



DEBATES
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DAILY HANSARD

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28 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 **Monday, 22 June 2026**.

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Thursday, 28 May 2026

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

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

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

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

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

Petitions

The following petition was lodged for presentation:

Planning and development—Curtin—petitions 38-26 and 52-26

By Ms Carrick, from 535 and 19 residents, respectively:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw to the attention of the Assembly their opposition to the proposed five-storey, 54-unit community housing development at the Curtin Presbytery site (5 Strangways Street). We believe this proposal is not appropriate for this site due to its scale, location, and likely impacts on surrounding community infrastructure and safety.

Specifically, the proposed development:

- appears inconsistent with the Territory Plan's objective to support sustainable growth while minimising pressure on existing infrastructure
- introduces building height and bulk that would overshadow the playground of Holy Trinity Primary School and overlook the adjacent early learning centre
- ignores Territory Plan guidelines that developments next to schools must not generate traffic that creates unsafe pick-up/ drop-off zones
- ignores the cumulative impact on urban density in the Curtin community, including traffic congestion and access to local services
- may establish a precedent for similar developments adjacent to school environments.

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

- Reject the proposed community housing development at the Curtin Presbytery site; and
- Develop and publish clear planning guidelines for community and social housing developments located adjacent to schools and other sensitive sites, including requirements relating to building scale, setbacks, traffic management, and safety.

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petitions, having at least 500 signatories, were referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning.

The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petitions would be recorded in Hansard and a copy referred to the appropriate minister for response pursuant to standing order 100, the petition was received.

Motion to take note of petitions

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

That the petitions so lodged be noted.

Planning and development—Curtin—petitions 38-26 and 52-26

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (10.02): I want to begin by saying that I support affordable housing. Our community needs more housing, and we need to support key workers, like teachers, nurses and others, to live close to where they work. This is something that I strongly believe in. But supporting affordable housing also means getting it right—making sure new development is well designed, appropriate for its context and takes account of the people who are already there. That is why I am sponsoring this petition.

This is about ensuring that the community has a voice, particularly the school community, whose daily environment will be directly affected by this proposal. The concerns that have been raised are consistent and reasonable. They relate to overlooking the school grounds, privacy, safety, overshadowing, and the impact of a multistorey development immediately adjoining a primary school. These are not minor issues. They go to the wellbeing of children and the functioning of the school.

It is worth noting that the National Capital Design Review Panel has already identified issues around overlooking and privacy in the design. However, the panel has not explicitly assessed the impacts on the school itself, and that is a critical gap. Similarly, the Planning Authority has not yet undertaken a detailed assessment of how this development will affect the school community, nor acquired a clear set of design responses to address those impacts.

I want to acknowledge that the proponent is willing to work with the community and is now modifying the design to reduce overlooking. That is a positive step. But this process has been a learning experience. It has highlighted that the school, as a sensitive neighbour, has not received the level of attention it deserves in the design and assessment process by our planning experts. I do not think the question is whether this development should proceed. The question is how it proceeds and whether it does so in

a way that properly responds to the school community.

The next step is clear. There should be a targeted assessment of the impacts on the school, followed by a set of considered design responses to address those impacts. That would allow us to do two important things at once—support much-needed affordable housing, and ensure that the safety, privacy and amenity of the school community are properly protected. That is a balanced outcome.

Given significant overshadowing happened at the Forrest Primary School from a private development, I encourage the government to develop and publish clear planning guidelines for community and social housing developments located adjacent to schools and other sensitive sites, including requirements relating to building scale, setbacks, traffic management and safety, as we densify and this happens more around our primary schools.

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) (10.05): I thank Ms Carrick for tabling this petition this morning. This government is absolutely committed to supporting more affordable housing in Canberra. The ACT government understands that change in established communities can be really challenging. I understand that.

The ACT has a planning system with the checks and balances which I know carefully considers issues, like shading and solar access. I also know that, in this case, Marymead CatholicCare has made a huge effort to ensure that these homes will have as minimum an impact as possible on the school community.

While the government will formally respond to this petition in due course, I have an ask of Canberrans today. I ask that all Canberrans make room for this project, to share their space, and to provide homes for people who really need them.

I want to acknowledge and thank Holy Trinity Primary School students for their representations to government. These are really important, and I invite you to continue to work with the proponent, Marymead CatholicCare, on this matter. I have absolutely heard your concerns, and those of your families and your community, but I ask you to please consider whether it might be worth sharing your special part of Curtin with people in our community who are doing it tough. We are all here, after all, talking about homes for real people who live in our city right now—early childhood educators, health workers, retail staff, cleaners, public servants, students, parents, and older Canberrans as well.

Of course, schools are at the heart of their communities, and I take the concerns of students and parents seriously. But I also have to ask every Canberran, now even more than ever, to be prepared to share their suburbs and their spaces. The need for more homes and the cost of housing are at an all-time high. We are in a housing crisis. We can no longer just support affordable housing in principle. Each of us simply must step up. If we as Canberrans are serious about housing affordability, we must make space for affordable homes in places where people can truly build their lives, the same as the rest of us do.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (10.07): I certainly want to echo the thoughts of the sponsoring member, Ms Carrick, that the community deserves to have a voice in this place. There are times when we sponsor a petition that may or may not exactly align with our wishes, but at least it is an opportunity for the community to represent their views here.

I was privileged to do a site tour of this particular development. I want to acknowledge Ms Anne Kirwan, the CEO of Marymead CatholicCare, who took me around the site, because there were some concerns being expressed to different MLAs, particularly those with some planning experience or background in this Assembly. In my case, it was as a former shadow planning minister. I want to thank Anne for the tour and the briefing.

As the minister has touched on, the proposal is to have 54 apartments to accommodate essential workers, including families, near a shopping centre and transport hub. In principle, that sounds like a great idea. It was good to see the site myself, to see the space that is available for this development, next to some open land, and next to a primary school.

I am comforted that the school have been fully engaged and have put their views forward. As part of that type of engagement and process, the design has been altered and there have been adjustments made. That is often an outcome of consistent and effective consultation. It is good to see that Marymead CatholicCare were open to hearing the views of an affected community.

As members would be aware, in a central location in the well-established suburb of Curtin, with access to schools, shops, transport and amenities, the proposal is for 54 apartments to accommodate essential workers in the affordable range. That is an outcome that I do not have a problem with, and I do not think any MLA in this place would have a problem with that. Getting the detail right is what the petition is calling for, even though it may have a negative view of the development in some ways.

We will see what happens with this petition as it goes forward. I again thank Marymead CatholicCare for the briefing I had with them. I am assured that the consultation door remains open; the community is able to talk to them at any time about any concerns. The process is underway; the petition has been lodged. I believe it has over 500 signatures, which is the threshold for a committee to be required to consider the petition and make a decision as to whether or not there should be an inquiry, and we will let that process play out.

Within the established footprint, where there is space, where there is closeness to amenities, having an increase in affordable houses and apartments, especially for essential workers, is certainly an outcome that, in principle, should be closely considered. If there is no problem with it proceeding, it should happen promptly.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.11): The Greens have been very clear at the last election and throughout the term that we are very keen to see more missing middle development and more homes built within our footprint. That makes more homes for our people, and it also helps us to do the essential work that we need to do of setting our urban growth boundary, our city limit, and making sure that we are not building more and more sprawl

and destroying our environment as we do that.

We are also extremely keen on seeing more public and community housing. It is important that we get the details of these projects right, and that we have good consultation on those. Generally speaking, I think it is a great idea for us to have public and community housing in more of our existing footprint and on more of our suitable sites. It is great to see this petition bringing through the voices of the community. We have a process to look at it from here, and we will be interested to see what the results are from that.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Executive business—precedence

Ordered that executive business be called on.

Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2026

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

Title read by Clerk.

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) (10.13): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I have a title for my speech today. My introduction speech today is called “The thousand acts of coercive control”. Coercive control is a thousand learnings—learning to retreat, to second-guess yourself, to apologise for things that were never your fault, or never a fault at all, a thousand moments of learning to shrink, a thousand feelings of despair and anxiety, a thousand moments where you could not see a way out, where you could not breathe.

Coercive control is a thousand acts of survival. It is staying small to stay safe; it is keeping children small for their safety. It is checking a mood before you speak. It is a thousand acts of justifying expenses, justifying attention focused on a phone, justifying a private conversation with a friend. It is a thousand put-downs of your friends and family, to the point that you cannot justify why you should see them anymore. It is a thousand acts of surviving the daily, deep disrespect, the name-calling, put-downs and abuse. It is a thousand acts of measuring every word you say and bracing against every word they say. It is a thousand acts of managing escalations of anger and constant threats, all the while, thousands of subtle acts to intersect and deflect the coercion and control, to protect the children.

Coercive control is a thousand acts of silence. The silence exists because the survivor’s autonomy is so eroded that self-confidence and safety are gone. A thousand acts create an overwhelming burden of disclosure to family and friends, let alone to the justice

system; the burden so heavy to tell a coherent story of a thousand acts of behaviours that are designed to be invisible, behaviours that have been normalised in family and social settings, behaviours that there is very little language for, behaviours that sit outside society's understandings of violence, behaviours that are so terrible in a relationship, that can become so deeply life-threatening after the relationship ends, behaviours that shift post-separation to a widening net of complexity; that while their eyes remain firmly on you, the control and coercion shifts to the children, the businesses or the lives that were jointly built.

These are just some parts of the thousand acts of coercive control. These are just parts of the hundreds of stories that I have heard from victim-survivors over the years, and I dedicate this bill to those victim-survivors.

Today, I present the Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2026 to the Assembly. The bill inserts a new part 3B—Coercive Control—into the Crimes Act 1900, to introduce a standalone criminal offence of coercive control. Coercive control is an insidious pattern of harmful behaviour that is designed to strip away a person's autonomy, freedom, safety and sense of self. Its impacts can be profound, cumulative and devastating.

Coercive control entered the national mainstream consciousness when Hannah Clarke and her three beautiful children were brutally murdered by her ex-husband. What Australians came to understand through Hannah's story was that the violence did not begin on that terrible day. It had been building for years through coercive and controlling behaviour. Hannah's parents, Sue and Lloyd Clarke, have shown extraordinary courage in turning unimaginable grief into advocacy, ensuring Australia better understands the warning signs and dangers of coercive control.

Like all Australian jurisdictions, the ACT has been on a journey to this point. In 2022, Minister Berry asked the Domestic Violence Prevention Council for advice regarding progressing an offence in the ACT. The report advised the government to undertake extensive consultations with First Nations and at-risk vulnerable groups in our community, while monitoring the implementation of similar laws in other Australian states, before criminalising coercive control.

In 2023, the inaugural ACT Domestic and Family Violence Review was released, which found that coercive control was present in the overwhelming majority of domestic and family violence deaths in the ACT. The review found that in several homicide cases there was "no identifiable history of physical violence prior to the homicide". Instead, perpetrators used non-physical tactics, including isolation, intimidation, psychological manipulation, surveillance, financial control and threats. The ACT review found that perpetrators frequently escalated coercive and controlling behaviours leading up to the homicide, particularly around separation, when perpetrators perceived they were losing control.

