



DEBATES
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DAILY HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

7 May 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 **Wednesday, 27 May 2026**.

Thursday, 7 May 2026

Economy—cost-of-living (Ministerial statement)	1615
Youth Homelessness Matters Day (Ministerial statement)	1618
National Palliative Care Week 2026 (Ministerial statement)	1621
Gambling—federal gaming reforms (Ministerial statement)	1625
Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT—Select Committee	1630
Statement by Chair	1630
Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2026.....	1630
Fuel Legislation Amendment Bill 2026.....	1632
Leave of absence	1639
Ministerial arrangements	1639
Questions without notice:	
Canberra Hospital—Behavioural Assessment Unit—incident.....	1639
Canberra Hospital—staff safety	1641
ACT public service—enterprise bargaining	1642
Housing ACT staff—enterprise bargaining.....	1643
Teachers—enterprise bargaining	1645
Teachers—enterprise bargaining	1646
Housing developments—administrative appeals.....	1647
Health services—insourcing	1649
Buses—late-night services	1650
Phillip—swimming pool.....	1650
Planning—Tharwa Village	1651
Yarralumla Primary School—language programs	1652
Emissions—low-carbon concrete	1654
Emergency Services Agency—Volunteer Charter	1655
Public schools—School Youth Health Nurse Program	1657
Supplementary answers to questions without notice:	
Phillip—swimming pool—standing order 118AA.....	1658
Phillip—stormwater infrastructure	1658
Personal explanation	1658
Papers	1660
Youth—homelessness	1660
Belconnen—Town Centre Master Plan	1677
Visitors	1686
Valedictory.....	1686
Belconnen town centre—master plan	1711
Motion to take note of papers	1713
Statements by members:	
Hospitals—staff uniforms—petition	1714
Hospitals—staff uniforms—petition	1714
Holt—street lighting	1714
Adjournment:	
City services—road signage	1715
International Nurses Day	1716
Automated external defibrillators	1718
Holt—street lighting	1719
Questions without notice taken on notice:	
Schools—dissemination of electoral matter	1721

Thursday, 7 May 2026

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

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

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

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

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

Economy—cost-of-living Ministerial statement

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (10.01): Mr Speaker, the global fuel disruptions of 2026 are a sharp reminder that even a strong and modern economy like ours is not immune to external shocks. These events, driven far beyond our borders, are now being felt at the kitchen tables of Canberrans. People are noticing it when they fill up their cars. They are noticing it when they pay their rent or their mortgage. They are noticing it at the supermarket, in their energy bills, and in the cost of accessing essential services.

These pressures are real, Mr Speaker, and the government recognises them clearly. But moments like this also help to clarify our priorities. They reinforce the importance of responsible economic management. They highlight the need for practical and immediate support. And they underscore why we must continue building an economy that is more resilient, more self-reliant, and less exposed to global volatility.

So, our response has been deliberate and balanced. We, together with the federal government, are acting now to ease pressure on households and to support confidence in the economy. At the same time, we are continuing to invest in long-term reforms that will reduce exposure to exactly these kinds of shocks in the future. This is not a choice between short-term relief and long-term reform. It is both, and it must be both.

Confidence matters. Economic confidence shapes how households plan their weeks and months ahead. It influences whether businesses invest, expand or hold back. And in times of uncertainty, it becomes even more important that governments act decisively and visibly. That is why immediate relief measures are a critical part of a response from all levels of government.

The temporary reduction in fuel excise, delivered through national cooperation, is providing meaningful and practical support. For Canberrans commuting across our city, from Gungahlin to Tuggeranong, Belconnen to Woden, that reduction is being felt each

and every week. For small businesses, for tradespeople, for community service providers, disability support workers, it is helping to manage operating costs and maintain service delivery without passing on further price increases.

It is also a clear example of governments working together in the national interest, and that relief will be strengthened further on 1 July when federal income tax cuts come into effect. These tax cuts will increase the take-home pay for hundreds of thousands of ACT residents. For working families, for students balancing study and part-time work, and for older Canberrans who remain active in the workforce, this will make a tangible difference. Combined, these measures provide a positive short-term economic tailwind. They support spending, stabilise expectations, and reinforce confidence at a time when it is needed most.

But while immediate relief is essential, lasting affordability comes from structural change. Transport is one of the clearest examples of this, and we have taken deliberate steps to reduce the cost of moving around our city. We have capped public transport fares to provide certainty for regular users. People know what they will pay. They can plan their weekly budgets with confidence. We have also expanded off-peak discounts, allowing those with more flexible travel patterns—seniors, students, carers, shift workers—to reduce their costs even further. We have strengthened concessions for those least able to absorb rising costs.

But I think the most significant reform is the ongoing electrification of our public transport system. Our light rail network—alongside the transition of buses to electric—is fundamentally changing the cost structure of transport in Canberra. It reduces reliance on imported fuels, it insulates the system from global price shocks, and it delivers cleaner, more reliable services for our community. Every journey taken on electric public transport is a journey that is no longer exposed to global fuel volatility. That is structural cost-of-living reform in action.

Renters are often most exposed to cost-of-living pressures. They are less likely to have control over energy efficiency in their homes. They are less able to invest in vehicle upgrades, and they are more reliant on the systems and infrastructure around them. That is why our approach is not limited to individual household subsidies. It is focused on system-wide affordability. When we invest in compact urban development close to public transport, renters benefit. When we cap transport fares, renters benefit. And when we electrify the transport network and stabilise energy prices, renters benefit—without needing to make upfront investments. This is about designing a city that costs less to live in, by default.

For older Canberrans, cost-of-living resilience is about more than affordability. It is also about independence. Accessible, affordable transport allows people to remain connected to their communities. It supports participation in work, volunteering and social life. So, our investments in electric public transport, putting in place fare caps and providing off-peak discounts all contribute to that independence.

So too does our health system. The expansion of urgent care clinics and walk-in centres has reduced out-of-pocket costs and makes care more accessible, closer to home. It reduces the need for long and expensive trips to hospital emergency departments. New health infrastructure under construction in south Tuggeranong and soon in the inner

south, will complement this and add to our existing network of community health centres to support older people with chronic diseases to stay well, in the community. Mr Speaker, access to healthcare is not just a social good, it is an economic enabler. When people can access care easily, they can continue to participate in their communities and in the economy.

One of the ACT's greatest strengths—although it is often unappreciated—is our 100 per cent renewable electricity system. At a time when other jurisdictions are exposed to gas price volatility, ACT households benefit from a far greater degree of price stability. This is particularly important for those living in apartments, in public and community housing, and in retirement villages, where options for individual upgrades may be limited. So, as we continue to electrify our economy, moving away from gas and petrol, we are increasing reliance on a system that is cleaner, more predictable and more stable in price. So, it is not just an environmental outcome, it is a cost-of-living outcome.

Our long-term economic resilience also depends on innovation. We are lucky in Canberra that our universities are not just places of learning; they are critical economic institutions. At the ANU, world-leading research into energy systems, battery storage, hydrogen and grid resilience is shaping national policy and investment. At the University of Canberra that research is translated into practice—through the education of graduates skilled in sustainable construction, electrified systems, and smart city design. The development of UNSW Canberra City strengthens the link between energy resilience, national security and critical infrastructure protection. Together, these institutions are helping design the post-fossil-fuel economy—one that is more resilient, more efficient, and ultimately less costly for households.

But innovation alone is not enough, Mr Speaker. It must be matched with skills, and that is where the Canberra Institute of Technology plays a critical role. The CIT is training the workforce that is delivering the energy transition on the ground: electricians installing EV charging infrastructure; technicians upgrading homes and apartments; workers supporting the electrification of public transport and improving energy efficiency across the city.

Importantly, these are secure and well-paid local jobs. They support households directly through wages and salaries, and they support the broader economy by making structural reforms practical and affordable. So, as we continue to invest in innovation and skills, we are also focused on retaining economic value locally. Through initiatives such as ACTivate Capital and targeted procurement, we are supporting ACT-based businesses to grow and to scale up. When companies grow here, the benefits stay here—through jobs, wages, and reinvestment in our community. This all strengthens our economic base and builds long-term resilience.

It is important to be clear about what we are doing. We are not simply responding to this short-term crisis. We are seeking to use this moment to accelerate reforms that will deliver lasting benefits: lower transport costs into the future; more stable and predictable energy prices; a skilled workforce in secure, well-paid jobs; accessible services that support participation and independence; and an economy that is less exposed to global shocks.

The fuel challenges of 2026 are real. The risk is ongoing. But with coordinated relief, federal tax cuts coming on 1 July and structural reforms already underway, the ACT is positioned to weather this disruption and also to emerge stronger. By reducing fossil fuel dependence, expanding affordable transport, investing in universities and TAFE, and designing our city so it costs less to live in, the government seeks to deliver both relief and reform. These are the next steps in economic development for a Canberra that is fairer, more resilient and better prepared for the future.

I present the following paper:

Next steps in economic development, cost-of-living relief and economic resilience—Ministerial statement, 7 May 2026.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (10.12): This statement rightly talks about reducing transport costs and improving resilience, but it largely assumes that people will continue to travel long distances across Canberra to work, to socialise and to recreate. The National Capital Plan is clear that Canberra is intended to be a city of relatively self-contained towns where people can meet their daily social, recreational and cultural needs close to home.

So, I want to ask: what assessment has been done of whether our districts actually have the social infrastructure they need to function that way into the future?

Do our newer and growing suburbs have sufficient local venues, community spaces, recreation facilities and night-time economies that allow people to connect without getting in a car or catching light rail across town?

And how is the government ensuring that future economic and urban planning decisions genuinely support local social life and recreation, rather than locking in more cross-city travel and higher costs of living over time? Thank you.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Youth Homelessness Matters Day 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) (10.14): I rise today to speak on Youth Homelessness Matters Day, which occurred on 15 April 2026. Youth Homelessness Matters Day is an important day to raise awareness to the challenges faced by young people who are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, homelessness. I had the pleasure of participating in the 2026 Youth Homelessness Matters Day event at Common Ground in Dickson. The event brought together young people who have experienced, or are experiencing, homelessness, and key youth homelessness services.

All of us here understand that homelessness does not discriminate. It can happen to anyone at any time. Young people are often the most at risk. If homelessness does occur, we want it to be brief, rare, and non-recurring. Early intervention is key to supporting our young people to become the leaders of the future, and perhaps to lessen the impact long-term homelessness can have.

Youth homelessness services are vital in this support. They do not just provide housing, they create communities. These communities help young people to re-engage in education and employment opportunities, while providing the tools they need to gain independence and reestablish their lives.

This government is committed to ensuring young Canberrans get the support they need, and when they need it. This is why the ACT government committed over \$37 million in funding for homelessness services across the last budget. Of this, more than \$7 million in funding is directed to services for young people, covering a range of supports as well as 150 beds across crisis and transitional accommodation services.

This week, I celebrated the opening of Woden Youth Foyer which will support an additional 20 young people, increasing the number of beds across crisis and transitional accommodation services to 170. The Youth Foyer will help build their independence with opportunities in education; employment; health and wellbeing; social connections; civic participation; housing; and living skills. It includes rooms that are disability-accessible as well as rooms for young parents with children.

While providing therapeutic support services focusing on trauma, it will upskill young people to sustain a tenancy. The Woden Youth Foyer is an education-first Youth Foyer model, meaning we are working to reduce the number of young people engaged with our homelessness services system long-term, providing lifelong skills and qualifications to support them to live independently. Many of these young people will go on to rent privately and break the cycle of homelessness.

Young people in the ACT can access a range of government-funded homelessness services and I would like to acknowledge the hard work of our youth-specific service providers. These include: Gudan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation; Barnardos; the Salvation Army; Conflict Resolution Service; and Marymead CatholicCare. The work of these services is vital in supporting young Canberrans to thrive.

Every program we deliver supports young people while strengthening outcomes for vulnerable Canberrans, helping to create safe, stable and sustainable accommodation for families. We know the ACT is continuing to experience sustained pressures in relation to available and affordable rentals, placing increasing demand on supported accommodation services. This is particularly so for our youth, who are increasingly facing the challenges of a cost-of-living and rental affordability crisis.

It is important we acknowledge that, often, there is no quick fix to addressing homelessness. We are continuing to see an increasing complexity of need in those seeking homelessness services in the ACT. These are real people with individual choice and agency over the services they may choose, or not, to engage with. For many young people, there are multiple other complexities occurring in their lives. It is important to recognise that housing is just one component of what is required to begin to support

these young people. It requires a service-wide response bringing together a range of services across government, including education, employment, health, and mental health, amongst others.

I want to finish by recognising our frontline workforce, who are the key in the success factors in reengaging these individuals in a trauma-informed, client-centred way. This frontline work is not easy—often challenging—but it is critical to supporting vulnerable Canberrans. The efforts of frontline workers are incredibly important, and I want to acknowledge their contributions, and the contributions that help to improve the lives of our young people in the ACT every single day.

I present the following paper:

Youth Homelessness Matters Day—Ministerial statement, 7 May 2026.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (10.19): I would like to thank the minister for her statement on Youth Homelessness Matters Day and echo her appreciation for the incredible people that work in youth homelessness services. Without wanting to anticipate Assembly business, we will have a lot more to say on this topic later today so I will keep my comments brief this morning.

What I do want to add in response to the minister's statement is that, while there are indeed many complex factors which cause a young person to be without a home, youth homelessness on the scale we are seeing in Canberra is not an inevitable crisis. It is a result of gaps in systems which we—as elected representatives of these young people—have both the ability and the responsibility to fix. These gaps in the system exist every day of the year, not just on the day that we have designated as Youth Homelessness Matters Day—as important as that day is.

It feels like every year we come together and ask young people to talk about how the system has failed them, and then we come back a year after without having fixed it, asking them to tell their stories again. I do not think this is for lack of trying. I do think we all care—the minister, housing and youth spokespeople across the board, the independents that also turn up. We are all deeply moved by the speeches and the cause of Youth Homelessness Matters Day. But we cannot ignore the reality that young people are going homeless in our city, and that means the current system is not a system that is meeting the needs of people in it.

I would also like to very briefly mention that while we are glad to hear that the Woden Youth Foyer is opening, it must be noted that this happened at least nine months late. It has been deeply concerning for many of us, and for many young people and the frontline workers in the sector, how and why there was such a delay while so many young people in Canberra desperately need a home. There is still serious room for improvement in how the ACT government addresses youth homelessness, and I look forward to discussing that more this afternoon.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (10.20): I just had a couple of brief remarks because I actually think Miss Nuttall has been very generous in reflecting that the Youth Foyer at CIT at Woden was opened some eight or nine months late. I mean, the reality of this is that it was funded last term. Somewhere, somebody knew this money was available.

I asked about this in estimates. I got really unclear answers because, even when you look at the detailed timeline, the certificate of occupancy was approved in May 2025. The tender did not go out until July 2025. It is not like we did not know it was coming. And there is a whole procurement process that takes quite a bit of time. That really should have been started much earlier because we knew it was coming. And that has been, certainly, a frustration. I know others have raised this issue in this place, and it is a frustration.

I was also struck by the media release that went out; it caught my eye. It went out on 1 May announcing the opening of the Youth Foyer. It is an extraordinary media release. It has seven spokespeople in it. I have some sympathy for the poor media adviser who had to try and coordinate that. Literally, there were four politicians: the federal minister Catherine King; Senator Katie Gallagher; the minister, Ms Berry; and the Member for Bean, David Smith. I think this press release is a testament to the old saying that success has many parents. But, unfortunately, none of those people were around for the months and months and months that this thing was not opened.

So, I hope that in the future we can learn some lessons from this process and make sure that when terrific facilities like this have been funded, made available, we can actually get them to the people who need them even sooner.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

National Palliative Care Week 2026 Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (10.22): I rise today, ahead of National Palliative Care Week, to provide the Assembly with an update on the ACT government's continued clear and firm commitment to palliative care in the territory. From 10 May, Palliative Care Australia hosts National Palliative Care Week, with this year's theme, "Getting to the heart of it—answering the big questions with real answers".

In this week, through honest questions and answers, our community will be encouraged and supported to better understand palliative care. At the heart of palliative care is a philosophy and approach to care that supports people with life-limiting illnesses to live as well as possible, in a way that reflects their values, choices and goals. Palliative care is person-centred and family-centred, and multidimensional—responding to the physiological, practical, psychological, existential and emotional impacts of life-limiting illness.

It is not limited to end-of-life care. Rather, it can be provided at any stage of illness, including alongside active treatment. From the point of diagnosis through the progression of disease, palliative care brings together multidisciplinary support to meet

a person's holistic and changing needs and wishes. It promotes the importance of starting open conversations early, to reduce uncertainty and support better planning and care.

Palliative care is a critical and valued part of our health system. Central to the work of the ACT's palliative care teams is the provision of care that is tailored, safe and respectful—ensuring individuals and their families feel supported, heard and confident throughout their palliative care journey. It is estimated that up to three quarters of all deaths are predictable, following a recognisable end-of-life trajectory. It is therefore safe to say that, when the time comes, palliative care can benefit most of our community. It is a form of health care that will touch most of our lives—whether as a patient, a family member or friend of a loved one accessing palliative care, or as part of the community wrapping around.

Access to palliative care is not always shared equally. There are known gaps and underserved communities, such as for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with a non-malignant diagnosis, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Knowing the value of a palliative approach, addressing these equity gaps is integral to our continued work and focus.

Further, as the ACT's population ages, the need for palliative care grows. That said, demand is not limited to those who are ageing. Palliative care is for anyone of any age with a life-limiting illness.

The ACT government is proud to play a leading role in the ACT's palliative care system through our public health system and our partnerships and collaborations with community, non-government organisations and primary health care providers. Through our public system, specialist palliative care services provided by Canberra Health Services support patients with complex or unstable palliative needs that cannot be addressed through generalist care alone. This specialist palliative care works across inpatient, outpatient, home-based and community settings, assisting individuals and families with complex and sensitive decision-making. They coordinate with other care teams, primary care and community-based services.

Clare Holland House, on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin, is a cornerstone of the ACT's specialist palliative care system. Led by an expert team of nursing, medical and allied health professionals, Clare Holland House provides tailored, compassionate inpatient care for palliative care patients. It would be remiss if I did not also mention the dedicated Palliative Care ACT volunteers who bring the compassion and care of our broader community into the day-to-day of Clare Holland House.

I would also like to highlight the PEACE team; our palliative aged care specialists. The PEACE team evolved from an ACT-based innovation where local nurses, nurse practitioners and doctors identified a need and opportunity to better engage with residential aged care providers, to ensure more equitable access to palliative care for residents, including by empowering aged care workers. Ten years later, we have the PEACE team in full swing, working with the ACT's 30 residential aged care homes to support dignity, comfort and peace of mind for older Canberrans in need of palliative care.

This work is supported by the Comprehensive Palliative Care in Aged Care Agreement with the commonwealth, reflecting its responsibility for aged care. The Palliative Medicines in Community Pharmacies program is also aimed at better supporting people who are receiving palliative care in the community. This program will work to build palliative capacity in seven local community pharmacies, ensuring permanent stocking of essential palliative medicines, access to training in the palliative approach, and hardship measures for patients in need.

By boosting the capability of our community pharmacies, we grow our palliative capability beyond hospitals settings and support care closer to home. Indeed, many people with life-limiting illness will be primarily supported by their regular general practitioner or nurse practitioner. Improving access to medicines and integration with specialist services will make it easier for these professionals, their patients and carers to navigate what can be a complex journey.

Unfortunately, while most people would prefer to die at home, many will need to access palliative and end-of-life care in a hospital setting. In line with the government's commitment to better end-of-life care and improved health infrastructure, an acute palliative care unit is under construction at Canberra Hospital. The unit will deliver the government's commitment and improve care coordination by integrating specialists and services. It is expected to open in early 2027.

I note that while dedicated specialist palliative care teams undertake much of this work directly, they are also experts in building the capability of their peers in the broader health system to build an understanding of palliative care across the health services system. One way in which this is achieved is through the Program of Experience in Palliative Approach (PEPA), where palliative specialists provide training for healthcare workers across the board, including paramedics, general practitioners and pharmacists, among others.

I also acknowledge the Advance Care Planning program through Canberra Health Services. For too long, crucial conversations about end-of-life care have been quarantined to hospital corridors and consultation rooms. Care at the end of life is not just a clinical matter. It is familial and it is communal. By equipping people to take charge of these conversations, the Advance Care Planning service builds our community's capability to talk about the hard things and focuses on person-centred care, enabling better planning for future care.

This is now complemented by the Violet Initiative; a community-driven organisation chaired by former ACT Chief Minister Kate Carnell. Violet has supported more than 50,000 Australians to have conversations about end-of-life since it was established in 2020, and last year launched Care Compass to help people talk about life's later chapters through simple questions, and to store that information in an accessible way.

Mr Speaker, as we reach the seventh month of voluntary assisted dying in the ACT, it is important to reflect on its role in supporting the choice, autonomy and dignity for people with life-limiting illness at the end of life. Palliative care and voluntary assisted dying are both important parts of the end-of-life care system. One does not replace the other. Palliative care focuses on comfort, symptom management and holistic support, while voluntary assisted dying provides an option for eligible individuals to die with

dignity, in line with their own choice and values.

For people who meet the eligibility requirements, voluntary assisted dying allows access to all available pathways with care tailored to changing wishes and needs. Palliative care remains a vital part of the care and support for people who choose voluntary assisted dying, ensuring support remains person-centred, compassionate and responsive throughout the end-of-life journey.

I am also pleased to reflect on the government's new investment to establish a dedicated Aboriginal health worker for palliative care and end of life—a support role within Canberra Health Services. This initiative marks an important step in strengthening culturally responsive palliative and end-of-life journeys for First Nations patients and their families across healthcare settings to deliver safer, more equitable and culturally responsive care.

It reflects our strong commitment to Closing the Gap by being innovative in addressing access, equity and health justice for First Nations people. The government recognises the central role of the community in delivering high-quality palliative care and continues to partner closely with organisations such as Community Options and Palliative Care ACT to support strong community-based services.

As a sector leader, Palliative Care ACT provides community awareness and education, supports a volunteer workforce of almost 200 people and operates services that complement clinical care. The ACT government is working with Palliative Care ACT to support the operation and expansion of Leo's Place, a unique, specialist approach to non-clinical, flexible respite for patients with life-limiting conditions, and their carers.

The Palliative Care ACT volunteer workforce is a testament to our community's compassion—recognising palliative care is not just a matter of clinical care, but also about our ability to collectively respond and support people in trying times. Volunteers bring comfort, companionship and dignity to people and families, reflecting that one of our greatest palliative care assets is our community.

We will continue to work closely with Palliative Care ACT to understand community needs and ensure the voices of families inform policy development, service design and delivery. I acknowledge its current advocacy on paediatric palliative care. I can assure the Assembly that we are committed to further work in this space, in line with our 2024 election commitment.

Dame Cicely Saunders, the pioneer of the modern palliative care and hospice movement, grounded palliative care in a respect for the dignity and value of each human life. She said:

You matter because you are you. You matter to the last moment of your life, and we will do all we can to help you not only to die peacefully, but also to live until you die.

Dame Cicely's legacy lives on through our dedicated palliative care teams, volunteers, advocates and our community. It is through our combined efforts that we make compassionate, high quality palliative care possible.

In closing, Mr Speaker, the ACT government remains committed to ongoing improvement in palliative care services, and we are continuing to work with consumers, carers, partners and experts to properly inform and deliver this work. I look forward to progressing these important conversations during Palliative Care Week.

I present the following paper:

National Palliative Care Week 2026—Ministerial statement, 7 May 2026.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Gambling—federal gaming reforms Ministerial statement

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform) (10.34): I rise today to welcome the federal government’s announcement on 2 April that they will introduce reforms to address gambling harm, with a focus on protecting children and young people, as well as decoupling gambling advertising from sport. These reforms are a significant move to address the pervasive and invasive gambling advertising that has been allowed to infiltrate the Australian advertising market. Every gambling prevalence survey around the country points to increases in harm from online gambling, with the primary cohort at risk and being harmed being young men. These young men have been the primary target audience of this decade-long marketing campaign. It has worked and paid off for these multinational gambling companies at significant expense to our community.

Some of the reforms announced by the federal government include restricting gambling advertising on broadcast television to no more than three ads each hour between 6.00 am and 8.30 pm, with a complete ban during live sport broadcasts within those hours; banning gambling advertisements on the radio during school drop-off and pick-up times; banning gambling ads through online platforms, unless people have a logged into an account, are over 18 and have the option of an opt-out of gambling advertising; banning the use of celebrities and sports players in gambling ads, along with odds-style ads targeting sports fans; and banning gambling ads in sports venues and on players’ and officials’ uniforms. These reforms are urgent and very welcome. Reducing gambling advertising on television, radio and online will reduce children and young people’s exposure to gambling harm. Kids and families will be able to support the Raiders or Brumbies without the constant barrage of advertising telling them they need to download an app endorsed by their favourite player.

The federal government’s reforms will limit availability of gambling products and provide support to help address some of the harms caused by gambling. Other initiatives announced include measures to address harmful and emerging online lottery products

as well as banning online keno “pocket pokies”; making match-fixing criminal offences consistent across Australia, improving the integrity of Australian sport and lessening its appeal as a target for criminal infiltration; boosting enforcement against illegal offshore gambling providers; continuing to work to strengthen BetStop, the National Self-Exclusion Register, following the recent statutory review; and expanding financial counselling support for gambling and work to increase public awareness of online gambling harms.

While the federal government’s reforms are a very important step in limiting gambling advertising, especially in sporting contexts, and addressing online gambling harms, gambling remains a serious public health issue and there is still a lot of work we need to do. The 2024 ACT Gambling Survey found that 9.1 per cent of adults, or over 33 per cent, of local Canberrans experienced harm from their own gambling, while 15.8 per cent of ACT adults reported experiencing some form of gambling-related harm in the last 12-months, including harm from their own gambling, someone else’s gambling or legacy harm. The survey found that younger men bear a disproportionate burden of harm from their own gambling whereas women, notably those younger and middle-aged, are more likely than men to be harmed by another person’s gambling.

That is why here in the ACT we are working hard on a range of reforms including strengthening the gambling self-exclusion scheme and introducing mandatory account based cashless gaming in all ACT venues that operate electronic gaming machines, including mandatory pre-commitment where users set personal loss limits with mandatory breaks in play. A dedicated working group established in May last year has supported the policy discussion of cashless gaming, bringing together representatives from the club industry, community and gambling harm reduction advocacy groups. The working group met six times and has helped ensure reforms are practical, effective and focus on minimising gambling harm.

As we move to the next stage of the reforms, an implementation working group will be established to identify issues that arise as clubs work towards meeting the account-based gaming commitment, including barriers faced by smaller clubs. We are also taking steps to reduce gambling harm by limiting the availability of poker machines, with a progressive reduction in electronic gaming machine licences to 1,000 by 2045. Significant progress has already been made to reduce the availability of poker machines in the ACT, and we exceeded our targeted reduction to 3,500 EGM licenses by 1 July last year. As part of the ongoing reduction in electronic gaming machine authorisations, we are also collaborating closely with the ACT clubs sector to determine transition pathways that do not rely on poker machine revenue. This includes initial planning on our commitment to encourage a pokie-free club venue in the Molonglo town centre and commissioning the independent inquiry into the future of the ACT clubs industry, which is currently finalising a comprehensive club sector transition plan, including practical strategies to see clubs transition to a sustainable future free from a dependence on poker machine revenue.

The clubs inquiry has now delivered its interim report, which is available online and includes a series of recommendations for both government and clubs. The draft recommendations provide a framework for a structured long-term transition to support ACT clubs to move away from a reliance on poker machine revenue while offering strategies to maintain their viability and includes a staged transition plan that seeks to

balance industry certainty, capability development and reform over a 20-year trajectory while maintaining the community benefit clubs provide and introducing harm reduction measures as poker machine numbers reduce. The ideas and concepts that have been presented in the clubs inquiry report require further validation, and I understand the inquiry is working with stakeholders to test its theories before the delivery of its final report. The ACT government wants clubs to remain places of connection and belonging and strong community-orientated organisations that are financially independent and, through working in partnership with the clubs industry, I hope we can achieve this. I look forward to receiving and further considering the final report of the clubs inquiry in the coming weeks.

We know that gambling continues to cause harm in our community and, unfortunately, we will continue to see the negative effects of that for years to come. The harm reduction measures the ACT government is working to implement, when coupled with the reforms the federal government has announced, will provide more tools and more pathways for people to access the support they need while preventing and limiting gambling harm. The ACT government welcomes the federal government's commitment to reduce gambling advertising as a positive step towards reducing harm, and we will continue to collaborate with the federal government to ensure a wholistic approach to reducing gambling-related harms as we pursue a sustained reduction in access to poker machines over the next 20 years while implementing harm-reduction measures here in the ACT as soon as possible.

I present the following paper:

Federal gaming reforms—Ministerial statement, 7 May 2026.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (10.41): I rise to respond to the minister's statement this morning. Australians are the biggest gambling losers per capita in the world. While I welcome the ACT government's stated commitment to gambling reforms here in this jurisdiction, I do not think there is much to welcome in the federal government's recent announcement.

Frankly, the fact that my children will now see three gambling ads every hour on TV is not something I am inclined to celebrate. Three years ago, a bipartisan federal parliamentary committee, chaired by the highly regarded late Labor MP Peta Murphy, handed down a report on online gambling harm and the need for reform, named, *You win some, you lose more*. The Murphy report was adamant that partial gambling advertising bans—which is exactly what has been announced quite clearly—do not work, and three years ago recommended a full ban on gambling advertising to be phased in over a three-year period. Yet it took three years of the federal government doing nothing only to get a commitment to a partial ban. It would be instructive to read some excerpts from the foreword in the report *You win some, you lose more*, dated June 2023, from Peta Murphy:

If the status quo of online gambling regulation, including but not limited to

advertising, was to continue Australians would continue to lose more—more money, more relationships, more love of sport for the game rather than the odds.

Australians outspend the citizens of every other country on online gambling. This is wreaking havoc in our communities. Saturation advertising ensures our future losses.

Australians lose the most to online gambling because we have a weak and fragmented regulatory framework, which places all the onus for reducing harm onto the person who gambles. Despite gambling harm being a major public health issue, we do not treat it like one.

Later on it says:

I am proud to say this Committee has delivered a unanimous report that says, “enough is enough”. The Committee has made 31 recommendations that apply a public health lens to online gambling to reduce harm across the whole Australian population.

