approvals where a proponent has come forward, in order to be able to support a project. The fundamental priority for us has been enabling things to occur which were disallowed, and which were prohibited from occurring, under the old Territory Plan, such as missing middle housing, more transport-oriented development, and more shop-top and shop-adjacent housing. We are undertaking that work to update the Territory Plan. Of course, we are looking at the planning and building systems as well.

In relation to the figures that Mr Milligan has asked for, as at the latest statistics for September, the percentage of development applications determined within statutory timeframes was 85 per cent. That is pretty high. The number of DAs that are active is 269. With respect to days to make a decision, the median figure was 45. There are a few outliers there, for the larger and complex development applications. We are monitoring that closely. That would be the best outcome in terms of percentage determined within the statutory timeframes for the year.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why is it that, despite significant growth in the number of planning staff, approvals have fallen by more than 50 per cent?

MR STEEL: I do not agree with the premise of the question. In fact, the percentage of DAs determined within the statutory timeframe is at a very good level. But we are examining, through the Construction Productivity Agenda, and working with stakeholders in the construction industry, a range of measures to streamline both the planning and building processes.

With respect to things that do not necessarily add value to a design or planning outcome, we are looking at removing those processes. Some of those are just administrative.

Some of them require potential legislative change. I will be bringing forward tranches of legislation to address those over the coming years. I have identified the first tranche of work that we will be undertaking. One part of that was around grey-water pipe infrastructure requirements that are in place for residential dwellings, and some further changes to exempt declarations and exempt development that will help to streamline building approval pathways to deliver more homes and, indeed, other simple structures sooner.

MS MORRIS: Minister, is your target of 30,000 homes by 2030 anything more than a hollow promise?

MR STEEL: No, it is transformational. It is transformational for the City and Environment Directorate. It sets a clear vision and expectation for officials of the City and Environment Directorate about what we are achieving, and what we want to achieve, to enable more housing supply, particularly through planning reform, through land release and by supporting more social and affordable homes. Hopefully, it will also set a vision that this Assembly supports, because many of those reforms will have to come here, and they will require the support of a majority of members of this Assembly, in order to be passed.

We are asking for your support, and for you to get behind this. Do you support it or not? Do you support the amendments that we are bringing forward to achieve this? They are substantial updates to the Territory Plan to make sure that we can deliver the housing supply required, particularly on leased land, noting that, as the city grows, we are reaching the edge of our nature reserves, and there will not be the abundance of government land for release that was available in the past. That land will be harder to develop, and it will require more infrastructure investment in order to be developed than ever before.

The leased land will have to do more of the heavy lifting, and that is why the Planning Strategy sets out that 70 per cent of new homes and development should be occurring within the existing urban footprint. We will require the support of the Assembly to achieve it. We have set a very clear vision, we are intent on achieving it, and we want your support.

Transport Canberra—bus frequency

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Transport. In 2020, you published the ACT Transport Strategy which says:

High frequency rapid routes lie at the core of the new network to service those corridors with highest demand and destination points. They include a total of 10 rapid routes (including light rail) to provide a frequent, reliable and fast journey into and across the city. The rapid routes comprise our long-term framework for public transport and will largely remain fixed. This will provide certainty for businesses, employers and individuals to make long term decisions on where to live, work and invest.

Minister, given that just over five years ago you suggested Canberrans could plan their lives around this rapid bus framework, why did you decide to cut off the R2 and R3 buses from servicing any communities beyond the Belconnen town centre?

MR STEEL: Because those buses would not have shown up on time if we had not made changes to the network and timetables during a period of significant disruption, whilst the NCA bridgeworks are under construction. It is very simple. We have made it clear that these are temporary changes and that we will be restoring the R2 and R3 routes following that period of construction, and we will then introduce new rapids and new improvements to the frequency of other routes across the network to support the outcomes that we want to see in transport. We know that those rapid routes are popular, and that is why we want to introduce more of them, but we are in a period of disruption and construction at the moment and we needed to respond to that or buses simply would not show up when they were timetabled.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, Canberrans in other parts of the city want to know whether their rapid bus routes are at risk of being cut. Can you guarantee that there will be no further cuts to rapid services?

MR STEEL: Last year, we outlined the changes that we made to the network and timetables. I warned the Assembly on two occasions about the extent of that and we have been communicating with the community about those changes. The timetables have been out for people to digest and understand what the government's policy is during this period of construction. It is temporary and we will make revisions to the updated timetables and network. We expect that to come in in the second half of the year, based on the actual experience on the traffic network and any improvements that we can make to make sure that there is extra capacity on the public transport network, including in West Belconnen.

MS CLAY: Minister, if you had invested more in the bus fleet and the workforce, would your rapid network have been able to withstand planned disruptions?

Mr Petterson: A point of order, Mr Speaker: I think Ms Clay is asking about hypothetical matters.

MR SPEAKER: I think that is a pretty reasonable point of order. We will move on to new questions.

Budget—debt

MR COCKS: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, the Auditor-General's financial audit report into the government's annual consolidated reports highlights that liabilities are four times greater than available financial assets in the ACT, placing significant pressure on the territory's ability to service its debt. In light of this, the report highlights the need for stronger fiscal management. Treasurer, what are you doing to improve the ratio of liability to available financial assets?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. I will be updating the Assembly on the territory's finances, including assets and liabilities, in the 2025-26 budget review that I will release on Thursday. That will also show how we are tracking against the fiscal strategy that we updated in the budget last year, which talks to putting the budget on a more sustainable path, including consolidating net debt.

The ACT government and the budget are in a strong position to be able to manage our liabilities. But, of course, there is further work to do. As we have outlined, a multi-year piece of work is required to put the budget on a sustainable path. The NHRA announcement through national cabinet was very welcome, because we know that a large part of expenditure in the budget is in relation to health. So to receive extra funding from the commonwealth is very welcome in that regard. That will not be reflected in the budget review but it will be reflected in the budget.

We have a range of different work underway. We identified whole-of-government savings measures in the budget which we are continuing to work on through our directorates. We are continuing to do the work necessary to put the budget on a sustainable path back to surplus, and I look forward to updating the Assembly on that on Thursday.

MR COCKS: Treasurer, what is the government's plan to restore the ACT's net financial worth, which currently stands at negative \$16.7 billion and falling, and by what date will you do so?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Our focus is on delivering the fiscal strategy that we set out and updated in the budget last year. Those points are available for Mr Cocks to look at. That is our focus. By putting the budget in a strong cash position and a strong HNOB position over the forward estimates, that will support the sustainable finances of the territory. I will be updating the Assembly on how we are tracking against that in the budget review on Thursday.

MR PARTON: Treasurer, do you expect Canberrans to just continue paying for your fiscal failures?

MR STEEL: I reject the premise of that question. We are delivering the services and infrastructure that a growing community expects while also making sure that our budget is on a sustainable path. We have seen a very significant increase in demand and in costs in our health system, which we responded to in the last budget. We have now seen, as a result of the advocacy of the Chief Minister, the health minister and myself as Treasurer, a significant agreement struck with the commonwealth to be able to support people to get the care that they need when they need it in our hospital system.

We are continuing to do the work necessary, as set out in the fiscal strategy, to put the budget on a sustainable footing. That includes responsible and sensible savings measures, not deep cuts. It also included some revenue measures and some difficult decisions that were made last year. It also includes continuing to make targeted investments in health and education and in community and recreational facilities that are expected by the community and continuing to renew aging assets in the community. We have set out a responsible path to balance, and I look forward to continuing to update the Assembly on how we are progressing against that.

Budget—debt

MS BARRY: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, last week, the Minister for Finance said on ABC Radio that there has been a half billion dollar improvement to the ACT budget's bottom line. Treasurer, can you confirm that the ACT's budget net debt

will decrease by half a billion dollars this financial year?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. Of course I will be outlining an update to the territory's finances when I release the budget review on Thursday, but the ACT government has done a significant amount of work since the last budget, consistent with the budget strategy that we set out around whole-of-government savings measures, budget control measures as well as revenue measures and difficult decisions that we set out in the budget to put the budget on a more sustainable footing. We will continue to track against that in updates like the budget review and also in the budget that I will release in June. This is going to be a multi-year effort, but we had a significant win on Friday with the national cabinet agreement to the National Health Reform Agreement, which has been in negotiation for two years, which will make sure that there is a fairer share in contribution to our hospital system from the commonwealth, recognising the growth and demand that we are seeing in our hospitals, as every state and territory is experiencing around the country. So we have set out those measures and I look forward to updating the Assembly on Thursday.

MS BARRY: Treasurer, is the Minister for Finance correct?

MR STEEL: I refer the member to the answer to my last question.

MR COCKS: Treasurer, would the Minister for Finance's statement that there has been a half billion dollar turn around in the budget bottom line be misleading, given that it was made before any commonwealth deal had been inked?

MR STEEL: No.

Transport Canberra—fare-free travel

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Transport. I refer you to your decision to implement a public transport ticketing policy of fare-free periods on Friday and Saturday evenings over the summer. This decision appears to stand in stark contrast to the clear intent of my motion of 23 October—which you supported—to provide fare relief to concession card holders and extend concession eligibility to part-time students. Minister, how is it possible, fair and reasonable that you could find the money to provide free fares to party goers, but not for concession holders?

MR STEEL: I disagree with the premise of the question. This is something that we committed to consider in budget review, and that is what we have been doing. I will, of course, release the budget review on Thursday. I will not pre-empt that, but certainly I have written to you, Mr Braddock, outlining some of the considerations that we have needed to make around the cost of delivering on the Assembly resolution in relation to part-time students. What it was asking for was a permanent concession being provided to part-time students, who are currently not eligible for student concessions. Of course, that would come at a substantial cost, and there is not additional appropriation in the 2025-26 financial year—

Mr Braddock: I have a point of order on relevance. The question was: how is it fair and reasonable they could find money for the fare-free Friday and Saturday evenings but not for concession holders?

MR STEEL: It would come at a substantial cost if it was a permanent measure to extend concessions, and that is in sharp contrast to a time-limited, targeted measure that only operates after 6 pm on Fridays and Saturdays for people using both light rail and bus services to support our cities businesses, which will be in place until the end of February—a time-limited measure that could be managed within the existing appropriation that we have and another measure where there is no additional appropriation that has been allocated for that purpose.

We have considered those issues in the budget review, and we will obviously provide some information when we release the budget review. Of course, there will need to be further consideration of the broader matters in the resolution in the 2026-27 budget process, and I look forward to having that discussion with Mr Braddock.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, how were you able to find money in the budget for party goers but not for concession holders?

MR STEEL: Again, I reject the question of the question. The answer is that we are talking about a time-limited initiative that only runs over the summer period, until February, for a very short span of hours compared to what was proposed, which was a permanent extension of concessions to potentially a larger group of people that would have cost more, for which there was no appropriation in the current budget passed last year, and in which this was not an initiative. So that has been part of the considerations for the budget review, but I am continuing to look at the opportunities there, particularly around how we can get better data around the number of part-time student concession passengers there are on public transport. I will have more to say about that tomorrow in my ministerial statement of priorities.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, do you and the government still support Mr Braddock's motion passed on 23 October, calling for free public transport for concession card holders, seniors and students, or are successful motions simply optional these days in the Assembly?

MR STEEL: No. We have, consistent with the motion, considered that in the budget review, and I will have more to say about that when I release the budget review. Of course, many of these motions are not costed when they come up. I am not sure that you know the cost of that particular proposal, especially when it was brought forward for debate. As part of any budget process we need to consider the cost of the proposal and whether it can be funded within the existing appropriation that the Assembly has given us. Obviously, that is a measure that had a cost for which there was no appropriation, so we will need to further consider how we can deliver on the intent of the motion. We need to go through a proper process where we consider that as part of a business case. That includes looking at the evidence base around that proposal and the number of part-time students that exist that might use public transport. That would then inform the cost of delivering or extending that concession.

The other part of the motion was to make public transport free for all students, and that is something that we will need to consider in the next budget process. Again, that would have very substantial and significant costs.

Budget—hospitals

MS LEE: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, on ABC Radio yesterday, the Minister for Health, who is also the Minister for Finance, said that the additional commonwealth funding will, and I quote, “largely be contributing to budget repair”.

Treasurer, to what extent will health funding increase as a result of the new commonwealth agreement, and what conditions have been attached to that additional funding?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. That money we have invested in our healthcare system is \$1.19 billion. That is the increase we have made in the last budget to support, particularly, the demand in costs we are seeing in the healthcare system—more people showing up at our emergency department; 70,000 elective surgeries that we will deliver. That funding from the commonwealth does go into supporting the healthcare services that people need in our hospital system in Canberra. Of course, we will continue, through future budgets, to look at a range of other needs that arise from time to time and deliver on our election commitments we have made as well.

It is welcome to have that funding. It did not happen without the advocacy, over two years, of members of our government to be able to achieve this deal—

Ms Lee: On a point of order. My question asked what conditions will be attached to that additional funding. I ask that the minister be direct to that question.

MR SPEAKER: Minister, do you have anything further to add about conditions?

MR STEEL: The details of the federal financial agreement, I am sure, will be made available through the Federal Financial Relations website once those agreements have been signed. We have set out some of the parameters of the deal, but there will need to be further discussions around the more detailed parts of that agreement. That will occur over the coming weeks. There is also the work that is underway, including through disability ministers, around Thriving Kids, and foundational supports there as well. I think there is a big meeting at the end of the month that the minister will no doubt be engaged with as well. There is further work to do to finalise the agreement-making. They will be transparently published at the appropriate time. I am sure, when we reflect that in the budget, there will be an opportunity for scrutiny there and discussion about the outcome.

It is a good outcome at the high-level agreement. It is because our government strongly advocated to the commonwealth to make sure they could more fairly fund our hospitals, particularly in a small jurisdiction, where we do have higher costs. That has been recognised through the small jurisdiction loading that has been provided.

MS LEE: What proportion of this additional funding will be spent on increasing frontline health services, such as employing more doctors and nurses?

MR STEEL: I was going to refer to the Minister for Health, but I am happy to answer. We made a \$1.19 billion investment in the hospital and health system in the budget last year. It is going directly into frontline services—70,000 elective surgeries. It is going

to support the demand we are seeing in our emergency departments so that when people show up, they get treated; that should be their expectation, and that is what we have funded. Now the commonwealth is contributing to that at a higher share than they were before. It is a great outcome that we now have agreement over five years that provides certainty about the delivery of those services.

We are continuing to work with the New South Wales government around the contribution that they make for their residents in our hospital system, and there is some positive news there as well, particularly in recognising the cost of delivering episodes of care in our hospitals. I will have more to say about that, and on what impact that has had on the budget, on Thursday. This is a great outcome. We should be celebrating. All parties should be celebrating this outcome we have achieved with the commonwealth. It is a momentous agreement that has taken two years of negotiation that will put us on a more sustainable path to delivering the frontline healthcare services that Canberrans need.

MR COCKS: Has the commonwealth government provided the extra funding, that additional amount, because your government has been unable to adequately manage the health budget?

MR STEEL: No. This is a fairer share of commonwealth funding to be able to fund the actual cost of delivering healthcare services, particularly in small jurisdictions. All jurisdictions in the country, all states and territories, have been facing pressure—the cost of demand in our hospital systems. We have all been, in a united effort across parties, engaging with the commonwealth to get a fairer share of commonwealth contribution to our systems. We have achieved that on Friday as a result of that advocacy. It is a welcome outcome. We are looking forward to continuing to engage with the commonwealth around supporting Thriving Kids and children with autism and developmental delay, and making sure they have access to support. That is part of the deal, and there is further work to do there to make sure we put in place the system that is needed to support those families.

Recycling—Container Deposit Scheme

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water. Minister, you announced last week that the ACT's Container Deposit Scheme will be expanded next year. How will the expansion improve ACT recycling rates and reduce littering in Canberra's streets?

MS ORR: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for his question. Yes, the ACT's Container Deposit Scheme, which supports the beverage industry in minimising waste and litter generated by beverage product packaging, is being expanded from the middle of next year.

The ACT CDS will grow to include most of the larger containers; that is, containers between 150 millilitres and three litres. This includes things like wine and spirit glass bottles, cordial and juice concentrate containers, and larger containers of up to three litres of beverages that are already in the scheme, such as flavoured milk, fruit and vegetable juice.