In early 2024, Women's Health Matters launched the start of the Victim Survivor Voice project. This project is grounded in lived-experience engagement and trauma-informed practice, working with victim-survivors to share their stories, experiences of the system and provide a forum to discuss reform.

The project undertook intensive work with victim-survivors to provide advice to inform policy, legal reform and service responses relating to coercive control in the ACT. The resulting report, titled *Too urgent to rush*, emphasises that coercive control is not a single incident of abuse; rather, it is an ongoing pattern of behaviours intended to dominate, isolate and intimidate another person. Many participants explained that coercive control often escalated gradually and was difficult to identify early, particularly when many behaviours can appear subtle or socially normalised when viewed in isolation.

A central finding of the report was that coercive control frequently continues after separation. Participants described perpetrators using legal systems, parenting arrangements, housing insecurity and ongoing intimidation to maintain control long after the relationship had ended. The report also highlights the profound impacts on victim-survivors' mental health, financial security, parenting capacity and long-term wellbeing.

The report strongly advocates for a whole-of-system response to coercive control. Victim-survivors called for improved community education, trauma-informed services, earlier intervention, stronger perpetrator accountability, and more consistent understanding of coercive control across police, courts, health services and community organisations. Importantly, the report stresses that criminalisation alone cannot address coercive control without broader investment in prevention, training and victim-survivor supports.

I would like to thank all the participants in this project for sharing their experiences and voices to effect this change, some of whom are in the chamber today, and online as well. As highlighted in the release of the ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy yesterday, centring the voices of victim-survivors in our policy development and reform is a critical part of the work going forward. This reform has also been shaped by sustained advocacy from our community. I would like to acknowledge all the victim-survivors who have personally written to me over the past year and a half to advocate for this reform. I see you, I believe you and I hear your calls for systemic reform.

I would also like to acknowledge Ms Castley for her advocacy in seeing us get to this point today, and to thank her and other colleagues in the Assembly for coming along the journey of the last few months, as we worked through the key aspects of the bill.

On 25 September last year, I outlined government's commitment to introduce legislation by mid-2026. At that time, I also noted that, while there is strong support to improve criminal justice responses to coercive control, there is equally a clear understanding that this is a complex and sensitive area of law. It required careful consideration and consultation with stakeholders to ensure the legislation reflects the realities of coercive control, while minimising the risk of unintended consequences.

Since then, I have been working with justice stakeholders and specialist community sector members to develop a legislative model of coercive control which responds to the needs and experiences of the ACT. This included establishing the Steering Committee on the Criminalisation of Coercive Control, bringing together the specialist domestic, family and sexual violence sector, community representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, multicultural community, disability

community and LGBTIQ+ community, and legal and justice organisations, to provide advice on the legislative model that we have landed on today. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to shaping this important reform, and I am proud now to introduce this bill.

The bill provides that an adult commits an offence if: they engage in a course of conduct consisting of family violence against another person; the other person is their family member; they engaged in the course of conduct with intent to coerce or control the family member; and a reasonable person would, in all the circumstances, consider it likely that the conduct would cause harm, or fear of harm, in the family member or another person. It is a defence if the conduct was reasonable in all the circumstances. The maximum penalty for the offence is seven years or 700 penalty units, or both.

I will now explain in more detail some of the key elements of the offence and the safeguards that we have incorporated. One of the primary aims of the bill is to improve the way the criminal justice system recognises and responds to coercive control as a pattern of behaviour. The traditional criminal justice system focuses on specific individual incidents, and coercive control operates as a course of conduct by which the perpetrator seeks to dominate and control another person, causing cumulative harm over time.

The first element of the offence recognises this, by providing that the prosecution must prove that the accused engaged in a course of conduct consisting of family violence. By focusing on a course of conduct, meaning, in plain terms, a pattern of behaviour rather than an individual event or incident, the bill targets the insidious reality of coercive control. This is the key difference between this offence and traditional approaches of family violence offending.

In the consultations, we heard that coercive control occurs in a wide range of familial relationships, beyond domestic and intimate partners. We heard from culturally and linguistically diverse communities that coercive control may involve the abuse of visa and migration status and culturally specific pressures exerted by extended family members. People with disability described control exercised by carers through restricting access to supports, communication or medication.

Members of the LGBTIQ+ community spoke of abuse experienced by family members, including threats of “outing” and control of their identity and expression. We also know that children and young people and older people are at risk of experiencing coercive control from family members and carers, exploiting the relationships of dependence and trust.

Several steering committee members and community representatives strongly advocated for the offence to recognise this by adopting a broad scope of relationships. We have taken this advice. The offence applies to family members as defined under the Family Violence Act 2016. The definition of family member includes a current or former domestic or intimate partner, a relative, a person someone has a family-like relationship with, a child of a domestic partner or former domestic partner, and a parent of one’s child. This also includes someone regarded and treated as a relative and someone with whom a person has a family-like relationship.

I acknowledge that jurisdictions have taken different approaches to the scope of relationships. We worked closely with stakeholders in the ACT to learn from these approaches and consider what would work best for our community. Community members, the specialist sector and advocacy organisations were clear that a narrow focus on intimate and domestic partners would undermine the impact and effectiveness of the offence, so this model will better reflect and respond to the prevalence of coercive control in our community.

The offence also provides that the accused must have intended their course of conduct to coerce or control the family member. This reflects the way coercive control has been characterised by experts, as a pattern of behaviour aimed at dominating or controlling another to deprive them of their autonomy and freedom. It is not incidental or accidental. It is a deliberate and targeted pattern of abuse.

The offence has been carefully designed to respond to the serious harm of coercive control and ensure our criminal law recognises the full context and pattern of abuse. We also recognise that this offence is novel in the way it captures a course of conduct. We have embedded safeguards with the offence to achieve this and guard against the risks of overreach and misidentification.

The fault element of intent is a vital safeguard for the offence. We have learned from the experiences in other jurisdictions in taking this approach. Every other Australian jurisdiction to date has adopted this fault element in their coercive control offences, targeting the use of coercive control, whilst reducing the risk of unintended consequences of this new offence.

In the second reading speech for the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Coercive Control) Bill 2022 in the New South Wales parliament, the then Attorney-General reflected that New South Wales adopted the fault element of intent as an important protection against the risks of the offence being used as a weapon against those it is designed to protect. In the context of a novel and evolving area of law, this strikes an appropriate balance.

A further safeguard is that the course of conduct must be made up of family violence as defined under the Family Violence Act. This appropriately confines the offence to conduct which is properly characterised as family violence in our legislation. It does not seek to criminalise ordinary disagreements, family tensions or imperfect relationships. It also ensures that the offence is consistent with the current definition of family law.

The bill also provides that a reasonable person must consider the course of conduct likely in all the circumstances to cause harm or fear of harm to the family member or someone else. This objective standard focuses on the likely outcomes of the alleged perpetrator's behaviour, applying the standard that the community expects. There is also a specific defence if the course of conduct was reasonable in all the circumstances. This ensures that the offence does not criminalise conduct that does not otherwise meet the threshold for criminal conduct.

Recognising that this is a new and complex reform, the bill provides for two layers of oversight and monitoring. Firstly, the bill establishes the Coercive Control Advisory

Committee. The committee will provide advice in relation to the offence. This advice will inform work to prepare the commencement of the offence and the initial implementation of the offence, to ensure we can proactively identify and respond to emerging issues and risks. Secondly, the bill provides that the minister must undertake a statutory review of the offence as soon as practicable three years after the offence commences. Both the advisory committee and the statutory review provide embedded opportunities to monitor the implementation and impact of the offence.

As we have acknowledged, law reform is only one part of the work needed to improve responses to coercive control. Although the introduction of this bill marks a significant step forward, there is still much work to be done to ensure any person experiencing this form of abuse can access trauma-informed supports and a meaningful justice response. This is why the bill proposes the commencement of the offence be delayed for two years. This will provide us with time to build on this important work with the newly established Coercive Control Advisory Committee, and the ACT community and stakeholders across the specialist domestic violence sector, community sector and justice sector. This work will ensure that this offence can be implemented safely and effectively.

Other jurisdictions have adopted similar delayed commencement periods and have reflected on the importance of providing this time to ensure the system and services can be ready to implement. Work is already underway in several of these areas for us to build on, as I outlined in my ministerial statement yesterday. I am particularly committed to working with ACT police to support building capability to recognise and respond to coercive control through the offence. ACT Policing is already undertaking significant work to uplift domestic and family violence capability across all members.

The coercive control response package funded in last year's budget also set foundations to support the implementation of the offence. This package enabled the delivery of a public education campaign, as well as funding for the ACT Magistrates Court staff to attend coercive control training delivered by the National Judicial College of Australia, and ongoing work to update and embed the risk assessment and management framework to develop a shared language and understanding of domestic and family violence risk across the system.

In closing, I wish again to acknowledge and thank the strong and committed advocacy of the domestic and family violence specialist sector, community advocates and victim-survivors who have shaped this work. I would also like to thank the JACS team—Claire, Angela, Johanna and Qing. This bill has been informed by all their voices and insights. I look forward to working with them, the rest of our community and members of the Assembly to progress this work going forward. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Intergovernmental cooperation

Ministerial statement

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (10.33): I rise this morning on the topic of intergovernmental cooperation, to outline the commonwealth's funding to the territory

in their 2026-27 budget, and speak to how the commonwealth government allocates funding across the federation.

The relationship between the territory and the commonwealth has never been more consequential. At a time of significant economic and social change, the effectiveness of engagement between the two levels of government in the territory will shape Canberra's capacity to respond to housing affordability pressures, infrastructure demand, productivity challenges and sustained population growth—whilst of course continuing to fulfil our unique responsibilities as Australia's national capital and a key regional centre for surrounding regional New South Wales.

In 26-27, total commonwealth payments to the ACT are estimated at approximately \$4 billion, rising to around \$4.3 billion per annum over the forward estimates. Over that forward estimates period, the ACT is expected to receive more than \$16 billion through a combination of GST distributions, specific purpose payments and national partnership agreements.

Turning specifically to the fiscal year ahead in 26-27, this includes approximately \$2.2 billion in GST distributions and approximately \$1.75 billion in other payments. It of course goes without saying that this level of funding represents a substantial share of the territory's overall revenue base. It underpins the delivery of essential services, supports infrastructure investment, and contributes directly to economic activity across the ACT.

Since the election of the Albanese government, the ACT has benefitted from increasing financial support from the commonwealth. This reflects a renewed recognition from the commonwealth of the territory's national role. As the national capital, the ACT's fiscal structure is fundamentally different to that of other jurisdictions. As is well known, we do not have access to major own-source revenues such as mining royalties which significantly augment the revenue capacity of some states in the federation. We are, of course, unable to tax commonwealth land, property or employment activity, which, as we all know, forms a significant share of economic activity within our jurisdiction.