Online gambling companies advertise so much in Australia because it works. Gambling advertising is grooming children and young people to gamble and encourages riskier behaviour. The torrent of advertising is inescapable. It is manipulating an impressionable and vulnerable audience to gamble online.

A phased, comprehensive ban on all gambling advertising on all media – broadcast and online, that leaves no room for circumvention, is needed. Partial bans on gambling advertising do not work. Harmful industries have shown they will identify and capitalise on any gaps in marketing restrictions ... the Committee recommends that the comprehensive ban be phased in over a three-year period.

I will not be welcoming or celebrating today what is essentially the implementation of half of one of the Murphy report’s 31 recommendations. To offer one of many examples, the federal reforms being welcomed by the minister today are completely silent on inducements, which we know are the most destructive predatory practice for people struggling with gambling harm, which is why addressing this issue was the most urgent recommendation put forward in the Murphy report three years ago.

Having sought community feedback on limiting child and youth exposure to gambling advertising in the ACT, the ACT government published a listening report last February, finding that 92 per cent of respondents want more expansive restrictions on gambling advertising on TV and radio and there was significant support for a complete ban on gambling advertising. Since then, we have heard that this is not something the ACT government is pursuing, which makes you ask why the consultation even occurred. We have seen, frankly, disappointing progress in implementing reforms that will lead to an actual and material reduction in harm here in the ACT.

The government’s gaming machine reduction policy, which you would think is a sign of things moving in the right direction, has not had any impact on gambling harm reduction, Research from the ANU suggests that, to start having an impact, the number of poker machines would need to fall to around 2,000 across the territory before we saw an impact, which will not happen for at least another decade under the policies that

Labor took to the election. Gambling harm has actually been increasing. Despite some reductions in gaming machines across the territory from an incredibly high starting point, you still will not find anyone having to line up to use a poker machine in the territory.

It is clear that governments for too long have been fundamentally conflicted with vested interests and close ties to the gambling industry. I fear that, while the industry continues to have a chokehold on the decision-making of some of our elected officials, we will continue to see disappointing non-announcements like what we have seen from the federal government and we will not see the reforms that actually prioritise the best interests of the people we are here to represent, the reforms that Canberrans have made clear that they want and expect.

While I know gambling reform is a passion for the minister, Canberrans told me they want ACT ministers to be more vocal and less reticent in calling out or condemning the actions of their federal Labor counterparts when the federal government makes decisions that do not stack up with community expectations here in the ACT. Although I understand the minister is glad to see some federal reform occurring in this area, I find it hard to believe that she is really satisfied with the narrow scope of reforms that have been announced.

I look forward to working together with the minister and across the Assembly to heed the calls of the people that we are here to represent, that we have been elected to represent, to reject the undue influences of the gambling industry and to pass stronger and much more ambitious reforms here in the ACT that actually address gambling harm in our community. On that front, I do welcome the minister's remarks this morning on her progress in developing a package of gambling harm reduction measures for the ACT, and I look forward to hearing more detail on these measures soon.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (10.48): Gambling reform is moving very slowly, and the job is far from done. The federal government's announcement contains some welcome steps. Limiting online gambling, banning celebrity endorsements, odd-style ads and gambling branding on players and uniforms are necessary protections, particularly for children and young people. They deserve support. However, these reforms fall well short of what the evidence demands. The late Peta Murphy MP's inquiry rightly called for a complete ban on gambling advertising. We know that, where loopholes exist, gambling companies exploit them. Partial bans simply shift exposure; they do not stop harm.

Here in the ACT, gambling remains a serious public health issue. More than 15 per cent of adults experience gambling-related harm. We also know that children are being normalised into gambling through sport. No-one is calling for gambling to be banned but, as we did with tobacco, we must protect the community by stopping the advertising of harmful products. Locally, in the 2024-25 annual report, the Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation recommended a breakdown of the \$170 million cost to implement a central management system in the ACT, and I look forward to the government being transparent and providing the breakdown of the cost to implement the CMS in response to the committee's recommendation.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT—Select Committee Statement by Chair

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.49): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Select Committee on the Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT to update the Assembly on the committee's progress with its inquiry.

Members would be aware that Mr Saul Eslake was engaged to provide independent technical expertise to the committee. The committee released Mr Eslake's interim report on 2 March 2026 and his final report was due at the end of April. The committee has received his final report and expects to publish it shortly. The committee notes that Mr Eslake's interim report made a significant contribution to public debate on the ACT's finances, and we trust that his final report will have a similar effect.

The committee has a number of deadlines and events approaching. We have a public hearing with the Deputy Chief Minister on 19 May 2026 in relation to the cost effectiveness of the government's housing and education services. The government response to Mr Eslake's report and terms of reference 4(b) to 4(h) is due on 29 May 2026. The committee has a public hearing with the Treasurer on 2 June 2026. The government's budget for 2026 is scheduled for 10 June 2026. The committee has a public hearing with the Chief Minister on 16 June 2026, which will cover infrastructure, sourcing commonwealth funds and the Wellbeing Framework. The government response to the committee's interim report is due on 24 July 2026. The committee's final report is due on 28 August 2026.

Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

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

Title read by Clerk.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy) (10.51): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to present the Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 to the Assembly. This bill makes amendments across eight pieces of justice system legislation to improve their operation. This JACS bill is an omnibus bill. It is a bill which makes minor and technical amendments to laws falling primarily within my portfolios as the Attorney-General and Minister for Human Rights. It also makes minor and technical amendments to laws within the portfolios of the Chief Minister, the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, the Minister for Corrections and the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

Amendments in the bill will improve the ACT's justice and community safety

legislation to ensure that it is of the highest standard and continues to promote the rights and wellbeing of ACT residents. Updating the legislation that protects the ACT community is important to ensure that it is responsible to a changing environment. Regular legislative reform ensures that the legal framework remains responsive and effective, addresses emerging challenges and maintains public confidence in the legal system.

First, the bill will amend the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Children and Young People Commissioner Act 2022 and the Custodial Inspector Act 2017 to support the effective collaboration and information sharing between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner, the ACT Inspector of Custodial Services and the ACT National Preventative Mechanism. The commissioner advocates for the rights and interests of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the Custodial Inspector independently reviews the treatment and wellbeing of detainees in ACT corrective centres. Both statutory officers have a role in supporting young people in the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, and they are both members of the ACT National Preventive Mechanism, which monitors treatment in places of detention. The new information-sharing provisions will support communication between these parties, facilitating more effective investigation and review of relevant matters concerning our young people, their safety and the protection of their rights.

An amendment to the Electoral Act 1992 restores a requirement for a political entity to disclose any additional gifts they receive once a person's total contributions reach \$1,000 or more during a reporting period. This amendment implements recommendation 2 in the interim report on the inquiry into the operation of the 2024 ACT Election and Electoral Act 1992, released by the Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders in January this year. This requirement was included in the act before the commencement of the Electoral and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Act 2023. Reintroducing this disclosure requirement supports transparency and integrity in the electoral process and helps strengthen public confidence in how elections are conducted in the ACT.

The bill will amend the Human Rights Commission Act 2005. Community members can make complaints to the Human Rights Commission about a wide range of matters, including discrimination, retirement villages, occupancy disputes and conversion practices. The commission can close a complaint if satisfied that the complainant has been given a reasonable explanation and that the complaint either lacks substance, requires no further action, is already being dealt with by a court, tribunal or the commission or is frivolous, vexatious or dishonest. The amendments in this bill will provide that, where a relevant complaint is closed under section 78(2)(c) of the Human Rights Commission Act and the complainant seeks to pursue the matter in the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, they will first be required to seek leave from the tribunal before the complaint can proceed further. This reform supports the efficient and fair operation of the tribunal, ensuring its resources are focused on matters that genuinely require further consideration and resolution.

This bill will amend the Supreme Court Act 1933 to allow the Supreme Court to initiate a declaration of a vexatious litigant on its own motion. Vexatious proceedings are legal actions brought without reasonable grounds and the purpose of the proceedings is to harass or annoy another party, cause unnecessary delay or for some other ulterior

purpose rather than to resolve a genuine dispute. A vexatious litigant can be declared if the court is satisfied that the person has frequently instituted vexatious proceedings. At present, the court can only make such a declaration if an application is brought by the Attorney-General or by the person affected by those proceedings. That obviously places a significant burden on individuals, who are likely already experiencing stress, cost and disruption as a result of repeated and unmeritorious legal action. This amendment allows the court to act on its own motion where it identifies vexatious litigants. By doing so, the court can intervene earlier and more effectively, reducing the cost and stress on affected individuals, ensuring judicial resources are appropriately directed and reducing delays for non-vexatious proceedings. Persons declared vexatious litigants can only institute or continue proceedings with the leave of the court.

Amendments to the Inquiries Act 1991 are being brought forward in this bill. The amendments, technical in nature, will address confidentiality and report-handling requirements, strengthen safeguards around disclosure and enhance procedural fairness by extending response times for adverse comments. The amendments have been developed following consideration of the outcomes and learnings from previous boards of inquiry and a review of the Inquiries Act to ensure it is fit for purpose and reflects contemporary best practice approaches.

The bill contains other amendments that address minor and technical issues, including an incorrect cross-reference in the Unit Titles (Management) Act 2011 and amendment to a title in the Oaths and Affirmations Act 1984. While these reforms are small and technical in nature, they are important for ensuring accuracy and clarity, so that our legislation may operate as intended for the justice system and our community. The bill also repeals the Crimes (Child Sex Offenders) Amendment Act 2025, because this act is now redundant. It referred to a review being tabled by the last sitting day of 2025 and that review was tabled on 2 December 2025.

In closing, this is a bill that supports continual improvement of the ACT's justice system. The JACS bill is intended to strengthen clarity, efficiency and integrity in our justice system through a range of targeted amendments, from technical to procedural. Together, these reforms improve access to justice, support the effective use of resources and reinforce transparency and trust in our democratic processes. They demonstrate the government's ongoing commitment to maintaining a modern, fair and reliable legal framework that works to protect the rights and wellbeing of all ACT residents. I am very pleased that there are officials from the directorate here today. Let me put on the record how glad I am to be supported by such a capable directorate. I commend this bill to the Assembly.

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

Fuel Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

Debate resumed from 6 May 2026 on motion by **Ms Orr**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (10.59): I rise to speak on the Fuel Legislation Amendment Bill

2026. First, I thank the minister and her staff, and the officials, for the constructive way in which they have engaged with the opposition on this urgent bill, which was, of course, introduced only on Tuesday. As the minister has already pointed out, this bill is required to respond to an extraordinary set of circumstances.

As part of Australia's response to the current fuel crisis, the federal government has established the national fuel plan. The measures in this bill give the minister the ability to request information from fuel sellers about stock levels and expected supply to support the work of the national fuel plan. Unlike other jurisdictions in Australia, the ACT does not hold centralised fuel reserves and therefore relies on fuel stocks held by individual retailers.

I was pleased that the bill includes a number of safeguards on the use of the collected information. The data cannot be used for price setting, arbitrary collection or to disclose commercially sensitive information. Many of the retailers are small operators and are already under pressure from a fluctuating supply, volatile prices and increased operational complexity.

I appreciate and acknowledge the assurances that were given by officials, during the briefing on this bill, that they will work with retailers to ensure that new reporting requirements do not impose undue regulatory burden on individual businesses—businesses that are already doing it tough in this current climate. In addition, this bill improves enforcement of fuel price accuracy and increases penalties for this offence.

The opposition will be supporting this legislation, but I do encourage the government to ensure that its implementation is collaborative, practical and proportionate and that the new reporting requirements do not impose undue regulatory burden on individual Canberra businesses. Thank you.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (11.01): Recent military action in the Middle East, including America's illegal and abhorrent attacks on Iran, has disrupted the global oil supply chain and created an environment of volatile prices and uncertainty around fuel supply. These events have highlighted the ongoing risks of Australia's reliance on fossil fuels. While the only response that can safeguard our future involves the electrification and decarbonisation of our transport systems and supply chains, we nevertheless welcome the legislation brought forward by the government which we are discussing today.

This bill supports proper planning and consideration for the current fuel crisis and future energy shocks and also strengthens protection for consumers. This action is definitely needed in these times of uncertainty, and the Greens are pleased to support it. This legislation is designed to ensure that governments have the information they need to act proportionately, consistently and in the public interest. Under the National Fuel Security Plan, one of the roles of state and territory governments is to monitor and ensure the timely reporting of fuel supply and other relevant data. This bill creates new powers for the ACT government to fulfil these obligations.

The powers under this bill impose new obligations on fuel retailers. These powers strengthen the ACT government's ability to understand what fuel is available, what is coming and how conditions are changing. It gives the minister clear powers to require

fuel sellers to provide information about fuel stocks and the expected supplies where that information is reasonably necessary. That information is essential to understand both the jurisdictional and national picture.

The amendments also strengthen consumer protection during periods of volatility. By aligning the Fair Trading (Fuel Prices) Act with existing fair trading enforcement powers, investigators can ensure fuel price information is accurate and consumers are not misled. There were concerns that fuel retailers were not upholding their obligations to consumers during periods of high price volatility and uncertainty. Increasing penalties for price mismatching and making the offence strict liability gives the community assurance that government can take action as required.

These amendments are modest but important. They provide clear powers to request information. They also allow enforcement and pricing transparency so that consumers are not misled or disadvantaged during periods of volatility. These measures support fairness in the market at a time when households and businesses are under pressure.

Importantly, this legislation has been developed in coordination with other jurisdictions and the commonwealth. Fuel supply does not stop at territorial borders, and neither should our planning. By aligning frameworks and information-sharing, governments can respond together rather than in isolation. That cooperation is critical to maintaining national fuel security and public confidence.

I would like to thank the minister's office and the directorate officials for providing me and my Greens colleagues a detailed briefing in advance, particularly given the timing, when the bill was brought on Tuesday and debated today. That is a reasonable thing to do in these sorts of circumstances; I have no qualms with that, and particularly when the government has set us up with the information in advance and given us the opportunity to ask questions.

Mr Assistant Speaker, uncertainty does lie ahead. We cannot control global conflicts or international energy markets, but we can control how prepared we are. This bill strengthens our ability to make informed decisions, coordinate across jurisdictions and ensure we avoid the worst possible outcomes of the ongoing crisis. For those reasons, the Greens are pleased to support this bill today.

MS CARRICK(Murrumbidgee) (11.05): I also rise to indicate my support for the Fuel Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 and thank the minister for providing me a briefing; it was very handy. In the current context it is sensible that the ACT government can obtain timely and reliable information about fuel stocks and expected supply. If the territory ever needs to consider fuel restrictions or rationing, those decisions must be based on accurate information. This bill is about preparedness and consumer protection. It ensures government has the information needed to respond proportionately in a fuel supply disruption, without imposing unnecessary burden on businesses for its own sake.

I also support stronger enforcement of fuel price display requirements. During periods of uncertainty, consumers must have confidence that display prices are accurate and that regulators have practical tools to act where they are not. That said, these powers must be used carefully. Retailers should receive clear guidance, strong protections for commercial information and a proportionate, educative enforcement approach. I note

the compressed process for this bill, but, given current fuel security concerns, I support it. Thank you.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (11.06): I rise to speak very briefly. I will be supporting this bill, and I want to extend my appreciation and thanks to the minister, and her office and officials, for providing a briefing to us to explain its urgency and its details and for also answering follow-up questions with respect to interjurisdictional comparisons in this area. It is an eminently sensible piece of legislation, and for that reason I will be supporting it.

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (11.07): I, too, am pleased to stand here today in support of the Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, and this Fuel Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill is a necessary and responsible measure. It reflects the simple but critical truth that governments must act before circumstances deteriorate, not after. Fuel supply in the ACT is currently stable. Essential services are operating normally. But stability today does not remove the obligation on government to prepare for tomorrow. The Fuel Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 achieves this goal by making sensible amendments that prepare the ACT for any fuel shortages that may arise in the future.

Fuel underpins every part of our community: it keeps essential services operating; supports food and freight supply chains; and enables people to get to work or to take their kids to school or early childhood education—to care for one another. When fuel supply becomes uncertain, the consequences can escalate very quickly. This bill recognises that reality and ensures the government is ready to respond should supply risks emerge. This bill is not responding to immediate fuel shortages, but the lesson from recent global events is clear: prudent governments are prepared in advance. The measures before us ensure that the ACT is ready to act if circumstances change.

The bill addresses clear gaps in the current legislative framework. In particular, it strengthens the government's ability to obtain timely and accurate information about fuel stocks and supply conditions before a fuel restriction scheme becomes necessary. It imposes reasonable penalties for not complying with the new notification requirements. It emphasises the joint responsibility of government and fuel suppliers to work together to address and manage any fuel supply shortages that may arise in the future.

It enhances enforcement powers to ensure the government can launch a stronger response if fuel suppliers engage in any deceptive or misleading conduct when it comes to fuel prices. This is not an expansion of power for its own sake. It is a practical and proportionate response to the reality that informed decisions cannot be made without reliable data. The government must continue to make sound decisions with clear visibility of fuel stocks, supply arrangements and emerging pressures, to manage any potential fuel shortages.

This approach is entirely consistent with the National Fuel Security Plan and with the expectation that jurisdictions will continue to work together with shared and up-to-date information. Fuel security is not a matter confined within borders. It will require ongoing cooperation with the commonwealth and with state and territory governments. This bill ensures the ACT is able to play its part effectively in that coordinated national

effort.

The bill also reinforces compliance and community confidence through strengthened enforcement arrangements. Enhanced enforcement powers and appropriately calibrated penalties ensure clarity for fuel sellers and provide assurance to the public that the government will not tolerate misleading conduct or noncompliance during periods of uncertainty.

The proportionate, necessary measures contained in this bill are designed to protect consumers, discourage misconduct and support the integrity of the fuel market if fuel shortages arise. This bill is not alarmist. It is measured, targeted and prudent. By putting the right powers and safeguards in place now, the government will ensure the community it can act quickly, lawfully and in the public interest. Having these powers in place now will allow the government to move decisively if circumstances change.

Fuel security is a matter of the highest importance to government. We will continue to work closely with other jurisdictions, monitor conditions carefully and respond as necessary to protect essential services, economic activity and the wellbeing of the ACT community.

For these reasons I commend the proactive and forward-thinking approach this bill proposes, and I am pleased to stand in support of the Fuel Legislation Amendment Bill 2026.

MS ORR (Yerrabi—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (11.11), in reply: Fuel underpins almost every part of our daily lives. It is critical for transport and food supply, hospitals and emergency services, and to keep the broader economy moving. When there is uncertainty about supply, anxiety naturally follows.

The government is acutely aware of our responsibility to proactively prepare for potential disruptions to fuel supply. Along with the commonwealth, and state and territory governments, the government is preparing a solid platform from which to manage any future fuel supply issues that may arise.

The amendments in the Fuel Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 will ensure we are able to make decisions based on accurate information and with the needs of our community in mind. A central message of the National Fuel Security Plan is that timely, accurate information-sharing of fuel stocks and supply issues is essential. Fuel security depends on visibility and clear insight into global supply conditions, domestic stock levels, distribution trends and community need. That is why the National Fuel Security Plan places such strong emphasis on governments and industry working from a shared evidence-base and responding together, rather than in isolation. Our ability to act calmly and proportionately depends on having the same trusted picture of the situation at the same time.

Under the National Fuel Security Plan, the commonwealth, states and territories have committed to regular, structured information exchange, supported by the Fuel Supply Taskforce and fuel supply coordinators. This ensures that decisions such as whether to

remain at current settings or to move to more targeted action are guided by the most recent available data, including fuel arrivals, minimum stockholding obligation levels, retail and freight trends, and insights from industry and major users. By continuously updating that shared picture, all levels of government can respond early, reduce uncertainty and avoid unnecessary disruption to communities and markets. This is why the measures contained in the Fuel Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 are necessary and must be passed without delay.

As I mentioned in my introductory speech, this bill creates a power for the minister to compel fuel sellers to provide information outside of a fuel restriction scheme. The bill is reasonable and proportionate, allowing the minister to require information from a fuel seller to inform any future decisions about a fuel restriction scheme should one become necessary, with appropriate timeframes, information safeguards and offences for misuse of what may be considered commercially sensitive fuel pricing information. It will also authorise the sharing of information with the commonwealth or a state and territory entity where it is reasonably necessary and appropriate.

Information, where disclosure may be required under this notification scheme, includes but is not limited to facility identification and location information; fuel stock information, including quantity and types of fuel by fuel supplier; fuel supply information, including details of supply contracts; a fuel supplier's capacity to continue receiving fuel and potential disruptions to forward contracts; and access to spot market indicators to the extent necessary to assess supply risk. In each circumstance the information being sought is directly related to the supply, use or consumption of fuel to prepare and protect consumers and the broader ACT community in cases of potential disruption to the fuel supply in the ACT. The bill only allows for the minister to require information to determine whether the fuel situation in the ACT requires a fuel restriction scheme to be enacted in the interests of the community.

Under this bill, fuel sellers will be given at least 24 hours to respond to a notification for information. If a fuel seller does not provide information within the stated timeframe, this bill will give the regulator the ability to impose a strict liability offence for noncompliance and can result in a maximum penalty of 50 penalty units. This penalty is intended to disincentivise fuel sellers from not complying with the requirement.

It is critical that if these powers are used, information is provided from all fuel sellers. Inconsistent information from fuel sellers may result in ill-considered measures or the enacting of fuel restriction measures that are unnecessary. I do not expect that our fuel suppliers will have any issues complying with the requirement to provide information, but it must be crystal clear that the government will always do what is necessary to protect consumers in cases of disruption to fuel supply in the ACT.

The bill also furthers protections by including safeguards that prevent misuse of this information. It will be an offence for a person to disclose or use protected fuel information for any purpose other than what is authorised by the Fuel Rationing Act, any other ACT law, in a court proceeding, or with the person's consent. These protections are designed to protect the privacy of third parties and the integrity of the information requirements. I want to re-emphasise the government's commitment to working with fuel sellers to ensure this is workable for them, while also delivering on

the needs of the community and the requirements of government as the situation evolves. I would like to thank our retailers, who have been engaging with officials, for their cooperation.

The bill also enhances the government's enforcement powers through several measures. It changes the definition of "inspector" to be "an investigator under the Fair Trading (Australian Consumer Law) Act 1992", which will better provide support, education, enforcement and compliance with the new reporting requirements, as well as fuel restrictions more broadly. It creates the Magistrates Court (Fuels Rationing Infringement Notices) Regulation 2026 to set an infringement notice for the offence of not complying with a notice to provide information, with a penalty of \$1,600 for an individual or \$8,000 for a corporation. This will provide an alternative to prosecution in circumstances where a fuel supplier does not comply with a notice to provide information.

The price display requirements offence under the Fair Trading (Fuel Prices) Act 1993 will also be amended by this bill. The penalty for displaying a fuel price on a price board that is a discounted fuel price, or a fuel price that is lower than the price at the corresponding pump, will be increased from 20 penalty units to 50 penalty units. This offence will also be made a strict liability offence. These amendments will make it clear to fuel suppliers that the government will not tolerate any misleading or deceptive fuel advertising or sale practices.

The increased penalty is intended to discourage unlawful behaviours like profiteering or bait-and-switch pricing tactics, all of which reduce community confidence in the supply and management of this fuel crisis. Making this offence a strict liability offence will provide best practice to protect consumers from deceptive pricing practices, regardless of whether the offender intended to publish the incorrect price. It will also facilitate a future infringement notice scheme for the existing offence of price mismatching at petrol stations, should this become a necessary next step.

In closing, it is important to be clear about where we stand: fuel supply is not currently constrained in the ACT, and essential services and the community continue to operate as normal. However, the experience of recent global disruptions reinforces an important principle: a responsible government does not wait until a crisis is upon us to act; preparation is necessary to ensure we can respond decisively if circumstances change.

The measures in the Fuel Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 discussed today are about preparedness. They ensure that, should risks to fuel supply emerge, the government can coordinate, anticipate and plan for the next steps, with appropriate powers and arrangements already in place. This allows government to move quickly, lawfully and in a coordinated way, rather than under pressure and delay.

This work is being undertaken in close cooperation with the commonwealth and state and territory governments. Australia's fuel security is a shared challenge that crosses borders and jurisdictions. Continued collaboration, communication and coordination with industry and the community are essential to addressing this challenge. The ACT's fuel security is of the highest importance to the government. While the world manages the uncertainty and significant challenges of the Iranian-US war and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, we remain focused on protecting essential services, supporting

economic activity and safeguarding the wellbeing of the ACT community.

Mr Speaker, in finalising my comments and closing the debate, I would like to thank all the members of this place who have engaged with the development of this bill, and the substance and need for it, for their constructive and collaborative approach. It is very much appreciated. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Leave of absence

Motion (by **Mrs Morris**) agreed to:

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Cocks for this sitting day due to personal reasons.

Sitting suspended from 11.21 am to 2 pm.

Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (2.00): Minister Orr, is away from question time today as she is en route to the Energy Ministers' meeting. So for question time today, Minister Stephen-Smith will take questions in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, disability, carers and community services portfolios. Minister Cheyne will take questions in climate change, environment, energy and water portfolios and Minister Pettersson in the seniors and veterans portfolios.

Questions without notice

Canberra Hospital—Behavioural Assessment Unit—incident

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, you confirmed during question time on Tuesday that you had not spoken to any of the BAU siege victims. Yesterday morning on ABC Radio you stated that you usually like to let some time pass between these events and reaching out. Today, we have learned of another serious staff assault that occurred in April of last year at the Canberra Hospital with a patient being charged with occasioning actual bodily harm after strangling or attempting to strangle a nurse. Minister, given that a year has passed, have you reached out or spoken to the nurse who was assaulted and strangled while at work at a government-run hospital?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: No, I have not spoken individually to that individual about that incident. I do take advice also from the directorate in relation to these matters.

I would note for the benefit of the Assembly that in some cases staff very much value their privacy. They want to deal with these matters on their own terms and they receive

support, as is appropriate, through workplace support, through occupational violence leave, through the occupational violence framework, through the employee assistance program and through their managers, including senior leaders in the hospital system.

I would take advice as to whether it is helpful for me to meet with people. I have been contacted by that individual now, subsequent to the media reporting, and that individual has requested a meeting and I have, of course, agreed to that.

MR PARTON: Minister, since my question to you on Tuesday, have you personally spoken to or visited any of the eight BAU siege victims?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: No, I have not, and the answer that I gave on radio yesterday stands. I will continue to take advice from the directorate, but the advice that I have received informally has been that those staff want to get on and do their work in this complex and challenging environment. The opposition's insistence on describing this as a siege, on using words like held hostage as if this individual, this very unwell individual, who the team were supporting had a motivation to harm them—the team understands this individual had no motivation to harm them. They were not under siege and they were not being held hostage. They were safe for an extended period of time. I recognise that what occurred was traumatic and difficult, but the advice that I have is that the team want to be able to get on with their job in the very difficult environment in which they work every day with people who have complex, challenging behaviours. It is called the Behavioural Assessment Unit for a reason.

MRS MORRIS: Minister, do you accept responsibility for failing to provide a safe workplace for hospital staff?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I do not agree with the premise of Mrs Morris's question, Mr Speaker. Hospitals can be challenging environments and we know that occupational violence is increasing across our community in many workplaces, from retail to education, to health, to all frontline services. We have strong policies in place, but we know that those can always be improved and we learn lessons every time there is a serious incident like this, and the leadership works closely with staff.

One great example of that is the Towards a Safer Culture strategy, where the Health and Community Services Directorate, then Health Directorate, Canberra Health Services and our nursing union, the ANMF, worked closely together on a series of activities to improve the safety of the workplace for nurses and midwives. That has been a very effective strategy, in combination with consultation and close engagement with staff. The roll out of Safewards, for example, I have heard described as one of the most positive things for culture in our hospital and health service that the union has ever seen. So those are the steps that we take.

Unfortunately, our healthcare workers come into contact with people on some of the worst days of their lives, sometimes people who have little control over their own behaviour, either because of the psychological psychiatric distress that they are experiencing or because they are drug and alcohol affected. They also come into contact with family members and carers who are extremely distressed by what is occurring, and people do get heightened in those situations. There is a lot of work that goes into saying to people that is not acceptable, but that is the world in which we live.

Canberra Hospital—staff safety

MR PARTON: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, we have learnt today through *Canberra Times* reporting that ACT Policing confirmed another occupational violence assault where a nurse at Canberra Hospital was strangled by a patient in April 2025. The recent siege at Canberra Hospital is one edition of 128 staff-reported incidents in the BAU alone, since opening in August 2024. It is undeniable and clearly evident that this government is only interested in the suppression of information, attempts to control the narrative, and that staff safety is not a priority. Minister, why were staff, patients and the broader community not proactively informed that such severe assaults have occurred inside the hospital system?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I completely reject Mr Parton's assertion. As I said earlier, staff deserve privacy when something really distressing has happened to them, when they've been the subject of occupational violence that is really severe and significant.

There are not very many staff who work in the Behavioural Assessment Unit at any particular point in time. They get support. They get cared for. And these incidents are reported to policing appropriately.

In this instance, the alleged perpetrator of the assault was charged. That subsequently did not proceed to court, but the matter was taken very, very seriously.

But I absolutely reject all of Mr Parton's assertions in his question about the way that this government responds to occupational violence. We take these matters incredibly seriously. I meet with unions and staff regularly about their work environment; and with leadership, to discuss what is being done in this space and in the broader space of supporting our incredible healthcare workforce—who work with some with people on some of the most challenging and difficult days of their lives; who work with people who have incredible complexity in their lives, who are often experiencing significant trauma and psychological or even psychiatric distress.

These are hard jobs. We thank the staff that do them, and we regularly do that in this place, and we work hard to keep them safe.

MR PARTON: Minister, is the level of violence and the frequency of violent incidents at Canberra Hospital acceptable to you? And is the government considering introducing occupational violence leave in the next enterprise agreement?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: No, it is not acceptable. That is why we have a range of strategies in place to seek to reduce occupational violence, like the Safewards program that I spoke about. That, elsewhere, was originally a program for mental health units. Not only has it been rolled out across mental health for Canberra Health Services but in a range of wards, and entirely across University of Canberra Hospital. That to my understanding is the only hospital that is entirely a Safewards hospital.

There are a range of other matters measures that we take as well, including a public campaign about reducing occupational violence and that aggression is not acceptable.

In relation to occupational violence leave, Canberra Health Services has a policy around occupational violence leave. I mentioned it earlier. It is something that is available to people. It is also the case, as I alluded to earlier, that not everybody is going to want to take leave after an experience of occupational violence. So, it is not mandatory. It is part of the suite of responses that are available to support people who have experienced occupational violence in the workplace.