There will be a few containers that will continue to be outside the scheme, because of the way they are made and the products that are contained in them. But, with all the extra containers coming into the scheme, modelling suggests that the expansion will capture an additional eight million containers in the first year, increasing to 13 million containers per year after five years of operation. Based on this modelling, the expansion of the scheme would initially result in an additional 400 tonnes of material being recovered and kept out of landfill per year, increasing to more than 500 tonnes per year by 2045.

Mr Parton: These are the partygoers getting the free buses.

MS ORR: All those partygoers on the free buses, drinking their Raiders lime milk. And an estimated 33 tonnes of additional litter per year will be avoided due to the CDS expansion by 2030, increasing to 40 tonnes of avoided litter per year by 2045. I am really excited to see the scheme expanding, delivering on our election commitment, and to see that we will have improved resource recovery and outcomes to support our transition to a circular economy.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, why is the scheme commencing in 2027 and not right now?

MS ORR: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for his question. The expanded scheme will commence no earlier than mid-2027. That is to give the beverage industry time to adjust, and to allow collection points and systems to get ready for collecting and processing the new containers. The government will continue to work with our partners to implement all of these changes across industry. We will also look at making sure that our timing aligns with the expansion of the New South Wales Return and Earn scheme, so that we have that consistency there, and everyone has the knowledge that things are being implemented equally.

Until we do expand the scheme, we will not be able to accept the new containers at our current refund points, but we are encouraging the community to continue to recycle these through their yellow-lidded recycle bins and, once the scheme is expanded, through the CDS.

MS TOUGH: Minister, how have ACT residents and community groups benefited from the container deposits being collected so far?

MS ORR: Since the scheme commenced, 430 million eligible containers have been recycled via the collection point network, putting \$43.3 million in container deposits back into people's pockets. The scheme has also facilitated over \$130,000 in donations to community groups, and it has significantly increased awareness, participation and redemption rates. The expansion of the CDS is expected to benefit the ACT economy and households by providing a broader range of items for which households can claim their 10c redemption per item. It will also provide more opportunities for charities and community groups to raise money by returning containers through the CDS.

Budget—hospitals

MR CAIN: My question is to the Treasurer. On Friday, the commonwealth government

announced a \$25 billion funding package for state and territory run public hospitals. This funding amounts to approximately \$4.1 billion for the ACT over five years. Treasurer, is the additional commonwealth funding being used to repair the budget damage caused by your mishandling of the \$75 million HRIMS project?

MR STEEL: I reject the premise of the question. This money is the contribution that the commonwealth is making to the cost of delivering hospital services. We invested \$1.19 billion in the budget last year. It makes a significant contribution to making sure that we can sustainably deliver those services as we see growth and demand in the system. It is a welcome agreement and it should be supported by all parties in this place, as it was by governments of all colours around the country.

MR CAIN: Treasurer, is the additional commonwealth funding being used to repair the budget damage caused by your mishandling of the botched \$64 million MyWay+ rollout?

MR STEEL: I reject the premise of the question. This is about delivering a fair share of commonwealth funding to our healthcare services, and that is what the government has been investing in through the investment that we made in the budget last year—\$1.19 billion across four years, which is a substantial investment to support Canberrans with the health care that they expect and which the opposition voted against.

MR COCKS: Treasurer, is the additional commonwealth funding actually being used to offset the budget damage caused by your mishandling of over \$150 million in projects?

MR STEEL: Again I reject the premise of the question. It is going directly into supporting the investment that we are making in the delivery of services for Canberrans in our hospitals—again, which the Canberra Liberals voted against and voted against in all budgets in recent memory.

Treasurer—conduct

MR PARTON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, over the last 12 months, we have seen a motion of censure, an embarrassing backflip on the health levy and now yet another botched public transport rollout. Chief Minister, do you still have confidence in Minister Steel?

MR BARR: Yes.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, given his demonstrated history of failure, how can you continue to have confidence in the “minister for mediocrity”?

Members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: I remind you to refer to members by their correct title, Mr Parton. You know that.

MR BARR: Although there is no “minister for mediocrity”, there is an opposition for that, Mr Speaker.

MR CAIN: Chief Minister, can you inform this Assembly what the threshold is at which you will dismiss a minister?

MR BARR: There is a ministerial code of conduct that is in place.

Skills—apprenticeships and traineeships

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations. A recent report from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research shows that over the last 10 years the number of apprentices and trainees in the ACT has reduced by 31 per cent. This is despite a 27 per cent increase in skills and vocational training spending over the same period. Minister, why has the government spent more money on skills to deliver worse outcomes?

MR PETTERSSON: I reject the premise of the question. I am not sure of the precise figures that Mr Milligan is referring to but there has not been a linear trend in enrolment numbers in vocational education over that time. We are currently experiencing a downturn in enrolments. I have been very clear to this chamber about that. We are experiencing a very tight labour market which is placing tremendous pressure on VET, both public and private, in their enrolment numbers. The government is committed to investing in vocational education to ensure we have the skills we need as a growing city. In the most recent budget we have supported apprentices through increased subsidy to six key construction trades. Prior to that, we increased subsidies to electro-technologies. We, as a government, are committed to investing in skills to meet the needs of our city. We acknowledge that there are challenges in getting the enrolment numbers we need for that future prosperity, which is why this government supports initiatives like Free TAFE and that is why this government supports initiatives like providing cost-of-living relief to students. So, this government is committed to supporting the skills agenda of this city and I encourage the Canberra Liberals to get on board and support that agenda too.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why should employers and training organisations have faith in the government to increase training numbers when it has failed to do so over the last 10 years?

MR PETTERSSON: Can Mr Milligan repeat that question, Mr Speaker?

MR MILLIGAN: Why should employers and training organisations have faith in the ACT government to increase trainee numbers when it has failed to do so over the last 10 years?

MR PETTERSSON: I would largely refer Mr Milligan to my previous answer, but I would highlight some of the initiatives that I have indicated, increasing the subsidy for six key construction trades. Those fees are paid by employers. So this is a government that is prepared to support all elements of the VET system to make sure that we have the skills needed for a growing city.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what specifically will your government do this year to make sure that enrolments for next year are significantly stronger?

MR PETTERSSON: I would expect that Ms Castley was not asking me to announce executive policy. This government is committed to growing enrolment numbers. I do acknowledge that there are currently challenges in meeting those high enrolment targets that we have set. As minister I will continue to work collaboratively with CIT to ensure that their course offering is meeting the needs of our city. I will continue to support the announced government initiatives that include working alongside the commonwealth government through the National Skills Agreement, highlighting key agreements like Free TAFE, and this government will continue to roll out cost-of-living support for apprentices.

Mr Barr: It has been a long one, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: It has.

Mr Barr: I now ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Supplementary answers to questions without notice Transport Canberra—MyWay+—standing order 118AA

MR BRADDOCK: Mr Speaker, I seek your ruling under standing order 118AA, in relation to the first supplementary to my first question to the Minister for Transport, relating to MyWay+ beta testing. Much as I appreciate the minister's offers for a briefing, which I will take him up on, I feel he did not answer the question.

MR SPEAKER: I will take that on notice and get back to you. I would just say to all members that it is going to be a lot easier if you raise these directly after the question has been asked and answered so I can then hopefully make a ruling on the spot. It gets a bit difficult if you are talking about a question that was asked 50 minutes ago. I will take it on notice and will get back to you. I mention that for all members. Mr Cocks did that at the time. Are you going to ask about another one now, Mr Cocks?

Development applications—approvals—standing order 118AA

MR COCKS: You will be very happy with this as well, Mr Speaker, because I will be going back a bit of a way! We had to check the precise answer before I decided that we would raise this. When Mr Milligan asked the Minister for Planning, very specifically, "How many development applications are currently sitting beyond their statutory timeframes?" we waited a while for the minister to find what we expected to be the answer, but we did not get it. Instead, the closest we got was a number for a specific month, regarding those which were returned within statutory timeframes. Of course, that is not the number that is currently outstanding.

MR SPEAKER: I thought he did provide that.

MR COCKS: We checked.

Mr Steel: It must be 15 per cent, by deduction, Mr Speaker.

MR COCKS: That is not the number, nor—

Mr Steel: There's the answer.

MR SPEAKER: To be frank, he has given you a percentage, and he did give a number. I will take it on notice, Mr Cocks. Without getting into a debate here, I reflect that he did give a number and a percentage, certainly. I will take it on notice and get back to you. Again, if you had raised the specifics of it directly afterwards, we would get a better result and a more timely result.

Whitlam—community facilities

MS BERRY: The Whitlam centre was handed in after the auction. It is still for sale over the counter, and the Suburban Land Agency is working on other strategies. I took on notice any other information that I can provide.

Budget—debt

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: In Ms Barry's question, I believe that she said that I had stated on radio that debt would be reduced by half a billion dollars. That was not what I said. I would encourage—

Mr Cocks: That was not the statement.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I believe that Ms Barry said debt would reduce by half a billion dollars. If she said that, that is incorrect and I would ask that she check the *Hansard*. What I very clearly indicated on radio was that the deficit would reduce from an unacceptable more than a billion dollars in 2024-25 to less than half a billion dollars in 2025-26, thereby improving the HNOB bottom line by half a billion dollars from last financial year to this financial year.

Papers

Mr Speaker presented the following papers:

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to section 17—Auditor-General's Reports—

No 7/2025—2024-25 Financial Audit Program—Overall Results, dated 18 December 2025.

No 1/2026—Diversity, equity and inclusion in the ACT Public Service, dated 14 January 2026.

Bills, referred to Committees, pursuant to standing order 174—Correspondence—

Bills—Inquiry—

Family, Personal and Sexual Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2025—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Legal Affairs, dated 10 December 2025.

Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Amendment Bill 2025—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders, dated 9 December 2025.

Bills—Not inquired into—

Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2025—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Legal Affairs, dated 21 January 2026.

Juries (Peremptory Challenges) Amendment Bill 2025—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Legal Affairs, dated 21 January 2026.

Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 (No 3)—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Legal Affairs, dated 5 December 2025.

Nurse Practitioners Legislation Amendment Bill 2025—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Social Policy, dated 27 January 2026.

Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Amendment Bill 2025—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Social Policy, dated 5 December 2025.

Standing order—

99B—Petitions—Referral advice—Correspondence—

Petition—Inquiry—e-Pet-063-25—Lack of Indoor sporting facilities on Canberra’s northside—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Economic, Industry and Recreation, dated 29 January 2026.

Petitions—Not inquired into—

e-Pet-008-25—Fix the ACT’s Broken Construction Approval System—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation, dated 29 January 2026.

e-Pet-033-25—Reimagining Wakefield Gardens a Bold New Community—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Economic, Industry and Recreation, dated 29 January 2026.

e-Pet-037-25—Keep WWVP cards free for volunteers—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Social Policy, dated 5 December 2025.

e-Pet-040-25—Keep the Rent Relief Fund—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Legal Affairs, dated 10 December 2025.

e-Pet-041-25—ACT Bail Reform—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Legal Affairs, dated 8 January 2026.

191—Amendments to the following bills:

Payroll Tax Amendment Bill 2025, dated 9 December 2025.

Planning (Territory Priority Project) Amendment Bill 2025, dated 9 December 2025.

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

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to section 21—Auditor-General’s Report No 5/2025—Specialist assessment services for dementia and cognitive decline—Government response, dated February 2026.

Building and construction industry—Regulatory burden reduction—Assembly resolution of 18 March 2025—Government response—Swimming Pool Safety Reforms—Documentation Review Report 15/7/2025 - 22/08/2025.

Dickson shops taskforce—Assembly resolution of 6 March 2025—Final report and improvement—Government response, dated February 2026

Domestic Violence Agencies Act, pursuant to subsection 16W(3)—ACT Domestic and

Family Violence Review—Biennial Report 2025, dated 24 December 2025.

Economics, Industry and Recreation—Standing Committee—Report 2—Inquiry into insurance costs in the ACT—Government response, dated January 2026.

Electoral Act, pursuant to subsection 10A(2)—Report on the ACT Legislative Assembly Election 2024—Government response, dated February 2026.

Freedom of Information Act, pursuant to section 39—Copy of notice provided to the Ombudsman—Freedom of Information request—Decision not made in time Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate—CMTEDD FOI2025-362, dated 17 December 2025.

Public housing—Minimum energy efficiency standard—Proposed upgrade—Assembly resolution of 29 November 2023—Government response—Report to Legislative Assembly, dated February 2026.

Urban Growth Boundary Establishment—Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre—Assembly resolution of 10 April 2025—Government response—Statement on progress in considering an urban growth boundary, dated February 2026.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act—ACT Teacher Quality Institute Amendment Regulation 2025 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2025-27 (LR, 11 December 2025).

Auditor-General Act—Auditor-General Appointment 2025—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-305 (LR, 1 December 2025).

Blood Donation (Transmittable Diseases) Act—Blood Donation (Transmittable Diseases) Blood Donor Form 2025 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-320 (LR, 22 December 2025).

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Act—Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2025 (No 6)—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-296 (LR, 27 November 2025).

Building and Construction Industry Training Levy Act and Financial Management Act—Building and Construction Industry Training Levy (Governing Board) Appointment 2025 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-319 (LR, 18 December 2025).

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act—City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency (Agency Board Deputy Chair) Appointment 2025 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-294 (LR, 25 November 2025).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Act—Civil Law (Wrongs) CPA Australia Professional Standards Scheme 2025—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-311 (LR, 11 December 2025).

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act—Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction (Greenhouse Gas Emissions Measurement Method) Determination 2025—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-310 (LR, 4 December 2025).

Domestic Animals Act—Domestic Animals (Dog Control Areas) Declaration 2025—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-317 (LR, 15 December 2025).

Education Act—

Education (Registration Standards Advisory Board) Appointment 2025 (No 1)—
Disallowable Instrument DI2025-312 (LR, 18 December 2025).

Education (Registration Standards Advisory Board) Appointment 2025 (No 2)—
Disallowable Instrument DI2025-313 (LR, 18 December 2025).

Food Act—Food (Fees) Determination 2025 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument
DI2025-297 (LR, 1 December 2025).

Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act—Health Records (Privacy and Access)
(Fees) Determination 2025 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-302 (LR, 1
December 2025).

Legal Profession Act—Legal Profession (Solicitors) Conduct Rules 2025 (No 2)—
Subordinate Law SL2025-28 (LR, 15 December 2025).

Lifetime Care and Support (Catastrophic Injuries) Act—

Lifetime Care and Support (Catastrophic Injuries) Attendant Care Services
Guidelines 2025—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-323 (LR, 23 December 2025).

Lifetime Care and Support (Catastrophic Injuries) Rehabilitation Guidelines
2025—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-322 (LR, 23 December 2025).

Lifetime Care and Support (Catastrophic Injuries) Workplace and Education
Facility Modifications Guidelines 2025—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-324
(LR, 23 December 2025).

Magistrates Court Act—Magistrates Court (Environment Protection Infringement
Notices) Amendment Regulation 2025 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2025-25
(LR, 27 November 2025).

Major Events Act—Major Events (Summernats 38) Declaration 2025—
Disallowable Instrument DI2025-309 (LR, 4 December 2025).

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act—

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods (Fees) Determination 2025 (No 1)—
Disallowable Instrument DI2025-298 (LR, 1 December 2025).

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Amendment Regulation 2025 (No
2)—Subordinate Law SL2025-29 (LR, 15 December 2025).

Motor Accident Injuries Act—

Motor Accident Injuries (ACAT Costs Orders) Amendment Regulation 2025 (No
1)—Subordinate Law SL2025-30 (LR, 18 December 2025).

Motor Accident Injuries (Quality of Life Benefit) Guidelines 2023—Disallowable
Instrument DI2025-308 (LR, 8 December 2025).

Nature Conservation Act—

Nature Conservation (Protected Native Species List) Criteria and Processes
2025—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-307 (LR, 1 December 2025).

Nature Conservation (Scientific Committee) Appointment 2025—Disallowable
Instrument DI2025-315 (LR, 11 December 2025).

Public Health Act—Public Health (Fees) Determination 2025 (No 1)—Disallowable
Instrument DI2025-299 (LR, 1 December 2025).

Public Place Names Act—Public Place Names (Dickson) Revocation 2025—
Disallowable Instrument DI2025-306 (LR, 4 December 2025).

Radiation Protection Act—Radiation Protection (Fees) Determination 2025 (No
1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-300 (LR, 1 December 2025).