That said, our economic base is uniquely shaped by the presence of the commonwealth government, which both underpins and constrains our fiscal capacity.

These are, of course, not temporary conditions. They are enduring structural characteristics of the ACT's place within the federation, and this means that commonwealth funding is not simply supplementary. It is integral to the territory's financial sustainability.

As I have mentioned, the largest component of commonwealth funding is general revenue assistance provided through the distribution of the goods and services tax. In the ACT in 26-27, those GST payments are estimated at \$2.2 billion and are expected to grow broadly in line with the national GST pool over the forward estimates. As I am sure members are aware, these payments are distributed by the Commonwealth Grants Commission under the principle of horizontal fiscal equalisation (HFE), which is designed to ensure that each jurisdiction has the capacity to provide public services at a broadly comparable standard—assuming comparable levels of revenue effort and operational efficiency.

Each year the Commonwealth Grants Commission undertakes what can only be described as an extensive and highly technical annual assessment of each jurisdiction's revenue-raising capacity and expenditure needs. Revenue capacity is assessed across all major tax bases including payroll tax, land tax, stamp duties and other economic activity. Expenditure needs are assessed across service delivery areas such as health, education, infrastructure, disability services and community programs. These assessments are consolidated into relativities, which determine each jurisdiction's per capita share of the national GST pool.

The operation of this system is complex. It is dynamic, and it is very sensitive to a wide range of factors. The ACT's assessed revenue capacity is influenced by our lack of access to mining royalties, our inability to tax commonwealth activity, and the relatively narrow structure of our economy. At the same time, our expenditure needs are assessed as below average in some areas, reflecting our compact urban form and economies of scale in service delivery. The interaction of these factors results in the ACT receiving a GST allocation that is above the national average on a per capita basis, consistent with the equalisation framework I have just touched upon.

However, this outcome should not be interpreted as evidence that the ACT is overfunded, Mr Speaker. It reflects the commission's attempt to balance structural revenue constraints against assessed service delivery costs within a model that necessarily applies generalised assumptions across all the Australian states and territories.

Importantly, and I think it is significant to stress this point, the ACT's GST share is highly sensitive to developments in the other states and territories. Movements in global commodity prices can significantly alter mining revenues in resource-rich jurisdictions, which in turn affects their assessed revenue capacity and redistributes the GST shares across all jurisdictions. Similarly, fluctuations in property markets influence transfer duty and land tax capacity, while differences in population growth affect both revenue and expenditure assessments. As a result, the ACT's GST allocation can be materially affected by economic conditions that are entirely external to our own economy.

There is no doubt that the commission's methodologies are often contested, and they continue to evolve. Recent refinements have included: changes to the way hospital funding is assessed under the National Health Reform Agreement; adjustments in the treatment of disability services and aged care interactions; updated approaches to measuring infrastructure costs; and the effects of population density. Each of these methodological changes has a distributional consequence, and careful engagement with these processes is therefore essential to ensure that the ACT's position is accurately represented.

A critical issue within this system is the accuracy of population estimation. Population is a central driver of both GST allocations and expenditure assessments. And for the ACT, this is particularly significant because the territory provides services to a broader regional population beyond our resident base, particularly in health, education and justice. While some of this cross-border demand is captured in expenditure assessments, it is not always fully reflected in population-based measures. This creates a risk of systematic under-recognition of actual service demand.

This issue has been further compounded by historical inaccuracies in population estimation. For example, in the 2021 national census, confirmation was found that the ACT's population had been undercounted by approximately 22,000 people—more than five per cent—representing the highest proportional error of any jurisdiction. Now, given the scale of GST funding that I outlined earlier in this statement, even relatively small discrepancies in population estimates can translate into material fiscal impacts.

So, in response to this challenge, the ACT government has worked closely with the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the commonwealth to improve estimation methodologies by incorporating broader administrative data sources and refining modelling approaches. While progress has been made, it is fair to say further work is required.

We are also seeking discussions with the commonwealth regarding the implications of past population undercounting for GST relativities. Ensuring that the GST system accurately reflects the ACT's structural constraints, our service delivery responsibilities and our true population is essential to achieving fair and equitable funding outcomes.

Whilst the GST is our largest single revenue source, in addition to it, the ACT receives funding through national agreements that support the delivery of essential services. In 2026-27, this includes approximately \$694 million for hospitals and health services; \$528 million for schools; \$51 million for skills and workforce development; and \$32 million for housing and homelessness services.

The ACT health system operates not only as a local provider but also as a regional tertiary system, delivering complex care to patients from surrounding southern New South Wales. This creates a level of demand and a cost that is high, relative to the size of the territory's population. And I am pleased to say that through coordinated advocacy with other small jurisdictions, particularly Tasmania and the Northern Territory, the ACT secured an outcome in the most recent National Health Reform Agreement. This has translated into an additional \$75 million in hospital funding in 26-27, with an important provision that this funding will be quarantined from GST assessments. In other words, it will not be equalised away from us to the other states and territories.

Turning now to housing, which remains one of the most significant areas of focus in commonwealth territory collaboration. The ACT continues to experience sustained demand for well-located and affordable housing. This is driven by a range of factors: population growth, demographic change and broader national market conditions. Addressing this challenge requires the alignment of land release, planning frameworks, infrastructure investment and financing mechanisms.

And I am pleased, again, to advise the Assembly that in April of this year the ACT and commonwealth governments reached an agreement to unlock approximately 4,900 new homes for the territory, including more than 1,700 reserved for first home buyers. This agreement is supported by \$250 million in commonwealth funding for enabling infrastructure, including estate servicing, water and utility upgrades, relocation of major assets, remediation works and infrastructure delivery across key growth areas.

In addition, as I mentioned in my ministerial statement yesterday, the ACT is benefiting

from continued investment through the Housing Australia Future Fund and related programs which are supporting around 894 social and affordable homes in the territory, as part of the first two rounds of that program. I do note that is well above our population share of that national program.

The territory is also well positioned to access funding from the \$2 billion National Housing Support Program Local Infrastructure Fund, supported by a strong pipeline of development in Molonglo, Belconnen and major urban renewal precincts.

As one of only three jurisdictions on track to meet the National Housing Accord targets, the ACT will also participate in the New Homes Bonus Scheme, further reinforcing its position as a national leader in housing supply.

Mr Speaker, the 26-27 commonwealth budget also includes targeted infrastructure investments in the territory that will support growth and connectivity across Canberra. These include: a \$50 million commonwealth contribution for the duplication of Drake-Brockman Drive, supporting the residential development in west Belconnen; \$4.6 million towards the planning for the Molonglo east-west arterial, supporting further growth in the Molonglo Valley; and, of course, \$50 million towards the upgrades of the Sydney-Canberra rail corridor that I spoke about extensively on Tuesday morning.

The rail investments form part of a broader program aimed at improving safety, reliability and travel times—with the initial objectives focused on achieving reliably sub-four-hour journey times. Whilst this investment is welcome, it represents an initial step, Mr Speaker. For the national capital, high-quality rail connectivity to Sydney must remain a long-term national infrastructure priority, and I am pleased to see the recognition by Infrastructure Australia of this priority. The ACT government will continue to advocate for sustained investment to deliver faster, more reliable and more frequent services.

Now, beyond the major funding streams I have just outlined, the commonwealth continues to invest across a wide range of community and national priorities in partnership with the territory government. This includes, in this budget: \$30 million for a new RSPCA facility; funding for our national cultural institutions, which are significant drivers of tourism activity for our economy; targeted investments in mental health services; and a range of smaller commonwealth programs that support skills, justice and community outcomes.

In conclusion this morning, Mr Speaker, we acknowledge the commonwealth's funding to the ACT has increased in recent years and we welcome the tangible benefits that this will deliver across multiple sectors. That progress is welcome. It recognises that the territory faces pressures arising from population growth, service demand—both inside the territory and from surrounding New South Wales, the infrastructure requirements our growing city faces, and, importantly, a significant partnership between the two levels of government to tackle housing affordability.

It is clear that meeting all of these challenges will require a sustained partnership. It is also going to require ongoing advocacy and careful alignment of investment between the two levels of government, with long-term planning required. The ACT government

will continue to work constructively with the commonwealth on fair and equitable funding arrangements to ensure that our population and service demands are accurately recognised.

I present the following paper:

Intergovernmental cooperation—Ministerial statement, 28 May 2026.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mental health and suicide prevention

Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (10.50): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a statement relating to the government's ongoing work on mental health and suicide prevention.

This is important enduring work to strengthen and support our community. It is estimated that more than one in four Canberra ACT residents have experienced mental illness in the past 12 months, and more than 45 per cent will experience mental illness in their lifetime. In 2024, 12 ACT residents lost their lives to suicide, with 16 per cent of Canberrans experiencing suicidal thoughts in their lifetime. There are members of our community who live with a diagnosable mental illness and require support and assistance to live full and meaningful lives.

But it is also a moment of volatility and change, where the environment is degrading the resilience of many people to deal with the pressures of everyday life. Sources of anxiety include the rising cost of living, increasing interest rates, National Disability Insurance Scheme policy shifts, and threats to young people's ambitions for the future, including climate change and AI. And this comes fast on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic, which upended people's lives for more than two years, and disrupted a critical period for so many children and young people. It is important to recognise the significant impact these factors can have on people's mental health.

Health services play a vital role in supporting individuals experiencing poor mental health, and the ACT government will continue to strengthen these services to ensure they are accessible to everyone who needs support, regardless of their background.

Importantly, the ACT government is not alone in delivering crucial services to people at all stages in their mental health journeys. The government is proud of the ongoing partnership with community organisations of all types to deliver services to where they are needed most, and with care and insight that is often driven by lived experience.

We also recognise that many services are funded or co-funded by the commonwealth government. In addition, it is important to acknowledge that mental health services are

only one part of the solution. The circumstances in which people live, including their access to safe and affordable housing, safety for themselves and their children, financial wellbeing, and connection to their community, are equally critical.

It is important to highlight this moment of volatility and changing demand because it requires something different of us as a government and as a community. Growing demand for services of all types means the ACT mental health system is under significant pressure. Too many people still receive help too late—through emergency care or acute inpatient admission. Earlier opportunities to intervene have been missed. People experience long waits, fragmented services and repeated assessments. Our mental health workforce has grown significantly, but increasing demand means it is still stretched, and our fiscal environment is constrained.

The initiatives I am focusing on today reflect the need to rebalance the way the government supports the ACT community. We are taking account of the enduring needs and the environmental drivers of changing demand. We are reshaping our relationship with community service providers and recognising changes in commonwealth government policy.

Mr Speaker, in November 2025, the government released a paper that underpins one of our key mechanisms for reshaping services in the ACT community—the Mental Health Non-Government Organisations Strategic Investment Plan, or SIP. The SIP is a key document that outlines the ACT government’s approach to redesigning and investing \$13.8 million annually in the NGO mental health sector. The SIP aims to shift the way we fund community services from grants to commissioning. This allows us work with the community sector on the overall design of the mental system, to meet the changing moment.