MRS MORRIS: Minister, if it is so unacceptable to you, and if you have implemented prevention measures, then why do we continue to see so many healthcare workers face violence on the frontline at Canberra Hospital?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I think I have already answered Mrs Morris's question in terms of the working environment that our healthcare workers work in. I have said, multiple times so far today, that healthcare workers work with people at some of the most difficult days that they will ever experience. They work with consumers who have incredible complexity in their lives. They work with consumers who are in acute psychiatric distress, and they work with consumers who are affected by alcohol or other drugs that impact their capacity for behaviour control. All of these things are unavoidable when you deliver a health service.

What we can do is support our staff with training to de-escalate situations and to keep themselves safe. On the incident on 22 April, our staff did exactly the right thing. They followed their training and they kept themselves safe. What we can do is ensure that we have appropriate code responses and security in place. What we can do is learn from every example of occupational violence, and understand whether it could have been avoided, and put measures in place to do that. What we can do is have community campaigns and local campaigns within our health facilities making it clear that aggression and violence are not acceptable—and we do that. What we can do is learn from evidence and implement policies like Safewards that reduce the risk of occupational violence; build positive relationships between staff and patients and carers; and reduce the need for restraint or restrictive practises while also reducing the impact of occupational violence on our staff.

ACT public service—enterprise bargaining

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, earlier today it was announced that the Community and Public Sector Union's protected action ballot was successful, with over 95 per cent of CPSU members, on the admin and health agreements, voting "yes" to take industrial action in the face of your below-inflation pay offer. In fact, some of them join us in the chamber right now. Chief Minister, is a better offer being considered by cabinet?

MR BARR: I thank Miss Nuttall for the question. She has been around this place long enough to know that cabinet deliberations are not discussed in question time. Of course, the government will continue to engage with the CPSU and other unions as we seek to reach an agreement. Bargaining is continuing. The Minister for the Public Service, Minister Stephen-Smith, together with officials, is working towards an outcome. We have a budget next month, and we will continue to engage constructively.

MISS NUTTALL: Chief Minister, recognising that NTEU members at the University

of Canberra also went on strike this week, will the government look at supporting a revised offer which goes to their concerns of pay and workloads?

MR BARR: Again, I think Miss Nuttall is aware that the ACT government does not fund the University of Canberra, and we do not have responsibility for their industrial relations arrangements. They operate, obviously, under federal arrangements, and the university is legally a separate entity from the ACT government. So just to be clear, the ACT government does not fund pay rises for staff at the University of Canberra.

I have spoken with the Vice Chancellor in relation to industrial matters on the campus, as well as governance matters that relate to the University of Canberra, and I know, given his long experience in industrial relations, he intends, again, to approach bargaining in good faith.

MR BRADDOCK: Chief Minister, does the ACT government share the position, which you yourself have previously put, that pay rises should at least match CPI?

MR BARR: Certainly, we endeavour, through the life of an agreement to achieve those outcomes. We also look to achieve productivity improvements, and we look forward, of course, to extending a range of other benefits to our workforce.

We are in a volatile time at the moment, and there will be a need to make some forecasts about what inflation will look like over the next 12 months and beyond. We certainly know the Reserve Bank is taking quite considerable action to seek to bring inflation back within the two to three per cent band, but we also need to be conscious of the government's own budget and fiscal position, and the reality that any extra money that we need to find will come from ACT taxpayers. There is no magic pot of money sitting out there. If there were, we would access it. There is not. So we need to put forward an offer that addresses, as best we can, the range of claims that are made but that also needs to be affordable for the territory and territory taxpayers.

Housing ACT staff—enterprise bargaining

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs. The CPSU has just announced that Housing ACT staff, some of whom are in the gallery today, will strike next week. The ACT Ombudsman recently found that Housing ACT is failing its legal obligations as a landlord in relation to repairs and maintenance. One of the tenants who features in the Ombudsman's report has told my office that her repairs are still outstanding. Meanwhile, there are 3½ thousand approved applicants on our public housing waitlist, critical repairs and maintenance are not occurring, thousands of people are waiting for a home, and staff feel undervalued to the point that they are going on strike. Minister, why is Housing ACT so chronically under-resourced?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Emerson for his question and his interest in housing in the ACT and services provided by Housing ACT staff, who do an incredible job under some very complex and challenging circumstances, supporting people in the ACT into homes across our city, in every suburb. I understand the pressure that Housing ACT staff are under, and I hope to work with them to continue to support not only their work, but also the work that the ACT government does to make sure that people are getting

into homes across the city.

It is a significant job. I have not shied away from the fact that we need to build more homes. That is clearly the case. No-one can deny it. But we are seeing increased funding and partnerships across the territory, including partnerships with the federal government, that are providing more opportunities to build more new homes that meet the needs of Canberrans. I commit to continuing to do that work.

MR EMERSON: Minister, does the government's pay offer for Housing ACT staff, which has led to a stalemate in negotiations, reflect a broader, ongoing de-prioritisation and devaluation of the work of Housing ACT?

MS BERRY: Absolutely not. I absolutely reject the premise of the question that the ACT government thinks that the work of Housing ACT staff is not vital. I value and respect the work that they do every day. I am a regular visitor at Housing ACT and engage very closely with the staff out there about their challenges. I continue to do that.

The government will continue its negotiations through the bargaining process. Of course, it was not something that any of us wanted to see—that action has been taken today, and members of the public service and Housing ACT have decided that they will take action. I am probably the least likely person to object to anybody taking industrial action. I understand the purpose of that. I will continue to work, in my capacity, in good faith with Housing ACT staff, and any other staff that I am directly responsible for, as well as across the ACT government, as all of us will, to ensure that we get the best possible outcome that we can, particularly under the circumstances that the government has, within the budget arrangements that the Chief Minister has referred to.

We will continue those negotiations. I hope that the members that are here today will know that we are speaking truthfully and seriously, and that we do want to work with the public service to make sure that we can support them and that they know that we respect and value their work.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, why does the government expect Housing ACT staff, who deliver critical services for vulnerable Canberrans, to accept a 1.6 per cent pay cut in real terms during a cost-of-living crisis?

MS BERRY: Negotiations are continuing. I ask Miss Nuttall to understand that we are continuing those negotiations with the public service. The Minister for the Public Service is sitting here right now, and she is committed to doing that work, so that we can get the best possible outcome that we can. We understand the cost-of-living crisis that people are experiencing, and the important, and often—unfortunately—unseen and undervalued work that Housing ACT staff do every day. It is done by people who are perhaps in this place today, and across the community. It is certainly not something that I have shied away from. I look forward to continuing those discussions with them. I would be very happy to meet with them, any time after today, following this announcement—

Mr Parton: I thought it was a branch meeting in here.

MS BERRY: It looks like it. I am very happy to meet with them, and I am sure any of

my colleagues would as well.

Teachers—enterprise bargaining

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, ACT government school educators have announced industrial action, citing months of delays and a failure by your directorate to meaningfully address key issues in enterprise bargaining. Minister, what action are you taking to resolve this dispute before it escalates further and disrupts staff, students and families?

MS BERRY: Thank you, Ms Lee, for your question. I think it is refreshing to have support from the Canberra Liberals and others in this place for the public service and the negotiations around their pay and conditions. It is not the usual course that we on this side of the table would be facing questions and support for unions and their actions by those opposite and others in the chamber. So it is refreshing and we thank you for your support for their work.

I have been meeting with the education union on a regular basis. My most recent meeting was on Friday, and my office has been in communication with them daily this week. I have been meeting with the Education Directorate. I have put my expectations to the Education Directorate that they meet more frequently and that the timelines and expectations that the AEU wants to see through the negotiations occurs throughout those meetings.

So I am determined to make sure that there is a good outcome and that the Education Union and their members see that I am taking these negotiations seriously. I am not the employer; the Education Directorate is. But we are all working closely to try and resolve the issues that the Education Union has raised.

MS LEE: Minister, what assurance can you give educators, parents and students that your government is treating this dispute with the urgency that it requires ahead of the planned stop work action on 22 May?

MS BERRY: Well, I already have. I have described the meetings that I have had to date. I have said to the education union officials that I am willing to meet with them at any time for any length of time to go through the issues that they have raised and to get some clarity around a way forward and the timelines that they are expecting so that they can inform their members. I made sure that that information was provided to them so that they could feed that back to their council meeting last night.

I am certainly doing everything I can to progress the negotiations and get them on track. I understand the frustrations of the Education Union and their members and that it has led to industrial action. I would note this is the first time as education minister that education members have taken industrial action. So whilst I am personally disappointed that, unfortunately, we are in this situation, I am absolutely 100 per cent committed to seeing a way through this. I will continue to work with the union to get a positive outcome where I can.

MS BARRY: Minister, do you retain confidence in your directorate's handling of the bargaining process?

MS BERRY: Yes, I do.

Teachers—enterprise bargaining

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood. Minister, on ABC radio this morning, the President of the ACT Australian Education Union said that your directorate failed to proceed with the next expected bargaining meeting, which had been scheduled as part of the conciliation process, and used this as an example of the ongoing frustration that they are experiencing. Your comments on radio this morning after seemed to contradict this statement when you said, “Look, there was a meeting yesterday with the Education Union and the Education Directorate.” However, our understanding is that that meeting was in relation to school assistants, not teachers. Minister, is it acceptable that your directorate did not proceed with the teachers’ bargaining meeting that was scheduled following conciliation?

MS BERRY: Again, I am super excited to have the opposition and Ms Lee focused on enterprise bargaining and get good outcomes for public school teachers and staff in the ACT. I understand that there was a meeting with the Education Union and it was with regard to other staff. I have spoken with the Education Directorate, and they are clear on my expectations on the frequency of and improved clarity on the meetings that they hold with the Education Union. I have committed to that publicly this morning and now and to the union and their members. That is the focus that I will be having over the next little while to get an agreement that leads to a positive outcome for the Education Union and education staff at all our public schools, and I will continue to do that work.

MS LEE: Minister, when is the next meeting either between yourself or your directorate and the Education Union, given that you have confirmed that that is to take place?

MS BERRY: I do not have a meeting with the Education Union at this time; however, I will meet at any time, on their request. I will request it of them as well. I am happy to meet with them at any time. I understand that the Education Directorate will also be organising meetings for bargaining with the union as well.

MR CAIN: Minister, what action are you taking to ensure staff, students and families are not disrupted by further industrial action?

MS BERRY: Again, I have said and put my commitments forward about the meetings that I will hold with the Education Union and the expectations I have on the directorate. Unfortunately, there will be some disruptions experienced within our public school system because the Education Union has made the decision and voted to take industrial action. They are looking at staging that action. The first part of the action will include not writing comments on reports and then a stop work meeting later this month. I am hoping that that does not escalate and that we can get to a good place. But, at the end of the day, the purpose for unions to vote and take industrial action is to make sure that their agenda is very clearly understood by their employer—in this case, the Education Directorate. I am not suggesting that they should not do that, but I am doing everything that I can to get the negotiations on track, and I am hopeful that I will be successful in that.

Housing developments—administrative appeals

MS CLAY: My question is to the minister for housing. Minister, in a recent *City News* article on a public housing development in Yarralumla, you urged people to be more accepting of public housing projects. That article seems to blame delays in construction on the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, but the development application was submitted in August 2024, approved in November 2024 and was appealed and resolved by ACAT in March 2025. Before that process, the site sat empty for four years before the DA was lodged. After that process, the site has sat vacant for 13 months since ACAT resolved the appeal. Why did that site sit vacant for over five years outside any DA or appeals process?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Clay for the question. I want to note that the comment that she is reflecting on in the article was with reference to a different housing project in Curtin where there is a petition, currently being sponsored by a member in this place, to stop the project for affordable housing in Curtin from going ahead. So it was in reference to that particular project that I was commenting on in that particular article, but it is certainly a message that I have called on our community to share some of their green space to ensure that we can have housing for the people who need it most.

With regard to the site in Yarralumla, the site was still occupied by at least one tenant until June 2022. During that time an architect was engaged—before that time in June 2021—to start design works in preparation for the development. During design there were a number of complex issues that were understood on the site, including the presence of regulated trees and public access easements which run through the site. So there were some complications and complexities with the site that needed to be worked through. This is a \$19 million project. It will completely transform a site that was previously built in the 1950s with 12 homes. It will move to 30 new homes across three buildings—18 one-bedroom units, 10 two-bedroom townhouses and two three-bedroom units.

This project is not merely one home on a site. It is quite a significant project. It is no small feat and I think that Canberrans will expect that the government takes the time to do the work and get the project right. I was happy when I went down to the site for the announcement to see and hear that there were some very large trees that were going to be protected through the build.

MS CLAY: Minister, how many public housing DAs has Housing ACT submitted since our December 2025 changes to allow public homes to be Territory Priority Projects?

MS BERRY: Well, under the TPP rules, public housing developments undertaken by Housing ACT are automatically considered a TPP, except for dwellings that were delivered through the Growing and Renewing Public Housing program. This was the program that the Greens insisted would be ineligible for the TPP process status. The government has focused on delivering the 230 that are left on the Growing and Renewing Public Housing program by mid-next year. This is why no TPP DAs for public housing have yet been submitted, because we are continuing to complete and finalise the current Growing and Renewing Public Housing program. However,

Canberrans can expect to see TPP public housing coming through the pipeline.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, why does your government keep blaming delays on regulators and the community when the lengthiest delays are caused by your own agencies?

MS BERRY: Well, that is not true, Mr Speaker.

Housing—new homes

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs. Minister, a couple of weeks ago you announced a partnership with the commonwealth government that will support the delivery of thousands of new homes around Canberra. What will this program involve?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Tough for her question. The commonwealth and ACT governments have teamed up to deliver another fantastic housing initiative, with \$250 million in support from the commonwealth to deliver 4,900 new homes right across the territory. 1,700 of these homes will be for first home buyers. This carve-out of 1,700 homes is especially for first home buyers and will make a real difference to Canberrans who have been priced out of the market.

The commonwealth funding comprises \$200 million in concessional loans and \$50 million in grant funding. It is the most significant amount of funding that we have seen from a federal government in decades, I believe. Certainly, in my time in this place, I have not seen the level of funding that is being contributed to housing in the ACT. I look forward to making sure it goes to building more homes.

MS TOUGH: Minister, where will these new homes be located?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Tough for the supplementary. The 4,900 homes, which includes the 1,700 for the first home buyers, will be spread all across the city.

The funding will be used to support infrastructure work such as water, sewerage, storm water and road infrastructure to unlock land for new residential development. A lot of these projects will be on the south side, which includes areas like Kingston, Weston Creek and the Molonglo valley. There are also some really exciting projects in Belconnen.

The ACT government is continuing to work with the community housing sector's ability to deliver these homes, and we do not want to put that at risk. There are some challenges that we are facing, like the petition that I referred to earlier which is championing a protest against Marymead CatholicCare's 54-dwelling affordable housing development in Curtin.

Now, all of us know that we are in a housing crisis all across the spectrum, but particularly for those people who need support in housing. In social housing, and affordable and community housing, we simply must build more homes. These homes are for people who really need it; people who need somewhere stable and affordable to live; people who just do not have the same kinds of chances or opportunities as the rest

of us. And I implore Canberrans, as Ms Clay has referred to in the article, and I say it again today, to think about the kind of world that they want to live in before jumping on these kinds of bandwagons which can delay building more homes in our suburbs.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister when can Canberrans expect the new homes for first-time buyers to hit the market?

MS BERRY: 1700 homes for first home buyers will be delivered by 2034.

Of course, we would love to see some of those delivered earlier but, as the Assembly knows, the ACT government has a lot of housing projects in the pipeline for coming years. That includes 324 social housing homes through the Growing and Renewing program; the Social Housing Accelerator; the Housing Australia Future Fund Round 2; and 800 affordable housing homes through the \$100 million Affordable Housing Project Fund. Mr Speaker, we are building homes.

Health services—insourcing

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, I ask: what specific public health services and contracts have been assessed for insourcing under the ACT Insourcing Framework to date, and will the ACT government publish a forward schedule of contracts to be assessed for insourcing?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: We have a public commitment to insourcing our cleaning workforce, so there is work currently underway that was funded in the last budget to undertake that work to prepare for insourcing the cleaning workforce.

Other decisions about insourcing around, for example, some elective surgery that can now be undertaken at Canberra Hospital would not be the subject of the type of process that Mr Parton refers to. Other things have been insourced through an agreement with the provider—for example, some dialysis services that were previously provided by a third party in our community health centres are now provided by CHS.

I will take the detail of the question on notice, but we are very proud of our record in providing secure jobs for public servants where it is the most appropriate way to deliver those services.

MR PARTON: You may want to take this on notice as well. In regard to services within the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services that are currently under consideration for insourcing, can you provide me with some indicative timeframes for those?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: In relation to cleaning services at Canberra Hospital, which is the only one that comes to mind in terms of clear timeframes, we indicated in the 2025-26 budget, when we allocated that funding, that we were aiming to insource cleaning services for Canberra Hospital and the rest of CHS, other than North Canberra Hospital and Clare Holland House, as of, I think, August this year, and to progress to North Canberra Hospital and Clare Holland House in the second half of 2027.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, what involvement have third-party stakeholders had in the

assessment and review of contracts and services identified for insourcing

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: There is an insourcing taskforce, which does not sit in my portfolio; that is a whole of government mechanism. The United Workers Union, as the representative of the cleaners and food services staff across Canberra Health Services has been involved in conversations about how that process is managed, and, of course, Canberra Health Services has also been discussing that with the contractors.

Buses—late-night services

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, on Saturday, 25 April, regular bus services concluded in the early evening, despite the abundance of night-life and activity in Civic, with the last buses departing Civic at around 9.30 pm. Was this early stopping of services because it was gazetted as a public holiday?

MR STEEL: I understand that that is the case. I am happy to take that on notice and come back with some further information.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, did no-one in your office or Transport Canberra consider that, in spite of it being a public holiday, this was a Saturday, with considerable night-life; hence late-night bus services might be suitable?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Certainly, what was taken into consideration was that it was a public holiday for employees of Transport Canberra, just as it would have been for every other person in Canberra. That had to be taken into account, in terms of running a public holiday bus network, which is what we do on public holidays during each stage of the year.

MS CLAY: Minister, what is the damage done to the night-time economy when bus services stop at 9.30 pm?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. It means that people in Canberra who are looking to go out at night beyond that period of time need to arrange for alternative modes of travel that may be available to them, whether it is rideshare, taxis or active travel, or whether they are looking to car pool or use a designated driver, or not drink themselves. There are a range of different options for people who want to access our city. Of course, I also welcome the recent announcement about the e-mobility shared scheme which has been established in the ACT. It provides another option for people to get around Canberra.

Phillip—swimming pool

MS CARRICK: My question is to the minister for planning and it is about the approval of the development application for the Geocon towers on the Phillip pool and ice skating rink site. The decision that approved the first two of five towers includes a recommendation that careful consideration be given to the advisory notes prior to commencing work.

The advisory notes include a statement from the Climate Change and Energy division of the ACT government which states that the proposed location of the central plaza and

design of surrounding buildings, including those in the DA that was approved, are likely to have significant detrimental impact on solar access and microclimate conditions and hence usability of the central plaza.

It also states that deep basements will limit the degree to which the central plaza's deep soil zone will enhance living infrastructure and support healthy tree growth. Minister, why was the DA approved with a design that is likely to have significant detrimental impacts on solar access and microclimate conditions and hence usability of the central plaza?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. As she is aware, we have an independent planning assessment system here in the ACT. I understand that development application was assessed under the old Planning and Land Development Act 2007. I will seek some further information from the Territory Planning Authority in relation to that matter and come back to the Assembly.

MS CARRICK: Minister, why was the DA approved with a design that is not likely to support deep soil zones to support healthy tree growth?

MR STEEL: Again, I will come back to the Assembly on that matter.

MR EMERSON: You may need to take this on notice too. Minister, how can this lack of solar access and deep soil zones be considered a good outcome for the community? Given that, how can we trust the assessment of DAs?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Noting that the development application was made under the old system, I will take that on notice. But I also will note that we have implemented a new planning system in the ACT. That has included a range of different new features which are aimed at building a more sustainable city. The *Housing Design Guide*, the *Urban Design Guide*, and hopefully a new missing middle design guide will provide greater guidance, particularly around the implementation of sustainable measures that can be undertaken in projects throughout the ACT, including providing more canopy cover and greater guidance around deep soil zones and planting.

We have also introduced the Urban Forest Act 2023 which also, of course, encourages the protection and planting of trees in the ACT, particularly the protection of trees in areas where there are not huge numbers of them, like Woden town centre, for example, where we do want to see more canopy and where the government has been making very significant investments in increasing canopy cover through the CIT Woden campus, particularly the establishment of the western plaza and the northern plaza which is currently under construction to completely finalise that project.

In an area that was a sea of surface car parks that had hardly any trees and was an urban heat island, there is the opportunity to see more trees planted as part of future development on those urban heat island car parks. And that is certainly the intention of the new planning system and that will be assessed under the new planning system with responses made against those design guides in the future.

Planning—Tharwa Village

MR PARTON: My question is to the minister for planning. Minister, back in 2018, your government released its Tharwa Village Plan to define what is important about Tharwa Village and provide a framework to guide future development. This plan sets out how the ACT government will continue to support the village, and surrounds through things like capital works programs and associated government service delivery. Minister, how many actions, including capital works programs, were outlined in that plan and how many have been delivered?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question in relation to the 2018 Tharwa Village Plan, which forms part of the ACT's broader planning framework. Key elements of the plan were implemented through changes to the Territory Plan, including updates to the Tharwa precinct map and code and removal of the public land overlay through plan variation 359, approved in February 2019 following public consultation. These changes embed the strategic planning outcomes of the plan and continue to guide future development and land use in Tharwa.

Since then, work has progressed across a range of areas identified in or consistent with the plan, including ongoing maintenance of public spaces, such as the Tharwa bridge, recreation area and surrounding corridor, targeted weed management alongside broader river corridor programs, and regular servicing of public amenities. A number of matters raised by the community, particularly water supply for drinking and firefighting and some local infrastructure upgrades, are still ongoing. Upgrades like those are complex, longstanding issues involving multiple different ACT government agencies and require further coordinated whole-of-government responses.

The ACT government will continue to engage with the Tharwa community as work progresses. Implementation of individual projects and infrastructure are, of course, subject to budget consideration and processes.

MR PARTON: How much money did the government make from the sale of the five vacant RZ1 blocks—the only thing that actually has been genuinely fulfilled from the Tharwa Village Plan?

MR STEEL: I reject the premise of the question, given the comprehensive answer that I just provided, which says quite a lot to the contrary. I am happy to come back on notice in relation to those sales. But I do note that I also regularly report on direct land sales.

MRS MORRIS: Minister, how can the people of Tharwa or, indeed, any part of Canberra believe any of the promises you make, given your government's appalling track record?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question and reject the premise of the question. When we undertake planning frameworks, those are typically updated through our planning system, and that is what we have done through changes to the Territory Plan in Tharwa and the range of actions that I outlined in the answer to the first question. So we have undertaken those planning actions out of what was a planning framework.

Yarralumla Primary School—language programs

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood. Minister, in correspondence from the Education Directorate to Yarralumla Primary School parents earlier this month, it states that 90 minutes of English and 60 minutes of maths education must be delivered daily in English. The correspondence goes on to say that these requirements apply across ACT public schools. Minister, given this advice from your directorate, will the bilingual programs at Telopea Park Primary School and Mawson Primary School also be affected?

MS BERRY: I am not aware that they run a similar program or the same way that the Yarralumla Primary School does; however, I will take that part of the question on notice. However, as members in the Assembly will know, in 2026, the Education Directorate's new learning and teaching policy now requires schools to deliver 90 minutes of English curriculum and 60 minutes of mathematics curriculum, and all students now receive daily English literacy instruction—Mr Hanson, one of your legacy projects. They will continue to participate in the Italian language learning in other areas of the curriculum.

Now, that is not to say that the school is completely cutting off families from engaging about future opportunities, and I know the principal has been engaging with the families and is welcoming those ongoing consultation opportunities. I know that the consultation that is happening throughout 2026 will continue to consider access to high-quality teaching and learning both in English and in Italian. But I will take on notice the first part of that question, about the other schools and whether they would be impacted the same, and bring that back to the Assembly.

MS LEE: Minister, given that you have just talked about continuing consultation with the families, why was it not undertaken before these changes came into place at Yarralumla Primary School?

MS BERRY: Well, it was. There was consultation.

Ms Lee interjecting—

MS BERRY: There was consultation, and I have described the new program and curriculum work that is happening across our system to ensure a consistent approach across all our schools, which is what our community has been calling for. Part of that is about making sure that when our curriculum on English literacy and mathematics is implemented, it is implemented in a way that is consistent and understood by families across all of our school system. So there has been consultation specifically on that, and I know that the Yarralumla Primary School has also communicated with their school community.

I know that the consultations began in 2025, in conversations with the board at the Yarralumla Primary School, and I know that they will continue. I understand that there are some families who are disappointed with the outcome so far, but I encourage them to continue to work with the school principal on the program going forward and to continue to engage about how Italian language and partnerships can continue to occur at Yarralumla Primary School.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, can you guarantee parents that Yarralumla Primary School will remain a bilingual school?

MS BERRY: Well, as I said, that is the intention. I know that the Yarralumla Primary School principal will continue to engage with staff, the school board and community to ensure that the bilingual model remains. It might change from what families have been used to, but to make sure it is fit for purpose and responsive to the needs of all children, including making sure we deliver on the programs we have committed to with regard to English literacy instruction.

Emissions—low-carbon concrete

MR SPEAKER: Your last question, Mr Rattenbury?

MR RATTENBURY: My question is to Minister Steel as the minister for sustainable development. Minister, the ACT government's *Low carbon concrete policy* aims to reduce embodied carbon in construction by mandating the use of low-carbon concrete in government projects. Implementation began in January 2025. We have now also seen Austroads release a detailed study on the barriers and opportunities for adopting low-carbon concrete in municipal road infrastructure. Can you provide an update to the Assembly about the progress on the use of low-carbon concrete in the ACT?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Rattenbury for his question, and I want to acknowledge his work and advocacy, particularly in relation to sustainability. The ACT government's *Low carbon concrete policy* encourages the use of low-carbon concrete where fit for purpose, and low-carbon concrete is currently being utilised in a variety of different applications across the ACT. As reported by the other minister, in 2024-2025 in their report under the Climate Change Act, low-carbon concrete was successfully used in a range of projects at different scales, including the Molonglo River Bridge, North Wright Sustainable Precinct, public housing and the raising of London Circuit. Roads ACT has now used low-carbon concrete in the delivery of concrete footpath maintenance works across the ACT.

During the current phase of the *Low carbon concrete policy*, as more information and understanding is developed, the use of low-carbon concrete is not required. However, the policy requires documentation and data collection to help understand where low-carbon concrete is used or not used. Data from the first phase will be evaluated later this year to inform the evolution of the policy.

Phase 2 of this policy will consider the introduction of embodied carbon limits on concrete. The infrastructure planning teams of the City and Environment Directorate undertook a series of consultation workshops with industry on new sustainable concrete specifications. This work was undertaken in collaboration with Austroads, other jurisdictions and with subject matter experts that were involved in the Austroads study referenced in the question.

The ACT's sustainable concrete specifications were published in August 2025 and align with the recommendations of the Austroads study. This work aims to transition the industry to the use of low-carbon concrete and the incorporation of recycled materials in concrete as business-as-usual practice in the ACT.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, what barriers to the adoption of low-carbon concrete are most significant for ACT government construction projects, and by extension its demonstration as a viable construction material to the broader industry and sector?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Rattenbury for another question cementing his legacy in sustainability and sustainable building! Thank you, Minister Cheyne, for that one!

Low-carbon concrete has proven to be a viable construction material within the ACT and is readily available from many suppliers. In many applications it is cost competitive, and it also comes standard, particularly through Ordinary Portland Cement concrete.

Some barriers remain to the wider use of low-carbon concrete. Industry understanding and experience in managing the supply, delivery and pouring of low-carbon concrete in a cold climate is one of those. So is experience and understanding of low-carbon concrete specifications and data, including the provision of environmental product declarations. Higher costs can also be an issue in lower embodied carbon concrete specifications.

The ACT government's leadership in this area is addressing these barriers and helping to build industry capacity, maturity and competitiveness in the market.

MS CLAY: Is the government mandating the use of low-carbon concrete in current construction projects including light rail stage 2A, the Monaro Highway upgrade, and the Molonglo River Bridge?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Clay for her question. The ACT government has taken steps to use low-carbon concrete on projects such as raising London Circuit and light rail stage 2A including, for the latter, mandating targets to achieve a reduction in use of Portland Cement in concrete.

Low-carbon concrete requirements are being progressively embedded into procurement processes, including forthcoming projects such as the new FOGO facility. These requirements are supporting industry transition by supporting clear signals to the market whilst maintaining a strong focus on performance, durability and value for money.

Major construction contracts for both the Molonglo River Bridge and Monaro Highway upgrade package 1B were executed in 2023, prior to the implementation of the *Low carbon concrete policy* in 2025. Accordingly, its use has not been mandated on those already-executed contracts. Notwithstanding that, the Molonglo River Bridge has actually now utilised low-carbon concrete mixes for some applications, where it is fit for purpose and meets specification requirements. That has also included the use of 2,400 cubic metres of low-carbon concrete in bridge structural elements on the project, including piers, slabs, bridge decks and walls.

Emergency Services Agency—Volunteer Charter

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the new ESA Volunteer

Charter that you recently signed and implemented?

DR PATERSON: I would like to thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for this excellent question. I was delighted, on 31 March, to sign the ESA Volunteer Charter at our Mitchell facility, alongside the ESA Commissioner, the ACT Volunteer Brigades Association, the ACT State Emergency Service Volunteers Association, the ACT Mapping and Planning Support Group, the ACT Community Fire Unit Consultative Committee and the ACT Fire Brigade Historical Society representatives.

The updated Volunteer Charter, which will run through to 2029, recognises volunteer contribution, provides a clear framework for how we work together and reinforces expectations around safety, respect, communication, training and support. It will continue to be reviewed every three years to ensure it stays relevant.

The ESA Volunteer Charter reflects a strong commitment to ensuring our volunteers are meaningfully engaged through consultation processes. Their perspectives are valued, and the ESA is committed to actively listening and responding to their input. We are genuinely proud of the extensive consultation process undertaken to inform and shape this Volunteer Charter. ESA embraced co-design principles to ensure the charter is not only relevant and practical but truly meaningful to our volunteers.