Road Transport (General) Act—

Road Transport (General) (Vehicle Impounding and Seizure/Speed Trial) Fees Determination 2025—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-304 (LR, 28 November 2025).

Road Transport (General) Exclusion of Road Transport Legislation (Summernats) Declaration 2025—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-318 (LR, 18 December 2025).

Road Transport (General) Numberplate Fees Determination 2025 (No 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-303 (LR, 1 December 2025).

Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Act—Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Public Transport Fares Determination 2025 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-314 (LR, 15 December 2025).

Taxation Administration Act—Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Ambulance Levy) Determination 2025—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-321 (LR, 22 December 2025).

Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act—Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Fees) Determination 2025 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-301 (LR, 1 December 2025).

University of Canberra Act—University of Canberra Council Appointment 2025 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-295 (LR, 24 November 2025).

Urban Forest Act—Urban Forest (Remediation of Land) Declaration 2025 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-316 (LR, 11 December 2025).

Veterinary Practice Act—Veterinary Practice (Board) Appointment 2025 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2025-325 (LR, 23 December 2025).

Work Health and Safety Act—Work Health and Safety Amendment Regulation 2025 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2025-26 (LR, 28 November 2025).

Sport and recreation—Erindale Leisure Centre

MR PARTON(Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (3.25): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that:
 - (a) the Active Leisure Centre in Erindale is one of two Government-owned indoor swim centres in Brindabella and offers a wide variety of health and wellbeing programs and facilities, catering to the inclusion of people of all ages and abilities;
 - (b) prior to the 2024 ACT Election, the ACT Labor Party committed to upgrading the aging facility, which has been in a state of disrepair for a considerable amount of time;
 - (c) in the 2025-2026 Budget, there was no money allocated for upgrades to this aging facility;
 - (d) Labor candidates for Brindabella made explicit promises to members of the community that there will be major upgrades to the Erindale Active Leisure Centre, but thus far have failed to articulate what these upgrades are;
 - (e) the ACT Labor Party has a demonstrated history of promising to deliver new facilities and services for the Tuggeranong Valley, but consistently fails to deliver on time, if ever; and

- (f) on a recent *ABC Radio* interview, users of the Erindale Active Leisure Centre described the conditions of the facility as "putrid" with "paint falling off the ceiling" and a "filthy pool deck with mould in the grates";
- (2) directs the Minister for Sport and Recreation to:
 - (a) enforce Belgravia Leisure's contractual obligations to maintain cleanliness and health standards at Erindale Active Leisure Centre; and
 - (b) report back to the Assembly by 26 February 2026 on:
 - (i) the extent of upgrades to be delivered at Erindale Active Leisure Centre made as part of ACT Labor's election commitment; and
 - (ii) the completion date of the proposed upgrades; and
- (3) calls on the Government to include full funding for upgrades to the Erindale Active Leisure Centre as part of the 2026-2027 Budget and appropriation.

This motion is pretty simple. It revolves around the fact that, if you are the incumbent government, you simply cannot go to an election promising to do something if you are not going to do it. That is really what it is about. I know that the minister will go with either, "We did not actually make such promises," or "We are going to upgrade that centre before the tram gets to Tuggeranong or by 2030." But, at the crux of it, this is a very simple motion. It is simply asking for the government to deliver what they promised. The community and stakeholders involved have lost faith in that; they do not believe it is going to happen.

This issue came to my attention while doorknocking last year in Monash. This is why I knock on 10,000 doors every term—because this stuff is important. As a part of that engagement I met with a group of Active Leisure Centre users at the facility late last year, and I was staggered at the state of the place. The Erindale pool is, to quote one listener of ABC Breakfast, "putrid". There are years and years of mould, grime and neglect visible at the centre, with some of the centre's core facilities being closed on numerous occasions because of equipment failures.

One user of the pool contacted my office saying that she does not venture into the change rooms after using the pool—she cannot go in there—because they are disgusting. I had a quiet tour myself and I have to agree with them. One user of the pool remarked to me that there is money for new uniforms and for the new signage out the front, but the dead cockroaches remain and the mould is getting worse.

A lot of the frequent users of the centre, those who contact my office the most, attend aquarobics classes at the pool. Recently, these people—most of whom are, let me say, my vintage and older—have been told that their aqua membership, which allowed them to use the pool and attend aquarobics, was cancelled and now they have to take out a nearly \$900 a year full membership. I have received more correspondence in the last 48 hours about the cost of using this centre going through the roof. When you consider how competitive these classes are, a lot of these frequent pool-goers are now seriously reconsidering their membership. For so many of these Active Leisure Centre users, what they do there in this centre is so important to their entire lives. Let me take you back to the election of 2024. ACT Labor's claim for Tuggeranong back then says that a re-elected Barr government will upgrade the facilities at the Erindale Active Leisure Centre.

This Tuggeranong plan brings me around to another point. The government's failure to even conceptualise the proposed upgrades for the Erindale Active Leisure Centre is just indicative of the disdain that the Labor Party has for the people of Tuggeranong. These upgrades join a long list of broken promises for the Tuggeranong Valley. It is interesting to note that the Tuggeranong Regional Plan also talks about the new ice sports venue. That is going all right, isn't it? That is going well! That has been promised since 2020. The Athlon Drive duplication has been promised longer than most of us have been in this place. To be honest, I am getting a bit tired of this, and so are the good people of Tuggeranong. Every election time, the Labor Party roll out promises for the valley that they are never going to make good on. I think it is time that this government actually deliver on what they promise—and that is exactly what this motion sets out to do.

This, of course, is indicative of the wider issue that the government now concede they have involving the provision of recreational facilities of this nature, like swimming pools. They, of course, have not been dragged kicking and screaming—because I do not want to say that, Mr Assistant Speaker; they have been robustly cajoled in a specific direction while offering loud and spirited resistance, which I do not believe is a gendered reference, but I am happy to take advice from the Deputy Chief Minister on this. This motion calls upon the government to do its job. Specifically, fulfil your promises. If you say you are going to do something, you need to do it. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Minister for Homes and New Suburbs and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (3.30): I move the following amendment:

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

“(b) report back to the Assembly by 28 May 2026 on upgrade priorities based on consultation with Active Leisure Centre users.”.

I rise today to speak to Mr Parton's motion and to the amendment that I have circulated. Mr Parton is right; he catches on pretty quick sometimes: ACT Labor did make a commitment to upgrade Erindale Leisure Centre prior to the 2024 ACT election. There are four years within a government term to deliver on those commitments, and the ACT Labor government plans on doing just that.

Labor's objection to this particular motion is that it calls on the government to appropriate funds and then report back on a scope and timing prior to the budget process. It also asks the government to report back on the scope in a very short period of time. It is simply not possible to report back on a scope and timing by 26 January and hear from and work with the Erindale pool users on the kinds of repairs and maintenance that they want to see at that centre. The government needs to go through the process of working with pool users on their priorities—because it is the right thing to do and, if we did not, Mr Parton would be the first one to raise that with us as an issue—and to go through the budget process to make a considered and informed decision once we know the scope and cost of those maintenance and upgrades works that would need to occur at Erindale.

I can inform the Assembly today—and for Mr Parton's special interest—that I am

taking a business case for this to the 2026-27 budget, but I cannot do that until I have the information in front of me on what is actually required at Erindale. My preference is—and it is right—for me to have those discussions appropriately with the Erindale users to ensure that the business case is fully informed. Instead, my amendment proposes that I could report back on priorities for upgrades following consultation with pool user groups.

But let me be clear and repeat that ACT Labor is committed to delivering on these upgrades. We made that promise during the election and we will certainly deliver on it—I know that Tuggeranong members Ms Tough and Mr Werner-Gibbins as well as every other member in this place from Tuggeranong will certainly hold me to that—and ensure that the Erindale Leisure Centre gets what it needs.

I know that it is a well-loved facility. It is particularly special, though, because the temperature of the pool is slightly warmer than some of our other lap pools, which makes it the perfect place to swim and do aquarobics as well as gentle exercise. There are 19 aquarobics classes scheduled every week. I have been invited to attend one of those aquarobics classes, and I commit to do that at some point in this period of time. I do enjoy an aquarobics class and I look forward to joining the groups there to experience the Erindale Leisure Centre and see what it is and what it can be after our discussions.

The promised upgrades to Erindale pool will be considered as part of the upcoming budget, as I have said, and to inform this decision we must consult with pool users to understand their priorities. But we have not been sitting on our hands waiting for these upgrades to be funded. Over the last year, \$300,000 has been invested in maintenance and minor upgrades across the whole facility. In the pool, that includes deep cleans, filter repairs, replacement of heat pumps, heating panels and plumbing in change rooms as well as repairs to the deck doors. I know there is more to do. This is an aging facility and it definitely needs some love, which is why the government committed to these upgrades and why ACT Labor will be delivering.

As members will know, Infrastructure Canberra is the custodian of seven public pools, which includes Erindale Leisure Centre. Since August last year, Belgravia has been the operator of the Erindale pool. Together, Belgravia and Infrastructure Canberra manage daily operations, respond to planned and unplanned maintenance needs and respond to upgrades that keep these facilities safe, modern and welcome for all Canberrans to enjoy.

The motion that sits before us today directs me personally, as Minister for Sport and Recreation, to enforce Belgravia's contractual obligations. For the benefit of the Assembly, while I take full responsibility for all activity across all of my portfolios, the management of contracts like this one is not one of my responsibilities, and rightly so. Infrastructure Canberra will absolutely continue to manage the contract to achieve the best possible outcomes for Canberra swimmers.

The community and their government, rightly, have high expectations about the cleanliness of these facilities. The Erindale centre was deep-cleaned twice in the last six months, once on 18 August and a second time on 5 November. That is in addition to the standard nightly cleans of the facility. Staff inspect bathrooms hourly throughout the day, with record-keeping on the wall.

I am grateful to the members of the community who have taken the time to give Belgravia, Infrastructure Canberra and myself feedback about the pool that they use and that they love. It is this feedback that helps us improve the experience for everyone who uses the pool. Last year, in response to feedback about Erindale and Lakeside pools, Belgravia put on additional staff to improve responsiveness to community feedback. I am hopeful we will start to see a difference from that change and see that Belgravia will continue to adapt feedback from the pool user groups. But we will keep listening to the community regardless through surveys and direct feedback from swimmers and any other pool user groups.

I look forward to delivering on these upgrades, as I said, which ACT Labor candidates, now MLAs, have been campaigning so hard for. I look forward to working with the Erindale user groups on these upgrades and hopefully being able to announce, after the budget process is completed, funding for the upgrades to the Erindale pool. Maybe, Mr Parton, I will see you there for a swim soon.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (3.37): I will make the majority of my speech once we have resolved the question of this amendment, but I want to get in my two cents worth. I am a bit disappointed by the content of the Labor amendment. I think it does—pun intended—water down the motion a bit too much, and lets themselves off the hook a bit too much, based on a commitment that they made a couple of years ago. If ACT Labor made the commitment prior to the election, a couple of years ago, they should be able to communicate that commitment to the community in a timely fashion.

I also think we are far enough into the term—and, indeed, having now already seen upgrades to the Lakeside Leisure Centre in a previous budget—that we should be able to expect government to provide a timeline for those upgrades. I am concerned that they do not already have it.

Labor's proposed amendment also, unfortunately, removes any call to undertake these upgrades and fund them as part of the budget process. I am reassured to hear now that the minister does intend to take a business case forward. That was not information that we were privy to beforehand. I am glad to hear that these might come about, as part of the next budget. I can absolutely anticipate their concerns about the Assembly's ability to direct the government to appropriate money. I am foreshadowing that I will propose an alternative amendment that, hopefully, will find a sensible way through, but I will leave that for now.

Question put:

That **Ms Berry's** amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 10

Noes 15

Andrew Barr
Yvette Berry
Tara Cheyne
Suzanne Orr
Marisa Paterson

Caitlin Tough

Chiaka Barry
Andrew Braddock
Peter Cain
Fiona Carrick
Leanne Castley

Jeremy Hanson
Elizabeth Lee
James Milligan
Deborah Morris
Laura Nuttall

Michael Petterson
Chris Steel
Rachel Stephen-Smith
Taimus Werner-Gibbings

Jo Clay
Ed Cocks
Thomas Emerson

Mark Parton
Shane Rattenbury

Question resolved in the negative.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (3.44): As a fellow member for Brindabella, I, along with my Greens colleagues, will be supporting Mr Parton's motion today. While Erindale Active Leisure Centre was actually where I learned to swim as a kid—

Mr Parton: Is that right?

MISS NUTTALL: It is—it is a shame that my most formative memory of this time was when my friend was in one of the stalls and I watched in abject horror as a cockroach, slowly, then quicker and quicker, sped towards the stall, and she let out an ungodly scream. It was terrifying. I am hoping and trusting that they have got on top of the cockroach problem. But the fact remains that this pool is an ageing facility. In a lot of ways, it is good that we are keeping existing assets online for as long as possible when they matter to the community. We shouldn't not do that. But I have consistently heard concerns from the Tuggeranong community that Erindale's facilities are not up to scratch, and it is such a shame that this is the case.

We value that they are open from early in the morning until late at night. However, if the facilities are not up to a certain standard then no-one will want to go there, no matter what time they are open. The community deserves clean, well-maintained and accessible public facilities.

Canberra has just experienced two heatwaves, with Tuggeranong hitting, I believe, a record high, or thereabouts, of 43.5 degrees Celsius last Wednesday. People rely on their local pools to stay cool, and it would be great to have our public pools open their doors and invite the community in, as a refuge from the heat. I know many people who travel to the Kambah Pool or Casuarina Sands to get out of the heat without that cost barrier. Where can people go that is accessible via public transport and within that area? Lake Tuggeranong, where the blue-green algae is in full bloom? I think not.

The Yass Valley Council was able to eliminate that cost barrier and allow free access to the pool over the heatwave. Brisbane and Melbourne city councils are offering \$2 pool entry fees across the summer. In contrast, the ACT government seems to have allowed a Victorian company—I believe Belgravia—to grandfather well-utilised membership options like aquatics-only memberships and, in a lot of ways, it looks like they are neglecting the upkeep of the facility. I think it would not be inaccurate to say that there has been a fair bit of community concern about how Belgravia has been managing our public facilities.

People turn away from facilities that are in a poor state. My friend and I were turned away by seeing cockroaches in the change rooms. The Erindale Active Leisure Centre is not up to the standard that the Tuggeranong community deserves. Labor understood this in 2024, when they released their priorities for the election. They said, "We'll upgrade facilities at the Tuggeranong Leisure Centre and Erindale Active Leisure

Centre.” I am happy to support any calls that can bring these upgrades to the community as soon as possible.

Investment in our natural waterways has all but dried up. If there is no forthcoming investment in restoring our natural bodies of water, where people love to swim, surely, our publicly built aquatic facilities must be at a standard that is not a barrier in terms of cost or cleanliness for the community. Let me be clear: I think we should have both natural and publicly built pools. It would be epic. Ultimately, it is a public facility and there needs to be a level of responsibility to listen to the community and the users of the pool.

Also, I think we all feel that the ACT government have a level of responsibility to the community that they have been serving for the last 25 years. As foreshadowed, I am moving this friendly amendment, which will amend the third point, and call on the government to include full funding for upgrades to the Erindale Active Leisure Centre at some point in this parliamentary term, which feels reasonable, given ACT Labor’s commitment to the Tuggeranong community at the last election. The point, hopefully, is to express both the community and the Assembly’s will to get the upgrades done. What did they mean by their 2024 election commitment if not fully funding the initiative during this parliamentary term? I strongly urge them to consider the upgrades in the budget. The facilities are, as the community has expressed, a bit dire.

I thank Mr Parton for his constructive engagement on the amendment that I have circulated. I cannot take full credit. This amendment is as much his as it is mine.

Mr Parton: Thanks, Laura.

MISS NUTTALL: You’re welcome, Mr Parton. I also want to thank Minister Berry and her office for their patience in trying to find a constructive way through. It got a bit tricky on time there, but I appreciate their efforts. Thank you also to Mr Emerson and Ms Carrick for their engagement.