When commissioning is completed, it will also provide funding certainty for community services, moving from short-term grants to a minimum of five-year contracts. The commissioning of various streams of service will be guided by the SIP. Presently, the preparatory work for commissioning of residential and community support and advocacy streams is almost finalised.

In the 2025-26 ACT budget, the government invested to support the mental health and wellbeing of young Canberrans by investing more than \$9.4 million over four years to strengthen community-based programs. These investments are supporting young Canberrans and their families by providing mental health services that are accessible, timely and effective. This will, in turn, help to reduce pressure on the public hospital system while enabling children and young people to live better.

These programs included ongoing funding support for: MindMap, which is a digital mental health navigation tool connecting young people and families to real-time support from clinical staff and peer workers; Youth Aware of Mental Health is an early intervention and suicide prevention program delivered in high schools; WOKE is a free dialectical behaviour therapy group program for young people experiencing emotional distress—and I understand it is being renamed in collaboration with young people; Stepping Stones is a trauma-informed service supporting children exposed to family violence and trauma, and their caregivers; and the ACT Child and Youth Mental Health Alliance, a collaboration of community services focused on improving mental health

outcomes for children and young people.

I am also pleased to also announce that the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative or HASI has commenced this year. HASI provides practical, community-based support to people living with severe mental illness, helping them to find and maintain stable housing, build independence, and stay connected to their communities. We are partnering with St Vincent de Paul and the Mental Health Foundation to deliver this important program, which includes support for residents in Oaks Estate. HASI is focused on those most at risk of homelessness or repeated hospitalisation, offering flexible, person-centred support that complements clinical care. Through this approach, we are improving housing stability, easing pressure on acute services, and supporting people on their long-term recovery journey.

Mr Speaker, almost 30 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents of the ACT report high levels of psychological distress. This needs to change, and the ACT government has a number of initiatives underway to respond to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander calls for supports that address mental health, social and emotional wellbeing.

Yamagigu Consulting has been engaged to lead the co-design of a service model for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Mental Health Service in the ACT. The project will deliver a service model focused on community-led supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 12 to 25 experiencing moderate mental health challenges.

Karabena Consulting has been engaged to develop and pilot an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumer service experience feedback mechanism tailored for the ACT. This mechanism will capture Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's experiences of mental health services and support continuous improvement in culturally responsive care through a collaborative co-design process.

The Health and Community Services Directorate is working with the Capital Health Network to develop a cultural responsiveness audit tool for ACT government-funded mainstream mental health and suicide prevention NGO services. Using this tool, mainstream services will be required to complete cultural responsiveness audits on a cyclical basis to genuinely reflect, assess and identify opportunities for improvement in cultural responsiveness. The intention is to build cultural responsiveness in mainstream mental health and suicide prevention services, and complement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumer service experience feedback mechanism. All of this work is in addition to our work with community-controlled organisations in direct service delivery.

The ACT government is working with the commonwealth and other jurisdictions to develop the next national mental health and suicide prevention agreement. We are ensuring the voices of the ACT community are heard during discussions, including by supporting the participation of people with lived and living experience, carers and sector partners at all levels. As the negotiations for the next agreement continue, the ACT will also continue to advocate for reform in the mental health and suicide prevention space. This will include making the case for earlier intervention and community-based supports that help people live dignified lives. We will also advocate

for programs and systems that support people to remain out of hospital wherever possible.

We are acutely aware that, as negotiations progress, there will need to be significant attention to psychosocial needs and the wider mental health implications of the recently announced NDIS reforms. We understand there is a level of uncertainty and distress in our community as the changes to NDIS accessibility and supports are discussed and implemented. I am paying close attention to the negotiations, which will potentially be significant for mental health service delivery for all states and territories.

In addition to risks, Mr Speaker, there are also potential opportunities in the development of foundational supports for people with psychosocial disability, enabling the establishment and expansion of programs and services that are best supported through block funding. Many of these activities disappeared with the establishment of the NDIS, removing opportunities to connect with community and supports without the need to be assessed for NDIS eligibility, have an individual plan and manage complex funding arrangements.

To ensure national agreement negotiations do not impact on valued co-funded services, we have signed a 12-month extension of the agreement and ACT bilateral to 30 June 2027. This provides funding certainty of \$3.9 million for 2026-27 for initiatives including the youth trauma service, Medicare Mental Health Kids Hub, perinatal mental health expansion, universal aftercare services, and the eating disorders early intervention service.

Our young people are a priority target group for our services. The Youth at Risk project has been ongoing for some years and has two key deliverables: a youth trauma service to fill identified gaps in the ACT service system to support young people aged 13 to 17 years who have experienced trauma and have emerging mental health challenges; and the establishment of a youth mental health alliance to improve collaboration across the youth mental health service sector.

After a detailed codesign process with young people, I was very pleased to launch Uniting's youth trauma service on 23 March with my federal colleague, the Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, the Hon Emma McBride MP. This is part of the youth services hub located on Northbourne Avenue, offering young people the opportunity to access support for a spectrum of mental health needs, with Headspace primary care, Headspace early psychosis and the youth trauma service all in one place.

This reflects feedback through the co-design process, which prioritised an easy initial referral process and smooth pathway to the right service. The youth trauma service is now known as TIDES, following further co-design with young people, families, carers and kin. Importantly, because this service represents genuine innovation, ANU's Centre for Mental Health Research has been contracted to complete an external evaluation of the service from early in its establishment phase. It is anticipated this will contribute to scientific literature. Even at this early stage, lessons have been learned, and the project team will be presenting at the international mental health conference at the Gold Coast in June to share their experiences in the co-design and development of a unique service.

Under the bilateral funding agreement, a new Medicare Mental Health Kids Hub will

soon open in Tuggeranong, providing a safe and welcoming space where children aged 0 to 12 years, and their families, carers and kin can access free mental health and wellbeing supports. The Kids Hub service is designed to operate as a secondary level child mental health and wellbeing service, targeting mild to moderate and emerging developmental, emotional, relational and/or behavioural challenges. Families will not need a diagnosis or referral to access services and support at the Kids Hub.

Importantly, the Kids Hub will complement and integrate with child health and family services already provided in the ACT community, and with the development of Thriving Kids services.

The grant for the non-government organisation delivery of the Kids Hub service process closed in February 2026, and negotiations are well underway with the preferred provider. Fit-out of the site is also underway, with the aim to begin operations in mid-2026.

In line with our election commitments, work is also underway to develop a mental health services plan to guide the ongoing development and integration of mental health services in the ACT. The Health and Community Services Directorate recently hosted a number of workshops with the local community to gather people's views on priorities, ahead of finalisation of the mental health services plan in late 2026.

The plan will address our changing environment and position our mental health services for the future. The themes so far brought forward by the community include: breaking down access barriers to ensure services are available at the right place and the right time; better support for people with complex needs, including improved transitions between services; strengthening how parts of the system and services work together so people experience care as connected, coordinated and continuous; and future proofing to build the resilience of our mental health system. The Productivity Commission, in its review of the national agreement, recognised that:

Many of the factors affecting mental ill health and suicide can be similar, such as trauma and disadvantage. But there are also issues unique to suicide prevention policy, such as the availability of supports for people following a suicide attempt.

It recommended that:

The next agreement should include a separate schedule on suicide prevention to enable whole-of-government collaboration focusing on the distinct factors affecting suicide, suicidal distress and self-harm.

The ACT government continues to place significant importance on suicide prevention; to support efforts to raise awareness about suicide and to increase capacity in the community and our health workforce to recognise and respond compassionately and appropriately to suicidal distress through training programs.

Specific initiatives include: Youth Aware of Mental Health, delivered to year 9 students in public, independent and Catholic high schools across the ACT; Wesley LifeForce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Training, specifically designed to promote culturally appropriate suicide prevention support; Minds Together, aimed at reducing the risk of mental ill health for families, friends and carers who are

supporting someone experiencing suicidal distress or following a suicide attempt; a new professional development component is being introduced to Canberra Health Services; and Roses in the Ocean Peer CARE Companion in Community Program is establishing itself in the ACT to support a dedicated peer-based non-clinical workforce of trained and supported community members with lived experience of suicide. The program is anticipated to commence service delivery in July 2026.

In addition to these programs, we are continuing work to improve service accessibility and address gaps in the system—and to do so through a holistic, culturally appropriate approach that embeds lived experience. This work includes Thirrili Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention, intervention, aftercare and postvention service. Thirrili aims to help to reduce suicide and the impacts of suicide in the ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community by providing culturally appropriate person-centred prevention, postvention and aftercare supports. Thirrili is also increasing its collaboration across the sector to help build capacity for culturally appropriate care in response to suicide and traumatic deaths.

Work also includes the youth aftercare service co-design. The Youth Coalition is leading a co-design project for an aftercare service for young people aged 12 to 15 experiencing suicidal crisis or following suicidal distress. The co-design will inform future measures aimed at providing support for young people in this space. Project reporting and recommendations will be completed in December 2026.

I understand the inquiry into men's suicide rates is expected to report in the near future. I look forward to receiving the report and responding to its recommendations to deliver the best possible outcomes for the ACT community, and I know that the shadow minister and Leader of the Opposition, Mr Parton, is also looking closely at this space.

At the more acute end of service delivery, the Mental Health Act 2015 is an important feature of a balanced, human rights compliant mental health system. The act provides for the treatment, care and support of people with mental illness or mental disorder. To ensure this legislation continues to serve the needs of the ACT community, the Chief Psychiatrist is undertaking a review of the act. This work is required under section 271A and is a transparency measure to ensure specific sections are operating as intended.

The review is an opportunity for the community to provide feedback on the operation of these provisions. The review is scheduled to formally commence in August 2026 with an opportunity for the community to participate by engaging in the public consultation process through the YourSay platform in addition to targeted consultation with clinicians, consumers, carers, advocates, experts in other jurisdictions, and the ACT Human Rights Commission. A report will be developed for tabling in the Legislative Assembly.

Finally, Mr Speaker, ADHD care and access have been an issue of concern for the ACT community over recent years. The ACT government is implementing reforms to improve ADHD care. These reforms will improve access to assessment and treatment and reduce wait times and costs for diagnosis and management. The reform has two stages. Stage 1 allows general practitioners to continue prescribing psychostimulants to people with ADHD who have previously received a diagnosis and are stable on their current medications, without the need for a further Chief Health Officer approval or a

shared care arrangement with a non-GP specialist. The ACT government has completed stage 1. Stage 2 will enable GPs who have undertaken specific training to diagnose ADHD for non-complex patients and initiate and change psychostimulant medications, marking a shift from specialist-led to primary care-based management where appropriate.

Mr Speaker, in these uncertain times, it is important to acknowledge the good work that has been done and is being done in our community, while also recognising there remains more to do, to address emerging mental health needs and challenges in the sector and our wider community. This requires making choices built on consultation and a deepening partnership between the government and community. We will continue to listen to the lived experience of ACT residents and those in surrounding regions, and we will work with our non-government partners to support the mental health and social and emotional wellbeing of our community.