Through the ESA Volunteer Charter, the ESA is committed to upholding guiding principles of the Volunteering Strategy. Central to these principles is a recognition that the experiences and insights of volunteers must remain at the forefront of decision-making. The charter formalises this commitment by ensuring volunteers' perspectives actively inform decisions and their lived experience continues to shape the work that we do.

I would like to thank all volunteers who participated in developing the new charter and I look forward to working with them in the future.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, a large number of our Emergency Services personnel are volunteers, so why is the Volunteer Charter so important to them?

DR PATERSON: Thank you for the question. Volunteers are integral to ESA, representing more than 60 per cent of the Emergency Services workforce. The charter establishes a clear framework for collaboration between staff and volunteers, reinforcing principles of respect, inclusion and shared responsibility.

The charter reinforces the importance of the ESA in recognising and including all volunteers and valuing the diverse contributions they make across a range of roles and settings. It represents a clear commitment to remain agile and responsive by continually adapting our approaches, support and strategies to meet the evolving needs of our emergency management volunteers.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what is the ACT government doing to support volunteers in our emergency services?

DR PATERSON: I thank Ms Tough for the question. Importantly, this charter also represents a clear and enduring commitment from ESA to support our volunteers. We

are dedicated to creating an environment where volunteers feel respected, empowered and equipped to contribute safely and meaningfully.

Through ongoing engagement, capability development and continuous improvement, the ACT government will continue to invest in our volunteers and ensure they are all supported to thrive, recognising that their contribution is essential to delivering the ESA's shared mission.

The ESA does not regard the development of this document as complete. It remains committed to accountability and is currently progressing in implementation phase to embed the charter in practice. This includes building capability among staff and volunteers through targeted education and integrating the charter into existing systems and processes to ensure it is applied effectively.

At every stage, ESA actively listened with respect to the voices of volunteers and deeply valued their insights, experiences and perspectives they so generously shared. Their contributions have been fundamental in shaping the final document.

In responding thoughtfully to the feedback, ESA have developed a robust, co-designed charter that reflects what matters most to the volunteers in our community. I am grateful to reaffirm the government's commitment to the volunteers and thank them for their service in keeping our community safe.

Public schools—School Youth Health Nurse Program

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood. In the 2025-26 budget, the government committed to having a school youth health nurse available in every ACT government high school on three days a week from January 2026. Minister, does every ACT government high school have access to a school youth health nurse on three days a week? If not, why not?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Parton for the question. The school youth health nurses are part of the Health workforce. Certainly, we funded in the last budget an expansion of school youth health nurses. I will take the detail of the question on notice in relation to recruitment and availability across schools for the time that Mr Parton has identified.

MR PARTON: Minister, why has the government not published any implementation updates, service coverage data or performance metrics for the expanded School Youth Health Nurse Program?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take that question on notice. I have been the health minister for quite some years now, and regular updates on the School Youth Health Nurse Program are not something that I have been asked about before, and they are not something that is generally part of our health data dashboard. I am happy to take the question on notice and ask about reporting, and I will come back to the Assembly with some further information.

MS LEE: Minister, will you commit to publicly reporting, by school, the actual number of nurse service days delivered each week?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am sure that I can pull that information together. I will take the question on notice—not me personally, but Canberra Health Services should be able to pull that information together, and we will treat it like a question on notice.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice Phillip—swimming pool—standing order 118AA

MS CARRICK: I would like to raise a point of order under 118AA with respect to the Phillip pool. The minister said that the Geocon DA decision was made under the old planning framework, when the decision was made under part 7.6 of the Planning Act 2023, the new outcomes-based framework. The minister was not responsive to the intent of the question about outcomes.

MR SPEAKER: My recollection is that he took it on notice.

MR STEEL: I did, but I acknowledge that I thought she was talking about a different Geocon development in Phillip, so I will provide the answer to the question on notice.

MR SPEAKER: The minister will get back to you on notice, Ms Carrick.

Phillip—stormwater infrastructure

MS CHEYNE: Regarding the question from Mr Emerson earlier in the week about the Ivy apartments in Phillip, the question, I believe, was: what actions has the government taken to ensure this building does not flood again? The answer is that Roads ACT has attended the site and investigated the issue in detail. Significant rainfall occurred within the Woden catchment over the evening of 7 February and into the morning of 8 February. This led to the Yarralumla channel experiencing a flow event that went beyond its capacity, with the surrounding stormwater network also running beyond full capacity, leading to a large number of flooding and inundation issues in the area.

A flood study is currently underway for the Yarralumla Creek catchment, which includes all of Woden Valley. The City and Environment Directorate has also engaged a consultant to undertake this work over the coming year. The study will use updated information on rainfall, climate change impacts, and other hydrological and hydraulic parameters to assess potential flood estimates for the catchment. The light rail stage 2B project has also undertaken future flood modelling testing for the area within the light rail corridor, as part of the recently published environmental impact assessment, including the section adjacent to the Ivy apartments.

Personal explanation

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (3.07): Pursuant to standing order 46, I seek leave to make a personal statement.

MR SPEAKER: Do you claim to have been misrepresented?

MS BERRY: Yes, I do, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: I grant leave.

MS BERRY: This week, two members in this place have been making comments about a speech that I gave at a community meeting concerning the closure of Big Splash in Belconnen. Mr Cain made comments and suggested that he was quoting parts of my speech, which was incorrect. Ms Clay also made suggestions about things that I said in my speech at that meeting.

My speech that was given at that meeting was obviously recorded. It was very clearly given, I thought, and appreciated by the community, and it was honest. I have heard on a number of occasions now, but specifically on those two occasions this week, members in this place cherry-picking parts of my statement, causing the community to believe that a different message was provided from me than what was provided in my statement in full.

I have a copy; for those people who did not listen to the statement, they can read the statement. I seek leave to table a copy of my speech that I gave at the event.

Leave granted:

MS BERRY I present the following paper:

Save Big Splash Community Meeting—Copy of speech—Ms Berry, undated.

I would not normally get down to this kind of level, because I think we all should behave a little bit better in this place, rather than taking the opportunity during adjournment speeches to misquote or misrepresent people and to make a personal attack on individuals in this place. I wanted to make sure that that was put on the record. Perhaps members will not misrepresent me now, because the evidence is very clearly provided on notice, as it was at the meeting. Mr Cain, Ms Clay, Ms Cheyne, Ms Barry and Ms Carrick were in the company of all the people who were present not only publicly but online.

I also note that Ms Cheyne and I have been staying engaged with the Save Big Splash group. We met with them earlier this week and we have committed to meet with them regularly, to keep them up to date. I would absolutely take up Ms Clay's suggestion that there perhaps would be a more constructive way forward—

MR SPEAKER: We will leave it at where you have been misrepresented. It is not an opportunity for an—

MS BERRY: You do not want me to keep going?

MR SPEAKER: I think you have provided a very clear explanation of where you have been misrepresented. We do not want to continue on with what might constitute a debate.

MS BERRY: I will leave it there. Thank you for giving me the—

Mr Cain: Go and watch the video.

MS BERRY: The interjections are not welcome, Mr Cain. Thank you for the chance to explain myself. I hope that I have made myself clear.

Papers

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

ACT historic housing debt waiver—Assembly resolution of 25 March 2026—Government response, dated May 2026.

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act—

Pursuant to section 7—Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Declaration 2026 (No 1)—Notifiable Instrument, dated 4 May 2025.

Pursuant to section 8—Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Directions 2026 (No 1)—Notifiable Instrument, dated 4 May 2026.

London Circuit Business Disruption Mitigation—Assembly resolution of 5 March 2025—Business Engagement Report—Light Rail Stage 2A—January to March 2026—Government update, dated May 2026.

Youth—homelessness

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (3.11): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) youth homelessness has serious and long-term impacts on young people's health, education, employment and connection to community, and increases the risk of ongoing homelessness into adulthood;
- (b) the scale of youth homelessness in the ACT is not currently measured by the Government in a regular manner to collate data across service providers;
- (c) national data shows that young people are overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness and that First Nations and people transitioning from out of home care are at particularly high risk of homelessness; and
- (d) ACT youth homelessness sector workers and young people with lived experience hold critical expertise that must inform effective policy and service design;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) the Government committed to prioritise young people under Goal 2 of the *ACT Housing Strategy 2018 to 2028* to reduce homelessness, however feedback from youth homelessness stakeholders indicates that young people continue to fall through service gaps and require improved wraparound supports;

- (b) current ACT data does not capture:
 - (i) how many young people are homeless every fortnight;
 - (ii) how young people move through the service system; and
 - (iii) how young people fall through service gaps, particularly during key transition points;
 - (c) the Youth Coalition is undertaking sector mapping that will provide valuable insight into service capacity, coordination and gaps in the ACT youth homelessness system; and
 - (d) the number of crisis beds for young people reduced from 24 beds in 2024 to 18 beds in 2026 and average wait times for people seeking crisis accommodation have increased from approximately 40 days to 60-90 days; and
- (3) calls on the Government to:
- (a) develop and release a youth homelessness strategy co-designed with:
 - (i) young people with lived experience of homelessness; and
 - (ii) the ACT youth homelessness and community services sector, specifically the Youth Coalition, to integrate findings from its sector mapping project; and
 - (b) under a youth homelessness strategy:
 - (i) improve data collection and measurement of youth homelessness in the ACT, ensuring data collection is designed to reduce the risk of young people slipping through service gaps and includes:
 - (A) the number of young people experiencing homelessness every fortnight;
 - (B) the level of unmet need for young people presenting at Specialist Homelessness Services; and
 - (C) pathways into and out of homelessness specifically for young people;
 - (ii) recognise and address the key drivers of youth homelessness and prioritise preventative measures as long-term, sustainable solutions;
 - (iii) strengthen public education and resources for early help-seeking, including the provision of age-appropriate youth homelessness service information posters to every school and college, bus stops, libraries and front-line services;
 - (iv) specifically address key cohorts, including both accompanied and unaccompanied young people, out of home care leavers and First Nations; and
 - (v) increase access to safe and appropriate housing options for young people to fully meet demand, including expansion of crisis accommodation specifically for young people and clear pathways into medium and long-term housing; and
 - (c) report back to the Assembly by 2 December 2026 on progress toward the development and implementation of the youth homelessness strategy.

I am moving this motion calling for an ACT youth homelessness strategy. Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge representatives of the Youth Coalition who are joining us in the gallery today. I thank them for their incredibly thoughtful engagement through the process of writing this motion and look forward to including their remarks, alongside those of other passionate advocates, in my closing speech.

Last month, on 15 March, I, along with several members of this place, gathered for Youth Homelessness Matters Day, attending a wonderful event put on by the residents of Our Place. There, alongside an array of people working in specialist homelessness and youth services, we heard the stories of several young people who had experienced homelessness and who had the generosity to tell us about their experiences on that Wednesday evening.

As we listened, one truth became clear: these young people had fallen or, in the words of one, “been pushed” through the cracks of a system meant to hold them up. The impact of their stories was palpable in the room, and for the rest of the night their stories stayed at the front of my mind as I spoke with other young people, community workers and advocates. Throughout these conversations, however, a second truth became blaringly evident—that the stories we had heard were not rare for young people in the ACT. In fact, they are the lived reality for far too many in our territory, and we must urgently do more, as their elected representatives. This is the basis of my motion today.

The scale of youth homelessness in the ACT is confronting, and it is not adequately captured through data currently collected in the ACT. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures tell us that, on any given day last year, 675 young people in the ACT were being supported by specialist homelessness services, with 250 of them being young people presenting alone and 425 being children who were accompanied.

Even these numbers fail to capture the full scale of the crisis right now. We know this because young people themselves have told us so. Hidden homelessness, couch surfing, sleeping over in the work staffroom after a late shift, students sleeping in the uni library, unsafe informal arrangements, and staying temporarily with friends—all rarely show up in official statistics.

Rough sleeping among young people is undercounted. Crucially, part of the picture which we often overlook is that many young people avoid seeking help from services at all. This is because of stigma, trauma or sometimes just because they have not been given the resources to know the services exist.

Today, the ACT Greens are calling on the government to develop and release a youth homelessness strategy that is co-designed with young people who have lived experience of homelessness, as well as the ACT youth homelessness and community services sector. The calls for what this strategy must include have come directly from the input of young people, fierce community advocates and frontline service providers. These are people who know the current system, have navigated it and, unfortunately, too often have been forced to feel its shortcomings. I am extremely grateful to all those who have contributed to and guided us with what this strategy needs to include to deliver for young people.

Before I speak to the reasons why we urgently need a youth homelessness strategy in

the ACT, I would like first to make it clear that this strategy must not and cannot just be a piece of paper. It must be actioned in genuine collaboration with young people and those who work incredibly hard in the services which support them. It must lead to real action and focus on ensuring young people stop getting left behind in housing and support. Without collaboration and real co-design, this strategy will be useless.

We need a youth homelessness strategy because we need a coordinated government approach—one that understands the full scale of the current crisis, addresses its underlying drivers, strengthens prevention and early intervention, and increases access for young people to safe and appropriate housing. Without this, young people will continue to fall through the gaps.

A key part of understanding the crisis is improving data collection. We have heard from frontline service providers and advocates, including ACT Shelter, that existing systems do not adequately capture the level of unmet need for young people seeking help for homelessness. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare collects and publishes national data, but there are gaps in what can be accessed at an ACT level. For example, national data tells us that, in 2025, the need for short-term or emergency accommodation was unmet for around one in three clients of specialist homelessness services across the country, but we are not currently able to see that figure for the ACT.

We need to be able to measure how many young people and how many young Canberrans are not getting the supports they need when they are trying to access them. As I mentioned earlier, seeking help is extremely difficult for many young people, and we owe it to them to, at the very least, track where their need for housing is not fulfilled. We need to do this so that we can respond effectively.

I understand that FIRST Canberra collects data as the central intake service and that they provide that data in certain cases. However, we have heard from service providers that the government needs to do more in making data collection increasingly regular, shared across service providers, and accessible to the public. We need that so that information can be brought together to provide a fuller, more accurate picture of youth homelessness in the ACT.

We know that homelessness is, by nature, a difficult thing to capture through data. We have been told that by the very same stakeholders who are calling for better data collection. They acknowledge that it is not easy to quantify how many young people are sleeping rough or couch surfing, but there are still basic ways in which data collection can be improved through better government coordination; namely, ensuring data is distributed regularly and that things which are already being measured nationally, like unmet need, are also measured at the territory level.

Another reason that we need this youth-specific strategy is because government needs to identify current service gaps and follow through by filling them. A key part of this, as explicitly mentioned in the motion, is ensuring that the strategy works with the sector-mapping project that the Youth Coalition will be undertaking. It is important to mention that sector mapping is something for which the youth homelessness sector has been repeatedly asking government for years, in a number of hearings that I can count.

After years of asking and waiting, the Youth Co have decided to take it on themselves.

With the budget of the ACT government, compared to that of a not-for-profit advocacy body like Youth Co, it is a little baffling that that is what this came to. To rub salt in the wound, this one could only be achieved through a donation. I do not think we should be relying on philanthropy or the goodwill of an underfunded sector to run what should be core business of government.

It is absolutely essential that this strategy works with the sector-mapping project of the Youth Co so that we can understand the current service landscape in full and address gaps with intention. We also need to track the pathways into and out of homelessness specifically for young people. If we fail to understand those pathways, we will fail to design a system that can support them properly.

This leads me to discuss another pivotal component of the motion. The youth homelessness strategy must recognise and address the key drivers of youth homelessness and prioritise preventive measures as long-term, sustainable solutions. Time and again, frontline service providers have told us that early intervention is critical. I would like to read some words from Corinne Dobson, CEO of ACT Shelter, who said:

For too long, our response to youth homelessness has been reactive, catching young people after they have already fallen into crisis. Yet for every young person we help once they are already homeless, there are others we could have reached earlier if the systems had been in place to do so. While we urgently need to increase resourcing to overstretched crisis services, we also need a greater focus on prevention and early intervention. A dedicated Youth Homelessness Strategy must look upstream, reaching young people before they reach crisis point and keeping them connected to support.

Another piece of early intervention is the need to strengthen public education and resources for early help-seeking so that children and young people know what supports are out there. I want to thank a particular young member. I will not name them, but they have navigated ACT homelessness services themselves and they are extremely committed to making things better for others who also have to do so. They brought the need for more age-appropriate information on youth homelessness services to our attention and told us that we desperately need more material in public spaces where young people will have access to them. That is why we have called for service information posters to be put in every ACT school and college, at bus stops, libraries and frontline services. We would welcome the expansion of this list, with advice from young people and youth workers who would be involved in this strategy through its co-design.

There are also key cohorts which this youth homelessness strategy must address—specifically, young people who are living in out-of-home care and First Nations young people. Nationally, around one in three young people leaving out-of-home care experience homelessness at some stage within their first year of leaving care. Thirty-seven per cent of these young people experience that homelessness for six months or more. That is not inevitable. That is a result of systemic gaps in support.

We have heard that what is needed is stronger transition planning, sustained wraparound supports and better coordination between services supporting these young people. We know what works is long-term, relationship-based support that helps young

people to move into independence with stability. We need to expand and properly invest in these approaches.

First Nations young people are significantly over-represented in homelessness statistics, and this strategy must be co-designed with ACCOs and services like Gugan Gulwan, who do such important work for young people in the ACT. I appreciate the irony of me delivering this motion on stolen Ngunnawal land, where our system continues to drive poor housing outcomes on country that its traditional custodians have never ceded. This strategy must be grounded in cultural safety and work that is led by First Nations community for their young ones.

The final point in this strategy calls for an increase in access to safe and appropriate housing options for young people to fully meet demand. This includes the expansion of crisis accommodation specifically for young people and clear pathways into medium and long-term housing. Since 2024, the number of youth crisis beds in the ACT has reduced from 24 to just 18. This occurred despite there being no reduction in the need for crisis beds and, as the minister mentioned in her statement this morning, complex needs are only increasing and, in turn, need for help is only increasing, too.

What followed was what one could only expect. Wait times for crisis accommodation went up. It is a simple connection to make, and one which I implore government to seriously reflect on. Every bed that is taken away is a young person without a safe place to sleep. We must do better. Expanding pathways into medium and long-term housing is crucial because we know young people face barriers in getting into the rental market. Youth Allowance sucks; it is below the poverty line. If you add a housing crisis on top of that, the barrier becomes a wall.

It is important to note that increasing access to safe and appropriate housing options for young people is something the government have said they will do under goal 2 of reducing homelessness in the Housing Strategy. More frontline homelessness services are listed as an indicator for success for prioritising young people and, according to the June 2025 report, eight years into the 10-year strategy, this work is still listed as “progressing”.

This highlights the very gap that this motion seeks to address. Without a dedicated youth-focused strategy, there is no clear framework for how young people are to be prioritised and no way to ensure accountability for effective outcomes. This strategy that the ACT Greens are calling for is an opportunity to genuinely prioritise young people, with recognition of the unique challenges they face and the need for a specific and coordinated solution.

At the beginning of this speech, I spoke about Youth Homelessness Matters Day, and I want to return to its core, which is to end youth homelessness—not reduce, but end. The fact is that youth homelessness is not inevitable. Youth homelessness is the result of gaps in systems which we have the power and duty to fix and, when we fail to act, the consequences follow young people for years.

In the ACT, we recognise housing as a human right. It is about time we had a plan to uphold that right for young people. A youth homelessness strategy gives us a chance to move from an empty prioritisation of young people to a coordinated approach, one

which is shaped by the voices of young people themselves and the frontline workers who support them. Every single young person deserves stability, dignity and a safe place to call home. This strategy must deliver that, and I commend this motion to the Assembly.

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) (3.24): I would like to thank Miss Nuttall for bringing this motion here today. Youth homelessness is often described as a hidden problem in our society. This is because a portion of young people experiencing homelessness are sleeping rough. The majority, however, might be couch surfing, or living in a refuge or in other transitional crisis accommodation. But even though this issue may not be as visible as some others, it is vital that we address it.

We are keenly aware in government that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to youth homelessness. In my portfolio, it is not always the best outcome to simply provide young people with a pathway to independence and access to supported or individual accommodation. In many cases, young people face homelessness because they feel they can no longer continue living with their parents or carers. Sometimes, the best long-term outcome is to wrap support around the whole family, to help young people stay safe at home, connected to their family and community.

That is what the Safe and Connected Youth Program is all about. It provides young people with short-term respite accommodation and takes the opportunity to work with the whole family to rebuild healthy family relationships and prevent homelessness before it occurs. This is an important program, and it highlights what Miss Nuttall's motion suggests—that homelessness in young people is a distinct issue that requires early intervention and prevention that are responsive to the circumstances of being a young person.

This program sits within a range of services and responses that aim to prevent youth homelessness, but more can be done to make sure these systems are integrated. In my portfolio, I am particularly interested in how we can better support children and young people in out-of-home care to transition safely to independence, including obtaining stable housing. There are currently a range of supports in place to support successful transitions to adulthood. These supports begin with early transition planning, which commences from 15 years of age for all young people on a care and protection order.

There are also post-care support options for young people up to the age of 25. This is provided through a continuum of care, which includes supports for young people to remain in stable and appropriate living arrangements where possible and maintain ongoing connection with carers and services. This government also provides tailored and flexible support to young people to assist with their transition goals, including accessing and sustaining housing and connecting with relevant services.

The government will continue to work closely with housing, community and service partners to improve coordination of supports and strengthen pathways into stable accommodation. We look forward to this future work in developing a youth homelessness strategy with a key focus on young people leaving care.

MS BARRY (Ginninderra) (3.27): I, too, rise to speak to this motion. I thank Miss Nuttall for bringing this motion forward and put on the record that the Canberra Liberals will be supporting the motion.

Youth homelessness is a serious challenge. I do not think anybody in this chamber is in doubt about that. It is appropriate that this issue is at the forefront of our minds in this place because, as I have often said, the strength of a society is in the health of its old and its young.

The youth of today are literally the future of this country, and we need to understand that our young people face unique and arguably unprecedented challenges as they navigate their way in the world. The industrial revolution implicit in the development of AI, which is fundamentally challenging the nature of work, is occurring at a time when our economy is changing, with decreasing affordability during a housing crisis, and while the spectre of climate change creates fear and uncertainty. These are all challenges that our young minds need to grapple with every day.

As we go through this transition, there will always be winners and losers. For many, the traditional social compact of study hard, work hard and you will be rewarded with housing and a comfortable lifestyle is breaking down. Our education system is changing slowly, far slower than the developments in AI. We are still training many young people for roles that simply will not exist or, if they do exist in five years, will not be employing anywhere near the number of graduates currently being generated.

This is not in any way to instil fear, but it is to alert us to the issues and the challenges that we will need to deal with in the future. We face the reality that this context is resulting in the current generation of young people thinking very differently to their parents. Mr Assistant Speaker, I can tell you that my children think completely differently to me. Different views on politics, religion, gender and life aspiration create conflicts in family. Sadly, it results in the breakdown of relationships and the loss of prospective family support.

In this context, we have increasing numbers of disillusioned young people who are opting out of the social compact. We are seeing increasing tensions around intergenerational conflicts, as many young people contemplate a life of employment, housing and financial uncertainty. In my view, it is our first and foremost duty in this place to ensure that these issues are addressed and our young people have the protection and support of the broader society today. Today's motion goes to that problem—the safety net we provide to young people facing housing insecurity.

As the shadow minister for housing and homelessness, I have become all too familiar with the devastating levels of youth homelessness in the ACT and the disproportionate impact that it has on very vulnerable groups, particularly young people. I cannot tell you, Mr Assistant Speaker, how many times I have had to go and pick up a young person who has been kicked out of the house and has no viable alternative, but has come to my attention because of my young daughter.

As a mother of two teenagers, this topic is very close to my heart. Young people are at a delicate stage of their life, navigating schools, friendship, a first job, relationships and discovering their own identity; yet, for some young people in our cities, these

milestones are overshadowed by homelessness. It is impossible to ignore the visible reality of homelessness in Canberra, but there are also many other homeless people who we do not see on the streets. They could be living with friends, couch surfing between houses and moving between emergency accommodation. In many cases, couch surfing is more dangerous than living on the streets, as the use of the couch can become an unwelcome pressure.

In that context, it is disappointing that the Woden Youth Foyer had been sitting empty for a year, despite having obtained a certificate of occupancy. While I am pleased that the government finally opened the doors of the foyer just three days ago, the facility could have been providing up to 20 young people with critical housing for over 12 months. The delay does not reflect the urgency to find solutions for young people in Canberra.

We must do better. Policies must reflect the diversity and complexity of this issue and young people's circumstances. National data show that, among the people experiencing homelessness, youth are over-represented and, as has been highlighted in this place, First Nations young people and those transitioning from out-of-home care are at a particularly high risk. The issue is multifaceted; we need to better understand it and provide better services for young people. This motion recognises that.

We also need to recognise different requirements of young people who are homeless and others who have caring responsibilities. They often face overlapping challenges that require a nuanced solution. Our policy framework must recognise these complexities and should aim to include guidance for elders and community leaders to ensure that culturally safe and effective support is tailored to individual needs.

As Liberals, we fundamentally believe in empowering individuals to thrive—not just to survive, and not just to be in entrenched dependency. A youth homelessness strategy must go beyond crisis accommodation by looking at long-term strategies to provide transition pathways into stable housing, skill development, secure job opportunities and support, so that once people become independent in their life, they remain independent. That should be our goal in this place.

I have often spoken about how I see young people who have transitioned from out-of-home care who do not know what to do with their life because, sadly, they were not offered a transitioning plan. Organisations such as Project Independence and Companion House are already demonstrating how targeted supports, medical attention and counselling can empower young people and those living with disability to thrive. I think that is a model that we can learn from.

Additionally, health services and preventive care, particularly for young carers and young parents, are vital. Supporting both the young person and the children or family members they care for ensures that they can build a foundation for independence, rather than remaining dependent on the system.

This motion is a welcome step towards ensuring that we are dealing with the issues that affect our young people, but the approach must offer a whole solution. At the heart of this motion is a simple idea. We must ensure that young people are making the days count, not counting the days. They must have hope, confidence in their future and feel

motivated and supported. It should be a goal of everyone in this place to give young people hope and a chance to thrive. Having effective structures in place starts with data and evidence to understand this issue and address it, which the motion is hoping will be achieved.

This motion highlights an urgent issue, and it must be considered with measurable outcomes and an appreciation of the need for diverse services that empower all young people to achieve independence. By building on the incredible work already being done by community leaders and further involving more people in the discussion, young people can feel seen and know that they are a part of the solution, not the problem. It is our duty to ensure that the structures and processes that we have in place do not leave them behind, because no-one should be homeless in Canberra, especially not our young people.

In this regard, we will be supporting this motion, as I have mentioned, but I note that providing homelessness services is not the whole solution. We need to look into the detail of the cause of the increasing disillusionment and despair of young people and consider what we need to do now to ensure that we set our young people up well to deal with structural, educational, employment and economic challenges of the future. There is work to be done, and I hope the government will use this opportunity to start doing that work.

Once again, I thank Miss Nuttall for bringing this motion forward. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (3.37): I thank Miss Nuttall for bringing forward this motion and I rise in support of it. I wish to acknowledge that the ACT government opened the Woden Youth Foyer this week. As the minister rightly noted, the foyer supports young people at risk of homelessness through housing linked with education, training and employment pathways. However, many young people are experiencing homelessness between the ages of 12 and 24. These figures reflect young people whose education is disrupted, whose health and wellbeing are compromised and whose connection to community is fractured. For too many, homelessness is not a short-term crisis but the beginning of a pathway into long-term adult homelessness, a trajectory none of us should accept.

As this motion rightly notes, young people are over-represented among those experiencing homelessness, particularly First Nations young people and those leaving out-of-home care. Yet the ACT does not consistently measure the scale of youth homelessness, how young people move through the system or where and why they fall through service gaps. We cannot fix what we do not measure. Stakeholders tell us that young people face the greatest risk during key transition points—leaving care, family breakdown, exiting crisis accommodation or contact with the justice system. This motion proposes a constructive and necessary response—a dedicated youth homelessness strategy co-designed with young people who have lived experience and the youth homelessness sector, including the Youth Coalition, who are here today. It prioritises better data, early intervention, prevention, education and real pathways into safe, appropriate housing, not just temporary fixes. Youth homelessness is preventable, but prevention requires visibility, coordination and most importantly, political will.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (3.39): I rise to speak in support of Miss Nuttall’s motion calling for the development of a co-designed youth homelessness strategy. I thank Miss Nuttall for bringing this motion forward today and I would also like to thank the Youth Coalition for their advocacy and work on this issue and in this area more broadly.

The existence and persistence of youth homelessness in our community is a choice; it is not inevitable, especially in a place like Canberra. It is a decision that is fuelled by many different decisions and many different choices: choices about what matters most; choices about who gets help and who does not; choices about where public money—where our money as Canberrans—goes and does not go; and choices about prioritising data collection on the scale of youth homelessness so we can determine how best to support young people who are facing housing insecurity. Without such data, of course, we are flying blind.

Speaking of choices, the minister emphasised in her ministerial statement earlier today that people experiencing homelessness are real people with individual choice and agency over the services they may choose to engage with or not engage with. Of course this is the case—it goes without saying that it is. But missing from the statement is the reality that Miss Nuttall touched on—that many people, many children and young people, do not feel they have a choice. Many have experienced institutional failure. If you are a young person who has been failed by the justice system or a First Nations child failed by the child protection system, who have been repeatedly failed by people and systems that were supposed to support you, why would you trust the system when it has caused you so much harm? Why take the chance to choose to engage with a service that might only fail you again? Saying that someone is choosing not to engage with services conceals why a young person might be driven to make this choice and effectively lets us off the hook for addressing that “why” and for addressing the barriers that make services inaccessible for some members of our community.

Better data collection, as reflected in this motion, is a critical step in addressing this problem, as is engaging closely with people who have experienced or are experiencing homelessness. We need an understanding of lived experience to answer the question of why vulnerable young people experiencing homelessness make the choices they do and how we can ensure the services we are providing actually work for them. For this reason, I am pleased to support this motion and look forward to seeing the development of this strategy. A youth homelessness strategy was one of the policies I took to the 2024 election, and I am very glad to see what looks like a consensus across the Assembly today that this is needed.

With that said, developing a strategy alone is, of course, not sufficient. We have seen plenty of fantastic plans and strategies developed here in the ACT that have never been implemented in full, if at all. To paraphrase comments made by Dr Kerrie Aust in a recent committee hearing, a strategy without funding is just an aspiration. Aspirations do not house young people. Funding and effective action on the ground is what houses young people. Writing strategies does not address homelessness; implementing them does.