Ultimately, the motion in front of us is a good motion that calls for something that the Tuggeranong community is eager to see. I am happy to say that the Greens will be backing this one today. I move:

Omit paragraph (3), substitute:

“(3) calls on the Government to include funding for upgrades to the Erindale Active Leisure Centre as part of the Government’s normal budget process at some point in this parliamentary term.”.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (3.49): Erindale Leisure Centre is a great facility; it is where I took my three boys to swimming lessons. It was during those lessons that I got back into swimming 20 years ago. It is a facility that is warm, but it can be opened up onto the nice green lawns. It deserves to be looked after for the community. I would like to thank Mr Parton for bringing forward the motion, which asks the ACT government to look after our public facilities, and Miss Nuttall for her amendment that seeks to be practical about potential funding to upgrade the facility.

MS MORRIS (Brindabella) (3.50): I rise today to support this motion. I want to thank

Mr Parton for bringing forward this motion for debate, for his tireless advocacy for Tuggeranong and for holding this government to account for its election commitments.

People in Tuggeranong do not ask for much, but we do expect promises to be kept, and we expect a clean, safe and functional pool. Erindale is one of two territory-owned pools in Tuggeranong, and it serves a vital role in teaching, especially, young Canberrans to swim.

I should not need to remind anyone about the vital role that well-maintained, accessible swimming pools play in our community. According to Surf Life Saving Australia's 2025 *National drowning report*, last year saw the deaths of 357 people in our country due to drowning. In addition to saving lives through prevention of drowning, pools offer a variety of services, including underwater rehab work for those recovering from injury, support for our disabled residents, and an affordable way for people to stay fit through lap swimming.

It is clear that Erindale pool is not in a fit state to meet the public's needs. When users go on radio to describe the pool condition as "putrid" and talk about grates full of mould, that is a warning to the public and a clear criticism of the government's inaction and disregard for the public. The government knows that the pool is not good enough, and it promised a much-needed upgrade leading into the 2024 election; yet, more than a year later, very little has been done to deliver on that commitment and, significantly, no money has been allocated to an upgrade. It is one thing to forget a promise, and it is another to not even start it. Documents released under freedom of information showed that the minister had not even sent an email to the operators about this upgrade since the election. The silence has been deafening.

We are not asking for a gold-plated swimming pool. We just want a pool that, in the words of a user, is not "putrid". This motion is straightforward and reasonable. The government must engage the operator to fix the hygiene and maintenance issues immediately. The government needs to explain what the upgrades to the pool will be and a timeline for when the community should expect them. The government must report back to the Assembly on progress so that this does not become just another one of their long list of broken promises to Tuggeranong.

The minister's statement today announcing that she will be leading the government's development of a new pools and aquatic strategy does not answer why essential hygiene and maintenance issues have not been addressed at Erindale, and it should not be used to put off addressing these immediate issues. We do not need a strategy to tell us that a public pool should not be putrid and that Erindale should be fixed now. In the election Labor promised voters an upgrade, and that is exactly what this motion directs the government to do. I thank Mr Parton for bringing it to the Assembly and I commend it.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS (Brindabella) (3.53): I will hazard that part (1)(a) of Mr Parton's motion is eminently reasonable. I will read it:

... the Active Leisure Centre in Erindale is one of two Government-owned indoor swim centres in Brindabella and offers a wide variety of health and wellbeing programs and facilities, catering to the inclusion of people of all ages and abilities;

I wholeheartedly agree with this part of Mr Parton's motion. I also agree with the first phrase of part (1)(b) of Mr Parton's motion:

... prior to the 2024 ACT Election, the ACT Labor Party committed to upgrading the aging facility ...

Yes, we certainly did. The ACT Labor Party listened to users of the Erindale Leisure Centre, like me, and made a commitment to fund upgrades to the centre in consultation with its users, should it form government. However, as I was reading this part, it took me about half a second to realise something was missing, then the rest of that second to realise what the missing bit was. I flatter myself; it took me three seconds to compose the phrase that makes part (1)(b) of Mr Parton's motion perfectly accurate. For the Assembly's benefit, I will re-read the first part of Mr Parton's part (1)(b) with my improvements included:

... prior to the 2024 ACT Election, the ACT Labor Party was the only party that committed to upgrading the aging facility.

That is what was missing, wasn't it, Mr Assistant Speaker? Only ACT Labor made that commitment in 2024. Only the ACT Labor government is prepared to stand by and deliver a commitment that it makes.

Have the Canberra Liberals ever made a commitment to upgrade the Active Leisure Centre in Erindale? If not—and I presume not, because there is nothing anywhere on the internet—there is still time. There is still time for the Canberra Liberals to match ACT Labor's commitment. It has been about 19 months, give or take, since ACT Labor committed to upgrading the Active Leisure Centre. Instead of matching our commitment in that time, or surpassing it, instead of working with me to annoy, constructively, the government in face-to-face meetings and during annual reports hearings about how important this investment is for north Tuggeranong's recreation facilities, the Canberra Liberals have carped and cavilled: never stepping up, always stepping away.

Surely, when bringing a motion like this, it is incumbent on Mr Parton at least to start pretending that he is leading an alternative government. Surely, in his closing speech Mr Parton will make a funding commitment to upgrade Erindale's Active Leisure Centre if the Canberra Liberals should ever form a government. Perhaps such a commitment was discussed in January. If he does step up with this commitment, surely, he will not commit to delivering it and its funding in his first year in office because—and I hope he understands, because he needs to understand—that would be an insane approach to budgeting.

Budgeting truth we know to be self-evident No 1: during its first year in government, no serious government can or does commit to delivering every single dollar of funding to fund every single commitment it has made. Should Mr Parton do it differently if he scrabbles to this side of the chamber, you can hand me the popcorn, Mr Assistant Speaker. I will have to shovel it in, because he is unlikely to be on this side for long.

I was so happy to run for election in the seat of Brindabella as an ACT Labor candidate. I am so honoured to be representing the people of Brindabella as a member of the ACT

Labor government. I am very proud and motivated to be advocating, fighting for and pointing towards ACT Labor's plan for Tuggeranong. It is the specific, detailed program of investment and interest that Tuggeranong needs and deserves—a program that the ACT Labor government is getting done.

Before the election, our plan for Tuggeranong was easily located online and at our street stalls. It still is. It decorates my office wall; but, a year in now, it has plenty of red lines through the commitments that have been delivered. Our plan—Labor's plan—can be discussed, questioned and checked. However, our commitments to Tuggeranong cannot be compared and checked against the Canberra Liberals' commitments to Tuggeranong because they never had a plan for our community that they were willing to publish, stand for and stand by.

Labor's plan for Tuggeranong was released prior to the 2024 election. It is a list of commitments to be delivered over this four-year electoral cycle. Since the election there has been one budget—one.

Mr Assistant Speaker, I urge Mr Parton to tell us, to assure us, that he understands and accepts that governments do not and cannot fund every single commitment all at once. It is extremely important that he acknowledges this. When my colleague Ms Tough and I reviewed Labor's plans for Tuggeranong after the election, its commitments to upgrade the public spaces around Erindale plaza and upgrade the Active Leisure Centre were at or near the top of both of our lobby lists. The ACT Labor government decided to fund upgrades to Erindale's public spaces in the 2025-26 budget. I am not unhappy about that. The fact that more than 400 Tuggeranong citizens have so far responded to my summer survey with suggestions on what should be upgraded demonstrates the validity of the government's decision.

I wish the ALC upgrade was funded in last year's budget, but I understand how governments work and, on behalf of all users of the ALC, have been in the minister's ear constructively since 1 July about delivering its ALC upgrade funding commitment in this budget.

Unlike some, I am not aggravating the minister about the ALC from a distance. I have been going there weekly since what feels like 1924 but may only be since 2017. My worst memory is not a cockroach—there are cockroaches at my house—but instead when a four-year-old son jumped in the deep end for no reason, and promptly and calmly sank. Since 12 January this year, I have been in ALC nine times, with my daughter and sometimes my partner, as they swim laps. I am the only member of this place who is sitting in one of the poolside plastic chairs at least twice a week. I know the facility, I know the staff and I am a user. I have listened to my fellow pool users for years. I hear the feedback, both good and bad; I pass it to the government.

I hope that the ACT government does deliver on its commitment in the coming budget to upgrade the ALC. It will be the right project at the right time for the right reasons—public health, community sport, learn to swim, rehabilitation, and seniors exercise. Should that happen, we users will have some strong and clear recommendations for the ACT government when it consults with us. There is no doubt that cleanliness and maintenance are non-negotiable. Belgravia Leisure has contractual obligations; they must meet them. I know that the minister enforces those obligations. I expect that to

continue.

I completely understand some of the pool users' comments about the pool decks and grating. They are not unfair, and it is not a great look. But it is not a look that is unique to Erindale's pool. Nor is it inappropriate to suggest that the presence of this biofilm indicates that the pool's warm, wet environment is doing what warm, wet environments do. This stuff is prominent in aquatic centres all over the place. This summer, I noticed a little bit at Lakeside Leisure Centre, which is younger than the Erindale pool, and some more at the Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre in Ultimo, in Sydney, which is much younger than Lakeside.

In that context, I think it is fair to acknowledge that the presence of the biofilm does not mean that standards have been abandoned. But none of this discounts community concerns. We patrons should expect clean facilities with non-slip, well-drained decks and fresh air quality. The professional response is to control humidity, manage drainage, use the right materials, clean correctly and renew the assets at the right time. I trust that the upgrades will deliver the design foundation to support that response.

This motion asks for a report back on upgrades and timeframes. That is reasonable. Transparency is reasonable. But spare us the pretence that the absence of a line item in the first budget after an election equals a commitment abandoned. Whilst rushing announcements in the next few weeks, like the motion requests, might make for a good headline, it does not deliver good outcomes.

Upgrading the ALC is important for Tuggeranong, but this motion allows just 3½ short weeks of consultation before demanding to know what the upgrades will be. That timeline is absurd, unless Mr Parton is arguing that we users should not be properly consulted on the ALC's upgrades. If yes, that is outrageous and I, on behalf of the pool users, reject his argument.

I am looking forward to the minister outlining the plan for the ALC following discussions with users of the pool that should, and must, be done properly. We should be taken seriously.

I am sure the Assembly will support this motion, but I want to be clear to my fellow users of the pool: these upgrades will not be the result of Mr Parton or any other member of this chamber bringing a motion to the chamber. The upgrades are an ACT Labor commitment, and only an ACT Labor commitment. I will continue to hold myself and the government to account for that commitment, not just in this chamber, but at the pool deck, as I listen to my neighbours who also use the Erindale Active Leisure Centre every single week.

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) (4.03): My office has worked very hard with Miss Nuttall to try to come to an agreement with regard to the amendment, but unfortunately ACT Labor and the government will not be able to support Miss Nuttall's amendment, because, despite her trying to find a way through, and perhaps with you, Mr Parton, it still effectively directs the government to appropriate. The government cannot support a motion that

suggests that.

I also want to provide a bit of information to Miss Nuttall. In her speech, she said funding and investment had not been made to the Erindale Leisure Centre. In fact, it has been. Some time ago, even though sometimes it feels like COVID was yesterday, the Erindale Leisure Centre received funding out of \$25 million of COVID funding to pools. That included draining the pool completely and upgrading all the electrical infrastructure, as well as some reconfiguration of the front office space. As I said in my speech, since August last year, over \$300,000 has been invested in maintenance and minor upgrades across the whole facility. I know that is not enough and that is not everything that needs to happen.

I have spoken with Erindale user groups in the past. I very much appreciate Mr Werner-Gibblings' very enthusiastic advocacy and the work that he is doing to engage the Erindale Leisure Centre user groups to be part of the conversation about what is going to be required, so that a fulsome business case can inform the 2026-27 budget process. Mr Werner-Gibblings is right. As I said in my speech, the government has four years to respond to and apply the promises that it makes during an election campaign. Not everything can be funded within the first three days of an election. As much as we would all love it, it is not possible. The budget would be in a much worse state if we spent all the money now. It needs to be carefully managed over a four-year period.

The promise is made. The commitment stands. I have said that I will be taking a business case through the budget process and I will work with the Erindale Active Leisure Centre community to understand what specific upgrades are required at the Erindale pool. They will be considered as part of the upcoming budget. Then I will be able to inform the Assembly about work going forward and what the Erindale Leisure Centre pool user groups can expect as a result of that process.

Mr Werner-Gibblings has hit the nail on the head. We do not disagree, but we should be factual. There is a promise. It is an election commitment. It will be delivered, and I am going through the process appropriately to ensure that the delivery occurs. Specifically and importantly, I will be making sure that we consult with all of the user groups throughout that process. As we go through that process, I am happy to advise Ms Nuttall and Mr Parton, if he is interested, on the outcomes of those conversations. It will be fed by the work that Mr Werner-Gibblings has already been doing in his surveys of the Tuggeranong community. To him, as another Tuggeranongite, and to you all, I am happy to provide that information to make sure that you are fully up to date on what is happening and what I am hearing regarding the Erindale pool.

Also—and I know this might get a bit tiresome for you all—if you are receiving correspondence from Erindale user groups that are asking questions or want to be involved, please send it to my office so that I can make sure that they are engaging with the process and that they do not feel left out. Do not feel that you need to wait to bring that correspondence to the Assembly during question time or during a motion. Let's get them into the process so that they feel that they are part of it.

As I said, we will not be able to support Ms Nuttall's amendment, for the reasons that I have provided. We cannot be directed to appropriate funds, but there is a process and I think everybody should be satisfied with that.

MR PARTON (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (4.09): To the amendment and in closing, I respond to my good friend Mr Werner-Gibbins by saying that the Canberra Liberals took an exceptionally well-detailed and well-received plan to Tuggeranong in the lead-up to the election of 2024 and, as a consequence, 25,135 Tuggeranong residents put a “1” in the primary column for the Canberra Liberals. That was 43.2 per cent of the primary vote, and that was a swing to the blue team of 4.7 per cent. I would also note that, on the flip side, 19,696 people went with the ALP, which was a swing against of nearly seven per cent, resulting in 33.8 per cent. What I am saying is that there was very clearly a plan for Tuggeranong laid out by the Canberra Liberals. We have certainly indicated on a number of occasions, including during this motion, that we are fully supportive of the upgrades to Erindale Active Leisure Centre.

I also point out that Ms Berry and Mr Werner-Gibbins have given us some lessons on fiscal management and budget processes, and they talk about the fact that you cannot do everything in the first year, but it will definitely be done in the parliamentary term, which is exactly what this amendment calls for. The repeated assertion from Ms Berry is that this was a steadfast promise and it will be done in this term. Again, I point members to the words of Miss Nuttall’s amendment. It was well-crafted by Miss Nuttall. It calls on the government to include full funding for upgrades to the Erindale Active Leisure Centre as part of the government’s normal budget process at some point in this parliamentary term, which is exactly what the minister is telling us she will do. As a consequence of that, I fully support Miss Nuttall’s amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Planning—Woden Town Centre

MS CARRICK(Murrumbidgee) (4.11), by leave: I move the following amended motion:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the Woden Town Centre (WTC) is the major hub in Canberra’s south and is undergoing significant densification and loss of social infrastructure;
- (b) the 2004 WTC Master Plan was not implemented and no coordinated planning for social infrastructure has occurred since. The 2015 Master Plan primarily sets building heights;
- (c) residential towers have replaced key social infrastructure, including the indoor sports stadium, bowling greens, bowling alley, tennis courts, YMCA and gymnasium. The 50m pool, ice rink and “pitch n putt” are also planned for residential towers;
- (d) since 2017, 24 residential towers and over 5,000 apartments, mostly one bedroom, have been built. Another 11 towers are in progress;
- (e) in December 2026, SQM Research reported that the 2606 postcode (Phillip, Lyons and Chifley) had a vacancy rate of 3 percent, high for

- Canberra and nationally;
- (f) in the 2024 election, the Government stated that feasibility is underway on additional indoor sporting facilities in the WTC; and
 - (g) on 29 January 2026, the Government announced a new 50m public pool in Woden;
- (2) further notes that:
- (a) the Government's Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework provides an opportunity to reconsider planning for residential, commercial and community development in the WTC;
 - (b) in late 2025, Scentre Group released a concept master plan proposing 17 towers up to 55 storeys, well above current Territory Plan limits, and some community facilities, proposed to be funded through the Lease Variation Charge; and
 - (c) the proposal includes opportunities to deliver diverse apartments and community facilities sought by residents. A land-use plan and negotiating strategy would progress consideration of the options; and
- (3) calls on the Government to:
- (a) deliver its commitments, starting with an integrated land-use plan for the WTC, including:
 - (i) governance arrangements—table by 24 February 2026, including terms of reference that drive collaboration with the building owners and community, identify underlying assumptions, options and criteria to be used to ensure activation and social infrastructure in the right place;
 - (ii) housing analysis—current apartment size and numbers, ownership/rental mix, vacancy rates and unmet housing needs;
 - (iii) entertainment precinct and place plan—a place plan to create a destination by activating public spaces and the night-time economy in the core of the WTC, including the Woden Town Square and the West Plaza;
 - (iv) social infrastructure—gap analysis, options and criteria to determine the preferred sites, with the 50m pool set in a green environment;
 - (v) tree canopy—a plan to increase the canopy from 20 to 30 percent; and
 - (vi) integration—ensure Scentre Group's master plan aligns with the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework;
 - (b) co-design the land-use plan and negotiating strategy with the community prior to consultation;
 - (c) table the above analyses, land-use plan and negotiating strategy by June 2026, before public consultation on the Southern Gateway Framework and before any major Territory Plan amendment for the Scentre Group proposal; and
 - (d) declare the WTC an urban renewal precinct by 24 February 2026.