Mr Speaker, just before I move the paper, I note that some of these subjects are sensitive and may raise issues for people, and I encourage anyone who is experiencing any level of distress or mental health challenges to reach out to Lifeline or Beyond Blue or, in this place, to our EAP provider, if they feel that they need support.

I present the following paper:

Mental health and suicide prevention—Ministerial statement, 28 May 2026.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS (Brindabella) (11.10): I rise to briefly speak on the health minister's statement on mental health and suicide prevention. It is a statement that is welcomed by me and, I can assure the Assembly, by the Brindabella community too. I know this because on Monday, during my regular Tuggeranong office at Kambah shops, a constituent dropped by for a conversation about what the ACT government is doing about mental health. It was a very interesting conversation—I suspect probably more interesting for me rather than them. I learnt a lot from listening to their lived experience and policy knowledge—and I have now learnt more from reading the minister's well-timed update. I promised my fellow Brindabella resident that I would annoy—constructively—Minister Stephen-Smith for a comprehensive review of what the ACT government is doing about mental health and suicide prevention for Tuggeranong as well as for Canberra. This statement, along with the minister's excellent and professional office, has given me exactly what I need to get back to my community with a comprehensive and positive response.

I will let my thoughtful fellow resident and the rest of our community know about the ACT government's plans to reshape services to the community and those delivered by the community, through its \$13.8 million mental health NGO strategic investment plan. I will tell them about the government's ongoing funding support for mental health services supporting our young people, like MindMap, Youth Aware of Mental Health, WOKE, Stepping Stones and the ACT Child and Youth Mental Health Alliance. I will support the minister's mission and this government's work contributing to the next

National Mental Health Agreement, delivering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health initiatives, the Youth at Risk Project, the Medicare Mental Health Kids Hub in Tuggeranong and every other measure the minister has just mentioned. I am proud to be part of the ACT Labor government that delivers on mental health and suicide prevention.

In our conversation on Monday, my constituent asked me how they can contribute their thoughts, expertise and lived experience to help shape the ACT government's service delivery and responses to contemporary mental health challenges in our city. "That is a great and impressive question," I said. In the first instance, I would gladly be their megaphone—an ability of mine not many are aware of—and take their thoughts straight back to Minister Stephen-Smith. I can now also go to them with useful information that their voice and experience could be directly considered as part of the Have Your Say consultation process for the review of the Mental Health Act, which is commencing this August.

The nature of how mental illness presents itself in individuals and in the community, and thus the policy responses required to assist and support it, are always changing. So I thank the minister for her timely and comprehensive statement. With regular updates on what the ACT government is doing to respond to what our community needs and with regular opportunities for those with lived experience to share their stories, we can and will continue to improve mental health outcomes in Canberra.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Transport Canberra—Buses—timetable changes Ministerial statement

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (11.13): I rise today to update the Assembly on the revised construction bus network and timetable commencing on Monday 20 July 2026.

The NCA's Commonwealth Avenue Bridge Renewal Project, which began earlier this year, halved road capacity on Commonwealth Avenue. This has had a significant impact on Transport Canberra's bus services and the general traffic network. Transport Canberra responded by putting in place a temporary construction bus network and timetable in February to protect core frequencies, prioritise key corridors and ensure that we could maintain key bus routes across the city. This was based on traffic modelling undertaken by the government on the impacts of the temporary traffic arrangement across the city. The ACT government committed at the time to revising the bus network based on actual traffic conditions for the second half of 2026. Transport Canberra has closely monitored traffic conditions and the performance of the construction bus network since February to inform improvements.

Since the beginning of works and lane closures, real-world traffic network conditions have stabilised as Canberrans have settled into their new travel habits. Actual delays being observed have generally aligned with those modelled when the network was being developed; however, there have been some differences in travel time. As an interim step, Transport Canberra implemented targeted refinements to local and school

service timetables on Tuesday 7 April to align the network to real-world conditions and improve reliability by addressing some instances of early running.

As members of the Assembly may be aware, earlier this month Transport Canberra announced a more substantive revision to the network and timetable, which will commence on 20 July, aligning with our commitment to do so for the second half of the year. With travel impacts of the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge works now known, Transport Canberra is utilising efficiencies and savings found in the network to increase the frequency and capacity of key bus routes as early as possible.

Transport Canberra is responding to crowding on the R4 and R5 services from the south by providing additional services to increase frequency and capacity to carry the passenger load. Extra R4 services will be provided from Woden to Belconnen during the morning peak and from Belconnen to Tuggeranong in the afternoon peak. Additional city-bound services on the R5, starting at Erindale, will also be provided during the morning peak—further supplementing capacity from Woden to the City during the busy periods of the morning. We are pleased to return the R2 and R3 rapid buses to their original routes serving west and north Belconnen. The reinstatement of Rapid 2 and Rapid 3 will restore continuous services between Fraser and Fyshwick and between Spence and the Canberra Airport, replacing temporary routes 12 and 13, which were put in place to address the potential flow-on effects of delays on Commonwealth Avenue. There will also be additional R2 services during the day, including two, extra city-bound services early on weekday mornings.

Transport Canberra will also keep the R6 and R5 running through to Belconnen. These rapid bus services have been well utilised since these route extensions were introduced for the first time, in February, with Belconnen commuters particularly making great use of the new direct connection to the National Triangle and Barton area. These routes will also receive additional services during the morning and afternoon peaks to meet the growing demand since they were extended. Keeping these routes running to Belconnen will provide additional capacity in the network, particularly along the Belconnen to city corridor, providing better services not only for passengers from Belconnen but also for passengers from the south side.

The route for the local 56 service will also be reinstated back over Kings Avenue Bridge, after being temporarily diverted via King Edward Terrace and Commonwealth Avenue Bridge in anticipation of greater traffic over the Kings Avenue Bridge, being an alternative route for crossing the lake. Finally, there will be some further, minor refinements to local school services, including the R19, which connects north Gungahlin suburbs into the town centre and light rail interchange, and the R26 to help students of John Paul II College get to school.

These changes deliver on the prioritised improvements to rapid bus services, whilst maintaining reliability across the broader bus network, which were outlined in the implementation plan that I tabled in the Assembly on 25 March in response to the Assembly's resolution of 26 February 2026 regarding restoring rapid bus services to Kippax.

I would like to thank Transport Canberra for their ongoing work to ensure our public transport continues to be responsive and reliable throughout these major infrastructure

works. I would also like to thank Transport Canberra's passengers and broader community and acknowledge the disruption of the construction works and the required changes to the network and timetable, which has had to occur more regularly than usual. All Canberra commuters should also be thanked sharing our road network and for their responsiveness during this disruptive period. Updated timetables and school information packs will be available to the community before the end of the school term, ahead of the network updates commencing. Information is also available on Transport Canberra's website.

Even when the revised network and timetable commences in July, we will still be in a period of construction disruption. The ACT government will continue to consider other service improvements, where feasible, and will continue to monitor the implementation of the revised network and timetable. Once works on the current span of Commonwealth Avenue Bridge conclude, temporary traffic arrangements are expected to change again as works begin on the other span, with traffic switching sides. Transport Canberra will be engaging closely with the National Capital Authority on progress against the construction program and how the changed temporary traffic arrangements may affect bus services, and we will keep the community updated. I commend the statement to the Assembly.

I present the following paper:

Transport Update—Term 3 2026 Bus Network and Timetable—Ministerial statement, 28 May 2026.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (11.20): I would like to thank the Minister for Transport for the update he just provided. The restoration of the R2 and R3 are particularly welcome, but I am sure my colleague Ms Clay would like to talk much further on that. We have learnt quite a lot over the last four or five months, not least of which is the resilience of Canberrans as they have dealt with these changes. The volumes of public transport patronage along the corridors from Belconnen and Woden to Civic have been particularly notable. The additional services from Belconnen are being filled up. The services from Woden have been found lacking. I believe that these observations vindicate the need to put light rail along these corridors sooner rather than later.

One matter that I have previously brought to the minister's attention but I would also like to bring to the attention of the Assembly is a problem that constituents have been bringing to me and Miss Nuttall from the south side. A decision was made to prioritise putting higher-capacity buses along the routes that cross Commonwealth Avenue Bridge, the challenge being that these includes the steer-tag buses, which coincidentally are also buses that are not equipped with bike racks. Therefore, people from the south side have been denied the ability to take their bike with them on the bus journey and then utilise it at the other end of that journey. This has made crossing the lake by public transport with a bike a significantly less reliable exercise for those constituents. It is my hope that Transport Canberra has also been looking at the impact of this particular outcome on the community in part of its review of the network.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.22): I welcome the transport minister's statement today. R2 and R3 will be coming back to West Belconnen on 20 July, and this is really good news. Those services should not have been cut. Removing both rapids from West Belconnen cut off rapid services for the one in 10 Canberrans who live there. I think the government underestimated the outrage they would get from this. We got almost 1,500 signatures on our petition very quickly. A lot of people contacted us, and I just want to make special mention of Ben, Megan, Lauren, Janice, Juanita and Yang, who shared stories about how it had affected them.

I do not think the government had really good data on how many people used those buses. The government put on an extra local bus and, within a very short space of time, the government had to increase that local bus, because more people were catching it than they had expected. We need our rapid buses. I am really pleased we are getting our rapid buses back. I am delighted the R2 and R3 are coming back. That is great news. But, please, do not cut our essential services. Do not look at a region of Canberra and say, "This whole region does not need this service." It is a really difficult thing to do to cut services from people who are relying on our buses. You need to do your forward planning so you are not in a position to need to do that again. You need to be talking to people and understanding how many people are relying on those services before you do that.

I am also pleased at the improvements that have been made for the R4, the R5 and the R6. That is going to help people in Belconnen and a lot of people all around Canberra. It is good to see those improvements, but I would just like to emphasise: please, do not take away our public transport.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (11.23): I would also like to thank the minister for his update on the bus services. It is clear that there were issues with the traffic and service modelling that the timetable changes in February were based on. Within weeks, feedback from constituents made it clear that the cuts to rapid services, particularly the R4 and the R5, were far too severe. Buses became overcrowded, often skipping stops and leaving passengers stranded on their daily commutes. These issues persist on most weekdays. It is disappointing that commuters will have to wait another eight weeks for some of these cancelled rapid services to be reinstated. This means nearly six months of reduced services, coinciding with an unprecedented fuel crisis that is encouraging more people to use public transport—yet the network lacks the capacity to meet this demand.

I also want to highlight the 35 local routes where frequency was reduced from 30 minutes to every 40 minutes in the February update. These cuts were not widely communicated, leaving many passengers caught off guard. This stands in contrast to the government's election commitment to improve frequencies to every 20 minutes. We are seeing the opposite. As discussed in the Assembly yesterday, continued investment in the bus fleet is essential. We need sufficient capacity to meet growing demand, deliver promised service improvements and respond to unexpected pressures on the network.