Unfortunately, the ACT government has a poor track record when it comes to the implementation of at least some of its strategies. A 10-year ACT housing strategy was released in October 2018. Objective 4E of the strategy is to target programs to increase

supply of affordable housing for vulnerable and disadvantaged households. One of four actions under that objective is to work with the National Disability Insurance Agency, the development sector and people with disabilities and their families and carers to identify potential opportunities to facilitate the development of specialist disability accommodation under the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Housing ACT was registered to deliver specialist disability accommodation, or SDA, in 2017, but a number of disability service providers noticed no funding was being accessed from the packages of their SDA-eligible clients who lived in public housing. Then, following questions being raised in the Senate in April 2024, the ACT government announced a four-month consultation process to investigate providing SDA in public housing. In May 2025, I sought an update from the government on this and was told they were still considering their role in SDA. Then, in November 2025, we found out that the promised consultation process announced 18 months prior never happened. Housing ACT's SDA registration was then allowed to lapse and the funding made available through this program was never accessed.

An Assembly committee, as we know, is now trying to figure out just how much funding for people with disability living in public housing across the ACT was missed out on because of this. Averages suggest it would be around \$2 million every year over the past eight years. This is funding that could have realised objective 4E in the housing strategy—funding that could have meaningfully changed the lives of people with disability; an aspiration that could have been turned into action but was not, leaving a key action under a key objective in a critical ACT government housing strategy undelivered. That is a choice. That is a matter of priorities. In this case, it is not a matter of difficult budgetary decisions, because accessing this funding would have saved us money.

This gap between aspiration and action is not an isolated example. In a recent committee hearing, the education minister stated that she would not say language is a priority right now for our public education system. That is despite having published a language education action plan just two years ago. Documents like the recently-tabled Food Relief Action Plan also evoke a sense of cynicism with respect to government strategies and plans. The first action of the Food Relief Action Plan is to establish an ACT government policy position for the food relief system—but no funding committed to act on the action plan, including the proposal it contains to explore and support the establishment of a shared warehouse model to increase cold and dry storage capacity across the ACT, though I am hopeful we will see something in the upcoming budget.

I know I am straying a bit, but the point I am making is that, if the government is supporting the strategy today, part of the strategy behind delivering the strategy should be that it is actually funded, that it is actually implemented, obviously. To quote Josh Frydenberg—and I am happy to pull quotes from anywhere when they are good ones—when he was asked about the purchase of AUKUS submarines and how we could justify this, he said, “Everything is affordable if it is a priority.” We need to make tackling youth homelessness a priority and fund it as if it is.

The next territory budget is an opportunity for the government to show that they not only support the principle of motions like the one we are passing today but also are willing to commit to providing the resources that are actually required to deliver on

those principles—required to make change in the lives of Canberrans who need for us to make change in their lives. I am not only talking about money for a youth homelessness strategy or support for organisations that work with young people experiencing housing insecurity; I am also talking about funding for social housing; for the community services sector; for transitional programs; for evidence-based through-care programs in our youth detention system; for the wraparound supports that ensure no more young people fall through the gaps; and to commit, as ACTCOSS has called for, to early contract renewal decisions for homelessness services rather than making them wait until weeks before their funding expires.

All of these things are not just costs; they are investments. We know that this sort of investment saves us money down the track. We seem to be willing to do this when it comes to physical infrastructure. I just cannot understand why we do not do this when it comes to social infrastructure—when it comes to the people that we are actually here to represent and we are elected to represent. We need to have the courage to make these kinds of investments to the benefit of those people—people who need our support—and to lock in those cost savings by doing so and to actually look at the evidence and invest on the basis of it.

As Miss Nuttall has raised in this chamber, approximately 680 homeless young Canberrans sought assistance in 2025. Nearly half of them remain homeless. These are alarming figures and they are unacceptable. They are also manageable. We are not talking about an insurmountable challenge or infinite sums of money. Youth homelessness is something we could solve—we could end, as Miss Nuttall spoke to—if we chose to. So today, in supporting this motion, I also urge the government to think of its priorities ahead of the next budget and to closely consider the expectations that Canberrans have of a progressive government.

As I said in responding to last year's budget, budgets are moral statements. They cannot be viewed separately from our community's social fabric. Who we take revenue from, how we take that money and how those funds are distributed sends a message to our community about who and what we value. Right now, with far too many young Canberrans experiencing homelessness, there are some real questions to be asked about what we value in this place and what kind of a message we are sending to some of the most vulnerable members of our community who need our support. So, again, I thank Miss Nuttall for posing those questions with her motion today, and I am very pleased to support its passage.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (3.49): I thank Miss Nuttall for bringing this motion to the Assembly today and for the opportunity for our offices to work together on this motion and on this important topic. As I mentioned earlier today, homelessness does not discriminate; it can happen to anyone at any time, with young people often at most risk. If homelessness does occur, we want it to be brief and non-reoccurring. Early intervention is key to supporting our young people to becoming the leaders of their futures.

The ACT government has committed to and currently reports against the ACT's Housing Strategy 2018-2028. This strategy seeks to address housing needs for all people in all income levels, looking at supported accommodation from a holistic

perspective, including the continuum from homelessness to more sustainable, longer-term accommodation solutions. Young people are recognised as a cohort with a distinct vulnerability within in the Housing Strategy and broader ACT responses, particularly those between the ages of 15 to 24 and those under 15 who are presenting alone or perhaps as part of a family unit. This reflects the risks associated with family breakdown that Minister Pettersson just referred to, transition from care settings and limited financial independence.

Homelessness services are one part of the funded service delivery in the ACT but also one part of the broader services that are available to youth in the ACT. The government is supporting Miss Nuttall's motion today calling for a new youth homelessness strategy. Developing a new strategy alongside the ACT youth homelessness sector workers and young people who have lived experiences will be vital in its success, which is why I am also keen to engage with the minister's Youth Advisory Council on the development of this strategy, along with the Youth Coalition, because the Youth Advisory Council often have individuals who have lived experience as well. They have also provided advice to me in the past as minister for youth on engaging with young people around supports for young people who have been homeless, including putting together homelessness support packs specifically designed for young people to be able to access things like period products, hygiene products and toothbrushes and the like, where they might not be able to have those when they are couch-surfing or moving from home to home or living in unsafe family situations. So I know that they would be super keen to be part of the work in developing a new strategy.

Obviously, there is more work to do; otherwise, we would not be having this motion today and we would not be having the numbers we are experiencing of young people who are experiencing homelessness. I acknowledge the Youth Coalition, who are here today, for the work that they do in this space. It is always better to understand this landscape better and for multiple providers who get government funding or not to be engaged in that conversation. I think we can all come together to understand not only the pathways and service systems available for youth but also potential gaps and opportunities for future investment and reform.

Our world is changing. It is becoming more complex and more challenging, and navigating your way through it—particularly for a young person who is experiencing homelessness—is becoming more and more difficult. Understanding what those challenges are and addressing them is important to me in my role as Minister for Homelessness. The ACT government does provide significant funding to the Youth Coalition—I know that they would, of course, always want more to do other important work—who are the peak advocacy group representing youth in the ACT. I look forward to working with the Youth Coalition in developing this youth homelessness strategy as well as any other key community sector organisations and, as I referred to, the Youth Advisory Council, who I know will be very keen to be engaged in this process.

An important factor for this strategy is also to improve the data collection of youth homelessness in the ACT. The ACT government currently uses a range of services to track demand for the use of youth homelessness services. I know Miss Nuttall has said that youth homelessness crisis beds has reduced from 24 to 18, and that is true. However, transition beds in the ACT for youth has increased from 88 to 126. I am not crowing about that, but it is important to understand the data so that we know what

more we need to do, what we have available and other supports that we need to put in place. So making sure that we have the right data, and all of the data, is important to developing this strategy.

Some of this data includes youth seeking assistance from ACT Homelessness Services, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the census data as well as the ACT Central Intake Service or Housing Support. Currently the ACT government predominantly relies on quarterly data which is released from AIHW's Specialist Homelessness information platform on young people seeking access to supports. But we know and I agree that we can do better at collecting data here in the ACT, which is why I am supporting Miss Nuttall's motion.

While I know that Miss Nuttall's motion is seeking fortnightly reporting, I must warn that that might not be possible and might not be able to be achieved in the ACT at this time, or at least in the next little while. It would have to be manually counted across a range of different data collections. So we might have to work a way through where we can make sure that that data is available but it does not take away from the frontline services that are being provided by Housing ACT. However, as I said, I am committed to the intent in the motion, to improving public reporting of youth homelessness services; so I am sure we can work our way through that. I look forward to sharing more details into how we are improving reporting on youth homelessness data later in the year.

I was glad to hear Miss Nuttall talking about Youth Homelessness Matters Day, where we got to hear the stories of young people and their experiences while experiencing homelessness and sleeping rough or couch-surfing. For me, I think Youth Homelessness Matters is a day that I recognise every day, because I know that it is not just a once-a-year occurrence; it is happening every day for young people in our community. For me, the stories of young people when they start in services like the youth foyers and the new Youth Foyer at Woden, including the Salvation Army's transitional housing—talking to me about getting to school when they have nowhere to live, when they are hungry, when they do not have clothes, when they have no-one on their side, when they do not feel valued or respected and when they do not feel like they are part of us—are what keep me focused on making sure that we find the solutions for young people.

After they have been in those services and you meet them again, they are the people who they should have been at the start. They are happy; they are filled with hope; and they are achieving their dreams. You can see that they are on this amazing journey of happiness and value, and they have people in their corner. That is what we want to see for young people in the ACT. I thank them every day for sharing their stories with us. I know how confronting that must be for all of them and how brave they all are. I do not think that, as a young person, I would have been able to share something like that with a stranger. I think those young people are incredibly amazing, and I value the contributions that they make to our community, wherever they are in it.

Importantly, I must recognise the young people and the youth workers that Youth Co represents in our frontline workforces in helping to re-engage with these young people from where they have come from. They are just the most amazing human beings. We know that that work is not easy and is so challenging and they just keep turning up for

those young people, and I just cannot thank them enough. (*Extension of time granted.*) I thank them for the countless hours that they put into supporting those young people. Their focus on those young people is so important. I know that work is often invisible and under-recognised, and I just want to note that we see you doing that.

I want to make a commitment to both young people and to the workers in this space that both of your voices will be an important part in the development of this strategy. I am eager to continue to learn from your experiences, to hear your stories and to understand where we can do better, what has worked and what has not worked, so that, together, we can create a strategy that changes the lives of all Canberrans, with housing and accommodation options that suit their needs and, ultimately, give them the best support towards independence—and so the stories that we hear are more like the stories that we hear at the end instead of those stories that we hear at the start when we hear of the complications and challenges that those young people experience.

I look forward to doing that work. I think it is really important work. I really appreciate Miss Nuttall bringing her motion forward today and for her understanding of how complex this space is. Getting all of the data right is an important part of that. So I commit myself to doing that work, and I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (4.00), in reply: In closing I want to thank members for their contribution to this debate. I am extremely pleased to hear that we will probably be passing a youth homelessness strategy for the ACT. I want to thank the offices of both Minister Pettersson and Minister Barry for their engagement with our office on this motion. They kindly facilitated briefings for us with both Housing ACT and Children, Youth and Families, which greatly helped in forming the calls of this motion. I would like to thank the directorate officials who took time out of their day to answer our many questions. I particularly want to thank Minister Berry for her incredibly heartfelt words just then. It is clear to me that she cares deeply about the young people that she represents, and I am sure they appreciate it greatly. Thank you also to Ms Barry, to Mr Cocks, to Mr Emerson and to Ms Carrick and their offices for their really constructive engagement—and, in particular, Ms Barry for that delightful chat over tea. That was a lot of fun.

I would also like to thank former Greens Minister for Housing and Homelessness, Rebecca Vassarotti, who was the driving force behind our 2024 commitment to a community-led, co-designed youth homelessness strategy, alongside the Youth Foyer Woden that she secured funding for as minister. She has been an excellent source of wisdom through the planning of the motion that we debate today.

As we close this debate, I want to read some words generously provided to me by some of the frontline service providers who help Canberrans experiencing homelessness. They are the ones that have called for this strategy and who know best about the needs of young people in the sector, and I think it is really useful to hear their words. From ACT Shelter:

ACT Shelter has long advocated for a dedicated response to youth homelessness in our city. Housing is the foundation on which everything else in a young person's life depends. Without a safe and stable place to sleep, young people struggle to stay in education, hold down work, maintain their health, or stay connected to family and community. And when we fail to house a young person, we do not just

fail them in that moment, we set in motion consequences that can last a lifetime.

ACT Shelter believes that Canberra can and should be a place where no young person falls through the cracks, and that a well-resourced, co-designed youth homelessness strategy is how we get there. We call on the ACT government to treat youth homelessness as the urgent public health and social justice issue that it is, and to deliver a dedicated strategy that matches the scale of the problem.

While the ACT Greens have brought this motion to the Assembly, this work is really thanks to so many who work outside this place, those who are on the ground every day in our communities helping our young people that need it most. I want to thank, in particular, Conflict Resolution Services, Joint Pathways, YWCA, Woden Community Services and ACT Shelter for all their contributions to all the other frontline service providers who support our children and young people in the ACT.

I would also like to thank Create Foundation, who provided invaluable advocacy and helped guide our research. Some incredible young people generously shared their knowledge and lived experience with us to ensure this motion included what will actually touch lives and make a difference. These young people navigated the service system themselves and are dedicated to making it better for other young people who will have to. I think it takes incredible guts and integrity to double back to a challenging place in your own history, because you care about changing it for the people who come after you.

Thank you also to Hannah and the team at Youth Coalition who have joined us in the chamber today. Your contribution to this motion was truly instrumental. As we have heard from many service providers, that sector mapping project will play a pivotal role in strengthening our response to youth homelessness in the ACT. I think it is fitting that I add the Youth Coalition's words to the closing of this debate:

Every single young person deserves a safe and stable place to call home. We welcome this motion as an important step towards a dedicated youth homelessness strategy for the ACT. A youth homelessness strategy should ensure young people can access support when they need it. To be effective, this strategy must be shaped through genuine collaboration between government and community services and take a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach.

Addressing youth homelessness is not the responsibility of any one service or portfolio. It is a shared commitment by the Canberra community to ensuring all young people have the housing and support they need to thrive. What we need now is a clear, actionable roadmap that turns this commitment into real outcomes for young people across Canberra.

Those are excellent remarks. I want to sincerely thank everyone who has worked with us to take the first critical step in making this roadmap. Those that sent the many emails, you know who you are. I look forward to their critical involvement as the strategy takes place, as government follows through with genuine co-design. I press upon ministers once again that this strategy must be done in collaboration with the sector and with young people. It must lead to real funded outcomes for young people. If we do not fully co-design the strategy then the one guarantee we have is that it will not deliver.

Usually I reserve this part of the speech titled, "Debate notes to try and respond to

arguments put forward by other members”, but today everyone was absolutely spitting facts. This discussion has actually reassured me that across the chamber and across all political alignments, the people in this chamber get it on both an individual and societal level. What I have heard today is genuine resolve within this place to fight for young people’s right to a home, a good life and a community that cares about them—and I have here that my adviser has simply written in the speech document, “True!!!”, with three exclamation marks. So let’s get it done, gang.

At the end of the day, tackling youth homelessness is not easy. If it were easy or even if it were moderately difficult, I am confident that any government worth their salt would have fixed it. My god, it is worth fixing. Insofar as we do not seek to understand the scale of youth homelessness in the ACT, the efficacy of our current response or the resourcing needs of services who our young people rely on, the corollary is that we accept that there will be a certain amount of youth homelessness in our system as full of luxuries as it is for the rest of us. Behind the statistics of youth homelessness in our city are real lives of children and young people for whom youth homelessness is not just a crisis or a theory but an everyday reality. Where we talk about it in this place, they feel it and they live it every day.

As elected representatives we need to ask ourselves whether we are prepared to look a young person in the eye and tell them it is acceptable that they or their loved ones or friends do not have access to a stable home. I would struggle. I think all of us would struggle. Either way, we are accountable to young people in the ACT whether we are prepared to look them in the eye or not. When I see young people in my electorate and across the city, I want to be able to look them in the eye and tell them that I have done everything that I can to make sure that they have a home. A youth homelessness strategy will not do that alone. But we need it if we are serious about fixing the system so that no more young people fall or are pushed through its cracks. I promise young people across this city that we, none of us, will shut up about it until the cracks are filled and they can trust us to always fight for their right to a home and a soft place to land.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Belconnen—Town Centre Master Plan

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.08): Together with Ms Barry, I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the Belconnen Town Centre is one of Canberra’s largest and most significant town centres and serves as the primary commercial, residential and community hub for the Belconnen district;
- (b) the Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan was released in September 2016 to guide future growth, urban renewal and development in the centre;
- (c) the 2016 master plan identified a number of priorities, including activating the Emu Bank foreshore, strengthening Lathlain Street as a main street, improving pedestrian and cycling connections, enhancing public open spaces and strengthening integration with the University of

Canberra;

- (d) it has now been almost a decade since the release of the 2016 master plan, during which time the Belconnen Town Centre has experienced significant residential development and population growth;
 - (e) while some development has occurred, many of the place-making, infrastructure and public domain improvements identified in the 2016 Master Plan remain incomplete or unrealised;
 - (f) Belconnen residents have increasingly called for a renewed vision for the town centre to ensure it develops as a vibrant, accessible and well-planned destination for Canberra's north-west; and
 - (g) Belconnen Town Centre contains significant civic, cultural and recreational assets, including Lake Ginninderra and the Belconnen Arts Centre, which provide opportunities for improved activation and community use of the town centre; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) conduct a formal implementation review of the 2016 Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan that identifies:
 - (i) each project, policy or initiative identified in the master plan and status of delivery;
 - (ii) whether each item has been completed, partially completed, deferred or abandoned;
 - (iii) the year in which each completed project was delivered;
 - (iv) the budgeted and actual cost of each delivered project;
 - (v) the reasons why any identified project or initiative has not progressed; and
 - (vi) population growth in the Belconnen Town Centre since 2016 compared with the delivery of supporting infrastructure, including schools, health services, transport, community and sporting facilities and open spaces;
 - (b) provide an assessment of the adequacy of social infrastructure, public space, recreation facilities and community amenities within the Belconnen Town Centre, noting the substantial residential growth that has occurred since 2016;
 - (c) report on the amount of developer contributions, lease variation charges and other planning-related revenues generated from development in the Belconnen Town Centre since 2016 and how those funds have been allocated to local infrastructure; and
 - (d) table in the Assembly by the first sitting day in September 2026 each of (2)(a) to (2)(c).

I love Belconnen. Do I get a “hear, hear”?

Ms Barry: Hear, hear!

MR CAIN: What about the other Ginninderra members here? Do I get a “hear, hear” for “I love Belconnen”? We love it. Is there anyone in the gallery who loves Belconnen? I am sorry; I should not be doing that. A Belconnen master plan has been around for

quite a while, and I think the community deserves to know what the ACT government has done in implementing the commitments within that plan.

Belconnen is a changing and evolving town centre, as we can all see; just go there and have a look. We have a gorgeous lake, of course—Lake Ginninderra. We have a growing number of high-rises. Within five years, there will be 22 around that town centre. Belconnen has about a quarter of Canberra’s population. We have two hospitals. We have the largest sporting stadium in Canberra. We have a very large CIT. We have a university, and we have the largest regional shopping centre in Canberra. As a friend of mine, and a lover of Belconnen, has often said, “Belconnen is the jewel in the crown that is Canberra.”

Ms Barry: Hear, hear!

MR CAIN: Hear, hear to that! I am aware that there is genuine support, with respect to the motion that Ms Barry and I are bringing, for the government to disclose what they have done about this 2016 master town plan. I note—and I am hopeful that this will be carried through with—that the Greens have an amendment to add to this motion, and it is my understanding that all parties are in agreement with it. It must be the afternoon for being agreeable with one another, because we are having that experience again with this motion, as we had with the previous one.

I am very grateful that the government has taken on board the commitment to tell this community—not just Belconnen but Canberra—what it has done with this master plan that has been sitting there for quite a while, what it is doing to demonstrate what it has implemented from its commitments, and how it is adjusting to the evolving and developing town centre of Belconnen. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MS BARRY (Ginninderra) (4.11): I speak in support and as co-sponsor of this motion. I welcome the government’s support for this motion, because I think it is very much needed. This motion calls for the government to do things that good governments do as a matter of course. It calls for a review of the government’s own decade-old town centre master plan, to determine whether the commitments made by the Barr government a decade ago have been delivered. It calls for the government to refresh the Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan to reflect current circumstances, including significant growth and the ageing nature of the Belconnen infrastructure.

Some will call this motion a waste of time, because the good old citizens of Belconnen already know how little has been delivered. No-one in Canberra would be the least surprised to see yet another report finding that this government has yet again delivered a plan full of aspiration and hope and, a decade along, has only delivered cost run-overs and disappointment to the community.

The question is: why are we doing this, Mr Deputy Speaker? It is because the world’s best cities are ones that are planned and managed with the needs of their community as their first priority. The Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan is now 10 years old and needs to be updated to reflect current issues and priorities. Belconnen is the largest district in Canberra, with a current population of over 110,000. This has exceeded the initial planned population levels of 90,000 to 100,000 when it was first established in the 1970s.

Belconnen infrastructure is ageing. With much of the construction done in the 1970s, considerable work would need to be done on basic infrastructure to accommodate the increased densification. Sewers, stormwater, fresh water, waste disposal, roads, bridges, footpaths, bike paths, schools and sporting facilities are all increasingly in need of remediation work, maintenance and, in many cases, replacement.

The nature of the town centre is changing, with expansion of high-rise accommodation. The needs of those in high-density apartment buildings are different to the needs of those with lower density homes. Those needs were not as apparent when the old Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan was pulled together. Now that we have a significant community of apartment residents, it is crucial that we listen to and reflect their concerns in the future development plan.

Planning is not just about providing a certain number of homes in a certain timeframe. It should be about identifying the needs and aspirations of our citizens and ensuring that these are reflected in development decisions over time. Good design is about accessibility of services, the quality of amenities in the environment and building an environment that builds connection, not isolation.

In that regard, I note the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning inquiry into missing middle housing reform, published last Thursday, which clearly identifies gaps in current developments which do not support the objectives of livability and wellness. This motion is consistent with the recommendations of that committee. We know that the ACT budget is very tight and that both the federal and ACT governments are making the private investment landscape more difficult.

We recognise in this context that a revised Belconnen master plan cannot be a very glittering, aspirational document, filled with unrealistic thought bubbles. In our view, the master plan should be realistic, deliverable and include reasonable timeframes. This is important, as we need to provide certainty to our current and future residents. We need to demonstrate that we have a town centre master plan that will attract the private investment that we certainly need.

We recognise the need to build many more homes and ensure that costs are kept as low as possible. We need to be careful that we are not enabling cheap, poor-quality housing in an environment that people do not want to live in. I acknowledge the work of the Belconnen Community Council, which has been calling for a revised town centre masterplan for some time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I, too, love Belconnen. I have beautiful memories of when I first arrived here in Australia, and those memories are what motivate me today. But if you are driving to Belconnen from Civic, and you take a detour through to Illawarra Court, you start to see the difference in terms of infrastructure, planning and maintenance. You wonder whether you are still in the same city, or whether you have driven out of Canberra. The difference, when it comes to the level of infrastructure that does not exist, is significant, in a place that I love so much.

I am not a planner, but there are things that we need to start thinking about, for a place

like Belconnen, when it comes to whether it meets the needs of Canberrans who live there. For example, should the focal point of the town centre be a street square, or does the Belconnen Mall serve that purpose? How does the town centre work in the context of the broader district? What are the roles of other shopping centres like Hawker, Kippax, Macquarie, Dunlop and Charnwood, and smaller local communities? Should recreational facilities such as Big Splash have a special status and protection as community assets? Should our parks, such as Lake Ginninderra and Umbagog District Park, have appropriate protections? Is the balance between the environmental protections and the recreational needs of Canberra being appropriately maintained? Should we reserve more space around residential towers, such as the extension of Margaret Timpson Park, which we have consistently advocated for?

How do we better connect our town centres to our greatest asset, the beautiful Lake Ginninderra waterfront? How do we better integrate the University of Canberra and the Australian Institute of Sport into the life of the community? Where and when will we have the long-promised Belconnen town centre school? Are there enough early childhood education centres, noting that Belconnen has the highest number of suburbs listed as childcare deserts? Are there enough community facilities to enable us to build cohesive and supportive communities? Do we have the jobs, and can we create jobs, for an increasing population?

We have relied heavily on public sector growth since Canberra was established, but we are now in an era of downsizing of the public sector. If there are no jobs, where are the residents of the new high-rises going to work? What are the community's needs for sporting clubs, and how can we deliver the quantity and variety of sporting venues and support clubs to be economically viable? There are challenges, such as access by the Belconnen Magpies to an oval, the Hawker Tennis Club tennis courts falling into disrepair, and the Belconnen basketball courts, which are in need of upgrade. I have been there myself, and it is a disgrace when the NBL come to play in Canberra.

Maintenance of infrastructure that keeps much-loved community facilities useable is crucial to our constituents. The appropriateness of public, social housing and emergency accommodation options and where they are constructed should be a priority. The availability of respite-care options should be planned for, so that people are not forced to travel long distances to take up a hospital bed.

There is a lot to love about living in Belconnen, and I say it again: I love Belconnen. But there is so much that we can do to ensure that we continue to improve our community. This motion calls for that work to start and to progress, with real consultation with the Belconnen community.

Once again, I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.20): I thank Ms Barry and Mr Cain for bringing forward this motion today. The Greens are happy to support it. I move the following amendment that has been circulated in my name:

Add:

“(3) further calls on the Government to:

- (a) consult with the local Belconnen businesses, community and the Belconnen Community Council about establishing a Belconnen Town Centre Renewal Authority; and
- (b) table a response to this community consultation and Government consideration in the Assembly by the first sitting day in September 2026.”.

I have lived in Belconnen for most of my life. I have family there, we have our schools there, we have our favourite places in nature there, and we are raising our next generations there. It is a really great place to be. Belconnen is the most populated of the ACT’s nine districts. In 2021, we had 106,000 people calling Belconnen home.

The town centre was commissioned 60 years ago, but the formal planning and construction of Belconnen town centre began in earnest in the 70s. Early plans prioritised anchor developments that would serve the local population and attract visitors from across Canberra. The opening of Belconnen markets in 1976 and the Belconnen Mall in 1978 were landmark moments, establishing the precinct as a commercial and social focal point. That design incorporated large public spaces, a bus interchange and provision for future growth—all reflecting what we thought we needed at the time.

Throughout the subsequent decades, ongoing master planning and urban renewal have shaped our centre’s development. The 80s and 90s saw our town centre expand, with a lot of new developments, commercial office space and civic infrastructure. The development of the Belconnen town centre has been guided by a long history of strategic planning, and that has continued since self-government. There have been two master plans, one in 2001 and the other in 2016 and, while it is not called a master plan, the 2023 district strategy has some of those attributes.

A master plan defines what is important about a place and identifies opportunities for preserving and enhancing the quality of that place. It offers us long-term planning and a framework for urban renewal, and it is guided by key actions and strategies. The 2016 Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan marked a significant step in articulating a long-term vision for our precinct’s future. Developed with extensive consultation, that plan set out priorities, like improving active and public transport, creating affordable and diverse housing and activating our public spaces. We gave a lot of attention to the density around the centre and making sure that we had sustainable design features and the community facilities that we needed.

The 2016 Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan set out a vision to guide future development. Implementation has involved public and private investment, and in recent years we have witnessed a real surge in high-density apartment complexes and mixed-use developments. Our strategic planning is meant to make sure that infrastructure and community facilities are keeping pace with all of that growth. I have to say that a lot of our community do not feel that it is keeping pace. Our arts centres, our libraries, our public squares, our pedestrian and cycling connections, and our bus routes and connections need improvement to make sure that they are servicing the needs of our growing population.

It is great that Ms Barry and Mr Cain have brought this motion forward to highlight

these needs. We want to make sure that Belconnen remains vibrant, inclusive and forward thinking. I have been speaking up for Belconnen as well for a while. We have won parliamentary support for a new primary and secondary school in Belconnen town centre, which was in the early planning for the town centre, but it seemed to have dropped off the radar.

I have asked repeatedly for better social infrastructure in the town centre, such as more support for Belco arts for programming, just like we need for all our art centres. I have spoken out for a playground, barbecues, upgrades and good design for Margaret Timpson Park, and I am pleased to see that those design upgrades are now rolling out.

I have heard the calls from the Belconnen Community Council for a Belconnen renewal authority, just like Civic has the City Renewal Authority. That is why I circulated an amendment today. I think it is time for us to seriously consider that, to activate our spaces. It would be great to have an authority that could look at existing services like the library, Belco arts and the Capital Region Community Services, and maybe expand pilot programs like Connecting Up that were so successful.

In 2025-26, the government provided \$10 million to the City Renewal Authority to renew the city precinct, in addition to the \$2 million spent through a city centre marketing and improvements levy. I think that a Belconnen town centre renewal authority would be a really great addition, and that is why my amendment asks government to consult with local businesses, local people and the Belconnen Community Council to see whether it is time for us to have our own renewal authority.

Regardless of whether we go ahead with that renewal authority, we need key accessibility upgrades for our library—I have spoken up for these—and more support for the spaces around Capital Region Community Services and the Belconnen Senior Citizens Club. Our community relies on these services. We have 80,000 Canberrans living with a disability, so we need to make sure that these spaces are accessible.

I have asked for quicker work on the feasibility and route planning for light rail stage 3 so that we can all see exactly how Belconnen, Civic and Kippax will be connected and how we should be developing. Alongside my colleague Andrew Braddock, I have spoken up for our rapid buses out in west Belconnen, to make sure that we are restoring those and that they are connecting back to Belconnen, along with regular weekday and weekend buses, including on Sundays and into the evening, so that people can get home from a fun night out.

I have called for a government commitment to a feasibility study and route planning, and a commitment for our bike paths connecting Kippax to Belconnen town centre. I have spoken up for more community housing in Belconnen town centre, where we have so many services and transport options; it is exactly where we need to have more people who need to live there. I have been looking at places like the former Arscott House site, which was set aside for community housing. I want to make sure that it is still used for community purposes and that it is not simply gifted to the sector for commercial development.