Today I rise once again to speak about the future of the Woden town centre. I know

some may roll their eyes and think, “Not again!” but I persist because Woden has the potential to become a vibrant and welcoming destination for southsiders, and I am increasingly concerned that this potential is slipping away. Good planning must be people focused. Too often I do not see that happening. I genuinely welcome the government’s recent commitment to a new 50-metre pool for Woden. It was an exciting announcement, but I have felt that excitement before. In 2018, the government announced a new community centre to bring together the essential services delivered by Woden Community Service. We are still waiting. We are also still waiting for the new ice rink, first announced a decade ago—not that I want to lose it from Woden. Why are projects delayed? Why is the Geocon pool so unpopular?

We need transparency around the underlying assumptions, options considered and the criteria used to determine where facilities go. It is called a multicriteria analysis and it is a decision-making tool that uses a non-monetary evaluation to transparently compare alignment of the options with the criteria. It helps you make clearer, more defensible and more balanced decisions when multiple factors matter. It brings structure, transparency and stakeholder involvement into complex choices. This is exactly why clear, transparent criteria for selecting sites, published openly by the government, are so important. If the government articulated and published the criteria it uses to choose locations for public facilities, we would have transparency and a basis for accountability, and the potential for better outcomes.

The problem is not only in the way the government chooses sites and the size of facilities. I also have concerns about the outcomes based planning framework. The first two towers of the Geocon development on the Phillip pool site tell the story. The ACT government’s own Climate Change and Energy Division stated clearly that Geocon’s central plaza, which will be surrounded by five towers, will suffer from cold and deeply overshadowed conditions in winter, and excessive heat will be trapped by surrounding tall buildings in summer. In other words, the plaza will be overshadowed and cold in winter, hot in summer and unable to support trees because of basement parking and building masses. This is not people focused planning; it is a developer’s design driving the outcome, with no-one clearly protecting the public interest.

So, yes, I am worried. I am worried that planning has been ceded to private interests without a coherent vision for Woden. I am worried that community outcomes are becoming an afterthought. I will continue to insist that land use planning must serve the people. The real questions are: can we trust the government to centre community needs in a town plan, identify the best sites for social infrastructure and strengthen Woden’s character, liveability and social heart? While the skyline has risen, much of the social infrastructure that once bound our community together has been lost.

The last land use plan was 22 years ago, the 2004 Woden Town Centre Master Plan, and included a map of numbered facilities and upgrades, including enclosing and upgrading the Phillip pool. Unfortunately, that plan was never implemented. Since then, no coordinated planning effort has addressed the everyday needs of families, young people and older residents. The 2015 Master Plan focused largely on building heights. It listed the community facilities that existed at the time, many of which have since been demolished, and no new land use planning has acknowledged their disappearance or the community’s growing needs.

Instead, we have seen 24 towers and over 5,000 apartments—mostly one-bedroom apartments—built since 2017, and another 11 towers are underway, and we have seen the steady loss of longstanding facilities. The indoor sports stadium, bowling greens, a bowling alley, tennis courts, the YMCA and the gymnasium have been demolished to make way for residential towers. The 50-metre pool, the ice rink and pitch and putt are now earmarked for more housing.

While housing is important, SQM Research reports that the 2606 postcode now has a vacancy rate of three per cent, which is amongst the highest in Canberra. Woden is oversupplied with small apartments and undersupplied in the social infrastructure that makes neighbourhoods thrive. The government needs to look at why we have so many empty apartments and the housing stock local people want. I have heard from many that they do not want 55-storey apartments.

There has been some progress. The government committed in the 2024 election to examining new indoor sports facilities, and last week announced a new 50-metre pool. These are welcome steps, but we need a plan to ensure that they are located where they will bring activity and fun to the area—places where people, particularly young people, want to come together to be active and catch up with their mates. This local social planning is important to our physical and mental health, and now we have an opportunity. The government's Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework allows us to consider how residential, commercial and community development can work cohesively. The Scentre Group's concept plan, with 17 towers up to 55 storeys and community facilities potentially funded partly through the lease variation charge, provides opportunities for more diverse housing stock and community facilities, but, to evaluate this properly, we need a strong land use plan and a well-developed negotiating position with Scentre Group.

So today I call on the government to act decisively. Deliver an integrated land use plan for Woden town centre that includes clear governance involving business owners and the community; social infrastructure gap analysis that identifies preferred sites for missing facilities; transparent assumptions, published options and, critically, published criteria for site selection; a detailed housing analysis to ensure future developments meet the needs of locals for housing that is hopefully affordable for our young people; an entertainment precinct and place plan to reinvigorate the town square and West Plaza; a genuine plan to green the environment; a strategy to increase the tree canopy to 30 per cent; and alignment of the Scentre Group proposal with the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework.

We want to see the community co-design the plan and the negotiating strategy before consultation so that residents can shape the vision from the outset. The community has formed a town centre action group that will continue to advocate for land use planning and better outcomes. I look forward to working with them over the coming months. Woden has a proud history, a strong identity and a community deeply invested in its future. We have a chance now to rebalance growth and liveability, restore lost social infrastructure and ensure the town centre focuses on the needs of all its users, particularly homes and activities for our young people, to support them having a sense of belonging to their community.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable

Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (4.20): I thank Ms Carrick for the motion that she has brought forward to the Assembly today. The ACT government has a strong record of investment and delivery in Woden, especially within the Woden Town Centre and we continue to plan and invest in the future of the Woden Valley and the town centre. In the last sitting week of 2025, I tabled the progress report for the Woden Town Centre working group, which was established in response to the Assembly resolution of 20 March 2025 regarding a similar motion by Ms Carrick on the Woden Town Centre.

I refer members to our record of investment mentioned in that, around community public transport, health and sporting infrastructure within the town centre, which is outlined in the report. Of course, further planning is required, and I have spoken at great lengths about our vision for Woden and our approach to the work underway in planning for the future of the town centre, both in this Assembly and through the inquiry that is underway into the role and future of the Woden Town Centre, which came from a petition moved by Dr Paterson.

The ACT government is undertaking substantial work on the development of a new Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework. Much like the City and Gateway Urban Design Framework, it will support urban regeneration across the southern corridor, and it provides an opportunity to revitalise this part of Canberra. Of course, Woden Town Centre is an important part of that southern gateway of work. It will demonstrate framework design excellence, and celebrate Canberra's unique landscape character whilst placing more value on public spaces that prioritise pedestrians, cycling and public transport, as well as providing social infrastructure required for sustainable communities. And that is really important as we start to see more people living in the Woden Town Centre.

There will be opportunities for more housing, commercial activity, active travel and public transport connections, as well as improvements to landscape, streets and public spaces, which of course is part of the motion and amendment that Ms Carrick has circulated today. I welcome the opportunity to have a discussion about these issues. The substance of today's motion is about the development of this new Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework, and I would like to thank Ms Carrick for working with us on the amendments that she will be moving to her motion about some of the things that we will need to consider as we develop that draft framework so that we can go out and consult with the broader community.

This amendment recognises that there is an established process that has been put in place for developing, consulting on and finalising an integrated land use plan for the Woden Town Centre through the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework. It also recognises the established interagency advisory group and Woden Town Centre working group who are already providing input into the investigations and planning for the development of the new draft framework on matters within the scope of today's motion.

I would like to thank Ms Carrick for acknowledging that any declaration of the Woden Town Centre as an urban renewal precinct would have resource implications and for agreeing for this to be appropriately considered through the upcoming budget process. It is something that we do support and want to consider, but we need to understand what

the financial implications are. Of course, we are really interested to see what community feedback we receive through the development and consultation of the draft framework.

Progressing urban regeneration is not just our ambition for Canberra; it is work that I am committed to do every single day. I am ambitious for Woden and I am dedicated to pursuing our vision for the Woden Valley and for all of Canberra. We will be doing that through the development of this transport-oriented development or integrated land use and transport plan for the Woden Town Centre and the broader corridor, stretching from Commonwealth Park, where light rail will be terminating with 2A, right down to as far as Beasley Street in Torrens and Farrer, including the Woden Town Centre in between.

The framework will represent an integrated strategic approach to land use planning and transport infrastructure in the corridor. It will support the implementation of the district strategies, which have been subject to consultation with the community in their development, and it will identify opportunities for community and recreational facilities that we will need as the population of Woden grows over time. It will maximise the benefits of the investment that the government has been making in infrastructure in Woden, including light rail.

The outcomes of community engagement with the district strategies undertaken between 2019 and 2023 on the unique character of the Woden district has also guided the project to date, but we will need to consult again through the development of the framework. We expect there will be multiple opportunities for that. When the district strategies were developed, they identified change areas and key sites, and they will also be part of the discussions that we need to have. They, of course, are broader than the town centre footprint, but there will be opportunities to guide the sorts of development that we want to see in in this important corridor in our city.

It is important to acknowledge that private landholders—like Scentre Group, which owns the Westfield at Woden—will play a key role in delivering outcomes for the community, so we will need to engage with them. I appreciate that Ms Carrick’s amendment around how we engage with them is going to be important to think about. The government has already been progressing work around developing a framework to consider some of the proposals that may be coming forward from them in the future, including our proposals around community and recreational facilities that they may wish to support within the town centre as part of a broader set of developments, including new housing development.

While it is not up to the government to dictate when private landholders like Scentre Group choose to bring forward planning applications or an amendment to the Territory Plan, any application for a major plan amendment, for example, is subject to public consultation and consideration by the independent Territory Planning Authority, which has a role in the statutory planning process. But of course, there will be opportunities for the Assembly and the planning committee to have their say through that process as well. So, I support the motion and the amendment to the motion moved by Ms Carrick.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (4.27): I want to rise briefly to echo many of the comments that Ms Carrick made and to thank her again for bringing a motion about Woden Town Centre, because we have been speaking about it for a long time. Ms Carrick and I have been engaging about the future and the importance of the Woden

Town Centre for a very long time. Since before either of us were running to represent our electorate, we have been talking about the utter neglect and decay that we have been witnessing in our community.

Labor, over its tenure, has presided over a decades-long failure. We have seen decay in Woden, the loss of community infrastructure and declining government services. We have seen closed schools. We witnessed for a time severe problems in terms of vacant buildings. Those problems are not necessarily gone. Many people look at what has been happening in the town centre, and it has become emblematic of what they see as an ad hoc approach to where we are going with our community.

I was recently door knocking in the Lyons area, and I remember knocking on the door of one gentleman and his husband. They were talking to me about how they overlook the town centre and how they had watched the high-rises grow. But they have given up going into the town centre because they are just slightly too far away to walk. It is pretty steep and they are not so young anymore, and getting back is a bit difficult. But they cannot find somewhere to park. Not only that; the economy in the town centre is struggling. The businesses in the Woden Town Centre are struggling to get by. “What is more,” they said to me, “we do not go down there for socialisation. There is no pool down there.”

That pool that we have been talking about in Phillip, over the past five years has been closed more than it has been open. Over the time that this minister claims to have been paying attention to Woden—the time since his interesting Woden experiment—Woden has continued to struggle. And that is why we absolutely support Ms Carrick’s approach here; something has got to be done.

I said in my first speech that Woden ought to be the beating economic heart of the south. And it should be. And not only that; it should be the beating social heart of the south. Woden is ideally positioned to serve people right across Canberra’s south. Whether you are in Yarralumla or in Banks, Woden ought to be a place where people can come and find the community infrastructure they need.

Now, it is interesting that when the minister was speaking about infrastructure, the one thing that he named—the one piece of infrastructure that he said the government has invested in—was light rail. But light rail has not come to Woden. As far as I am aware, there is no contract to deliver light rail in Woden. As far as I am aware, there is not a dollar in the budget for a light rail contract in Woden. It begs the question: if that is the one thing that the minister can point to, what about everything else that is going backwards? What about the roads that people come to all of us and talk about—the decay in the roads that they are forced to drive on? What about the decaying footpaths that people are attempting to walk on to get to the places they need to get to? What about those road signs that we drive past every day—the road signs we can see the letters falling off?

Labor has not done well for Woden. It likes to talk about the sort of things that it would like to do. It likes to talk about visions; it likes to talk about plans. This government is fantastic at talking up plans for the future, but then never getting there. How many decades does it take to deliver on a plan? Rolling five-year plans that never get delivered are not good enough. And it is about time they did a little better.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (4.32): I thank Ms Carrick for bringing this motion forward and for the cooperative way we have been able to work together, and with the minister's office, on finalising the wording of the motion. I note that not 12 months ago, as has been touched on, Ms Carrick brought forward a similar motion which called on the government to establish a working group that would, amongst other things, identify opportunities to improve the Woden town centre and there is no doubt that today's motion is borne out of a frustration that we have not seen clear outcomes from that process to this point in time.

There is certainly much going on in the Woden town centre. The new CIT is now operational and work is well progressed on the new bus interchange. Land is being released for redevelopment and the government has recently announced its intention to establish a public 50 metre pool in Woden, although I think significant questions remain about both the timeline and the scope of that project.

The working group is progressing with its studies and of course Scentre has been consulting the community about extensive changes that it wants to make to the town centre, with the intention of seeking to amend the Territory Plan and the government has been progressing the development of the Southern Gateway Planning Framework. We have the environment and planning committee conducting a review into the Woden town centre, although that inquiry has not yet released its report. In addition to all of that, the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development has been negotiating with the owners of businesses in the Phillip Services Trades Area about reintroducing housing in parts of the services trades area, which is part of the Woden town centre. So all in all, there is a lot happening.

It is some 60 years since Woden Valley was established as Canberra's first new town outside the Inner North and South. Initially planned as a discrete unit, its role expanded with the development of Weston Creek, enabling a larger town centre with improved facilities. The town centre now serves as a major hub for retail, employment, services, recreation, community facilities and public transport for Canberra's south.

The town centre has an inward-looking design focused on a central square, which is surrounded by retail, offices, some community facilities, a theatre and a church centre. While the combined Woden-Weston Creek population peaked at around 63,000 in the late 1970s, Woden's population has steadily grown from 31,336 in 2001 to now more than 39,000 in 2021, with the combined population again nearing that earlier peak.

Woden does have an older age profile in many districts, picking up Mr Cocks' anecdote that he just shared with us, although this is expected to shift with population growth and high-density housing. Public open space within the town centre is limited, with constrained east-west movement, reflecting broader demographic and planning changes. Population yield has been driven largely by compact city policies, planning decisions and land releases, resulting in a significant increase in residential development in and around the town centre.

At the same time, the government has been progressing initiatives to introduce missing middle housing typologies through the suburbs. These initiatives respond to strong community support for natural spaces, liveability and diverse housing choices,

alongside the need to balance social, environmental and economic outcomes. I note that the environment and planning committee is conducting the inquiry that I touched on earlier, both of Woden but also of the missing middle initiatives. And so again, I come back to my point and all this context is, there is a lot going on.

Certainly recent residential development has transformed the Woden town centre, replacing extensive car parking with buildings, though not without concern about the pace of change and the supporting infrastructure. The Greens fully support the extension of light rail to Woden. It is a significant step that has the potential to really improve access to the Woden town centre and drive a degree of urban consolidation and change.