Finally, I raise ongoing delays affecting northbound rapid services on Commonwealth Avenue during peak periods. Buses are forced to queue behind merging traffic near the

Hyatt Hotel before they can access the bus lane at Albert Hall. This undermines the purpose of the bus lane. There is a straightforward solution: extend the bus lane approximately 300 metres back to the Coronation Drive intersection. This would require minimal infrastructure—just signage and road markings. I understand Transport Canberra has previously proposed this to the National Capital Authority, but it has not progressed. I urge the government to work with the NCA to implement this simple fix and eliminate unnecessary delays for passengers from the south travelling from Tuggeranong, Woden, Weston Creek, Molonglo and the inner south.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—Reconciliation Week

Ministerial statement

MS ORR (Yerrabi—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (11.26): National Reconciliation Week is held annually between 27 May and 3 June. This year’s theme is “All In” and it reminds us that we all have a role to play in reconciliation and that reconciliation is not the responsibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples alone. Partnership and working together are essential to reconciliation, and the call from Reconciliation Australia is for all Australians to commit wholeheartedly to reconciliation. This means supporting actions that create meaningful change that advance the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and turning the tide on the injustices of the past.

In this spirit, I would also like to acknowledge that earlier this week we marked National Sorry Day. Sorry Day is recognised annually on 26 May to acknowledge the Stolen Generations and the ongoing impacts resulting from children who were forcibly removed from their families between the mid-1800s and the 1980s. This is a significant day for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and commemorated by all Australians. I wish to honour the resilience and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their profound connection to family, country, community, culture and language which has endured despite enormous challenges from the intergenerational impact of colonisation and discrimination.

Earlier this week, Winnunga Nimmityjah hosted their annual Sorry Day gathering to honour the Stolen Generations and acknowledge the history of forcible removals. I thank Winnunga for their leadership in the community and for continuing to deliver a meaningful and impactful gathering in honour of this important day. I was very pleased to attend the event, as several of us here in the chamber did over the course of the day. I wish to state that the ACT government remains committed to ensuring that the policies and practices that underpinned the Stolen Generations are never repeated.

Reflecting on National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week confirms that we must continue to heal the wounds of the past and walk together to build a brighter future—one that celebrates, protects and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The ACT remains the only jurisdiction in Australia to recognise Reconciliation Day as a public holiday—a day we acknowledge together to reflect on where we have

been on the journey so far, to learn about and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history, and to recommit to reconciliation, with every person, every community playing a role.

Reconciliation Day itself marks 59 years since the 1967 referendum took place, with over 90 per cent of eligible voters saying yes to recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as part of Australia's population. Next week will also mark 34 years since the High Court handed down its landmark ruling in *Mabo v Queensland*, paving the way for the recognition of pre-colonial land interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This year's Reconciliation Day event is being held on the Monday Reconciliation Day public holiday of 1 June, from 10 am until 3 pm, at a new home in John Dunmore Lang Place, situated near Reconciliation Place in the National Triangle, just near Questacon. This year, we are honoured to have Gumbaynggirr and Dunghutti woman Casey Donovan as our headliner. Additionally, the event will also showcase the talented singers Tahalianna Soward-Mahanga, Liam Keenan, and more, alongside a whole range of workshops and activities for kids and beyond to participate in.

This event will also showcase many non-Indigenous groups, such as Hockey ACT, the Canberra Royals, the National Zoo and Aquarium, and the Canberra Raiders. I would like to thank the ACT Reconciliation Council, the volunteers, the stallholders and performers who are all dedicating their public holiday to supporting reconciliation in the ACT. I encourage all members of this place to commit to being "All In" for reconciliation and to join in the festivities of reconciliation on Monday, 1 June.

I would like to acknowledge some of ACT government's actions towards reconciliation. The Closing the Gap subcommittee of cabinet is now well established. Cabinet ministers meet regularly with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body for the discussion of key priorities and initiatives that advance work towards Closing the Gap and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement.

Meetings this year so far have considered an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation transition and support strategy to strengthen partnerships, build capacity and expand services in line with priority 2 under the national agreement, and a whole-of-government Closing the Gap response strategy to bring reporting together, reduce duplication, and support coordinated, community-led action. Additionally, through the phase 3 action plans of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement, which were developed in partnership with the Elected Body, we are embedding cultural governance, trauma-informed practice and operational transformation across directorates.

The ACT government is supporting our Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations through the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation Establishment and Expansion Fund, which is a targeted grant program aimed at building and strengthening ACCOs in the ACT. By partnering with the Elected Body, the ACT government will continue to embed the principles of transparency, accountability and self-determination to improve the way we deliver vital supports and services.

The success of our local and national agreements requires an "All In" commitment

across government, and that is what I wish to recommit to today—that the ACT government remains “All In” on our partnership with the Elected Body and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in building a transformed system that improves outcomes in all domains, entrusted with self-determination and cultural governance in mind.

I present the following paper:

Reconciliation Week 2026—Ministerial statement, 28 May 2026.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (11.32): I rise today in strong support of Minister Orr’s statement about National Reconciliation Week. This year’s theme, “All In”, makes it clear that everyone and every part of our community has a role to play in reconciliation.

Over eight years as Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, I have had the privilege of working closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across our city. This engagement has reinforced a key truth: reconciliation and closing the gap are not achieved through words alone; they require sustained action, leadership and accountability. In sum, reconciliation will not happen by itself, nor will it happen without all of us playing our part.

Today, as Minister for the Public Service, I am pleased to update members on how the ACT public service is contributing to closing the gap. With the passage of the Public Sector (Closing the Gap) Legislation Amendment Act 2025—the closing the gap act—the ACT became the first Australian jurisdiction to legislate Closing the Gap targets specifically for its public sector. And I recognise that this was Mr Emerson’s bill, which we were pleased to work with him on and support.

But this is more than a legislative milestone. This is about ensuring that the responsibility for reconciliation is not seen as the responsibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Led by the Cultural Transformation Group in the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, the ACT public service is implementing the closing the gap act, which includes strengthening cultural capability across the ACT public service, better co-design of policy development and service delivery, reinforcing accountability for senior executives and statutory officeholders, and establishing clear performance and reporting frameworks.

Cultural capability is more than simply knowing about culture. For senior executives it is leadership in practice, an ongoing, relational and reflective discipline grounded in humility, accountability and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership. It requires embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into policies, practices and behaviours. When culturally capable leadership is embedded across the ACT public service, it leads to stronger trust, more effective services, more inclusive workplaces, and better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

peoples in the ACT.

Effectively, strengthening cultural capability is critical to delivering services that reflect community expectations. Closing the gap is now a legislative responsibility, as well as being a core function of government. It requires sustained effort, strong leadership and accountability. The government takes this responsibility seriously. We recognise the concern that too often commitments have been made, reports delivered and recommendations agreed to without consistent follow-through. The Cultural Transformation Group is addressing this directly by working across government to establish clear expectations, measurable outcomes and strengthened accountability mechanisms that ensure commitments translate into action.

We are at a moment where cultural capability has become a fundamental requirement of public administration, where there is a clear expectation that leadership, governance and service design consistently honour cultural knowledge and deliver transparent, measurable outcomes. A key focus of the Cultural Transformation Group's work is strengthening cultural capability and accountability across the public service, particularly within the senior executive service. Maintaining strong, ongoing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and community members is also a core priority, ensuring this work is informed by lived experience, community leadership and genuine partnership.

As I noted in my last update in March, the Cultural Transformation Group is delivering a range of priority actions in the lead-up to July. These include all SES cultural capability training workshops to be held in June and the introduction of standardised cultural capability commitments in executive performance agreements, making expectations clear and enforceable. These requirements apply to every member of the senior executive service, regardless of role, business area or level. Each executive carries a legislative responsibility to help close the gap and to lead with cultural safety, integrity and accountability. The first key performance indicator has been established in consultation with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body. Within the first six months of the act's implementation, all SES must be able to clearly articulate their role in cultural capability and their contribution to closing the gap.

As I advised in March, the Cultural Transformation Group is launching the BRAVE—Bias, Racism, Allyship, Validate and Empower—Program to support ongoing leadership development and reflection. Cultural safety tools and cultural safety care plans are being implemented across directorates, alongside updates to executive capability frameworks, recruitment processes and contract documentation. New guidance will ensure policies and workplace practices align with strengthened expectations.

Beyond July, the focus will shift to embedding and sustaining reform across the system. This includes continuing the BRAVE Program, developing a cultural capability maturity model, strengthening accountability through enhanced reporting, and working in partnership with the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs to deliver a whole-of-government transformation strategy. The Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy is also progressing reforms to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge, expertise and responsibilities are properly recognised and

remunerated.

The Cultural Transformation Group has already made significant progress. An all-SES communique issued in May outlined obligations under the act, supported by communications to statutory officeholders, and all-SES training is scheduled, as I said, for June 2026. Yarning circles are occurring across the ACT public service to strengthen cultural safety, connection and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, embedding these practices into everyday workplace culture. The CMTEDD Cultural Awareness e-learning module is being updated into a mandatory whole-of-government resource, with strengthened storytelling, expanded content and full alignment with the act to reflect lived experience and re-enforce legislative responsibilities. On 15 May, all directors-general and other SES staff participated in a workshop at Boomanulla Oval that covered cultural safety, performance agreements, and performance and conduct. This is the second workshop facilitated by the Cultural Transformation Group to drive systemic reform under Priority Reform 3 and the legislative requirements. The next stage of this work requires sustained accountability, genuine co-design and cultural integrity. Through a coordinated whole-of-government approach, the government will meet legislative responsibilities, drive systemic reform and deliver lasting change.

National Reconciliation Week 2026 and its theme “All In” resonate deeply with the work we are doing. Driving whole-of-government accountability puts that theme into practice. It is “All In” in the truest sense: legislated, measurable and ongoing. The ACT public service is committed to being “All In”—listening, acting and walking together with First Nations Canberrans so that they never again have to lead reconciliation and closing the gap alone.

I commend Minister Orr’s statement and thank the ACT public service, particularly the incredible Cultural Transformation Group for its leadership and ongoing commitment to helping us to do our part, “All In”, on closing the gap.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (11.40): I rise to welcome Minister Orr’s statement this morning, and also to reflect very briefly on Minister Stephen-Smith’s update on the provisions of the Public Sector (Closing the Gap) Legislation Amendment Act 2025. I very much welcome this update, and also thank the minister and her office for their engagement with me and my office on these matters. I am looking forward to these provisions coming into effect, and it is fantastic to get an update on exactly what that will look like from 1 July.