I am happy to continue speaking up for the Belconnen community about all these issues. I would love to add the extra one to Mr Cain and Ms Barry's motion today, to consult

with the local community, local businesses and the Belconnen Community Council about the establishment of a renewal authority for our Belconnen town centre. I think that is the best way to link together all these services and all of this infrastructure, and to make sure that our rapidly growing population has what it needs to thrive. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy) (4.27): I apologise to all the people in the gallery who are here for the more important speech. I would never say that Belconnen town centre is not important, but I will be as brief as I can, so that we can wrap this up and give Mr Rattenbury the attention that he deserves.

I thank Mr Cain and Ms Barry for bringing forward this motion and appreciate their engagement on it this week. I also need to declare an interest, Mr Speaker. Belconnen is my home and it has my heart. I have lived in the town centre since 2009, with one brief detour to Bruce, and I have been a home owner there since February 2013.

I was also the Deputy Chair and then the Chair of the Belconnen Community Council during the 18 months of community consultation that produced the document we are now debating. We did a lot to get the community engaged. We pushed, sometimes very loudly, for the things that residents wanted, and those things are in the master plan. Some have already been built—plenty have already been built, actually. Full disclosure, Mr Speaker: I appear on page 10 of the document itself. It is a younger version of me, but it is definitely me—you can see the hair—studying a consultation board with what I hope reads as thoughtful concentration.

I mention all this not to claim any ownership of the plan—because it is so good, because it had so much community involvement—but to provide the context that I know it very well.

There is much in part (1) of this motion which the government accepts without reservation. The Belconnen town centre is one of Canberra's largest and most significant centres. The 2016 master plan identified clear and worthwhile priorities—Emu Bank foreshore activation, strengthening Lathlain Street as a main street, improving walking and cycling connections, and enhancing open space. And, yes, since 2016, Belconnen town centre has experienced substantial residential growth. All of that is true, but there is a premise to this motion that is absolutely mistaken. We will leave it there, on the notice paper, but let us be clear: a master plan is not a statutory planning document; it is a non-statutory planning document that provides a vision, a spatial framework and strategies to guide the development of the Belconnen town centre over the next 20-plus years.

Do not just take my word for it, Mr Speaker; the master plan says so itself, on page 7. It is meant to be read holistically, as a coherent vision for the centre, not totted up like an itemised invoice. Detailed design, funding, sequencing and delivery sit with operational agencies and successive government investment decisions. It is not unique to Belconnen in not providing a full audit of master plan recommendations. No master plan in Belconnen's history has ever been delivered in full, and nor should they have been. There are some wild ideas from the 60s and 70s.

Master plans set direction. They do not hard-wire outcomes. They recognise that things change, like population growth outpacing projections. Things evolve and change. The premise that is embedded in this motion that complete delivery was ever the standard against which a master plan could be judged is, with respect, mistaken. Further, the premise that the planning environment and the infrastructure environment have stood still since 2016, as Ms Barry implied, simply does not survive contact with the facts. The master plan's principal statutory pathway, Territory Plan variation 342, commenced in March 2019. Its operational provisions were carried into the Belconnen district policy under the new Territory Plan. The 2023 Belconnen district strategy carries forward the master plan's high-level intents, without replicating its place-specific actions or delivery detail.

A standalone retrospective audit of a 2016 strategic vision document is not terribly proportionate. But the question beneath this motion—whether Belconnen town centre is being adequately supported as it grows—is a fair one. Residents are entitled to transparency about how the centre is changing, what has been delivered and what still needs attention.

We are prepared to support an implementation-style response, but it will be on our terms. If the movers had read the master plan, they would know that most of the subsections contained in (2)(a) will not be applicable to the recommendations as crafted in the master plan.

What the register will show is not a master plan that is languishing on a shelf; it will show the Emu Bank foreshore upgrade, Margaret Timpson Park improvements, Lathlain Street precinct work, graduated building heights, Lake Ginninderra path upgrades, Belco bikeway, and Belconnen library being put on the Heritage Register. They were all recommendations in the master plan, and they are all delivered or underway.

Going to the amendment moved by Ms Clay, I should be candid about my own view. I do not think that a separate renewal authority is necessary. I expect that the ledger I have just committed the government to tabling will demonstrate that point comprehensively. A great deal has been achieved in this centre through existing arrangements, without a renewal authority.

The amendment, at its heart, though, is about equity. If the question is being asked about Woden, as it is, we can ask it about Belconnen. Agreeing to consult on the question is not the same as agreeing to establish such an authority. We will need to undertake our own considerations about whether the case for a separate body is made out at all. The amendment allows for that, and that is why we are prepared to support it.

What we will not do is treat developer contributions or lease variation charges as suburb-level trust funds. Those revenues are general territory revenue. They fund services and infrastructure across Canberra. They are not, and have never been, hypothecated to the postcode where development occurs. Any framework that implies otherwise is asking the Assembly to agree to a fiction.

I will close on this point: I note with some interest the deep admiration that Mr Cain

and Ms Barry now profess for the Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan. They want it reviewed and every recommendation accounted for. They cite its priorities approvingly. That is very welcome. Yet, when the government has sought to give effect to one of the plan's specific, considered recommendations, that is, the redevelopment of the block next to Margaret Timpson Park into housing, a recommendation that the plan reached after expressly considering and rejecting the alternative of absorbing that block into the park, those opposite have campaigned against it, proudly. They have argued, repeatedly and loudly, the precise opposite of what the master plan recommends.

Mr Cain did it on Tuesday. Ms Barry did it just now. You cannot have it both ways, Mr Speaker. Either the master plan is the considered, evidence-based document that those opposite tell us it is, when they are hoping to score points about delivery, in which case its specific recommendations about the block next to Margaret Timpson Park deserve respect, or it is not; in which case, the motion before us collapses into a list of grievances looking for a framework. Mr Cain and Ms Barry need to pick one.

Finally, when the government announced our \$20 million package for Belconnen at the last election, Mr Cain's response was that that package was "recycled, reactionary and disrespectful". It was, he said, "evidence that ACT Labor thinks so little of Belconnen residents". Yet so much of that election commitment delivers on some of the remaining visions in—guess what?—the master plan.

There is, I concede, one thread that holds all of this together, and it is that the Canberra Liberals have an incoherent policy position on Belconnen. But we will accept the motion as it is, and I look forward to updating the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Braddock**) adjourned to a later hour.

Visitors

MR SPEAKER: I would like to draw to members' attention, and wish to recognise the presence in the gallery, of former member Ms Rebecca Vassarotti, as well as Senator Hanson-Young, who has come to pay us a visit from the hill. Ms Le Couteur is here as well. Shane's mum is probably here as well. Yes, there she is. I will give her a mention as well. On behalf of the members of the Assembly, you are most welcome.

Valedictory

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (4.36), by leave: Colleagues, I thank you for the opportunity to make some remarks today on my final sitting day here in this chamber. I welcome family, friends, current and former colleagues, and members of the community, who have honoured me by being here today.

Of all the speeches we give in this place, there is a very particular pressure inherent in a valedictory speech. It is both a moment of reflection and one of casting an eye to the future. There is thanks to give, stories to be shared, lessons to be imparted, and a clear expectation of some humour along the way. I cannot guarantee a *Saturday Night Live* skit, but I will do my best.

I first stood here as a budding, new MLA in 2008, and said:

I enter the Assembly with a great sense of responsibility and a great sense of optimism—responsibility because of the great challenges we face; optimism because I do believe that there are solutions and that a better future is possible. I am here to make that optimism a reality.

Back then, I believed that, when the moment calls, you step up. Seventeen-and-a-half years later, I still believe that, but I understand much more clearly what it takes.

I grew up in a small town on the South Coast. I watched my mum and my brother, and my broader family, step up as part of our community, whether it was volunteering with Meals on Wheels or supporting the local theatre company. When action was needed, everybody chipped in. Each member of the community created a thread and, when woven together, it became a beautiful tapestry of humans connecting with and supporting each other.

When the opportunity came for me to come to Canberra for my education, once again my mum stepped up to the challenge, packed up our family and relocated us all over the mountain. I was a child of the 80s, with a dorky haircut and bad fashion, but I was equally inspired by the big environmental campaigns—saving Antarctica from mining, repairing the hole in the ozone layer and protecting native forests. Those issues showed me that, when people stepped up together, change was possible.

I saw the challenges that our world was facing, and I knew that a better future was possible. I could see it. I ventured out into the world of activism and environmental protection—work that challenged and inspired me, allowed me to explore our planet and understand the challenges that we were facing more deeply. Working with Greenpeace International, we stood alongside communities around the world, stepping up and taking action together to protect the oceans, the forests and our climate.

Returning to Canberra and running for a seat in the ACT Legislative Assembly gave me the chance to step up and take action in the community that I called home. I stand here now, some 17½ years later, with a mixture of pride at the progress we have driven and the changes we have made for the people of Canberra, and a restlessness, knowing that there is still much more to be done.

That is both the privilege and the burden of politics. The more you change, the more there is still to do. And in here we can make real change—change that is meaningful and impactful on people’s everyday lives. Sometimes it is the small things, like helping someone to get a path fixed or accessing a service they need. And sometimes it is big steps, the systemic change, like legislating climate targets, raising the age of criminal responsibility, introducing a charter of rights for victims of crime, or getting our light rail network underway. Whether big or small, the work we do in this place is important, and I feel so lucky that I have been able to do it for as long as I have.

On climate action, in particular, I do leave this place proud. I started this job just one year after leading the Greenpeace delegation to the 2007 United Nations climate talks, where the message was clear: those with the capacity to act must step up. Over the last 17-odd years, that is exactly what we have done in the ACT. After winning the balance of power in 2008, we heeded that call from the UN and insisted that the ACT adopt

ambitious, legislated emission reduction targets that matched the science. By 2010, that legislation was in place and laid the foundations for where we are today. We have halved our emissions compared to 1990; we have 100 per cent renewable electricity; we have set the goal to electrify our city; and we have started to phase out fossil fuel gas.

There is sweet irony that every time Barnaby Joyce, Matt Canavan and all the other fossil fuel fanatics come to federal parliament, they work in a building that is powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity. That is a joy I will take with me well beyond politics!

The ACT's progress on climate action offers lessons for governments in how to deliver bold reform. When you set a goal, define clear targets and a defined timeline, you can take an entire community with you. This approach generates ongoing accountability, and it creates clarity and the authorising environment for the public service, the business sector and community organisations. You take deliberate steps forward, you keep evolving, but with your focus always fixed on the end goal.

Of course, it would be remiss of me to reflect on these achievements without recognising the partnership that the Greens have held with the Labor Party. The collaboration between our parties has not always been easy. For the Greens, being the smaller party comes with obvious challenges. But this partnership was effective in delivering some great outcomes for our community. It is a credit to both our parties that we have been able to articulate and maintain a shared agenda, agree a path as we have gone along, and largely iron out our differences.

I would like to acknowledge colleagues in the Labor Party, particularly Katy Gallagher and Andrew Barr, in their roles as Chief Minister through that period. I believe that, through our collective efforts, we were able to demonstrate how an effective two-party government on the progressive side of politics could work. We demonstrated the dynamism of such an arrangement. No-one could just assume they would get what they wanted, but there was goodwill to work together and get things done.

Andrew, we have each led parties with a different view of the world, but I have always respected your dedication, your intellect, your pragmatism and your clear sense of where you were going.

Ministers in the ACT get to hold a range of portfolios and, over the course of 12 years, as the ACT's third-longest-serving minister, I have held my fair share. While there are some areas that I had more obvious background or experience in, just like you would never ask a parent to pick their favourite child, I could never choose a favourite portfolio. Each came with its own challenges and complexities, its own learnings and opportunities. Every portfolio offers the chance to step up and make things happen.

I have already spoken about the achievements in my role as climate and energy minister. As Attorney-General, I improved renters' rights, implemented minimum energy efficiency standards and ended no-cause evictions. As minister for the portfolio formerly known as TAMS, I delivered some of the most progressive animal welfare legislation in the country, banning battery cages, sow stalls, and puppy and kitten farms in the territory.

As mental health minister, I oversaw the introduction of the PACER model in the ACT, combining police, ambulance and mental health clinicians in a single mental health response to improve patient care. As corrections minister, I worked with Winnunga to make the Alexander Maconochie Centre the only jail in Australia with an Aboriginal community-controlled health service operating inside the wire.

There are plenty more. In doing some research for this speech, the Assembly Library informed me that I have 2,148 media releases on file—but you can relax; I do not plan to reminisce on each of them!

It did seem at one point that Labor leaders around the country were swapping notes as to which portfolios to give new Greens ministers, with Nick McKim in Tasmania and I both being handed the corrections portfolio straight off the bat. I think they figured it would keep us in hot water. The funny thing was, we both loved it. It is a tough portfolio but one where, when you get it right, you really improve the lives of some of our most challenged members of the community.

I want to acknowledge the ACT public service. I simply loved working with them. I have met so many dedicated people, experts in their field, brimming with ideas and here to serve their community. From the DLOs to the directors-general, from the comms officers to the custodial officers, the lawyers to the librarians—thank you for your support, advice and hard work.

I also throw out a challenge to our public service. When you have a long-term government like we do, it is incumbent on you to not become habituated; to not sit with the comfort of knowing what you think the minister wants and just serving it up. Now, more than ever, we need you to be frank and fearless, to speak truth to power. This community needs you to be challenging them from within, to continue to strive for better, and to say what you think, even if it is not always welcome.

It has been widely reported that I was the first Greens Speaker of a parliament anywhere in the world. What is less widely reported on is that I took the Speaker's chair on my very first day in this place, with no parliamentary experience. It was quite the baptism of fire! I am sure that, for the old hands of the Assembly—Mr Barr being one at the time—it was a little frustrating, as I fumbled my way through those first sittings. They were mostly patient. With hindsight, it is not something I would recommend to a newbie. I cannot thank enough Tom Duncan, the Clerk, and his team for nursing me through that phase.

There is a funny symmetry to the fact that now the only other member remaining of the class of 2008—Mr Hanson—is the Speaker, as we both finish our time in this place. Cut from different cloth, but bookends of an era in one capacity.

One of the great opportunities in this Assembly is the ability to pass private member's legislation. As the Greens, we have sought to make the most of that. Why wouldn't you? You can turn an issue that you and the community care about into actual law, with amazing support from the Parliamentary Counsel's Office to ensure that you get it right. During my tenure, I have had 15 private member's bills passed. Funnily enough, that is exactly the same tally as the entire Liberal Party during the same period. But hey, who's

counting? I did check.

My bills have included creating an exclusion zone for protesters around the ACT's abortion clinic so that women can seek medical care with dignity and without harassment. Another overhauled our Freedom of Information Act to improve access to government documents. This term my bill added the right to housing to our Human Rights Act. It is such an important opportunity to do private member's bills, and one that we should not take for granted. I encourage all non-executive members to make the most of this tool, just as Mr Werner-Gibbings did yesterday.

There is another benefit. In the Greens we have a tradition of making a themed cake to mark the success of passing a private member's bill. This is a celebration that can require some creativity to design a cake that matches what the bill is all about. It can be relatively straightforward for some, such as the right to housing. When Amanda Bresnan passed a bill on workplace surveillance and privacy, the cake was in the shape of a CCTV camera. Caroline Le Couteur's bill on shopping trolley return systems was reasonably self-evident. But I must confess that the design of the cake for my Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Amendment Bill does not clearly come to mind.

As an MLA, you are afforded an extraordinary opportunity to get to know this city in ways that you did not know existed, by virtue of the many invites and experiences that we are offered. While it takes a lot of time, it is a part of the role I have always loved—getting out there, seeing what people are doing, and appreciating the enormous contribution that is being made by members of our community, creating the fabric of our city one volunteering action at a time. It takes me back to my community down at the coast, with the tapestry now bigger and more colourful than ever.

Then there are the random things you get to do—things that definitely were not in the job description. I have driven an ACTION bus, toured a sewer system, seen the inside of more jails than the average person, had dinner with both Matt Canavan and Angus Taylor, done a lap of Bathurst in an electric vehicle, toured a brothel, sung Daryl Braithwaite's *Horses* on stage at a Lifeline charity ball, tried my hand at stand-up comedy, and invited the Queensland Premier for a drink at Mooseheads. I would like to assure you that all these things were done for work purposes!

That brings me to another reflection on this place—what it means to be a public figure. I do not want to sound naive or strange about this. It is just that it was never something I contemplated before being elected. It manifests in many ways that you might not expect. I have received an email from someone who spotted me jaywalking somewhere in Civic one day, and who took the time to write and express their condemnation of my actions.

Another time I had come in to do a media interview in the middle of the Christmas holidays. Admittedly, I had not shaved and had a bit of holiday stubble going on. Subsequently, I received an email from someone who was appalled by this conduct, describing how embarrassed they were to have to admit to their international visitors that the apparently scruffy-looking individual on TV was, in fact, the Speaker of their local parliament.

Then there was my infamous run-in with a kangaroo that saw stories go around the world and had former colleagues in Europe messaging to check that I was okay. It was the early days of social media, when the term “viral” was primarily used in a medical context. I posted a photo of my injuries to my personal Facebook, thinking my running buddies would find it amusing. The next thing I know, I am on morning radio on 2CC with the one and only Mark Parton. He broke the story that would very quickly garner the interest of CNN and the *Indian Express*, to name a few.

Sometime later, a press release emerged from a group campaigning against the kangaroo cull, alleging that there was, in fact, no kangaroo involved and that I had faked the injury to demonise kangaroos, to justify the annual conservation cull. They even had a doctor examine the photo of my wounded leg, and he confidently proclaimed that these injuries were clearly not from kangaroo claws; rather, I had used a sharp stick or a piece of wire to inflict the injuries on myself. I will use my parliamentary oath to assure you all that the wounds were most definitely inflicted by a kangaroo.

There was the time that I revealed to a journalist that I had once taken ecstasy at a party. We were campaigning to get pill testing in the ACT and, in the course of the interview, the journalist asked me whether I had ever taken party drugs. In the split second, and ever the honest politician, I disclosed that I had—and, of course, my answer became the headline. While some members of the community may have found that scandalous, I think the real problem for me was the damage to my street cred amongst many of my own voters, who could not believe that I had only done it once! Then there was the awkward phone call to my mother, to let her know she was about to see in the press that I had taken an illicit substance. The good news was that we did adopt pill testing in the ACT, first at festivals, and later with a permanent testing site in the city. That is a reform that has undoubtedly saved lives in this town.

Recreational quests aside, I have at times been referred to as a divisive figure. That does sit strangely for me, as someone who has always sought to listen, to understand different perspectives, and to find common ground wherever possible. Over time, I have come to learn that being called divisive is sometimes what happens when you stand up for what you believe in, have the conviction to argue the case, and press ahead in the face of headwinds.

This, I believe, is one of the greatest challenges facing modern politics. Our community is becoming more and more divided. The issues seem more complex and the stakes are much higher than ever before. How can we find common ground when our grounds seem so far apart? How can we stand up for what we believe in and disagree with one another without tearing each other down? How do we find the space to fight fiercely to address the serious issues that we are faced with, without creating so much space that our world is irrevocably divided?

To be honest, I do not know what the answer to that is, but I know that it is the responsibility of those in this place and others like it—our community leaders—to lead that journey. The challenge for those who remain and those who will come to this place is not to retreat into grievance or short-termism, but to step up and meet the challenge with integrity, ambition and courage, because this place is not about us. It is about what we do with the privilege we are given by being elected here.

That privilege is hard to step away from, but I have formed the view that it is time. As late as this morning, some generous colleagues suggested to me that it was not too late to change my mind and just continue on. But no; it is time. There is no single reason for that, and I am sure others here will appreciate this. It is a mix of the draw of more time with family, family members' health, fatigue, the toll of public life, making space for others to step up, and the opportunity to try my hand at something new and contribute to our community in a different way.

There are, of course, many people I want to thank. Over the course of 17½ years, there is a long list, which I have necessarily sought to condense. Firstly, to those who have shared their stories with me over the years, especially those who have shared their stories in times of hardship and vulnerability, thank you. The inspiring stories, the insightful stories, the painful stories, stories of frustration, funny stories—every one of your stories has impacted me, taught me something, and formed part of the legacy I leave behind today.

In that same vein, to the community organisations and volunteers: like the tapestry of generosity you have woven across our city, your impact is woven so deeply into this building, the journeys of all of us here and, of course, into the stories of every Canberran you reach. Thank you for all you do for our wonderful city.

Thank you, of course, to those who voted me into this place, first in the seat of Molonglo, and later in Kurrajong. Thank you to the Greens members and supporters. We have laughed and cried together. We have debated, strategised and hoped. Thank you for your trust, your energy and your belief that politics can be a force for good. Together, we have turned those hopes into reality and delivered on so many of the things we promised to do.

To my Greens colleagues, past and present, both here and across the country: it has been an honour to stand alongside you, fighting the good fight. I especially want to acknowledge Bob Brown and Christine Milne, giants of our movement and our party, people I have looked up to and who have taken the time to support me along the way, and my good friends Ben Oquist and Sarah Hanson-Young—always there, and always wise.

Through a span like this in the Assembly, and through many ministerial portfolios, you can only prosper with great people around you. It is truly a team effort. In vague chronological order, I would like to thank, from the bottom of my heart, many of my staff team, including Tom Burmester, Helen Oakey, Richard Griggs, Anna Landon—who actually worked for Wayne Berry, and is a life member of the Labor Party, Indra Esguerra, Matt Georgeson, Charlie Wood, Fiona Walls, Jarrah Robbins, Larry O'Loughlin, Rob Thorman, Ali Jaques, Tom Warne Smith, Laura Stuart, Neneh Darwin, Leigh Cox, Lisa Wills, Lisa Gelbart, Jarrah Aguera, Hal Judge, Sandra Cappucio, Anna McGuire, Logan McLennan, Sophie Trevitt, Maiy Azize, Christian Dent, Veronica Wensing, Michael Brewer, John Griffiths, Carol Bunt, Lewis Poke, Lachlan Roberts, Loi Lam, Kylie Blakemore, Isobel Mudford, Guy Bromley, Amy Miller, Jordan Maloney, Jen Faerber, Kate Bills, Ella McAuliffe, Toni Dawes, Jo Higgins, and Tamara Browne.

Despite that list, there is bound to be someone I have missed, and I apologise. There are

also those staff who have worked for my fellow Greens MLAs and who have helped me and our team. I deeply thank all of you for your contribution. Of course, there is our amazing and beloved volunteer, Melissa Benyon, who has been in my office for so long that we actually cannot remember how long it has been, but it is since at least 2018.

To the OLA staff, I thank you for being the glue that holds this place together. You certainly do not get enough credit for all the unseen work that you do, keeping this sausage factory going. Of course, a special mention goes to the Clerk, Tom Duncan, ahead of his impending retirement.

To the journalists and media who play such an important role in sharing the stories that keep our city connected: in a changing world, true and thoughtful journalism matters more than ever.

I want to thank my family. I thank my mother, Marcia, for taking that first step, and bringing this little beach grommet to the big city to start a new life that was more fulfilling, exciting and challenging than he could ever have imagined. I thank my broader family, my sister, Tammy, and my stepfather, Jim, Grace—one of my staunchest online defenders—my politics-loving uncles, who are always up for a chat, and who especially made the trip today, all my other aunts and uncles, my cousins, and my family on Louise's side who have so generously embraced me, and many of whom have made the trip here today. A special shout-out goes to the grandkids, Will and Charlie. He is loving it so much that he is having a nap! All of them have supported, encouraged and counselled me along the way, and I look forward to having more time to give back to them all now.

Finally, and most importantly, there is my partner, Louise. We met after I had entered politics, and you nonetheless overlooked the inherent flaws of that lifestyle. I appreciate that. You have been a pillar of support across this journey, a constant source of wisdom and patience through it all. Quick with insightful political analysis, the one who reminds me of what really matters, you have ridden the highs and lows with me, and you have worn the consequences of my career with grace. We have had fun and hardship. I could not have done it without you, and I will be eternally grateful. Thank you.

I want to finish where this all began. I was a kid whose mum had the courage to step up, to leave a familiar life, to move our family and to build something better. Everything I have tried to do in this place has been guided by that same instinct—to step up when it matters and to help build something better for the people we serve. I came here with optimism and I leave with optimism. But that optimism is now grounded in experience, and in the knowledge that progress is possible when people are willing to step up and do the work.

I say to those who continue in this place: that is the task and that is the privilege. I have hope that you will rise to meet it. Thank you, and good luck.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (5.03), by leave: That is, indeed, a thoughtful valedictory speech and a hard act to follow, but this afternoon, I rise on behalf of my ACT Labor colleagues, both past and present, to acknowledge Mr Rattenbury's contribution on this, his final sitting day, in this Assembly. This is a moment that

deserves more than just routine words of thanks, but it is also far too good an opportunity to let pass without a gentle roasting! It is an opportunity to reflect not only on the conclusion of a long parliamentary career but on a shared era of reform, responsibility and public service—one that has helped shape both this institution and territory politics over many, many years.

In acknowledging the parliamentary career of Mr Rattenbury, and the contribution he has made to governing this territory, it is fitting to begin with the many firsts that have marked Shane's time here. As we have heard, he served as the first Greens Speaker of this Assembly and, indeed, the first Greens member anywhere in the world to be elected as Speaker of a parliament—and probably also the member who served the shortest amount of time in a world parliament before being elected Speaker, which I believe to have been less than 30 minutes in this place. He later became the first Greens Attorney-General in any Australian parliament.

Across the years, Shane has held a wide range of roles: as leader of his party and that is a demanding role, and those who have led—and there are many in this room—know exactly what I am talking about; and as a senior cabinet minister and a member of the engine room of government, the Expenditure Review Committee. He carried some of the most demanding portfolios in government: climate and energy; justice and corrections; mental health; transport; municipal services; education; consumer affairs; gaming; housing; and aging. I have not missed any? None of them were easy responsibilities; often they were very complex areas of public policy where trade-offs are real and decisions affect people at their most vulnerable.

But having acknowledged these parliamentary and ministerial highlights, I would like to take a step back in time, back to the last century, when I first heard of this fellow, Shane Rattenbury. It was the spring of 1992. We were both students at the Australian National University and election season was approaching. Somehow, as a first-year student, I found myself as the Labor student club representative on a diverse and eclectic committee of progressive students from across the political left on the campus. Our task was to identify candidates to run under the Green Alliance banner for the student association elections. So, yes, multi-party coalitions were all the rage at the ANU in the early 1990s!

Now, let's be honest: we were a little short of nominees in some faculties, particularly economics and law, and Shane's name was raised. There was, I must say, a rather confident assessment circulating around campus political circles about Shane, and it was informed by the following facts: he was a graduate of Canberra Grammar School; he was studying economics and law; and he was pretty conservatively dressed—some colourful knitwear and some 90s high-waisted jeans were as about as adventurous as it got. And it was rumoured that he spent most of his time, perhaps unsurprisingly given where he had come from, hanging out with the conservative country kids. So the conclusion that was offered with some certainty was that, based on these known facts, he must be a Young Liberal!

I have to say that that theory fell apart almost immediately, because alongside that tidy, conservative profile, we kept on hearing about other things: about his environmental activism; about his involvement in causes that would have been decidedly unfashionable in Liberal student politics back then and certainly now; and about his

clear commitment to environmental protection. In short, the stereotype was neat, but the evidence was not, and that gap between assumption and reality turned out to be an early indicator of the style Shane would later bring to public office. To finish this great anecdote from the 90s, Shane was nominated. He ran a great campaign as part of the Green Alliance team, and he was elected—a first taste of the campaign trail. Not long after, he put himself forward as a candidate for the 1995 territory election and achieved a very credible result for a first-time support candidate.

What then followed was a series of campaigns in pretty much every available seat in the territory. The 1996 federal election as the Greens candidate in the southern electorate of Namadgi. As a campaign worker for the Labor Party on that campaign, I need to thank you very much for the preferences that elected Annette Ellis over Brendan Smyth in that election! And then Shane contested the 1998 and 2001 ACT elections in the northern seat of Ginninderra. He did not contest the 2004 election; he was overseas working with Greenpeace, I believe. He finally broke through in the best part of Canberra in the Molonglo electorate in late 2008. And from that point on, we have served together in this Assembly for 17½ years, most of that time in coalition government, bookended by two periods of Greens crossbench support for minority Labor governments.

I say anyone who has experienced minority or coalition government knows it only works when people are prepared to talk, to listen and to keep showing up, even when the disagreement is real and the outcomes are uncertain. Those arrangements required compromise, patience and an acceptance that progress is often incremental. But they also enabled delivery, because differences were worked through, agreements were honoured and responsibility was shared. There are many, many examples of that.

In climate and energy, Shane played a key role in strengthening legislated emissions targets, locking in the ACT's long-term commitment to net zero and implementing shared renewable energy goals. And across the journey, he worked very closely with Labor on the practical detail of the energy transition—initially with Simon Corbell and later with me—and supported a range of initiatives, such as the ACT reaching 100 per cent renewable electricity in 2020, and initiatives like the Big Canberra Battery and the Sustainable Household Scheme.

In transport and infrastructure, Shane supported the legislation, the planning approvals and the procurement reforms that allowed light rail to be delivered. He backed broader financing and governance reforms that helped make this major infrastructure project a reality. Across justice, corrections, mental health, consumer protection, gambling harm reduction, housing and aging, Shane consistently chose to engage with hard policy areas, where systems were under strain, where progress could only be gradual, but where persistence mattered.

I want to acknowledge today the particular support Shane gave to many initiatives that were brought forward by me and my Labor colleagues over the years. That support was never automatic. He asked hard questions. He definitely scrutinised the detail and negotiated outcomes. Crucially, though, that engagement was grounded in a shared understanding that governing carries responsibilities not just to advocate but to decide, and not just to criticise but to deliver. Because of that approach, there were so many significant reforms across taxation, planning, education infrastructure, equality—and, I

want to particularly note, on every step of the civil partnership, civil unions, marriage equality journey that we have lived through in this jurisdiction, you have been there supporting that, pushing it. On a personal note, I thank you so much for that. I am married now because of some of the work that you have done, so thank you.

It extended to climate action and areas of justice and drug law reform—really significant, lasting legacies that you can be so proud of. All were things we were able to move forward through this Assembly because of a close and collaborative working relationship between our two parties, and because they were built through negotiation rather than expediency, they have been able to endure.

What has always stood out to me is how Shane approached the work of governing. He understood that progress rarely comes from insisting on perfection. More often it comes from sitting down, working through differences, agreeing on what can be delivered and then improving this over time. Though I have to say—and I just noted an expression on his face—I am fairly sure he is pretty sick of me telling him that he was “making the very good the enemy of the perfect”!