This all goes to, I think, the heart of Ms Carrick's motion, which is a concern that there is a need for a holistic plan for the town centre. I have just described all these things that are happening, but I think the heart of Ms Carrick's motion is what will it mean for Woden? What will it look like at the end? And are there things we need to be putting in place now that will ensure that at the end of all this, we have not just housing, but we have community services amenity, we have third spaces and Woden has become a place that future residents will feel like it is a community, not just the place they live or go to work. What will it actually look like and how will it feel for the people that go to Woden? I think that is at the heart of the motion and the heart of Ms Carrick's frustrations—that it does not feel like there is a vision for Woden. More like that there is height limits and land releases and loss of community amenities and the private sector driving the changes they want to make, but not within a context of how do we make town centre function for the people.

That brings us to the motion, which the Greens will be supporting, including Ms Carrick's amendment, which we are pleased to have collaborated with her on. I think that it does really speak to what is needed for Woden, which is to, as it says right at point (a) there in the section on the calls on the government, ensure the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework delivers an integrated land use plan for Woden town centre. That is at the heart of it. How does it all come together and what does it ultimately look like?

I think the other parts then really go to how you put that together; governance arrangements, making sure that the underlying assumptions and premises that this is all being built on are available to the community so that we can have an open discussion about it, that there is good analysis, there is good planning and good opportunities for the community to participate and participate with, let us say, clear insights, as to what those underlying drivers are.

So all of that said, I am pleased that this motion came before the Assembly today. I think we have landed on a good amendment that will provide practical steps to move this discussion forward and move this forward in a way where there is transparency and there is a clear opportunity for community participation and input into these conversations so that we land an outcome where, in, whether it is a decade's time or two or three decades' time, we can look back and say that the right steps were put in place to make Woden a great place to live, to visit as a community member and to create opportunities for the citizens of the area.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (4.40): I rise to speak very briefly in support of Ms Carrick's motion and to thank her for bringing it to the Assembly today and also to discourage her from worrying about any eye rolls in this place when she raises the issue of the Woden town centre. If you did not know what Ms Carrick was focused on prior to the election, you will have heard throughout the election campaign that she cares about Woden, and she was focusing on this for a decade prior to joining this place. So, we should not be surprised that her efforts are going to focus closely on exactly what she campaigned on. I think that is something Ms Carrick should be proud of. I am impressed by it and I think other members should be as well—that she continues to focus on the issues that motivated her to try to get in this place and represent her community, and that is what she has done here today. It is fantastic to see that commitment and that ongoing advocacy—energizer bunny mode as members have commented—lead to outcomes and commitments being made. I look forward to seeing the outcomes of this motion and any others that she continues to bring to this place, focused on what matters most to her and the people that she is here to represent.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (4.41), in reply: I would like to thank everybody for their contributions and thank you, Mr Emerson, for your support. He is secretly a southsider—do not tell anyone! I would like to thank Mr Rattenbury for bringing up the vision and where we will be in 20 years because that is what it is about. Where will our community be in 20 years and how cohesive will it be? It is really important.

I note that you mentioned the Phillip trades precinct and this is another matter for planning. If we are going to bring residential apartment blocks into the Phillip trades precinct, we need to plan how those apartment blocks and existing trades work together so that we do not end up pushing the trades out to Fyshwick or somewhere else. As it happened in Braddon, a lot of the trades were pushed out. We need to have discussions about how will they co-exist because we are happy to have development and to have residents in the Phillip trades precinct, but we do not want to lose all our trades. We have already lost our hardware shop. There is another thing—our hardware shop, our garden centre—they have gone too. We do not want to lose our trades precinct completely. So how they will co-exist is another discussion.

Mr Rattenbury mentioned population. By 2065, Phillip will be the largest suburb of people. It will even surpass Kambah. It will have 19,000 people. Woden will grow to 89,000. Woden/Weston, because remember this is Weston Creek's town centre, will be 120,000. If you put the five kilometre radius around Woden this town centre will be servicing over 150,000, let alone all of Canberra south. As said, it has the potential to be the social and economic heart of the south.

I would like to also acknowledge Mr Cocks' comments. When you talk about struggling business, it is true. Businesses are struggling. The buildings are empty. Lovett Tower, our iconic building, is empty. A lot of the ground floors around the town square are empty. The doors are locked. You cannot get into the plaza for fear of somebody running out and stealing stuff from the shops.

There is a lot of work to do for our public spaces. People just walk through them. They do not stop; they just walk through, but there are a lot of people living there now. With the 5,000 apartments that have just gone in there are people around, but they do not stop because there is nothing to stop for, so we need to work on that.

The CIT is terrific, and as wonderful as the CIT is, it is surrounded by blank walls. It is really annoying. I really do not know how that happened. The frustration—the CIT and the Youth Foyer and their blank walls on our public spaces highlights my frustration.

I would like to also acknowledge that I do see Mr Parton at the recently established Woden parkrun. I tell you, it is something to see—when you are going to the parkrun, you see people coming out of the towers and all of these people just heading to the parkrun. It is very exciting. I would like to thank Andrew Dempster for establishing it. It has been going since late last year and hundreds of people show up. It brings people and activity to the town centre and it is really terrific.

I would like to thank the minister for his support for Woden. I know that he has got passion for Woden to be a terrific town centre and I know he is working on it. So thank you for supporting the motion Minister and thank you everybody else for supporting it.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Motion to take note of papers

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pursuant to standing order 211A, I propose the question:

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

ACT Domestic and Family Violence Review—biennial report 2025

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) (4.45):

I table the following paper:

Domestic Violence Agencies Act, pursuant to subsection 16W(3)—ACT Domestic and Family Violence Review—Biennial Report 2025, dated 24 December 2025.

I would like to speak on the ACT Domestic and Family Violence Review that was tabled earlier.

The ACT Domestic and Family Violence Review was established in 2021 through an amendment to the Domestic Violence Agencies Act 1986. Its purpose is to review the deaths where domestic and family violence is known or suspected to have been present, to identify factors leading up to the incident and to examine the effectiveness of system responses.

The inaugural ACT Domestic and Family Violence Review Biennial Report 2023 was tabled in February 2024. I now table, today, the ACT Domestic and Family Violence Review Biennial Report 2025.

The 2025 report presents a detailed analysis of non-homicide deaths occurring between 2020 and 2024. These deaths are constituted mostly of suicides but also include unintentional deaths such as accidental overdoses and cases where the coroner was unable to determine whether the death was a suicide or unintentional.

The report is deeply sobering, and the findings are deeply confronting. It reminds us of the devastating impact of domestic and family violence on our community, and the impact it continues to have on individuals, families and the broader community. Behind every statistic is a life lost, a person who should be with us, and loved ones who carry unimaginable grief. We honour those lives today and recommit ourselves to the urgent work of prevention.

Between 2020 and 2024, 49 fatal incidents occurred in the context of domestic and family violence in the ACT. Thirty-eight of these were non-homicide deaths, including suicides, and 11 were homicides. The report found that 67 children in the ACT were impacted by domestic and family violence in these cases.

The 2025 report identified the following key themes: firstly, victims were misidentified as perpetrators and perceived as problematic, highlighting the need for trauma-informed approaches that recognise patterns of coercive control; secondly, children must be recognised as victims in their own right, with responses prioritising their safety and healing; thirdly, domestic family violence often involves repeated harm, with victims experiencing violence from multiple perpetrators and offenders targeting multiple victims; and finally, perpetrators who died by suicide exhibit similar risk factors to perpetrators who commit homicide.

The 2025 report does not propose any new recommendations but highlights how the 12 recommendations from the 2023 report remain relevant, based on its current findings, and provides an update on progress against these recommendations.

I extend my heartfelt condolences to the families and friends affected by the deaths documented in this report. Each life lost represents a profound tragedy, a person with a unique story whose absence leaves an enduring void.

I reaffirm this government's unwavering commitment to preventing domestic and family violence. The government will take time to deeply consider the findings of this report and future approaches to this important work. Thank you.

Dickson shops taskforce—final report and improvement—government response

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (4.49): I want to thank the minister for giving us the opportunity to speak. I want to briefly speak on the final report on the Dickson shops taskforce, and I welcome the government presenting this report today.

These are my local shops. I am down there multiple times a week and very familiar with the issues at Dickson shops, which are often raised with me by residents, not only in Dickson but throughout the inner north. I am really pleased to see that the data collected through this process, by the taskforce, will be used as a baseline to continue

analysing trends in spend, visitation and perceptions from before and after the shops upgrades, which are underway now.

The current data, per this report, indicates that levels of crime continue fluctuating. There is no real trend up or down, although I do note the addition of CCTV cameras since this motion was brought to the Assembly, and that has been welcomed by residents. There does continue to be, at the shops, a concerning overall vacancy rate of over 20 per cent, with more office space having been vacated than taken up from July 2024 to July 2025. This will remain a significant ongoing issue throughout the works that are underway in the public realm but also with the significant changes proposed through the Tradies development, which is likely to disrupt foot traffic and businesses that are operating out of the Dickson shops. So I ask all members to spend time, whenever they can, at the shops, visiting and supporting the local businesses there.

I am concerned in the report about some of the somewhat vague language used on “next steps” and hope to see concrete actions taken to follow up on the momentum that has been produced and come out of this motion, and the work that has happened on the back of it. And while I am pleased that supporting vulnerable people in Dickson has been a key consideration, I would similarly like to see more specifics about what the government really means when it says that it is continuing to strengthen existing outreach models to address individuals with complex needs. This is a really key issue for people in Dickson. It is important to us that that translates into tangible action.

Clearly, there is a lot of work still to be done, with community perceptions of safety, comfort, cleanliness and ease of access all lower than compared to similar areas like Civic. For ease of access, 63 per cent responded positively; for community safety, just 52 per cent; for comfort, 52 per cent; and for cleanliness, only 39 per cent of people responded positively regarding the cleanliness of the shops.

Again, it is encouraging, though, that the motion has prompted multiple meetings with key stakeholders in Dickson, including residents, local business owners, small business owners and landlords, and I hope the government sees this in the same way. I certainly see this not as the conclusion of the work on improving Dickson shops and transforming it as best as possible into the hub it could and should be for us in the inner north but as the beginning of continuing action in line with community expectations.

And I did want to mention, along those lines, Poppyfield Commons, the collaboration between community members, the Tradies and local hospitality venues. I think this is a fantastic example of what can be done when multiple different members of the community come together, put their heads together and have a look at how to make more creative use of spaces and re-activate local shopping centres like what we have in Dickson. I would love to see more of that—more partnerships between Dicksonians, government, local businesses and other stakeholders.

And with that in mind, I would acknowledge the incredible, immense, ongoing, undying, relentless work of the Dickson Residents Group, who have put many of these issues on the radar of those of us here in the Assembly. I am sure they will continue to advocate, connect with residents and push for Dickson shops to be as fantastic as it can be.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health,

Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (4.53): I rise quickly to respond to Mr Emerson's comments with regard to Dickson shops, just to provide a little bit of additional information. Of course, Dickson is not my local shopping centre, because I live in the city, but it is certainly a place I am very familiar with, having grown up in the inner north and spent a lot of time in Dickson, and I still spend a bit of time there and talk to a lot of people in my electorate about it.

Mr Cocks: It is nice to hear some inner north parochialism.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Well, it does not happen that often in this place. Community safety, of course, remains a top priority for the ACT government, and our directorates are committed to working collaboratively with ACT Policing, with service providers and with the community to deliver effective and lasting solutions. That includes enhancing visible policing strategies, particularly during those peak times and high-traffic areas.

Deployment of mobile CCTV units to deter antisocial behaviour and assist with incident response is part of this consideration. The government is looking into possible further actions, including permanent CCTV and more visible police engagement. Of course, many of the incidents that cause distress to people at the shops, such as shouting and throwing objects, may not necessarily be illegal, and it does take a more nuanced approach to manage these kinds of behaviours effectively. But we do encourage people to contact ACT Policing if they have specific concerns in that regard.

In 2025, ACT Policing appointed a business liaison officer to strengthen engagement with the business community, including those in the Dickson precinct. That officer serves as a key point of contact for Dickson businesses, helping to address concerns, promote crime prevention and support a safe trading environment. Station inspectors continue to engage directly with business owners, raising awareness of criminal activity and offering education on crime prevention strategies when requested—so raising police awareness about what is happening in the community. Landlords, of course, have raised concerns as well, and we are definitely listening to those alongside the businesses operating in the precinct. More than \$12 million has been invested in upgrades, with major works underway, responding to some of the concerns about the physical environment in Dickson.

Particularly in relation to supporting vulnerable individuals—and I know Mr Emerson touched on this—the ACT government is continuing to work on solutions to support vulnerable members of the community. But that can be a complex and ongoing challenge, both more broadly and in relation to some individuals, and it does require sustained and compassionate engagement. Not all individuals will accept support, at least in the initial period, and persistent, respectful engagement is vital to build trust and improve outcomes over time. One of the organisations that does that incredibly well is Vinnies's Street to Home program.

The ACT government has increased funding and is looking to pilot a more agile place-based outreach model or models to better respond to individual needs and circumstances. The 2025-26 ACT budget included a further investment of \$19.6 million to strengthen homelessness services, mental health support and drug and alcohol programs, including in the Dickson areas.

Community feedback has been central to shaping the response to concerns of Dickson residents and businesses so far, and further engagement is planned to ensure that local voices continue to guide future actions. The Canberra Community Working Group will continue to meet regularly, adapting strategies based on lived experience and emerging needs. Insights from Dickson will also inform future revitalisation efforts across Canberra, helping to build stronger, safer and more vibrant local centres. This coordinated response has already delivered tangible improvements, and I am sure that it will continue to evolve in partnership with the community. I certainly welcome and I know the government will welcome any feedback that Mr Emerson gets from constituents as well, both about the concerns they have and ideas for improvement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Government Procurement Amendment Bill 2025

Debate resumed from 29 October 2025, on motion by **Ms Stephen-Smith**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (4.59): Given the length of debates today, I am going to try to keep this relatively short, at least for me. But, given the length of notes that I have, we will see how we go. Let me start off by saying something that should not be controversial: procurement should be simpler. It should be easier for frontline agencies to buy what they need when they need it, especially for small, routine purchases; it should be easier for local businesses and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned and led businesses to compete and win contracts to deliver the things that Canberrans need; and it should be easier for the public to see where the money goes.

As a party, we believe in the core principles of good procurement—that the goal of any government should be to achieve best value for money, to make it easy for departments to pay for services, to give local businesses a genuine shot and, most importantly, to ensure the public gets what they are looking for and they can see that that is what is happening. They need to be able to see where their hard-earned money is going. So we support the stated intent of this bill. Practical, simple things like the \$500 threshold are sensible. They relieve some administrative weight and simplify recurrent purchases, and there are improvements to the opportunities for Canberra’s local and Indigenous businesses.

The Canberra Liberals will always back measures that boost productivity and give our businesses a better shot. So, yes, the Canberra Liberals will support this bill. But we do have concerns, because the real issue facing this territory’s procurement system is not whether an agency can get one quote or three for a small purchase. The real issue is the growing gap between what this government is contracting for, what it is committing the territory to spend, and what it has budgeted for. That gap is a silent engine room of fiscal risk. It is where costs blow out again and again and it is where “We did not know” becomes “We had to” and where future budgets get eroded to pay for decisions made today. That is what this bill does not confront.

Procurement is not just a process; it is a pipeline of spending. It is the point where policy

turns into contracts and contracts turn into liabilities. The contract is not a press release, a glossy brochure or a concept design, and it should not be treated as such. A contract is an obligation. Once you have entered into it, the territory is on the hook, often for years and sometimes for decades and, increasingly, across a web of variations, extensions and scope adjustments that conveniently appear after the initial deal is done. This government wants to focus on tidying up the rulebook while the pipeline quietly expands.

If a bill about procurement does not materially strengthen the bottom line of the budget and make sure that the government is getting value for money, there is a bit of a challenge. We must have visibility of major commitments, what they cost, when they hit the budget and where the funding comes from. If a bill does not, it is missing the point of procurement reform in a time of fiscal stress. Let's be frank, this government is operating in a fiscal environment where the territory cannot afford surprises. We cannot afford discoveries in the outyears. We cannot afford to learn, after contracts are signed, that the scope was wrong and the forward estimates were never realistic. But that is the pattern that we see too often.