As the minister reflected at the end of her remarks, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices have often been forgotten. Commitments have been made without being fulfilled. We have seen this in multiple reports, multiple inquiries, investigations and recommendations that have often been accepted but not acted on. It is really encouraging to hear about the level of commitment we are seeing with the executive in the ACT public service to make some substantive change in this area as of 1 July, and that the preparatory work that is required has been going on. I am also pleased to hear about the level of engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body as part of that work. My hope, certainly, in bringing forward this legislation is that the relationship would be strengthened, and that the institution would be strengthened as well and empowered to play the role that it is legislatively expected to play.

I note that, as part of that, the Remuneration Tribunal is currently taking submissions, including into the remuneration of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body. I think that members of the Elected Body, particularly in the chair and deputy chair positions, are not sufficiently remunerated to play their role. I will be making a submission to that consultation process—I would encourage other members to do the same—and hope the government will do that to ensure that Elected Body members are actually empowered and resourced. What I hear so often from members of our First Nations community is that they will do the work anyway and they will show up anyway. They are doing it after hours, they are doing it alongside other roles, and they are doing it on weekends, which is welcome, but I think they should be sufficiently resourced to actually fulfil their functions, which will have significantly increased in ways by the provisions that come into effect on 1 July.

I very much welcome both ministers' statements this morning and thank them for their willingness to engage with me and my office in an ongoing way on these matters, but, more importantly, for engaging with local First Nations leaders and the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT to ensure that these provisions are not just on pieces of paper, bits of legislation, but actually create substantive changes. I think that everyone in this Assembly wants to see that for this community.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.43): I thank the ministers for their statements today, and I particularly thank the health minister for her engagement with our office in recent weeks. She has been very generous with her time.

I want to start by expressing deep condolences and acknowledge the grief of Stolen Generations. This is a blight on Australia's history, and the harm is still happening, and separations and violence are still happening. Our First Nations community and our First Nations leaders have to show incredible strength. They have to show up every day for their community. They have to show up in so many different roles and they are still leading us in reconciliation. I do not understand how so many are doing so much. I cannot imagine the fatigue of taking that on day after day, week after week, and sometimes not seeing much progress from that.

The first National Sorry Day was in 1998, one year after the *Bringing them home* report was tabled. The contents of that 689-page report are harrowing. Professor Mick Dodson, Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, this year reflected on the process of hearing thousands of stories from the Stolen Generations for the report. He described it as soul-destroying. He also reflected on what has come since and he called the federal government's response, which I see is our collective national response, as a failure. There were 83 actions recommended in the *Bringing them home* report. Today, 29 years later, only five out of 83 have been implemented. This is shameful.

Colonisation is not something that happened in this country years ago; colonisation is something that was done and is continuing to be done. It is an ongoing process of dispossession and assimilation for our First Nations people. This is why Reconciliation Week must be the action for non-Indigenous Australians, and it is why Reconciliation Australia gave this year's week the theme of "All In". In the words of the CEO, Karen

Mundine, our First Nations people have “carried the weight of championing, explaining and acting for far too long”.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can only take us so far in doing the work for reconciliation. They have taken us a really long way. They have taken us a long way through incredible personal sacrifice and continuing work and labour, and often doing that in situations where they are dealing with a lot of personal grief and grief in their community, and they are still showing up and doing that. They have done more than their share. If we are to address the horrific injustices which Indigenous people continue to face in their own country every day, day after day, we need ongoing, active commitment to decolonising the systems which enable these injustices.

Yesterday, Travis Lovett, alongside hundreds of people, completed the Walk for Truth at Parliament House. He invited Australians to join in truth-telling. It is something we need to commit to—to listen and to do in this place as well, and to do in our communities: listen to the truth and acknowledge the truth.

Every day on Ngunnawal Country, I am amazed by the commitment of our First Nations leaders to their communities and the generosity they show to us who live, work and play on their country. We must recommit ourselves to what Sorry Day and Reconciliation Week are about. Sorry means saying you are sorry, it means that you will not do it again, and it means that you will take steps to try to make up for what you have done. We still have so much work to do to get there.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (11.46): Sorry Day calls us to acknowledge the injustices experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, especially the Stolen Generations—children who were taken from their families, cultures and communities. We begin by acknowledging and paying our deepest respects to the traditional custodians of the land on which we stand today. We also recognise the strength, resilience and rich cultures of First Nations peoples and the important work they continue to do in caring for country, preserving language and culture, leading communities and contributing in so many ways to our shared society.

Saying sorry is more than a word; it is an act of truth-telling, respect and responsibility. It means we listen, we learn and we commit to building a future grounded in understanding and fairness. On this day, we honour those who have suffered, and we stand alongside those who continue to heal. Let us carry the spirit of Sorry Day forward, not just today but also in our actions every day, working toward reconciliation, respect and a more united future.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Standing orders and continuing resolutions—continuing resolution 7

Statement by Speaker

MR SPEAKER (Mr Hanson) (11.48): Members, before we move to Assembly business, I want to take the opportunity to draw your attention to Continuing Resolution 7, which has been adopted by the Assembly since May 1995, regarding the exercise of

freedom of speech. The resolution states:

That the Legislative Assembly considers that, in speaking in the Assembly or in a committee, Members should take the following matters into account:

- (a) the need to exercise their valuable right of freedom of speech in a responsible manner;
- (b) the damage that may be done by allegations made in the Assembly to those who are the subject of such allegations and to the standing of the Assembly;
- (c) the limited opportunities for persons other than Members of the Assembly to respond to allegations made in the Assembly;
- (d) the need for Members, while fearlessly performing their duties, to have regard to the rights of others; and
- (e) the desirability of ensuring that statements reflecting adversely on persons are soundly based.

Standing orders—suspension

Debate resumed from 27 May 2026, on motion by **Mr Emerson**:

That so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the public interest disclosure documents tabled by Mr Emerson today from being authorised for publication.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Cheyne**) adjourned to a later hour.

RSPCA—ACT—order to table documents

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (11.50): I move:

That, with reference to standing order 213A, the Assembly directs the Chief Minister to table:

- (1) any metrics the Government has recorded or received in the last 10 years relating to companion animal welfare in the ACT, including investigations, surrenders, rehoming rates and euthanasia;
- (2) any service, funding, in-kind or other agreements the Government has entered into with animal welfare organisations in the last 10 years and associated accountability arrangements;
- (3) regarding the current Weston facility and site and proposed Pialligo facility and site for RSPCA ACT, any land valuations, business cases, contracts, costings, deeds of agreement, feasibility studies, invoices and correspondence, including any correspondence with the Commonwealth Government, from the last 10 years; and
- (4) a statement detailing any capital and recurrent impacts resulting from the proposal for a new facility for RSPCA ACT in Pialligo, including new funding, interest expenses and any impacts to other animal welfare expenditure over the forward estimates period.

I think everyone can agree that the RSPCA facilities at Weston are at the end of useful

life. I think everyone can agree that replacing those facilities is a good thing, and I think that most agree that the Pialligo site is a good fit for a new facility. But because we might all agree on the broad strokes of what the government is doing with this issue, it does not automatically follow that we agree with every detail and every dollar of what Labor is proposing. In fact, it is quite difficult to form a view on the proposal because very little information is on the public record. And when you look at what Labor wants to do, you come away with more questions than answers.

This motion simply asks for the information we need to answer those questions so we can properly consider what Labor is proposing. One of those questions is: why do we need to invest \$70 million in a new facility? The South Australian government recently delivered RSPCA SA with a new facility that seems significantly different than the ACT proposal. It is a state headquarters with administration, education and community facilities, a 24-hour wildlife hospital, a base for their animal rescue team and accommodation for 16,000 animals per year. All of this was delivered for \$26 million, which means the ACT seems to be getting much less for three times the cost.

Another question is how the government will manage the fiscal impact of the proposal. The ACT's contribution of \$40 million at the borrowing rate in the budget papers suggests an annual interest bill of \$2.4 million. We have no information on how this will be funded and whether it will require offsets or cuts to spending on other animal welfare services or groups. And a third question is whether the RSPCA will need any additional funding from the government to operate the new facilities this facility will provide and if this will be new money or if it will be offset by cuts elsewhere.

And finally, we know that local animal welfare groups have been crying out for additional funding from the government. Most receive much less than the RSPCA and have only asked for very modest additions, only to be told time and again there is no money in the budget for them. But if that is the case, how can there be \$40 million for the RSPCA?

These are all reasonable questions for the parliament and the community to ask. It is disappointing that nobody in the government has been proactive or made the information publicly available. A little bit of transparency can go a long way. Today's motion simply seeks answers to those questions so that the parliament and the community can properly consider the government's proposal in full knowledge of the impacts that it will have.

I appreciate the good faith engagement we have had from members from all sides, particularly the government, in the amendments agreed and the wording and timeframe of the motion. I know there is an amendment coming through. I was worried that some might try and spin this motion as an opposition attempt to undermine the RSPCA or this project, despite it being a Liberal policy at the last election, but those fears have been proved unfounded. There is obviously a general acceptance of the principle that transparency and scrutiny are important, even for the groups we like and the projects we support.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister

for the Night-Time Economy) (11.54): I move:

1. In paragraphs (1), (2) and (3), omit “10”, substitute “7”.
2. Add:
“(5) notwithstanding standing order 213A(f), the indexed listing and all documents be provided to the Clerk within 30 business days.”.

I accept all those points that Ms Castley has made, and I appreciate the conversations we have been able to have about exactly what she is seeking with this. As a result, we have broadened the scope to really paint the picture of the need regarding the facility but also the need across all of our organisations and what that looks like.

I am very happy to shine a light on that and for there to be a better understanding across the Assembly. But, equally, 10 years is quite a long time, and in discussions with the directorate about what is achievable, and in confirming with Ms Castley exactly the picture she is looking to get a better handle on, seven years captures before the first election commitment was made on the RSPCA facility, so we think that is a reasonable middle ground to adopt in trying to be as helpful as possible without diminishing the full picture that Ms Castley is seeking with this 213A. I appreciate the engagement and I commend my amendment to the chamber.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.55): I understand that the Canberra Liberals and the Labor government have come together on an agreement on this one, so we are happy to support the agreed amendments. The RSPCA does a marvellous job. I am really pleased to see, on this long-running project, that there is some progress on it. We welcome transparency. This looks like a good result all round.

I will just take the opportunity to say that I really enjoyed the Canberra Paws Walk on the weekend. I spoke to a lot of dogs. It is always my favourite conversation. I love my constituents, but if you have got a dog, I will talk to your dog first. I am really sorry; I cannot help myself! And we very much appreciate the work that the RSPCA does in our community.

Amendment agreed to.

Question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Standing orders—suspension

Motion (by **Ms Lee**) agreed to, with the concurrence of an absolute majority:

That so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent Assembly Business, Notice No. 2 relating to the reporting date for the Select Committee on Privileges 2026 being called on and debated forthwith.

Privileges 2026—Select Committee Amendment to reporting date

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (11.57): I move:

That the resolution of the Assembly of 6 May 2026 establishing the Select Committee on Privileges 2026 be amended to omit “10 June 2026” and substitute with “15 September 2026”.