So, on his final sitting day, Shane leaves this Assembly with a record shaped not only by principle but by collaboration, responsibility and delivery. It has been a privilege to serve alongside him for nearly two decades: to argue the issues, and we have argued some issues; to negotiate outcomes, and I think we negotiated some fantastic ones; and to govern together in the interests of the territory. The ACT is better for the work we have been able to do together, and this Assembly is stronger for the contribution you have made.

Now, Shane, on a personal note, it seems only fair to observe, after all of these years, that early assessment of you as a Young Liberal was—how shall I put it—a little wide of the mark. Although, you did give me some cause to revisit that over the summer after moving a little closer to that Mark!

Thank you for the service you have given this place and for the seriousness, integrity and goodwill you have brought to your time here and in all the work that we have shared. I wish you and your family all the very best for what comes next. I know you will continue to passionately advocate for the issues you believe in. Thank you so much for a big contribution to this place and to the ACT.

MR PARTON (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (5.17), by leave: Well, here we are. It is all over for “Ratters”! I cannot help but think about what a missed opportunity it was for the Liberal movement in the early 90s. If only we had got to him—if only! I get the sense we might have missed out anyway, but I am going to miss Shane; genuinely, I am going to miss having him in the building.

I have known Shane for a long time—nearly 20 years. I have actually known his partner Louise for longer. We used to be involved in junior AFL a long time ago. I hope I am not giving secrets away, but I can clearly remember having a chat with Louise in the earlier part of the century, I think at the National Press Club or the Kingo, during which she said to me, “Hey, you won’t believe who I am dating!” And she told me, and I said, “Really?” I said, “Louise, I thought you were on the right side of the political spectrum!” That was a long time ago. It was a long time ago. It has turned out all right,

hasn't it? It has gone good!

On the radio at 2CC I can very clearly remember early morning radio interviews and that on most of those occasions, if not every occasion, you rode your bike into the studio—yes. In the political sphere there are so many things that you and I have disagreed on, but I think I can safely say that we actually agree on more things than we disagree on. He is a Green, and I am a Liberal, but we have always been able to find some common ground on most things. I accept that the political spectrum is very wide and that there is validity in most political views. It is just that most of Shane's are wrong! And that is okay.

Shane and I did have some well-documented discussions over the summer just gone about the prospect of our two parties doing something spectacularly different. I mean, Shane is a trailblazer. He is a trailblazer. He has done a lot of things that have never been done before. And it was something that would have been spectacularly different, and, in the end, it was not to be, but it would have been a wild ride. I still cling to the view that it would not have ended in tears. It was just a genuine, positive experience to go through those discussions, and I know there are some mixed views about them—probably the less I say about them, the better.

Can I tell you that I was chatting to a Liberal Party member on the phone on the way home last night, and I remarked that I had not given any thought at that stage to this speech, and this bloke said to me, "I can write the speech for you now." He said: "Your speech should simply say, 'Goodbye, good riddance and do not let the door hit you on the way out.'" He used some other colourful words, and I counselled him for some time on the phone, genuinely, about his lack of grace and respect and about his lack of acknowledgement for what has been a groundbreaking political career. Because whichever prism you look through at what Shane Rattenbury has done, it is amazing. It is amazing. You, my friend, should be so proud! You should be so proud of what you have done—so many things that none of the critics can take away from you, whether you are jaywalking or not.

We know you had a couple of unsuccessful attempts—I did not realise there were that many—and that you were addicted to campaigning. I love it when you get the Wikipedia page up for Shane—it is actually quite short, and there is not much on it—and when it gets to personal life, it just says, "He tried MDMA once." Really? That is it? Anyway, I know you had a couple of unsuccessful attempts to get in this place. You were much closer than most people think, in one of those goes, in Ginninderra, I know. And the planets finally aligned in 2008, and in you came as the member for Molonglo. Having sat in the Speaker's chair, I cannot get my head around coming into this place and being the Speaker for the first day. What could possibly go wrong!

You have done so many things in your time here which have already been listed, and I am not going to list them. You have led the party. You have been re-elected another four times. You have masterminded this power-sharing agreement with the Labor Party, which was groundbreaking. You have been the Attorney-General, among other cabinet positions. You have overseen directorates. You have left your mark on the landscape of this city.

Mr Rattenbury is a pragmatist. He has got strong views on most things, but he has got

the ability to listen to other views. I am a comms guy at the end of the day. I love the way he talks. I just love the way he talks. I love the way that he answers questions. I have long stated that I think one of the reasons I am actually not suited at all to this role is that in the media, when someone asks me a question, my first instinct is to answer it. I sort of say, "All right, I am going to answer it." Mr Rattenbury is living proof that you can have a long and successful political life while still attempting to answer questions, because he does. He has never tried to make an art form of avoiding questions, and by and large, he did the same as a minister in this chamber, and I think there should be more of it.

Shane will be missed for many reasons. He will be missed by his party because he is the best Green I have ever heard at making radical ideas sound quite sensible. And that is a gift. It is a gift. He has this amazing ability to talk to the centre and convince them, in some of those conservative clothes that he had in his university days, that far-left policy is not far left at all—that it is not radical at all—and that they should give it due consideration.

Shane Rattenbury, congratulations on an amazing career. You are a friend of mine. I will miss you here. Do not be a stranger.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (5.24), by leave: Like a lot of Canberrans, I have been crossing paths with Shane for a while. For me, it began in 2008. I was volunteering for Pedal Power and organising the pre-election forum. Pedal Power always invited Labor and the Liberals, and I persuaded them to include a third voice. The board at the time was pretty Labor-heavy, but cycling had not had a lot of love, so I convinced them that adding a little competition might lead to more action. We did not get a little competition. This newcomer from the Greens showed up, fresh off the back of some Euro triathlon, and he wiped the floor with all of his much-more-experienced colleagues. It was enormous fun to watch.

I bumped into Shane at the pub, next. My partner and his friend were running a SimCity challenge for their blog, a little outlet called Riotact. They got political wannabes to build their vision for Canberra. Now, Shane launched in with enthusiasm. He could not hold his beer. I regret to say we drank him under the table after two schooners. He has clearly been working on that skills deficit because he managed a few shots, I think, at the nationally renowned outing to Mooseheads. Well done. Good job.

Anyway, Shane could not hold his beer, but his city building was solid. This is a quote from the Riotact post.

Iron man Shane Rattenbury, Green for Molonglo, rode his bike down to All Bar Nun last night to tank up the Riotact SimCity challenge. With a team of gun SimCity players advising, Shane gave a masterclass in sustainable city development, keeping his environment rating flawless throughout. He also ran extremely strong surplus budgets.

Now you should never read the comments below the line, but here is one that stood out. It is from Cath, and it was written at 2.55 pm on 13 September 2008. Cath said, "I get the feeling that Rattenbury is going to be a prominent part of our political scene for the next while." Cath, how right you were.

Shane has been a constant figure in ACT politics and the Greens for decades. When I arrived, I was grateful to have good leadership in charge, particularly because I arrived in strange times. I come from the climate movement. I first ran in 2020 and it was an apocalyptic year. We had the fires, the smoke, the hail and then COVID. I have never planned and cancelled so many events.

Shane was an incredibly steady leader during that time. He was a reassuring pillar for our staff, for our candidates and for our community. We Greens did well at that 2020 election and Shane had the difficult task of coaching five brand-new politicians and all of their brand-new advisers. If you have ever watched an organisation swell to three times its size in a fortnight, you would have a lot of sympathy. Shane is a patient man.

I have been working in politics with Shane for six years now, and there are too many stories to tell—and a lot that should never be told. I am expecting his memoir will be a cracker. But until he gets around to writing it, I would like to tell three stories that give an insight into what it has been like doing politics with Shane Rattenbury. I want to tell you about “the filibuster”, “the spill” and “the numbers”.

First is “the filibuster”. It was in 2023, and that was the third time I ran a budget amendment to try to stop Labor giving \$8 million of public money to the horse racing industry. I run this debate every year. I have persuaded most of Canberra, but I cannot seem to convince nine or 10 colleagues. Labor knows our amendment will not pass, but they do not like having to stand up and publicly support their gift of \$8 million to the horse racing industry. They would like the debate not to happen, and if they cannot stop it, they would like it to go quietly.

All day, that schedule kept mysteriously changing. First, the manager for government business rushed us all together as much debate in the morning as possible. “Great,” we Greens thought. “We will get to the horse racing amendment mid-afternoon and the media will be paying attention.”

But then there were a lot of unscheduled speeches from Labor members.

“Hmm,” we Greens thought. “It is almost as if Labor is trying to push the horse racing debate to the media dead zone after 6 pm today. But what if that strategy backfires? What if through some mysterious intervention, debate gets pushed so far back it happens first thing tomorrow, and it becomes the top headline?”

Enter Attorney-General Shane Rattenbury, who suddenly found he had a lot to say on the budget. He was unscripted, he was unscheduled, he was unstoppable—literally, because an Attorney-General has no time limit on his own budget. He spoke with passion and vigour, but most importantly, he spoke at length. His advisor said she had never been so proud or so bored. Our colleagues in Labor looked livid, which seemed particularly unfair from Chief Minister Barr, who once began reading me his annual report paragraph by paragraph during hearings to stop me asking questions about the climate.

Now, in between reading from his budget and philosophising about what it all meant, Shane made eye contact with me to see if he had banged on long enough. Shane and I got pretty good at the subtle non-verbal exchange over the years. You have got to do

this in parliaments and negotiating rooms, particularly when you are a minority party, trying to get the best you can for your community with less power than you need to do the job. But on this particular occasion, whenever Shane looked at me, I cracked. I could not keep a straight face because the situation was so very funny.

That 2023 filibuster was key moment for our Greens team. We learned how to speak up for people on the planet in a system stacked against us. It was a team effort. Andrew Braddock spoke about decolonisation and reminded us all that jailing is failing. He used so many long pauses. It was like the opposite of TikTok. Minister Emma Davidson gave us a solid 10 minutes on radical love and how it applied in the ACT corrections system. But Shane shone for a solid 23 minutes and 20 seconds off the cuff.

I left that budget debate with the horse racing industry still in receipt of \$8 million of public money—but knowing that the Attorney-General, and the Greens team, will do all they could for a better outcome and knowing they had my back.

The next story I want to tell you is about “the spill”.

I recently saw Shane Rattenbury stare one down without blinking. It happened in a week that saw two spills in politics. One was in the Canberra Liberals, and it made headlines for an uncomfortably long time. The second was in the Greens, and it did not make it to the media at all.

Laura Nuttall was giving a speech in the Assembly about our waterways. Ironically, she knocked over a glass of water. It tipped out entirely. It spread through to her iPad, her notes and her phone. And, of course, she could not stop to mop it up for fear of losing her right to speak. In another of those wordless moments, Shane and I moved in. We knelt before Laura’s desk to avoid blocking the camera and we cleaned up the spill.

Laura delivered her speech perfectly. I shared the footage to our Ginninderra Greens WhatsApp group, who found it adorable. And it was. It also showed what Greens expect of their leaders: they expect service and support; they expect a leader who looks after the team so everyone can do their best for the movement.

The third story I will share is “the numbers”.

All politicians have to track the numbers all the time—but the leader of a minority party, who has held the balance of power his entire career, has to pay extra careful attention. I do not know how closely Shane has been tracking his own numbers, so here are a few I have noticed.

Seventeen: the number of years he has been in—returned every time by the people of Canberra regardless of whether it was a good year or a bad one for the Greens. It is a career reflecting the stamina of an Iron Man.

Four, one, two, six and four: those are the numbers of Greens MLAs in the team each term. They held the balance of power that whole time and I cannot imagine how heavy the load was when it was just Shane.

Ten: the age of which kids in Canberra will no longer find themselves locked up in jail.

Eighty-nine: the number of bills Shane has presented. We have also heard that he brought 15 private members' bills. Now, there are politicians who leave here after a longer career than Shane's, who have never brought forward a single bill.

2035: the year we will phase out fossil fuel gas and fossil fuel cars—100 per cent—for Canberra's renewable electricity. That single figure has brought so much hope to so many of us.

Shane, I am sorry you are going. You have done a great job for the climate, for our community and for Canberra. It has been a pleasure speaking out for bold Greens ideas with you. Things like phasing out gas, bringing in EVs, not locking up kids. Time and again we have seen these sensible reforms get labelled as crazy, mad, dangerous. Then Labor absorbs them, and later Labor brags about them. That has been enormous fun.

I will miss our honest and often wordless talks. I will miss working on shared goals for climate and for justice.

We Greens will do the very best we can from here on, with that heavy load that you have been carrying.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.33), by leave: Shane, I am just saying, it is not too late, you can change your mind by next Friday! Other members and colleagues have already listed many of Shane's achievements. They need to be celebrated, but I am not going to parrot what has already been mentioned. Instead, I am going to focus on the man.

Shane was not someone who simply served his 17 years in this place. He served in high pressure roles, met unique challenges and responded in-kind whilst progressing reform. Now, all members work hard in this place but Shane does set a high benchmark. Day after day, week after week, his attention to detail, doing the long hours, the hard work, whether it be engaging with party members, constituents, stakeholders, colleagues, following up on a phone call, being across his brief—I do not believe Shane has received enough recognition or gratitude for the level of hard work he has contributed towards the territory.

I am sure some of his former staff and colleagues, who are in the gallery today, are also remembering the times when it came together at the last moment, and the grey hairs they incurred as Shane kept his political options open whilst trying to secure the outcome. And they would be right. But it is hard to argue against the results he was able to secure whilst doing so.

As has been mentioned, Shane is a pragmatic politician, constantly seeking ways, through the art-of-the-possible, to progress towards a goal. In a media and a social landscape that rewards conflict and stridency, he strode a different path. And it serves as a great example for all of us here to not simply shout at each other, but to explore the ways we can collaborate and achieve real progress together.

Shane is not a loud politician. His words, however, reverberated because of this approach. Commentators, colleagues, opponents knew that when Shane spoke the words were well chosen, based on deep reflection and difficult to argue against. It also

speaks to his character; of Shane's willingness to front up when things got tough, to do the difficult media interviews, to answer the questions—as Mr Parton mentioned—to have the difficult meeting, never shying away from his responsibilities or his accountability.

His example serves all of us well. I challenge any member in this place today to imagine what it must have been like to be in Shane's position in the 2012 to 2016 term as the sole member of his party in this place, holding the sole balance of power; that much pressure on one lone individual. I doubt anyone here, including myself, would have the strength of character or the fortitude to handle that pressure and the political nous, the patience, and diplomacy to pull that off. And anyone who could survive would probably have taken to quit at the first opportunity after such a period. But Shane did not. He stuck around and kept going for another 10 years. It is an impressive personal achievement and, again, a reflection of his resilience and his character.

Now, whilst today is meant to be about Shane, I do want to talk about the crowd we have here in the gallery. And that speaks volumes in terms of Shane's contribution. To everyone here: you are very welcome, and I appreciate all you have done in support of Shane in his time here.

I do however want to point out two particular people within the gallery and speak to them. Louise, I want to say, thank you for your great love and support for Shane over the years, for letting him come out and play with us in the Assembly. We know the sacrifices you have personally made over the years. We thank you for the contributions you made, the quiet guidance you have given to us as MLAs, to our partners, to other candidates in the Greens party.

Now to Shane's mother, Marcia. Thank you for all the support you provided to Shane over the years. He turned out pretty good, did he not? He did pretty well. I do want to share one story which you probably have no memory of. It was 2015, and I was a wet-behind-the-ears nominee for the pre-selection for the brand-new seat of Yerrabi. At the end of one event, this very novice politician approached Marcia, and during the ensuing conversation she said she would support my nomination. Now, that was probably a very small thing to you, but to me that was my political claim to fame at that point; I had Shane Rattenbury's mother's support. I was going places.

Coming back to Shane, himself: I am extremely jealous as you move into the next stage of your life, leaving this place well satisfied of a job well done, for a future not yet mapped out—but I am sure you will take great delight in its discovery. I have no doubt it will be rewarding and of great contribution to the community and the planet.

Shane, thank you for all of your wisdom, all of your coaching. Your guidance has been invaluable. Enjoy the change in pace. And all the best.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (5.38), by leave: I rise today to protest the loss of a certified “real one” from the chamber. This certified real one, of course, being our party leader of 17 and a half years, Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA.

I do not really know what a Shane-free parliament looks like, and that scares me. I was only just becoming politically aware—sapient, even—in year two, when Mr Rattenbury

was first elected to this parliament. It is only looking back now that I think we are all coming to the realisation that his legacy is inextricable from our daily lives and, for my generation, the way we have grown up in this city.

We got to ride to school on buses that were not trying to buy our loyalty to the companies destroying our planet, because transport reform minister, Shane Rattenbury banned ads for junk food, alcohol, gambling, fossil fuels and weapons, back in 2015.

Whenever our chooks were not forking out for eggs, mum and I could pick them up free-range from the shops, knowing that they came the second happiest chooks in the ACT. We could be confident that any ACT eggs would come from happy chooks because TAMS minister, Shane Rattenbury had banned battery cages, alongside sow stalls and puppy and kitten farming. I informed our chooks of this and they seemed pleased, also.

These days, I get to game on 100 per cent renewable electricity, kept warm with a heated blanket we were eligible for through the Renters' Home Energy Program.

And Shane, I think, has been a particular ally to us renters in his time as Attorney-General—and indeed, beforehand. We watched the indicative price range—that we had paid just over the maximum for—disappear from real estate websites as he banned solicited rent bidding. The minimum energy efficiency kept our bills down during the cost-of-living crisis, and the ban on no-cause evictions let us trust that we would still be able to call a place home in six months' time.

Now listen, I do not believe in the invisible hand of the market, but I do believe in the visible and verdant hand of a good legislator with a moral compass pointing true north. I believe in a community where kids in primary school will no longer be locked up because this good legislator fought tooth-and-claw to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility. I believe in a city that protects our right to a healthy environment and a right to housing because it is the right thing to do. And I believe our city has been better off because Shane Rattenbury MLA fought for these changes and got them done.

And you might be prone to wondering, "What is the catch? What is the offset? Is he secretly an evil genius with a rotten personality and we are all really scared of him?" Lord knows we have seen enough of those in politics. I am devastated to inform you that there is no catch, because he demonstrates an incredible generosity of spirit, a wicked sense of humour and formidable competence in every shared space.

I hope he does not mind me sharing this, but I remember a time where we brought different perspectives to an issue in the party room. Mind you, it was not even an argument; it was incredibly amicable and thoughtfully presented, especially on Shane's part. Afterwards, later in the day, he found me in my office and said words to the effect of, "I know we found ourselves a bit cross-purposes there. I thought that was a really helpful discussion and I just want to reassure you and encourage you to continue to put forward those viewpoints, even when they are contrary to what is on the table."

I found myself looking for the bar, but it had already gone through the ceiling. Shane had rightly picked up that I would have spun my wheels on that meeting and he immediately used the moment to make sure that I felt empowered to continue to speak

up each time. It is exactly this kind of behaviour that creates safety, especially for young women in a profession that can be incredibly hostile, and it is an authenticity of character that cannot be replicated.

Shane extends that compassion very keenly and into his work in the Assembly, which is always to the very highest standard. We are all a little bit scared of our party leader because his ability to translate empathy and a sense of justice into well-engineered reforms is second to none. He has set the bar for quality of bills and thoughtfulness of contributions.

He has also set the bar really high for being funny in the chamber. Sitting next to him has been great because you get to hear him chuckle and write something down on a piece of paper, and you know you are about to get a really entertaining speech. It is a little bit ominous occasionally, but it keeps the day interesting. This wicked humour also comes out as a streak of adventurousness. When we were at Rising Tide last year we got to share a kayak, which only Shane knew how to drive, and that seemed to me like a great idea until Shane went full Greenpeace and began making an absolute beeline for the police line because he “wanted to get a better look at them”. I think the triathlete training kicked in too, because we were out there faster than all of the young rabble-rousers present. I was terrified, but boat-bound. But, if you are going to toe the line of civil disobedience with anyone, a former Attorney-General and decorated athlete is probably your singular best bet. We did not get arrested, so not sure how Shane felt about that, but let’s chalk it up as a win.

As you have already seen from the tenor of these speeches in this place, and the standing ovation, Shane Rattenbury has made an impression with all of us. A lot of us see the ACT Legislative Assembly and the pace and tone of ACT politics as inextricably tied to him.

It is all the big stuff—the legacy that put goons in government, and the light rail through this city—and it is all the small stuff—the quiet and amusing bits, the far-too-frequent flashes of brilliance and the myriad contributions—that leave this place better than you found it.

I hope good karma comes back your way, Shane. And while we scramble to fill a Shane-shaped hole in our hearts, I think the goodwill that you have built here will sustain you a hundred times over.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (5.44), by leave: As they say, it is the end of an era. I do not remember a time in ACT politics without a Shane Rattenbury and I would say that most Canberrans would say the same, including Miss Nuttall who was in grade two when he was elected. Despite our political differences, Shane and I have enjoyed—well, at least from my perspective—a mutually respectful, professional and cordial relationship.

Now, I could talk about Shane’s many firsts and achievements but they have already been covered in a lot of detail. I was first elected in 2016, and I had the chance to work with Shane because, despite the fact that he was a minister, he was actually the chair of the select committee that was inquiring into the establishment of the ACT’s first integrity commission. I think at the time perhaps Mr Barr thought, “You know what, I will put Shane as chair because with two Liberals and two Labor members on that

committee, he is the only one that I can trust to keep us all under control.”

And “under control” he did keep us.

I always found Shane to be well prepared, incredibly pragmatic and always willing to listen to other people’s views. He did not always agree with you, but he was always open-minded and that is what I think held him in good stead. And, whilst I will not and cannot claim that it was perfect, we worked hard as a committee and that work led to the establishment of the ACT’s first integrity commission. And we know how busy that commission has been.

Mr Rattenbury has also spoken a lot about the private members’ bills that he has passed, and showed off about the 15 that he has passed which is equivalent to the 15 of the entire Canberra Liberals, but of course he has not recollected that he does rely on the votes from the Greens to have those bills passed, so I do not think we can take all the blame for that.

But I will give him credit because one of those 15 was of course the stealthing legislation that I brought, and I will forever be grateful to the support of the Greens and to the Labor Party in getting that passed. So, whilst we cannot boast the same achievement in terms of passing private members’ bills, perhaps it was a blessing in disguise. Many of us obviously saved on a lot of cake mix so that we did not have to come up with how on earth to be able to make a cake about stealthing! That may not be safe for the workplace.

This term, I did have the chance to work closely with Shane again—this time with both of us as non-executive members—and I do not think that people have given Shane enough credit. At the time when he made that decision—as the party room did—to leave cabinet and to not go into a power sharing arrangement but instead to sit as a genuine crossbench, I always said that I think it was the right call for the Greens as a party but I thought it was incredibly challenging and difficult on a personal level for Shane. I do not think he gets enough credit for how enormously difficult that decision would have been.

I found the chance to work with Shane again on the economics committee, and we found ourselves on another committee trip. Now, this is probably not going to go down in the same Assembly folklore as the very well documented trip that Caroline Le Couteur, Alistair Coe and Mary Porter took to go through the nightlife in Fortitude Valley in Brisbane but, as we all know, whatever happens on a trip in the nightclubs and the pubs of Brisbane will stay in the nightclubs and pubs of Brisbane! And without divulging any confidences on what happens on a committee trip, Shane and I—along with Ms Carrick—formed a nice little trio to go on a committee trip a few months ago.

Now, it was an ACT taxpayer funded trip so, lest there be any outrage, we are not talking about business class flights and a corporate box at the footy grand final. We are talking about a hired van taking three MLAs on a day trip to Wagga, and it included one lunch stop at the local pub where we all paid for our own schnittys out of our own pockets.

So, I am sure that will not go down in Assembly folklore in the same way, but it does

give us MLAs an opportunity to speak outside of our comfort zone and our natural habitat. Between sharing jelly snakes and constituent stories on that van trip—it is three hours each way—and, again, without divulging any confidences, there were a lot of attempts by both Fiona and Shane to cheer me up by telling me about the virtues of life on the crossbench because for a time it looked like that was where I would go.

Now, there has been quite a lot of public commentary about the recent Liberal-Green potential government that never was and, as is always the case, there is more to the story than what is in the headlines. But perhaps that is a story for another time; perhaps my own valedictory. I can see Mr Parton breathing a sigh of relief.

Leaving aside everything that has happened since—and it was always going to be almost Mission Impossible—I do personally think it is one of those “what could have been” scenarios. And I think perhaps for Shane, a man who has achieved so many out-of-the-box and unique positions as a Greens elected member in this place, it might be that too. But despite that particular thing not coming into fruition, Shane has achieved so many things that no one else has. I mean, I still cannot boast that I have had dinner with Matt Canavan or Angus Taylor, so he has got one up on me there.

On a personal note, I put on the record my thanks to Shane—and indeed the Greens team—for the kindness, support and encouragement during an incredibly challenging time for me and my staff in this place. Shane’s team regularly checked in on my staff and offered us support during a time when so many others turned away from us. I will never forget that, Shane. Thank you.

Shane’s partner, Louise, is probably well-known to many in this chamber and I acknowledge that she is here today. I have had the great pleasure of connecting with Louise over the years—not quite as much as Mr Parton, but certainly for a long time—and she has sacrificed so much to make sure that Shane can do the job that he has been doing for the last almost-18 years. I cannot imagine Shane staying idle for long, but I am sure that Louise is looking forward to spending more time with Shane, at least in the short term.

Politics aside, anyone who has dedicated their lives to serving the people of Canberra for the last 18 years deserves to be recognised. Whether you agree with everything he has done or not, he has had the incredible privilege of serving as Speaker, keeping this Assembly in order—and you know yourself, Mr Speaker, it ain’t easy; as minister, bringing to reality so many of the Greens’ policies; as party leader wrangling what I am sure is a robust party room; and as local member, representing our shared constituency in Kurrajong.

Shane, thank you for your service. You leave a unique legacy in this place for the history books. Your contribution is significant, and as testament you can see the full gallery here today.

Best wishes to you, to Louise and to your family, as you embark on your next step in life post ACT politics. You leave this place a better one. May your never-ending optimism follow you wherever the future takes you.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health,

Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (5.52), by leave: It is a great pleasure to rise today to acknowledge the service of a colleague whose contribution to this Assembly has been enduring and impactful. Mr Rattenbury, who I think we are all allowed to call “Shane” in this debate, Mr Speaker—I seek your guidance—has been a constant presence in this place during my time here, of course, as well as out and about in the inner north and south as a fellow member for Kurrajong. While, of course, we are expecting to welcome back a former colleague to represent our electorate, it will be a significant change for me and the people of Kurrajong not to have Shane representing our community.

From Light Up Lyneham to the Narrabundah Community Festival to sometimes more treacherous events, there are annual and one-off activities across the electorate where I can reliably expect to bump into Shane and often Louise, which is a great relief when I think I am not going to know anybody else. I do want to acknowledge Louise. In addition to the support she has given Shane, Louise has been a friendly face and a welcoming presence for me, and I want to thank her very much for her kindness over the last decade. I wish her all the best with Shane’s retirement, which will no doubt be a big change for her as well, and there may be a fairly short period between “Yay, he is at home” to “Can’t you find something to do?” I have no doubt Shane will quickly find something to do.

I will go to a couple of reflections on Shane’s impact on this place. As has been said, obviously Shane was first elected in 2008, which was a credit to his perseverance after first having his name on a national election ballot paper in 1996 and many times in between, as the Chief Minister touched on. It has been an astonishing trajectory in time in the Assembly, becoming Speaker on the first day, followed by three terms as a minister. Shane has led his party in this place with clarity of purpose and a strong sense of responsibility and awareness of the deep privilege we all share, and we heard that in today’s speech.

He has held some of the most complex and challenging human services portfolios, from Education and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, to Corrections and Mental Health. He has been Attorney-General, a pivotal role in government, and he has held a range of portfolios related to his driving motivation to get involved in politics in the first place: climate change and sustainability, energy, water and emissions reduction. A friend with whom I worked in the Rudd government commented after seeing Shane in action at an energy-related event that he really knew his stuff—and I do not think anyone could argue with that.

But it was not in those portfolios that I mostly worked with Shane. It was mostly in the contexts of justice, mental health and harm reduction. Among many things, as cabinet colleagues, we worked together in the delivery of the Disability Justice Strategy, when Shane held the Corrections portfolio; the establishment of fixed-site pill testing to reduce harms for people who use drugs; and significant cultural change across the health system through the Culture Review Oversight Group when Shane was Minister for Mental Health. Indeed, I was really grateful for Shane’s insights as mental health minister when I unexpectedly came into the Health portfolio in 2019. With Meegan Fitzharris’s departure from this place—although she was always there for advice—Shane was the ministerial corporate memory.

When the conversation around a fixed-site pill testing pilot first emerged, it was something we agreed on in principle, but it was the cause of one of our most challenging conversations. On my side, the questions were around whether this really represented value for money, compared with the many, many other things I could go in and ask the Expenditure Review Committee to spend money on. My passion on this subject seemed to take Shane aback—I do not think he had ever heard me swear in a meeting before. In true Greens fashion, though, Shane just stuck to the position that it was a good thing to do, so we should just fund it—“Don’t worry about the money, folks.” But, with credit to Shane, he was in fact right: it was the right thing to do. The subsequent public debate was highly charged, and I was glad that we were on the same side of it. I am sure you will recall, Mr Speaker, that others had a different view about whether it was the right thing to do. But, in that environment, Shane was clear-eyed about the risks to people who use drugs, particularly young people, and equally clear that we could and should do something about it. The ACT’s pill-testing reforms were not easy nor universally popular, but they were and remain grounded in empathy, informed by evidence and have proved—like so much the ACT government does and so much that Shane has led—to be an example for other jurisdictions.

Our work together as ministers was, in my view, nowhere more important than raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility. It is a prime example of the Chief Minister’s reflection on Shane’s ability to work with Labor colleagues to get a result that may not be perfect but moves the needle and delivers real change. I am sure Shane would agree that both the ACT and Kurrajong have been well served by having members prepared to work constructively across party lines in government. Working together, the Greens and ACT Labor have achieved nation-leading reforms, with pragmatism, empathy and as much urgency as possible, understanding politics is the art of the possible. Shane brings a real passion and dedication to his work, as we have heard throughout this debate. He has been guided by an unwavering belief that we can and must do better for the people we represent, particularly those voices that too often go unheard.