This bill moves in the wrong direction on transparency. It reduces reporting obligations and narrows what must be included in compliance reporting, reduces visibility of oversight functions and, in the context of the Auditor-General's comments about procurement, it does this at the very moment we should be strengthening disclosures, because procurements can sink budgets. If the government want the Assembly to accept simplification, then I think it is probably reasonable that they start to take steps to increase transparency, because, no matter how much you simplify the procurement rules for small purchases, the productivity gains there will never fix the territory's budget if major projects and major contracts keep landing on the books without transparent funding pathways.

We need to talk about procurements not yet budgeted. I mean projects and service arrangements where the government advances procurement activity—planning, market sounding, early works, tenders, concepts and contract negotiations—before the full envelope is locked into the forward estimates in a way that is transparent and credible. Sometimes it might be staged contracting, where early stages are funded but the later stages are “to be determined”. Sometimes it might be in the form of optimistic cost ranges that quietly harden into fixed commitments, variations that become the real project, while the original contract value was just the entry price—the opening bid. The public sees an announcement, the industry sees a tender and agencies see a timetable. But the budget papers tell a different story. Sometimes they do not give us any story. Sometimes the story gets split up into stage 2A and stage 2B.

The point is that the transparency of procurement under this government is going the wrong way. That is a procurement problem and a budget integrity problem, because, once the procurement train leaves the station, the pressure to keep going becomes immense, and the Assembly is left debating supplementary appropriations, unavoidable increases and re-profiles after that initial commitment has already been made. The psychological impact of that is significant, too—sunk cost fallacy, the tendency to throw good money after bad, as it is known.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Do you have any actual examples of these things?

MR COCKS: The finance minister is asking for actual examples. I am sure that the government will groan, but the HRIMS system is the perfect example—a \$15 million cabinet decision that blew out repeatedly until the government had to pull the plug and pay out the contract, and the ACT is still on the hook for the new version. So, from \$15 million, we will end up spending over \$100 million to get basically the system we started with, with a couple of small upgrades. Meanwhile, the government is asking Canberrans, households and small businesses, to carry the burden. The elevated tax burden on the ACT is significant. Again, the Auditor-General was clear in pointing this out. In that context, oversight should be stronger, not weaker.

The bill adjusts thresholds and oversight arrangements—and I am not going to relitigate every detail of it—but the direction of reform matters. If fewer projects trigger independent reviews, the Assembly needs some sort of assurance that we are not simply reducing scrutiny to speed up convenience. Speed is not always a virtue in public contracting, especially if it comes at the expense of probity, value for money and fiscal discipline. Again, the greatest risk is not simply, “Did the process follow a checklist?” The greatest risk is, “Did the government commit the ACT to spending at a higher cost than necessary, at a rate that we cannot afford and that future generations are going to have to pay for?”

If you want the Assembly to accept simplification, you have to work towards stronger transparency around procurements, particularly as we head into uncertain fiscal times, and especially on the back of clearly unacceptable budget deficits. The public is not particularly worried about whether an agency can spend \$450 or \$500 with an oral quote; the public is worried about whether this government is signing the territory up to spending it cannot afford and then sending the bill—through higher rates, higher charges and future service cuts—to everyone else.

I want to take a moment to put on the record some other concerns around the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned and led businesses provisions. These types of provisions that give additional opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned and led corporations are well accepted across the country as ways to build capacity and ways to give a hand up. But there is deep concern across the Aboriginal community that too often that procurement money, the procurement contracts, may not go to the businesses that are genuinely Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-owned and controlled.

This is a concern that has been raised with me over some time. It is not an easy one to deal with. But the fear is that, unless you get the settings right, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses do not benefit. Under this, clearly, those businesses do not benefit unless certified. The concern that is put to me is that too often it is too easy to check the right boxes and look like an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporation when the connection is paper-thin at best. I hope that the changes in this bill will improve that. It needs to improve not just here but across the country. We need to make sure that, if we are giving a hand up to a specific group, the money goes where it is intended.

All of that said, and having gone for clearly longer than I said I would, the Canberra Liberals will be supporting this bill, but we will be watching closely to make sure the

government's procurement processes are actually delivering what they should for Canberrans.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.11): I rise to support the intent of this bill and the improvements it seeks to make to the Government Procurement Act 2001 and the Government Procurement Regulation 2007. Many of the amendments before us are relatively modest in nature. They reflect commonsense clarifications to existing procurement practices—including redrafting, consolidation and reorganisation of provisions—without altering the underlying intent of the framework. These are technical changes that aim to improve clarity and accessibility and look to increase administrative efficiency, simplifying the bidding process and clarifying the confidentiality of personal information and legal services within government contracts.

While the practical nature of such amendments is encouraging, we most notably support the intent to expand access to procurement opportunities for certified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entities, as well as small and medium enterprises based in the Canberra region. Ensuring that local and First Nations businesses and entities are better positioned to participate in government procurement not only strengthens our local economy but also advances fairness and inclusion in public spending and participation.

More broadly, the bill aims to embed greater transparency in government procurement and expenditure. That said, I note the directorate's annual reports will no longer be required to detail compliance with the Secure Local Jobs code, audit guidelines and the government procurement rules and practices. For this reason it is vital that transparency remains at the core of these reforms and that the government recognises its ongoing obligation to clearly account for how public funds are spent and how procurement standards are upheld. Integrity and accountability are the bedrock of our democratic institutions and are essential to maintaining public confidence. Ultimately, I recognise the intent to improve procurement processes by enshrining appropriate safeguards and therefore I am happy to support this bill.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (5.13): I, too, rise to speak in support of this bill. As I said before, Canberra is a great place to live but it can be a tough place to do business. Nonetheless, Canberra is home to so many SMEs doing incredible and innovative work, some of whom are recognised interstate and overseas for this work. They are winning government contracts abroad and across the border, but when they attempt to bid for ACT government work, many cannot get a look in, and are passed over for outsiders at a significant detriment to our local economy and local capability.

Canberra-based SMEs are not necessarily asking for special treatment, although that would not be refused, but they are asking at least to be fairly considered on their merits. They are asking for the government to use local skills, local technology and local people. It is an eminently sensible ask—an ask that, if answered, could lead not only to significant growth of these local SMEs, but also to greater value-for-money outcomes for our territory. We have seen the impacts of procuring the services of big multinationals or interstate entities. Take a look at the rollout of MyWay+ as an example.

Local businesses have a vested interest in delivering great outcomes for the ACT government. They face terminal reputational risks if they fail, and have real skin in the

game in a way that interstate or foreign entities can only pretend to. This legislation opens the door to buying local more often—and I welcome it for that reason—by enabling government entities to seek a single quotation from SMEs based in Canberra or from a certified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entity for certain tenders.

But the legislation is missing the centre of that Venn diagram. Mr Cocks touched on this. This is an issue that has been consistently raised with me as well—Canberra-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entities being overlooked in favour of interstate competitors. I have been raising in various budget hearings that it would be a benefit to consider the value not just of local SMEs and of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SMEs, but of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SMEs.

Further, while this amendment bill today is a welcome step, what remains unclear is whether the decision-makers within government will actually take advantage of the provisions that it contains. Real change in this area requires a cultural shift to ensure that occurs—where Canberra-based businesses are not assumed to be inferior and where interstate or international alternatives are not seen as more attractive just because they come from somewhere else and are assumed to be more capable.

Looking at a number of problematic procurements here in the territory, there is no evidence to support that assumption, so I hope to see public funding being used more strategically to support local industry, both at the subcontractor level and at the head contractor level, whether it is for infrastructure works or IT projects. We can do a lot more to back Canberra-based SMEs in this place and to support the Canberrans behind them. I hope this bill moves us in that direction and would absolutely welcome further reforms targeted at achieving this aim.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (5.16), in reply: The intent of this bill is to provide clarity to the operation of the ACT Government Procurement Framework whilst ensuring that value for money remains the central and unaltered tenet. As others have mentioned, the bill makes minor and technical refinements to the Government Procurement Act and Government Procurement Regulation 2007, and I thank those members who have spoken on the bill this afternoon for their comments and their support—although I am not sure I thank Mr Cocks for all of his comments!

As I highlighted in my introductory remarks for this bill, this bill builds on substantial changes to the act and regulation that commenced on 1 July 2024. Those changes delivered a legislative framework that is contemporary, that reflects best practice and that aligns with community expectations that government procurements are conducted with transparency, fairness and rigour. I think it is telling that Mr Cocks was only able to identify one example of all of the broad claims that he was making in relation to procurement and its impact on expenditure in the ACT.

I also note that we could certainly respond to some of Mr Cocks's broad comments about problems with staged procurements by presenting an alternative presentation which points out that sometimes staging a procurement—like entering into a very early contract or involvement process—actually helps to drive value for money in the project overall by bringing in expertise early, while also offering a pathway out if necessary. But in any case, the refinements being debated today build on the strong foundation that

the previous legislation had delivered and will bring in practical refinements that reduce administrative burden for suppliers, improve operational efficiency and provide greater clarity and transparency in government spending.

Procurement values are at the heart of government procurement. They articulate the value the government seeks to embed in every procurement. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic participation procurement value is our commitment to using government procurement as a lever to achieve greater economic participation but also support the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The business development and innovation procurement value recognises the value in buying local—which Mr Emerson has spoken about—growing the local economy and creating opportunities for innovation, flexibility and best practice. There are some key refinements in the bill that will help our community to achieve that vision.

I am sure it will be to the relief of everybody that I will not go through all the details of the bill again, as others have spoken about it and I did, in introducing the bill. I will just close by saying that the passage of this bill—which could possibly be described as “dull but worthy”—marks another step in streamlining and strengthening the ACT government’s procurement framework. These refinements are designed to deliver enduring value for the ACT community, ensuring that the procurement remains transparent, consistent and strategically aligned to support long-term economic growth and deliver against community expectations. I thank the scrutiny committee for its consideration of the bill and members for their time in considering the bill, attending briefings and, as I said, for their support here today. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Statements by members

LGBTIQA+ community

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (5.21): In the week before Christmas last year, I had the very great pleasure to attend the official opening of ChiChiz Bar on Northbourne Avenue. It is wonderful to see a venue like ChiChiz opening up, and particularly providing a place where the LGBTIQA+ community can come together and connect. I must say that the new fit-out in the venue is impressive and it is welcoming. It is great to see ChiChiz has embraced the opportunity to showcase queer culture, art and creativity, with live music, cabaret and much, much more.

This provides new experiences for patrons and, importantly, work for artists and creatives. With the new Lyric Theatre being built several hundred metres away, the nearby University of New South Wales Canberra City campus under construction, and essentially every public transport route in the territory delivering patrons to their front door, ChiChiz is very well located in the heart of our city centre.

I thank Anastasia Tyler, Oliver McLean and Travis Moore for their very kind invitation

to be part of the official opening of ChiChiz Bar, and I wish them all the very best and look forward to many great community events at their venue.

Environment—biodiversity network

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (5.22): The Conservation Council ACT and the Friends of Grasslands have been calling for years for the ACT government to implement a biodiversity network. The only system we have now to protect precious habitat is our reserve network. Adding new areas to reserves is an opaque process with vague criteria, and government deems it to be costly, so it does not happen very often. Sixty-seven per cent of the ACT's natural temperate grasslands which are critically endangered are outside our reserves, and 80 per cent of our box-gum woodlands are, too. Outside reserves, they have no legally protected status. They often occur on leased land or on urban open space land managed by government.

If we are going to stave off the biodiversity crisis and halt the devastating loss of habitat, particularly at the hands of development and urban sprawl, we need a better solution. A biodiversity network would enable government to identify conservation areas across lease types and secure their legal protection. The idea is backed by a broad coalition that includes the Rural Landholders Association, because our farmers do so much of the heavy lifting when it comes to conservation.

Australia has passed a new set of national environment laws, and here in the ACT we are currently rewriting our own. This is the best opportunity to put the ACT at the forefront of conservation and biodiversity protection, and that means protecting and investing in our environment properly, both inside and outside our reserves.

Belconnen—graffiti and signs

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.24): Just yesterday I was out in our suburbs talking with some very concerned residents about the state of graffiti and road signage in a particular suburb, particularly around a local shopping centre. I must admit in my door knocking and at my mobile office shops the state of signs and graffiti in Belconnen is a frequent part of the conversations, and a very concerning part of the conversations. Why can't a government of over 25 years under one political leadership make sure that our road signs are clear and that our buildings are not defaced and graffitied? It does seem like the really simplest part of local government; the really simplest part of local government.

So yesterday's visit included looking at signage on buildings and graffiti that was politically divisive. And in the current environment, we do not need that. Near a primary school, I will have you know. We do not need that. There was four-letter language on buildings near a primary school. We do not need that. The Minister for City and Government Services is here in the chamber. Please do something about one of the most basic and easiest functions of local government.

Discussion concluded.

Legislative Assembly—development applications—approvals—standing order 118AA

MR SPEAKER: Before we move on to adjourning, members, after question time Mr Cocks raised a point of order in relation to a question without notice asked by Mr Milligan. Mr Milligan's question was:

Minister, how many development applications are currently sitting beyond their statutory timeframes?

The minister's answer was:

In relation to the figures that Mr Milligan has asked for, as at the latest statistics for September, the percentage of development applications determined within statutory timeframes was 85 per cent. That is pretty high. The number of DAs that are active is 269. With respect to days to make a decision, the median figure was 45. There are a few outliers there, for the larger and complex development applications. We are monitoring that closely. That would be the best outcome in terms of percentage determined within the statutory timeframes for the year.

Members, whilst the minister's answer did not exactly address the exact wording of the question, he answered and provided percentages and I think the minister has made an attempt to provide an answer that was responsive to the question, which is the requirement under the standing orders, and so I do not uphold the point of order.

Transport Canberra—MyWay+—standing order 118AA Ruling by Speaker

MR SPEAKER: Also at the end of the question time, Mr Braddock raised a point of order under standing order 118AA that his question was not answered by Mr Steel. Mr Braddock's question was:

Minister, does MyWay+ have a beta testing environment to test the deployment of patches and network upgrades? If so, how much testing happened with this network update?

The minister answered the question as follows:

I thank the member for his question. Of course, they were not aware that there was an issue. I have offered Mr Braddock a briefing on the technical aspects of the issue. I am happy to continue to offer that, if he would like to take it up, to discuss the exact software issue, which is around the chain of data transmission between the HASTUS system and the ACT government's MuleSoft system, NEC and SchedGo, which is a third-party journey-planner vendor that we also used under the MyWay system. That issue is a new one that has been identified, and controls will be put in place in the future to address any issues so that it does not occur again.

Having considered the matter, I do not consider that the answer was responsive to the question and so I do direct the minister to provide a written response to the Clerk by 1.45 pm tomorrow.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Australia Day—celebrations

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.28): I want to speak about my experience on the day that Australians celebrated their culture and their hopes for the future, last Monday, Australia Day. That day and the events that I travelled to that day reminded me of our evolving and changing nation. I had opportunities to address different gatherings along the theme of Australia Day, as has been the case for several years, to reflect on our past, our mistakes and ways we can repair our culture and society to the themes of respect, mutual tolerance, harmony and acceptance of differences—enjoying those differences, learning from one another and celebrating. Those things were very much the themes, particularly the latter. It was a very interesting and multifaceted day for me.

It began at the Weston Neighbourhood Hall with the Federation of Indian Associations of the ACT, or FINACT. It was a special time of celebrating, with Indigenous, Australian and Indian cultural presentations. Australian Day is the same day as Republic Day of India, so it is a very interesting combination of celebrations for those within such gatherings. I thank Ms Divya Ravikumar, the President of FINACT, for the opportunity to attend and to enjoy time with that community.

Then I moved on with many of my colleagues from the Canberra Liberals for a community barbecue at Weston Park with our Senate candidate, Mr Nick Tyrrell. Hopefully he will be one of the next senators for the ACT. It was great to see that it was not ticketed entry; it was open to the community. It was great to see the whole community, whether they were party members or otherwise. They were people who were interested in coming and talking with someone we hope will be a representative at the federal level for our city.

Then I moved on with Ms Barry to a wonderful lunch at Taj Agra in Belconnen—they have beautiful food there; I recommend it—with the Multicultural Association of Canberra. The president, Nishi Puri, yet again organised a wonderful Australia Day celebration of culture, speeches and acknowledgements. It was great to see former colleague Nicole Lawder there as well, joining the company.