Leadership in politics is never easy. It demands a careful balance between ambition and patience. Shane has usually navigated those tensions with discipline and humility and he has managed to keep it real, as Mr Parton said, in the way he engages with people in person and in important debates. Though I do reflect back on our first sitting in 2025 when we came into this place in February and Shane looked very, very relaxed after a summer where he was not a minister and had probably had a pretty good summer holiday. I said, “Shane, you are looking happy and comfortable,” and he said, “No crisis on the crossbench.” That is a quote. Then February 2026 rolled around and we had a crisis on the crossbench. If no one else hands it to you, you can create it yourself.

Public office asks much of those who serve—time, energy, and often quite, sometimes public, personal sacrifice. Shane has given those things in great measure, reflecting a deep belief in collective action and in the capacity of government to improve lives. While today marks the end of Shane’s time in this chamber and next week will be his last as an MLA, I have no doubt this is not the end of his influence. The policies he shaped and the debates that he led will continue to benefit the Canberra community for many years to come. As a colleague, as a fellow member for Kurrajong and as a minister who has valued the work we have done together, Shane, thank you for your service to this Assembly and to the ACT. I wish you every success in whatever comes next.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (6.00), by leave: I rise to place on record my thanks to Mr Rattenbury—Shane—for his many years of service to this Assembly and to the people of the ACT. Shane’s valedictory speech reflected many of the qualities we have seen from him throughout his time in this place—thoughtful, generous, humble and a deep respect for the role of the public service. It was a fitting reflection on a long and meaningful career. Much has already been said about Shane’s achievements and the significant legacy he leaves behind. His contribution to shaping policy, law and public debate in the ACT is substantial, and those impacts will endure well beyond his time here. But I wanted to speak briefly and personally about the colleague I have come to know since arriving in this Assembly.

As a new member, there were plenty of moments when I was still trying to work out how this place operates, its processes, its rhythms and sometimes what was actually happening in the chamber. Shane was one of the people I could always approach. I could say, “Shane, what do you think about this or that?” or, “Can you explain to me what is going on?”—and he would always take the time to do exactly that. He has been consistently approachable, patient and generous with his knowledge. He never made me feel silly for asking a question. Instead, he shared his experience calmly and collegiately. That kind of support makes an enormous difference to new members, as an Independent that did not have a party machine around me, and is something I will always appreciate.

One thing that has struck me is that, even after 17 years in this place, Shane continued to show up—not just here, but at community events, forums and local issues across Canberra, often outside his own electorate—with genuine interest and engagement. That speaks volumes about his commitment to the community he has served. His attendance at events is second only to Mr Cain.

Shane has also been, for many of us, a voice of reason in this Assembly—calm, practical and balanced. He has approached debate with respect and common sense. Even when there has been disagreement, he brings fairness and integrity to his work. He has led by example in how he treats others, regardless of political differences. Politics is not always an easy or gentle environment, yet, even when there was the occasional good-natured ribbing across the chamber or in committees, Shane always took it with grace and good humour—particularly from Mr Hanson.

I will miss being able to turn to Shane for his counsel, and I know many others will miss his experience and steady presence in this place. Shane, your valedictory speech spoke about new chapters and new opportunities. It takes courage to step away from a role like this, and I wish you every success in whatever comes next. Thank you for your service to the ACT, and thank you personally for your kindness, guidance and support.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (6.03), by leave: This is one of the rare occasions where we have so many different speakers across the Assembly but actually there is nothing to debate, because the contribution that Mr Rattenbury has made to this Assembly and to the people he represents is widely recognised. It cannot be debated. Members in this place—perhaps not in the gallery—know that I am fond of moving amendments. I do not have anything planned for this one. But, if this was a piece of legislation for Mr Rattenbury’s resignation, I might be tempted to amend it to defer the commencement

date, because of his value in this place—and I echo a lot of what Ms Carrick had to say.

I recall meeting with Shane shortly after the 2024 election, at a time where I, along with Ms Carrick, had contributed, I suppose, to reduce the representation of Greens in this place—I am sure much to the chagrin of some of the people in the gallery. But being struck at that time by his candour, openness, generosity and immediate eagerness, despite the campaign that had just occurred, to find opportunities to collaborate in pursuit of better outcomes for our community.

I also remember my first couple of sitting weeks in this Assembly, immediately noticing Shane's effectiveness in negotiating outcomes—outcomes for the Greens, outcomes for the crossbench and outcomes between the major parties—which struck me as a kind of unseen and unacknowledged labour that comes with holding the balance of power on the crossbench. You could definitely call it highly skilled labour in Mr Rattenbury's case. Shane's absence from this place will be noticed for many reasons, and for me one of the clearest will be this genuine approach to multipartisan collaboration to achieve outcomes across the Assembly—outcomes that matter to people in our community.

I have only been here about a tenth of the time that Shane has; so I would like to comment on some of the things that I have enjoyed having the opportunity to work together on as colleagues, and particularly as members for Kurrajong, during that short time. On Oaks Estate, one of the most vulnerable communities certainly in Kurrajong but across the ACT, we both learnt from locals who had raised concerns with multiple different members, specifically in Kurrajong; went out and met with them and realised we had kind of had the same conversations and same meetings. Shane, Ms Lee and I sat then down for coffee and spoke about how we could pursue that. I really enjoyed that—in pursuit of a plan for community members who felt they had not been heard and to be able to collaborate, relatively early for me, in the political process and feel that was good faith and no-one was doing it except in pursuit of better outcomes.

On the Ainslie Volcanics Grasslands and a lot of the incredible conservation work that has gone on there, during this term a telecommunications company was approved to put a big tower in the grasslands. Shane and I both wrote, I think, to Indara, the company, seeking to broker some kind of solution where that would not occur. Neither of us heard back until Shane prepared a bill that would have blocked the development—at which time everyone in the Assembly heard from Indara, seeking for us not to pass the bill.

With Wakefield Gardens, behind the Ainslie shops, there was a small opportunity to collaborate. Multiple members have reflected on Shane's reputation for showing up. I hosted a community forum to discuss the future of the gardens and Shane came along. He did not come along to make a speech or to make a political point—some people who attended would not have noticed that he was there; he just came to show up. It was important to me and to people at the forum that did notice his presence that he was there and he was listening. Not long ago, a community leader reflected on this as well. She told me about having had her fair share of qualms with Mr Rattenbury but reflecting that notwithstanding some very heated arguments, she said, "Shane always shows up."

Shane and I often find ourselves operating in similar political spaces, both being members for Kurrajong and what a conservative voter might describe as "tree-hugging lefty snowflakes". From time to time, this intersecting policy interest is less convenient.

We had an example just this week, where, on Tuesday, Shane came into the chamber during question time and asked why K-Time Twist bars were on the Meals in Schools menu across the ACT, not knowing that I had planned to come in on a Wednesday with a K-Time Twist bar—like the one I am holding—and ask why they were included in the Meals in Schools program and have a back and forth with the Speaker about whether this is a political prop or a visual aid.

MR SPEAKER: I will let it slide this once, Mr Emerson.

MR EMERSON: It is a visual aid—so I got my answer. Shane’s tactfulness in negotiating the shared political space we are operating in, his willingness to have honest conversations, his ability to be smart politically along the way and his ability to navigate any small disputes or even larger disagreements that might arise and to do so in a way that maintains positive interpersonal relationships and a focus on what is best for the people he is here to represent is, I think, a testament to his character, his skill, his political nous and, I am sure, is a significant part of why he is so respected across our community.

With Mr Rattenbury’s resignation, the ACT loses one of its most experienced politicians, a significant source of institutional knowledge, and I think we all know the Assembly will have a different feel moving forward. Like many members, although I have not shared quite as much time in this place with Shane as some, I will certainly miss having him as a colleague and have appreciated the time that we have been able to share. I know he will continue to have an impact on whatever comes next and I wish him and his family all the best.

MR SPEAKER: Well, Mr Rattenbury, after 17 years of quite significant fights you and I have had, I finally get the last word. So on my behalf personally and on behalf of the ACT Legislative Assembly, I would like to thank you for your commitment and dedication as an MLA. I thank you very much, and I wish you and Louise all the very best for the future.

At 6.10 pm, the sitting was suspended until the ringing of the bells.

The bells having been rung, Mr Speaker resumed the chair at 6.16 pm.

Belconnen town centre—master plan

Debate resumed.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (6.17): I will be mercifully short, Mr Speaker. I thank Mr Cain and Ms Barry for bringing this motion in relation to the Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan. Of course, master plans were established under the old planning system and they were intended to articulate a long-term vision, as Ms Cheyne stated—a vision of 20 plus years identifying opportunities for urban renewal, guiding future planning, investment and coordination across government, rather than to establish binding planning controls or delivery obligations. Master plans did not have a direct statutory role under the Territory Plan and were not implementation instruments in their own right. Instead, they were designed to inform

subsequent statutory planning processes, capital works prioritisation and agency investment decisions with individual projects subject to separate funding approvals, business cases and delivery responsibilities across government.

The Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan intent has been progressively translated into district-level strategy, statutory planning controls and investment decisions enabling sustained growth and renewal of the Belconnen town centre. In developing the new planning system, including the new district strategies in the Territory Plan, the content of the previous Territory Plan and the master plans, including the Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan, were considered and included in the new planning system as appropriate. Today, the 2023 Belconnen District Strategy carries forward the high-level strategic directions from the 2016 Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan, particularly in relation to growth around centres, transport and active travel, employment, housing mix and sustainability, while not replicating the detail of the master plan and its specific actions.

In terms of the reviews being called on in this motion of government, there are already reviews that are required at least once every five years after making the planning strategy or a district strategy. Because we have picked up many of the elements in the new planning system of the former Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan, we need to consider every five years whether the district strategy should be reviewed, and consideration must be given as to whether the strategy continues to reflect the long-term planning policy and goals for the ACT and for the Belconnen district. So there will be an opportunity to consider in the future what has been achieved and what can further be improved and implemented in a vision for Belconnen. So we will be supporting the intent of the motion today.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (6.20): I thank Ms Barry and Mr Cain for bringing this motion forward. As Canberra continues to densify, our town centres are doing much of the heavy lifting. It is therefore critical that they maintain the right balance of housing, commerce, transport, community facilities and green space—the very foundations of the high quality of life that makes Canberra such a great place to live. As populations increase in our town centres, community infrastructure must increase alongside them. Too often, however, we see the opposite. Rapid residential growth without a corresponding expansion in public space, community facilities or social infrastructure.

The Belconnen town centre has a great deal going for it—Lake Ginninderra and its surrounding parklands, its great arts centre and its proximity to the University of Canberra. As Belconnen continues to grow, these assets will need to be protected, maintained and built upon. This motion is a practical and sensible step in that direction. It seeks transparency, accountability and good planning, ensuring that the 2016 Belconnen Master Plan is properly reviewed and that growth is supported by the infrastructure people rely on every day. I will therefore be supporting this motion.

I will also be supporting Ms Clay's amendment, which I believe strengthens the calls on the government. In particular, I support the proposal for a Belconnen town centre renewal authority, as coordinated planning and activation are essential to achieving good outcomes in our established town centres. Each town centre should have a renewal authority or something like that which addresses the needs of the particular town centre.

The government has previously said it would consider a renewal authority for Woden, and I look forward to seeing progress on that commitment in the budget. I think all our town centres should have what they need to thrive. I thank all the members for Ginninderra for their strong advocacy for the Belconnen town centre and their electorate.

Amendment agreed to.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (6.22): In brief, and in closing, I want to thank, particularly, Ms Clay for her consultation and the spirit of it throughout the day and for arriving at an amendment to the motion that, as she knows, we were originally reluctant to accept. The amendment calls for a consultation—a consultation on something that the ACT Labor Party made as part of their ACT Labor Plan for Belconnen 2024, and I quote: “A re-elected Labor government will deliver a major renewal of the rapidly growing Belconnen Town Centre.” So, whether that takes the form of an authority or something else, I think Labor should be held to account for something they have promised. Obviously consulting with the community on such a thing is actually pretty important to do. So I do want to thank Ms Clay for adding that into the motion. I also want to thank the government for their support of the motion.

It is not every day, Mr Speaker, as you would know, that a motion is agreed to by all the parties, especially if it comes from the opposition or crossbench. So I do acknowledge the government support for the motion and the amendment. You would think such support would be accompanied by a positive celebratory manner—like the celebratory wine that you might have at a gathering where you are agreeing to something—but, instead, from Minister Cheyne, we got sour grapes as part of her presentation. I thought it was really inappropriate. I am sorry, but I just cannot stomach a line of arguing that starts with, “We agree with something”—they must think it is important if they are going to agree with it, because they do not have to—and then, unfortunately, the minister, not being able to help herself, tainting it with sourness and accusations. That was really disappointing to hear, particularly on an afternoon when we have found the parties very much in agreeance on an earlier motion as well as leading into a mutual acknowledgement of the contribution of a very significant contributor to the ACT parliament and community, Mr Rattenbury.

I want to especially thank my colleague Ms Barry. We worked together on this—Team Ginninderra. We should get the t-shirts. We are going to get the t-shirts ready one day. I want to thank the members for supporting the motion. We look forward to what the government delivers by September and to see how they intend to conduct consultation on taking care of the Belconnen town centre.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Motion to take note of papers

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

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

Statements by members

Hospitals—staff uniforms—petition

MR PARTON (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (6.26): Okay, Canberra health workers, let's talk about fun scrubs. Today I rise to announce that I am sponsoring a petition to this place, calling upon the government to amend or clarify the CHS Uniform Policy, to explicitly permit the wearing of appropriate fun scrubs by nursing, midwifery and other clinical staff, subject to infection control, safety and professional standards, ensuring a revised policy provides clear territory-wide guidance; and to recognise the positive contribution that fun scrubs make to patient experience, staff wellbeing and workplace culture. This petition speaks to the compassion, the dignity and the human side of health care.

I have been absolutely overwhelmed by the outreach to me personally and to my office, through media and social media, since emails from CHS management to staff pushed to limit the wearing of fun scrubs in our healthcare facilities and hospitals. This push is not being considered by health workers as a trivial one—and neither should it be. It has a real impact for patients, especially children. For those experiencing fear or distress, a splash of colour can soften a clinical environment and make care feel much more personal. For staff, it offers a very small but an important way to express individuality and bring positivity into what is a demanding workplace.

This petition reflects what we already know: that good health care is not just about clinical excellence; it is also about connection, it is about comfort and it is about morale. We should be backing our healthcare workers, not restricting them with outdated or overly rigid uniform policies. This petition is live now, and you can expect to see more on this out in the community and, dare I say it, Mr Speaker, on my socials, which I am sure you are all over.

Hospitals—staff uniforms—petition

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (6.28): I rise to speak briefly to respond to Mr Parton's 90 second statement, to let him know that my petition response will point out that the current uniform policy for CHS is due for review this year. If he had been listening to the comments that I made earlier about this matter, (a) there is no ban on fun scrubs; and (b) we will be reviewing this policy this year. So any feedback that is provided through the petition will be taken into account in relation to that.

What I would encourage Mr Parton to do is to not inaccurately represent the position that currently exists, which is that fun scrubs, non-CHS uniform, is allowed in areas where that is part of the local agreement. That policy has not changed. Indeed, the uniform policy for nurses and midwives has not changed at all in the last couple of weeks.

Holt—street lighting

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (6.29): I rise to speak briefly about a response I got to a

ministerial I sent to Minister Cheyne's office on 9 April. It was about missing and not enough operational streetlights in Beaurepaire Crescent and Mockridge Crescent in Holt. There was some concerns from residents, which I expressed to the minister. I received an email response yesterday. I am not quite sure why the minister does not send a ministerial letter in response to a ministerial from an MLA. The response I got was an email from one of her staff. I actually wonder if that is the formality that this should attract—but that is not the point of my speech.

The point of my speech is that, while I did get a response about an inspection of the lights that were suspect and not working—and it was acknowledge that there was some work that clearly needed to be done, and I am grateful for that—I am really a bit concerned about a statement at the conclusion of this email that said, “While we recognise there are some works to be done, there is currently a resource shortage in the ACT for the works required.” For something like streetlights, that is really disappointing to hear. *(Time expired.)*

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

MR SPEAKER: It being 6.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Question resolved in the negative.

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

City services—road signage

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (6.33): Early in April, a work experience student from Canberra Grammar, Miss Koya Napa, spent a few days in my office during the week of 7 to 9 April. It was a pleasure to have her company, and my team enjoyed working with her. During the time where her, I mentioned to her that she had the opportunity to write a speech about something that she thought was important about the governance of the ACT that she would be happy to have read in the parliament, which I now do. I will now read the speech—and I will read it word for word—by Miss Koya Napa, a year 10 student from Canberra Grammar, on something that was of importance to her and chosen by her. Her speech, titled “Damaged road signs in Canberra” is as follows:

Mr Speaker, I would like to speak of a certain issue occurring across Canberra for at least the last three years. The road and traffic signs across the city have been concerning. The public citizens are speaking up about how disgusting it is to see and drive past these damaged signs every day. These traffic signs have been left in poor condition, peeling, covered in graffiti, unable to be read properly, and decaying overall. Some signs are pulled out, turned, or stolen as souvenirs.

In the past year alone over 50 road signs were reported damaged, creating confusion and increasing risk for drivers and pedestrians. And there was even a

promise made for executing an audit and replacement schedule, but this commitment is considered to be only directional and yet not fully implemented. Both the local government and the public could do more to improve the issue.

The public should understand the laws and regulations regarding this matter. Under the Crimes Act 1900 in the ACT reckless damage of public infrastructure can be penalised with up to 10 years imprisonment for serious destruction or a fine for low-level damage. Theft of traffic signs under the same law is most handled with fines, a criminal record or court orders and again up to 10 years imprisonment in serious cases.

If someone interferes with a sign that could affect traffic safety, like creating traffic hazards or misleading drivers, they can be charged under the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act 1999, ACT. With very serious cases, like it caused injury or death, then imprisonment would most likely occur. Restitution fees exist, but there are better ways to help to manage this issue safely.

This issue is as well as a government fault in some descriptions, some members of the public contribute to this issue. They do not understand how consequential these actions can be and view this as mere mischief or boredom. Young people only think about the thrill-seeking side of this behaviour, acting in rebellion without grasping the result of their actions. Another aspect of vandalising these sites may be to protest the government's decisions.

None of these reasons are good enough to damage public infrastructure and safety for personal gain, which is why there are government laws and policies, but a different perspective could be more beneficial. Education can play a crucial role in preventing future incidents and could be the best passive option. At a young age, children learn about the world through those who educate them, and using this approach could become valuable. Without proper education, the offenders do not truly understand the issue and importance of the vandalism and damage of public infrastructure laws and policies. This can create a divide of trust between the public and government, lacking the true harmony this city creates.

Additionally, community engagement can reinforce these lessons. Encouraging local development programs that involve young people in civic projects, such as reporting damaged signs or participating in maintenance initiatives, can give responsibility and pride in the city. By combining education and public involvement, Canberrans can address the issue as a whole. Canberra can work together with cooperation to resolve this issue between the government and the public, and through education and regular maintenance, they can be restored.

International Nurses Day

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (6.38): Every day, nurses shape the health of our communities. International Nurses Day is an opportunity to recognise their leadership, compassion, innovation and enduring impact across the healthcare system. As we mark International Nurses Day next week, on 12 May, we do so mindful of this year's powerful theme, "Our nurses, our future: empowered nurses save lives". In the ACT, this is not merely an aspirational idea it is a guiding principle for how we deliver strategic leadership to support, strengthen and sustain the nursing workforce across the health system. Investing in nurses and enabling full scope of practice strengthens our health services and improves health and wellbeing outcomes

for the entire community.

The ACT government has demonstrated a strong commitment to empowering nurses through targeted workforce strategies and reform initiatives, with continued investment in education, leadership development and creating contemporary career pathways for nurses and midwives. These reforms recognise that the future sustainability of our healthcare system relies on an empowered nursing workforce that is adaptable, innovative and supported. One of the most significant reforms in decades was the introduction of designated RN prescribing, creating new opportunities for registered nurses to work to an extended scope of practice and supporting appropriately-qualified registered nurses to prescribe safely within approved models of care.

The ACT government has progressed a comprehensive program of legislative reform to enable and empower nurse practitioners to work to their full scope of practice, supporting nurse-led, timely, accessible care across settings. This was most recently seen in the passing of the Nurse Practitioners Legislation Amendment Act 2026, removing outdated barriers, strengthening interdisciplinary teamwork and ensuring people can receive timely, person-centred care. As I noted at the time, these reforms are especially important in palliative, aged-care and community settings, where continuity and clinical judgment are critical.

As the backbone of the ACT health system, nurses deliver safe, accessible, professional and person-centred care across all stages of life and care environments. From acute hospitals to community and home-based care, their expertise ensures continuity and trust, supporting individuals and families during some of the most significant and challenging moments of their lives. The ACT government is committed to supporting nurses through all stages of their professional career journey. The co-designed ACT Nursing and Midwifery Leadership Capability Framework is an important initiative supporting leadership growth at every level of the profession. Career transitions in nursing ranging from graduate practice and specialty change to advanced practice, leadership, education, research, policy and later-career pathways require effective support. When well-managed, these transitions strengthen retention and enable nurses to sustain career growth and long-term contribution to the workforce.

Consistent with the national policy agenda under the Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce Scope of Practice Review, the ACT government's early investment in walk-in centres, established since 2010, provides nurse-led models of care that enable advanced practice nurses and nurse practitioners to work to their full scope of practice. The walk-in centres demonstrate our confidence in nursing expertise, enabling advanced practice, local leadership and professional autonomy while delivering free, community-based care close to home.

Supporting nurses also means creating safer and healthier workplaces. International Nurses Day also reminds us that professional autonomy must be matched by safe and supportive work environments. The ACT government continues to invest in initiatives that improve nurse and midwife safety, including the Nurses and Midwives: Towards a Safer Culture Strategy, delivering evidence-based models of care, resources, community awareness campaigns and programs such as Clinical Supervision—all designed to address and support psychosocial safety and positive workplace environments.

Looking after the wellbeing of nurses is not optional; it is fundamental to workforce sustainability. Our commitment to creating safer and healthier workplaces is further reflected in the implementation of the nurse and midwife to patient ratios across ACT public health inpatient services. This reform ensures safe staffing, appropriate skill mix and high-quality care, while supporting staff to deliver the care they are trained and committed to providing. *(Time expired.)*

Automated external defibrillators

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS(Brindabella) (6.43): I am rising this evening to speak about the StreetBeat program. It is a practical, community-based initiative that is spreading publicly accessible defibrillators across Canberra suburbs and, in doing so, it is directly saving lives. StreetBeat is built on a simple idea: in a cardiac arrest, every minute matters. If a defibrillator is available locally, quickly, and members of the public can easily access it, the chances of survival increase dramatically—up to five times if a defibrillator is accessed in the first four minutes.

Too often, these devices are locked behind doors, hidden inside buildings, or located too far away to be used in time. StreetBeat is turning that around by placing automated external defibrillators—or AEDs—in visible, accessible locations in our suburbs, where people live, shop, work and gather. Given that somewhere around 80 per cent of cardiac arrests occur at homes in our suburbs, this approach is very sensible. These devices are designed for ordinary members of the community to use. They provide clear voice instructions; they will not deliver a shock unless it is needed; and they allow someone nearby to act immediately while an ambulance is on the way.

On 15 April, I had the privilege of joining Martin Fisk from St John Ambulance ACT and representatives of GoodLoop Mutual and Bendigo Bank for the launch of two new publicly accessible defibrillators; one in Gowrie and another in Erindale. The Gowrie defibrillator was funded by the Christmas Lights for MS fundraising effort in Gowrie. Ben and James have raised more than \$130,000 for multiple sclerosis and they funded the Gowrie automatic external defibrillator as a gift to the suburb.

After the launch, Ben from Christmas Lights for MS—he also works with me—shared a story that stayed with me and was discussed this morning at StreetBeat’s Canberra-wide launch. He recently spoke with someone whose childhood home was next to the Gowrie shops, less than 100 metres away from the newly installed defibrillator. Her father lost his life to a cardiac arrest in that house, and she recognised immediately how the presence of such a device so close by could have changed the outcome.

Whilst the Gowrie AED is new, that recognition is powerful and it reminds us as elected representatives that these devices and initiatives genuinely save lives. The Erindale defibrillator is located on Gartside Street in front of what many locals know as “fast food wonderland”. It was funded by Con Tsoulis from the Tsoulis Group, who also have a personal connection to this cause. It is a busy area with high foot traffic and constant activity, so it will be a welcome addition to the streetscape.

This morning it was announced that, due to the generous contribution of a local

Canberran, StreetBeat has received a donation large enough to install an AED in every Canberra suburb by the end of this year. Two philanthropists, Frederik Paulsen OBE and Canberran Mat Franklin, have contributed over \$350,000 to fund 77 new AEDs, which will complement the 47 AEDs already installed across Canberra, thanks to significant contributions from Capital Chemist, GoodLoop Mutual, Community Bank Canberra and a range of other individuals, businesses and community groups.

This is extraordinary news. It means that no matter where you live in Canberra, there will be a publicly accessible defibrillator nearby, ready to be used when it is needed most. It is difficult to quantify how significant that is for public health.

Of course, installation is only one part of the story. For those devices to be as effective as possible, people need to know where they are. That is why I believe this work would be strongly complemented by the use of a public notification app such as GoodSAM, which was the subject of a motion I brought to the Assembly last year. On such an app, AED locations can be mapped and shared in real time. When someone calls 000 or when a cardiac arrest is reported through such an app, nearby responders can be alerted and the closest defibrillator can be identified immediately.

I was proud to be at the launch of two new AEDs, and the announcement, this morning. This is a fight I will continue because it is about making sure that the investments we are making translate into lives saved. The StreetBeat initiative shows what can be achieved when government, community organisations, businesses and individuals work together with a shared purpose. These AEDs will save lives and I commend everyone involved. I look forward to seeing this life-saving network extended into every suburb across our great city. Thank you.

Holt—street lighting

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) (6.48): Noting Mr Cain’s 90-second statement and given he is still here, I might as well save us all some time and respond to explain why under-boring services are under pressure, and why that makes streetlight maintenance so difficult at the moment.

But first, Mr Speaker, Mr Cain is welcome to criticise how I run my office, but doing so and, I felt, impugning a staff member felt highly disorderly and Mr Speaker—

Mr Cain interjecting—

MS CHEYNE: Mr Speaker, I do authorise my staff to respond to straightforward queries. Do you know why? Because I get more correspondence than anyone—vastly more—maybe not more than Minister Stephen-Smith, but I think so. When you have the entirety of municipal functions—almost—in your portfolio, let alone AG, the correspondence that we get is significant.

I made a decision in early 2024—which was communicated at the time—that I would prioritise getting responses to members and to constituents quickly, over something that goes through multiple layers of clearance in the directorate just to get my signature on

it—especially when we already know the answer and have that information available. It is much more time consuming to go through a process of that nature but if Mr Cain would like all of my responses to the undertaken in that way, I am happy to. But it will mean that he will get delayed responses, compared to everyone else. That is a matter for him to decide, and he can communicate with my office about what he would prefer.

Now to street lights. It is a bit of a history lesson theme today but understanding history is essential to understanding the challenges that we face now. The thing is, in the massive rapid development of Canberra, particularly in the post WWII era through to the 60s and 70s, street lighting cables were progressively installed underground. This reflected Canberra's strong planning ethos. Urban amenity, uncluttered streetscapes, safety and sensitivity to the landscape and environment were paramount.

Obviously, that has delivered long term benefits for the character of our city, but it has created a lasting and extremely expensive legacy which we have inherited. That is because underground infrastructure is inherently more complex and more expensive to maintain, repair and upgrade. And it often requires under-boring rather than simple surface works. Now there are pressures everywhere on under-boring services. This is because they are highly specialised; they depend on skilled operators and highly specific equipment. They are now under significant strain due to simultaneous demand from transport, energy, utilities and urban development projects.

These pressures are felt nationally but they are particularly acute in the ACT because of those historic planning decisions.

So, when we have multiple street lights out it will almost certainly reflect a cable fault. That cable is almost certainly underground. When there is pressure nationally on highly specialised under-boring services to find the location of that fault, then yes, capacity is limited and things will take longer.

I trust that Mr Cain can use the Hansard of this to inform himself regarding future street light maintenance requests.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.53 pm until Tuesday, 26 May at 10 am

Questions without notice taken on notice
Schools—dissemination of electoral matter

Ms Berry (*in reply to a question by Mr Braddock on Wednesday, 6 May 2026*):

ACT public schools operate under clear policies to ensure that any materials distributed to students are appropriate, non-partisan, and consistent with the Directorate's obligations as a public education provider.

In particular, the *MLA and VIP Visits and Facilities Hire at ACT Public Schools Protocol* is explicit on this point. Section 6.1 provides that partisan or party-political materials, including materials that promote a particular politician, political party or candidate, must not be distributed, promoted or displayed in a school. This includes flyers, posters, booklets, or the electronic distribution of political material.

Electoral matter, as defined under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act*, is inherently partisan. As such, there is no standing authority for such material to be distributed within ACT public schools for promotional purposes.

If material that is branded with a political officeholder and authorised as electoral matter has been distributed, that would appear to be inconsistent with the Protocol. I have therefore asked the Directorate to review the circumstances under which this occurred.

Ms Berry (*in reply to a question by Mr Braddock on Wednesday, 6 May 2026*):

It does not accord with the Education Directorate's Protocol.

As I have indicated, the *MLA and VIP Visits and Facilities Hire at ACT Public Schools Protocol* is explicit at section 6.1 that partisan or party-political materials, including those that promote a particular politician, must not be distributed, promoted or displayed in ACT public schools.

If such material has been distributed in a school setting, that would appear to be inconsistent with the Directorate's policy requirements. That is why I have asked the Directorate to examine the circumstances of this matter and to remind schools of their obligations under Directorate protocol.

Ms Berry (*in reply to a question by Miss Nuttall on Wednesday, 6 May 2026*):

No, I was not aware of this electoral matter being distributed in ACT public schools prior to it being brought to my attention.

Since becoming aware, I have asked the Directorate to investigate the circumstances of how this occurred. I am advised that steps have been taken to ensure that any such material has been removed and the Directorate has also reminded schools of their obligations under relevant policies, including the requirement that partisan or political materials must not be distributed. My office has also written to all federal parliamentarians, reminding them of the *MLA and VIP Visits and Facilities Hire at ACT Public Schools Protocol*.