We all know what sort of day it was. It was over 40 degrees Celsius. There was a brave gathering at the Hawker Bowling Club of the Ginninderra branch of the Canberra Liberals for an opportunity for all the membership in our city to enjoy some social time over a barbecue and, if they dared to be in the elements, do some lawn bowling at Hawker. It was great to see many of our colleagues in that public venue enjoying and celebrating Australia Day.

Then there was something very different at Yerrabi Ponds: the Australia Day Afro Aboriginal Cultural Fusion Event. It was wonderful to again see Charles Koker from Celebration of African Australians bringing the community together with African culture and Aboriginal culture, acknowledging this place, their home, where they came from, celebrating Australia Day and celebrating the opportunity they have to present their culture in our city.

The second-last event of the day was an offer from friends on my travels from Yerrabi Ponds to my last event, at the Hellenic Club—to pop in at a neighbourhood barbecue in someone’s backyard, with friends and people who now are new friends. I enjoyed social time in the shade, having a couple of cold drinks and enjoying a late barbecue with them.

The evening ended with a wonderful dinner at the Hellenic Club in Canberra, organised by the Australian Multicultural Action Network. Ravi Krishnamurthy and his wife, Radha Ravi, did a great job of organising and presiding over a panel of interesting speakers talking about our multicultural community. *New Beginnings: Celebrating Australia* was the theme. It was a wonderful way to end a wonderful day.

Erindale shopping centre—survey

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS (Brindabella) (5.33): I rise this afternoon to remind the Assembly about the community survey I am running to seek direct advice from locals about the improvements they want to see in and around the public spaces at the Erindale shopping centre and to acknowledge Tuggeranong’s Australia Day honours recipients.

The ACT Labor government has committed \$2.6 million to improve the public spaces around the Erindale shopping centre. I am working on ensuring this investment reflects what our community actually needs, how the money should be spent, where it should go and what items or infrastructure will make the biggest difference for locals. Over the past couple of months, I have been inviting residents’ suggestions through a community survey, both on paper and online. As at this morning, more than 400 Tuggeranong residents have shared their ideas and priorities. So far, there is strong support for a new play space, retaining and/or improving car parking, and adding more shade, more garden beds and more outdoor seating in the hope that will make the area more welcoming and accessible. The survey remains open until 15 January 2026. To all the Tuggeranong residents watching or listening to this broadcast, if you have not done so already, I encourage you to take part and let me know what you would like to see delivered at the Erindale shopping centre.

I remain on my feet to be so bold as to tip this Assembly’s collective cap in respect and congratulations to Dr Bruce Moore, Mr Robert Cranston, Mr Paul Ryan and Mr Paul Owens for their extraordinary work and service to not only the Tuggeranong community but also Australia—work which was deservedly recognised in the 2026 Australia Day Honours List.

Dr Moore was awarded Officer of the Order of Australia for his distinguished service to linguistics, to the scholarship of Australian English, to lexicography, to the history of language and to tertiary education. That is a fair body of work. Since I have a long-held gentlemen’s interest in how and why a distinct Australian accent was becoming apparent in the currency, which refers to Australian-born citizens, as soon as 30 years after 1788, I was delighted to write to Dr Moore to congratulate to him on behalf of his fellow citizens.

Mr Cranston was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his distinguished service to the arts. There can never be enough distinguished service to the arts, and I deeply appreciate Mr Cranston’s passion and efforts on behalf of art and artists.

Mr Ryan is a dedicated public servant who has been working on advancing climate-smart land management in Australia, and he has been awarded the Public Service Medal. The Brindabella Electorate is unique to Canberra because it encompasses significant rural landholdings as well as national parks, so Mr Ryan's work is becoming more critical for and to his fellow citizens.

Finally, Mr Owen's dedication as a member of the Australian Fire Services has seen him awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal. As we are reminded every summer, we owe a lot to those who risk their lives to protect ours.

On behalf of the Brindabella community, I thank Dr Moore, Mr Cranston, Mr Ryan and Mr Owens, for their hard work and leadership. They join a long and inspirational list of Brindabella residents.

West Belconnen—public transport services—rapid routes

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (5.37): More than 1,000 people have already signed a petition to advocate for a well-connected, reliable and accessible public transport system in west Belconnen. Cutting the R2 and R3 operating between the Belconnen centre and the Fraser and Spence terminus means that about one-tenth of Canberra is now not serviced by a rapid route.

I want to share some of the stories that people have shared with me when they signed up to that petition. Ben is a visually impaired person who has relied on the R2 since 2018. Ben said, "This change poses a significant accessibility barrier for those of us who cannot drive and rely on public transport for freedom of movement." Ben went on to say that he believed "the impact on residents with disabilities has been overlooked in this decision to cut the rapid services from servicing west Belconnen". Ben said that, in his experience, "as a visually impaired person, navigating changeovers is difficult and stressful". Ben said that the R2 allowed him to lead a full life in Canberra, accessing shopping centres, travelling to work in the city, studying at the University of Canberra, picking up his kid from school, and enjoying the events and opportunities that are offered only in Civic.

Megan is concerned about her neighbours who rely on the bus to get around and the impact this will have on their quality of living—to get to and from work, to get to recreation and education facilities. Quite recently, Megan herself had to turn to public transport over her car due to the convenience of the rapid routes. Megan and many others believe that removing these rapids means that more people will choose to drive. It will increase congestion, and the government is trying to avoid this. We have William Hovell Drive upgrades coming. We are getting congestion in Belconnen, and it will be made worse by the lack of well-connected, direct public transport options.

Lauren relies on the R2 to get home from school and to attend after-school activities. She is really worried about the impact that this new timetable has on shiftworkers, including teenagers, who rely on buses to get to and from work. Some of those kids are working shifts that fall outside the new bus timetable hours, so they cannot do them at all.

I have spoken to people who live in Ginninderry, who already have to travel to Kippax before they can get onto a direct rapid public transport option beyond the Belconnen

region. Now they have to catch a local bus to the Belconnen town centre, then swap to another, when travelling to uni, work and, in some cases, school. Janice and her husband said that, as they become older, they are increasingly relying on the rapid routes for direct access to their health appointments and to the train in Sydney.

Cutting the R2 and R3 disincentivises one-tenth of Canberra from choosing public transport. This is a really bad outcome for older people, for people who cannot drive, for people with a disability, and for Canberrans who are riding with bulky items like prams. For some of these people, the substitute local network is no longer available, it is less convenient, it is less frequent, or it is less reliable. For some of them, that local network simply does not provide a service that is useful for them at all. People in Belconnen deserve better.

A lot of people in west Belconnen do not have many other public transport options. Our cycling infrastructure has not yet been delivered well. Light rail to Kippax is decades off, and we are worried about whether it will come to Kippax at all. West and north Belconnen at least had really good buses, but we have just lost our rapids. It is not good enough for a city that says that it wants a great, reliable public transport system, and it is not a good enough solution for one-tenth of our people.

Climate change—Extreme Heat Awareness Day

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.41): Tomorrow, Wednesday, 4 February, is Extreme Heat Awareness Day. This summer, many of us have been following along anxiously, while we watch towns being evacuated due to oncoming bushfires. But we have also been worrying about the safety of people caught in damaging floods and cyclones. However, the deadliest natural hazard in Australia is one that does not immediately come to mind. It is not bushfires, it is not floods, it is not cyclones; it is heat. Heatwaves kill more people than all other disasters in Australia.

Extreme Heat Awareness Day is an important initiative to raise awareness of the problem and to develop community-based solutions. We all think fondly of a traditional Australian summer, having a barbecue outside with friends and family, watching your kids play sport or play in the pool, or staying in a caravan park down at the coast. Heat has long been part of our country, but in recent years climate change has been making our summers hotter and longer. This means they are also becoming more dangerous.

In my electorate of Yerrabi, we recently had a catch-up where locals got to share their experience of heat. I think particularly of Julie, a doctor who retired recently, after 47 years of service to her patients and the community. She only has ceiling fans in her home and every summer that has been all that she needs. But during January's heatwave, as the temperature climbed, she began to feel hot and bothered. She was getting frustrated about things that would not normally bother her.

She could not cool down and, by the third day, she felt faint, fatigued and with a headache that she just could not shake. Then it hit her. After all those years treating patients and understanding the effect of heat on a human body, she was sick. She was suffering heat stress, something she knew could affect others but never thought would affect her. Once she realised this, she knew that, in order to feel better, she needed to avoid her heat stress progressing towards heat exhaustion.

Julie is a doctor; she knows this better than most other members of our community do. Tomorrow's Extreme Heat Awareness Day helps the rest of us to understand the warning signs of heat-related illness and take steps to protect ourselves and others, with things like increasing air circulation, staying hydrated and resting during the hottest hours of the afternoon. When staying cool at home becomes impossible, knowing where the heat refuges are in your area becomes so important.

We need whole-of-society solutions as well as individual and community ones. Imagine how it will feel when this summer's strongest heatwaves count as average or mild. We will begin looking at our summer weather forecast with dread. Will it get to 50 degrees tomorrow, or only 47 degrees?

Anjali Sharma made a critical point today when I hosted an extreme heat awareness event here in the Assembly. She said that adaptation has a role to play, but surrender does not. We know that the only way to stop such a future is to stop burning fossil fuels.

With the Greens at the table, the ACT has been a world leader in combating climate change through emissions reduction. While many would rest on the laurels of past achievements, the Greens know the importance of continuing to reduce our emissions. Every tonne of emissions released is added to a cumulative total, to our eventual detriment. This is the point of Extreme Heat Awareness Day—not only to raise awareness of how to stay safe as the temperatures soar, but to raise awareness of the real solutions that we need to work on together.

Reserve Bank of Australia—interest rate increase

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (5.44): I rise briefly to flag my concern, because today the Reserve Bank has announced at its first meeting for the year an interest rate increase. On the back of higher than expected inflation, the Reserve Bank has seen to, as is its remit as an independent body, to increase the cash rate by 0.25 per cent to now 3.85 per cent.

The impact of this on Canberra households is not insignificant. The impact on a median mortgage repayment will be \$112 every month. When people are already doing it tough with the cost of living, that is not easy money to find, let alone if you are one of the more recent home purchasers who have potentially much higher mortgages—and therefore this will hit even more. It also makes it more difficult for people to buy their first home, when you are facing the prospect of higher interest rates. This is not necessarily the last interest rate hike that we are going to see. It makes it even more difficult to get into home ownership.

A year ago, this was not the story that we were hearing. What we were hearing was that the trend was down. We were hearing that the federal government had beaten inflation and that we could expect a progressive repeated rate cuts to get us down as low as 2.85 per cent. That was the story we were hearing from the federal government and from some analysts in the first half of last year.

The federal government have denied that their spending has any impact on inflation and therefore does not contribute to those interest rate hikes that we are now expecting. But,

if you look over history, that is not the case. Government spending does drive inflation. Government spending does therefore contribute to interest rate hikes. Unless the federal government can get their budget under control and, indeed, unless state and territory budgets can be brought back under control, this is the future that we can expect. There are repercussions from bad fiscal management, and this is one of them.

Bondi Beach attack

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) (5.47): While later this week I will speak about my ministerial priorities, which will touch on quite a lot of work in the space that relates to the actions that we are taking with resolve and with care following the awful massacre in Bondi, this evening I want to offer my own personal condolences.

In late November of 2023, I issued a statement and in it I stated, among other things, that I had been so troubled about the lack of value placed on human life with the Hamas attacks of 7 October and in the crisis since. How troubled I felt only deepened as time went on. I can only liken it now to a crevasse, one that I fear is insurmountable and irreparable.

And that was before 14 December 2025—a massacre at home; a massacre near us; a massacre at a site of national renown and international recognition; desecration of human life on our shores; the deliberate targeting of our Jewish community on a day of light and celebration. An event of fun, food, face painting and a petting zoo was a target—beliefs targeted, bodies targeted, lives and futures targeted and lives and futures scarred, if not stolen and discarded. The beginning of Hanukkah was marred with indelible horror. Night felt so heavy. Never has a sunset—which, in any other circumstance, was a glorious sunset over Bondi that night—felt so repugnant as the one that occurred at Bondi on 14 December.

The following week, the last night of Hanukkah was marked with services grieving and honouring 15 murdered, including here in the ACT. It was profound and awful, memorialising while celebrating, recommitting to light over darkness, to resolve without fear, while around Australian Parliament House, filled to the rafters with Canberrans standing in solidarity, reflection and unity, resolve without fear while a security contingent—one I do not think I have ever witnessed—surrounded the building.

I have struggled like so many of us with the duality of what it means to be human. But, in those moments of terror, humanity shone and united us, and it continues to unite us. Yet, all along the greatest threat to our humanity continues to be ourselves. So may their memories be a blessing: Matilda, Edith Brutman, Dan Elkayam, Boris and Sofia Gurman, Alexander Kleytman, Rabbi Yaakov Levitan, Peter Meagher, Reuven Morrison, Marika Pogany, Rabbi Eli Schlanger, Adam Smyth, Boris Tetleroyd, Tania Tretiak and Tibor Weitzen. May their memories be our blessing.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.52 pm

Standing Order 118AA—answer to a question without notice Transport Canberra—MyWay+

Mr Steel (*in reply to a question asked by Mr Braddock on 3 February 2026*):

In response to the Speaker’s ruling in accordance with Standing Order 118AA at the conclusion of Question Time on 3 February 2026, I can advise the answer is as follows:

The file share process for transmitting bus network, including timetable, data to journey planning platforms can be outlined as follows:

1. Transport Canberra creates a file from the HASTUS network planning tool.
2. The Digital CBR (D-CBR) MuleSoft tool performs two functions on the export ready file: MuleSoft transforms the data from AVL to JSON and moves the transformed file from Transport Canberra to NEC.
3. NEC loads the JSON file into the MyWay+ Transport Management solution (MyWay+ TMS).
4. From the MyWay+ TMS is the General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data feed, which third party vendors, such as Skedgo, can then access for use in their platforms, such as the Journey Planner on the MyWay+ app and Transport Canberra website (the Journey Planner).

NEC runs an integration environment which is designed to test third party integrations into the NEC systems, though is not currently designed for testing new networks and related output data validation. Essentially, the integration environment provides visibility of whether data has been successfully exported from the MyWay+ TMS, though does not “test” (provide visibility of) the output of exported data received into a third-party vendor’s platform.

With regards to the testing of Journey Planner platforms ahead of the updated construction commencing, while conducting due diligence on 30 January, Transport Canberra became aware this network’s data was not presenting in the MyWay+ TMS. The “break” in the aforementioned transmission sequence was identified as occurring at the MuleSoft tool. This issue was rectified by the following day, and the network file re-progressed through to “chain” to NEC.

On 1 February, Transport Canberra checked the MyWay+ TMS to confirm the presence of the updated network data. It was not present, however, NEC provided evidence the data was still loading into the MyWay+ which was expected to be completed overnight. This occurred and at 1:00 am on 2 February, Transport Canberra then forced a refresh of the GTFS data feed.

As the Journey Planner is “further down the chain”, testing of these could not occur until the file was available in the MyWay+ TMS and subsequently integrated into third-party platforms. This testing was able to occur at 3:00 am on Monday 2 February, at which point Transport Canberra identified information in the Journey Planner continued to incorrectly display the previous network information.

Current network and timetable information became available on third-party platforms Google maps and NextThere at approximately 10:30 am on Monday 2 February, which suggested the issue with the information in the Journey

Planning was occurring downstream of the GTFS data feed (i.e. within the Skedgo platform). NEC addressed this directly with Skedgo and the issue was resolved by approximately 3:00 pm on the Monday, with correct network and timetable data being shown in the Journey Planner. The time difference between this information being made available by different third-party vendors is not expected and can be attributed to the date refresh rate and/or timing for each of their platforms.

The City and Environment Directorate, including Transport Canberra, will conduct a post-incident review with NEC to determine agreed measures which will be implemented to improve the validation and assurance of outputs for future network updates. This will consider process changes, evidence required to demonstrate activity undertaken and status check-ins.

Transport Canberra and D-CBR are also working together to review HASTUS files against MuleSoft parameters, and update those which conflict. Transport Canberra has also approached D-CBR to request increased access for the Public Transport Systems Director to have increased access and functionality within MuleSoft to assist with the remedy of any Transport Canberra data related issues.