This is obviously a suspension of standing orders because the privileges committee met yesterday at lunchtime and came to this conclusion based on the discussion we had. Privileges committees are fairly rare in this Assembly, as members would know, and they raise serious issues that we need to discuss. And as a result, there have been serious issues raised, and the reporting date, which was 10 June—it has become abundantly clear—will be very difficult for the committee to report by.

Accordingly, the motion seeks to change and amend the reporting date to the next sitting period. Lest there be any angst, there is firm agreement amongst the committee members that, whilst the reporting date has been pushed to the next sitting, it is the intention of the committee to ensure that we report as soon as possible. And I seek the support from members in this place for that motion.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy) (11.59): We have no issue with this. I think we have indicated, when this motion was first moved establishing the privileges committee, that we were happy to have some flexibility with the reporting date. And I think that was acknowledged by all parties. But we also appreciated that we could not amend the reporting date, except through the Assembly, and that we would take advice from the privileges committee. That is, accordingly, what we are doing, so we support the motion as put today.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Sitting suspended from 11.59 am to 2.00 pm.

Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (2.00): As members may be aware, Minister Cheyne is away from question time today, so Minister Steel will take questions in the city and government services portfolios; Minister Paterson will take questions in the Attorney-General and human rights portfolios; and Minister Pettersson will take questions in the night-time economy portfolio.

Questions without notice

Procurement—Secure Local Jobs Code—Future Form

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations. Minister, the Secure Local Jobs Code is supposed to ensure that ACT government contracts only go to businesses meeting the highest ethical and labour standards. Yet reports today say Future Form’s ACT entity has picked up work on the ACT government’s lyric theatre project despite the New South Wales Labor

government recently banning the company over suspected underpayments; tax fraud; workers compensation, safety and subcontracting transparency breaches; and the alleged involvement in the firebombing of a union official's car. Minister, why has Future Form, or at least their ACT entity, been certified for taxpayer funded contracts under the Secure Local Jobs Code?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mr Parton for the question and his interest in the ethical treatment of workers. As the member would be aware, these are matters for the registrar. I am happy to take it on notice and see if any information can be provided.

MR PARTON: Minister, what is the point of the Secure Local Jobs Code if it enables a subcontractor subject to multiple investigations in New South Wales relating to underpayments, tax fraud, workers compensation failures and safety breaches to end up on an ACT government work site?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mr Parton for the supplementary question. The Secure Local Jobs Code plays an important role in uplifting standards in industry. It is a strong initiative, which has not been supported by those opposite. So, I am heartened to see any interest from the Canberra Liberals to make sure that these high ethical standards are met here in the ACT. The appropriate course of action when matters arise in this space is for that information to be provided to the registrar for them to assess compliance. This is a question for them. As such, I thank Mr Parton for the question but I am not in a position to speak to the specifics of it.

MRS MORRIS: Minister, why are ACT taxpayers lining the pockets of a company being investigated for firebombing, threats and intimidation, underpayments, tax fraud and safety breaches?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mrs Morris for the question. The Secure Local Jobs Code is an important tool that the ACT government has to uplift standards in the ACT, to ensure those who work on ACT government projects do meet those high ethical standards—which are also inclusive of the lowest of standards; simply obeying the law. It is important that all work undertaken in the ACT is done so by those that are compliant. These are questions for the registrar, and I understand that they are aware of these matters.

Procurement—Secure Local Jobs Code—Future Form

MRS MORRIS: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, the New South Wales Labor government reportedly acted to ban Future Form from a major taxpayer funded project after serious allegations about underpayments, tax fraud, workers compensation failures, safety breaches and the alleged involvement in the firebombing of a union official's car. Three weeks later, Future Form's ACT entity was engaged on the ACT government's \$317 million lyric theatre build.

Chief Minister, how much are Canberra families paying to engage to work on the lyric theatre a company suspected of firebombing, underpayments and tax fraud?

MR BARR: I will need to take the detail of that question on notice in relation to the subcontracting arrangements. But to be clear, we expect all contractors and

subcontractors engaged in ACT government projects to meet strict standards, including the full disclosure of subcontracting arrangements and compliance with workplace, taxation and insurance obligations.

The Canberra lyric theatre project is being delivered by Multiplex under a robust contractual and probity framework. Of course we will continue to monitor closely all aspects of delivery. If any issues are identified, they would be addressed swiftly, including referral to appropriate agencies and authorities where required. I would refer Mrs Morris to the minister's answer in terms of that process, and that is of course a matter that is handled at arms-length from ministers.

MRS MORRIS: Chief Minister, will you allow Future Form to continue working on the lyric theatre or will you protect the integrity of government infrastructure projects and terminate their contract as the New South Wales Labor government has done?

MR BARR: We acknowledge the findings and the public statements out of New South Wales are serious and concerning, particularly around worker exploitation and subcontracting practices. Further information is being sought from New South Wales, and ACT regulators are of course aware of the situation and are in a position to take any action they consider necessary.

We have zero tolerance for this kind of behaviour, and if any contractor or subcontractor on ACT projects is found to be in breach of their obligations under the law, then of course there will be consequences.

MR COCKS: Chief Minister, is the ACT government seriously saying that it is acceptable for a company banned by the New South Wales Labor government from New South Wales work sites to be engaged on an ACT government project?

MR BARR: We are saying that there is an appropriate legal framework and protection in place in the ACT through the Secure Local Jobs Code. If any issues in relation to a breach of any of the requirements of that code are identified, then that would trigger action against a subcontractor in this regard.

Procurement—Secure Local Jobs Code

MRS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations. The government says that the Secure Local Jobs Code and local industry participation policy settings support local workers and local businesses. Industry professionals are warning that the existing framework drives up the cost of government projects and fails to deliver outcomes for local businesses and workers. Minister, what evidence does the government have that these rules have actually improved employment outcomes for ACT workers or increased participation by ACT-based construction businesses?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank Mrs Morris for the question.

A bit tongue-in-cheek, but my first response would be that the strong opposition to its existence from the Canberra Liberals throughout its history indicates that it has been very effective in driving up standards here in the ACT, because the Canberra Liberals,

throughout my time in this place, have always sought to undermine the working conditions of—

Mr Cocks: A point of order, Mr Speaker. I think the minister may have been pushing things a bit close to the line of acceptability. He really is, at this point, debating another party's policy position.

MR SPEAKER: I agree. Minister, I would ask you to be relevant and not debate the matter. The Liberals' position is not relevant to your administrative arrangements. I would ask you to be directly relevant.

MR PETTERSSON: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was seeking to highlight the views of those that were opposed to the policy as evidence as to why they would be opposed to it, and their strong opposition to it. It is very clear to me—

Mr Cocks: A point of order, Mr Speaker. On debating the question, essentially, what the minister has just stood and said is that in responding to the question he is seeking to build a straw man. That would be a debating technique.

MR SPEAKER: What he is saying is that his evidence is the strong opposition to it. You may or may not agree with that, but he is citing what his evidence is. So he is being relevant, and he is being responsive. You may not agree with his position, but he is saying that is the evidence that he has. Minister, do you have anything further to add?

MR PETTERSSON: Yes, Mr Speaker. This is a strange question, to me. In the first question that I received today, I was asked about applying the Secure Local Jobs Code to ensure that companies that meet high ethical standards abide—*(Time expired.)*

MRS MORRIS: Minister, how many additional ACT residents, apprentices or local subcontractors can you point to who got work because of these rules?

MR PETTERSSON: I cannot accept the premise and the framing of the question. The Secure Local Jobs Code plays an important role in ensuring that the highest standards are met in industry to ensure that companies that get government work here in the ACT meet incredibly low bars, like not breaking the law. There are a range of policies in place at Procurement ACT that speak to supporting and generating local employment.

Mr Parton: A point of order, Mr Speaker. The minister was asked very specifically: how many additional local jobs are there because of the Local Jobs Code? He is not going anywhere near answering it.

MR SPEAKER: I think what he is saying is that that is not the purpose of the code. He is outlining what the purpose of the code is.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Members! He is providing a response. He is being relevant. He might not be giving an empirical number, but he is giving you an explanation that is both relevant and responsive, so there is no point of order.

MR PETTERSSON: There are a range of policies in place across Procurement to try and support investment and support local jobs. The Secure Local Jobs Code plays one part in that suite of policies. I do not have a particular number that I can attribute to that one particular policy, but this government is proud to support local jobs. We are proud to use our procurement powers to make sure that we support local industry, and it is something we will continue to do.

MR COCKS: Minister, has the government ever commissioned an independent evaluation of its union-influenced procurement regime to assess whether it is delivering better outcomes for local workers and businesses?

MR PETTERSSON: I am not aware of any review of that nature. I am happy to take it on notice and check.

Planning—lease compliance and Macquarie pool

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Planning. Many Canberrans are concerned about lease squatting, and one of those sites is Big Splash. Big Splash has been part of the Belconnen way of life for nearly 60 years. It started as a public swimming pool, but it fell victim to the thinking that governments should not be involved in delivering those services. It is now privately owned, but it is clear the community still considers it is a public asset and its continued use enhances the community wealth of the people in Belconnen. Minister, we often talk about good planning outcomes, but how will the public value of Big Splash to the community be taken into account in decisions about Big Splash's future?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. Under our planning system, we have a range of ways that the community can provide input into planning decisions. The government is not proposing any changes to the zoning of Big Splash. We have been very clear about that. Any future development applications that the proponent, the lessee, puts to the government would have to go out through public notification for community consultation and input as part of the independent assessment undertaken by the Territory Planning Authority. I am not aware that there is any live development application in relation to the site. The government has expressed its wish to see that aquatic facility open as soon as possible and certainly in line with the lessee's commitment of opening it on 1 November this year.

Obviously, we have a leasehold system here in the ACT, but, whilst we have a leasehold system, property rights are attached to those leases and we need to respect those property rights, but we also need to provide community consultation in relation to developments that lessees want to undertake, and that process is there for the community to be involved with.

MR SPEAKER: Just before we go to your supplementary, Ms Clay, it has been drawn to my attention that there is a sign on the former member Mr Rattenbury's chair. I make this point about props. The ruling that I set is that, if it is a visual aid, it is permitted but not encouraged. But if it is not a visual aid to illustrate a point, it is not. Further, if you go to *House of Representatives Practice*, page 509, the chair has more than once ruled that displaying signs is not permitted. I will not go on about the further ruling, but, if you want to go further, you can read at your leisure about why he made that ruling. The

prop has been removed. Mr Braddock, do you have a point of order?

Mr Braddock: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table this document for the information of members, in terms of Mr Rattenbury and his valuable contribution to this place.

Leave granted.

Mr Braddock: I hereby table the sign saying how much we miss Mr Rattenbury in this place.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, members. After that little interlude, Ms Clay, you may go to your supplementary.

MS CLAY: Minister, what is the latest update on the now defunct Hawker Tennis Centre?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. This has certainly been a site that has been looked at by the independent regulator, Access Canberra. Following the work that they have been doing on the Big Splash site, they have also been looking at a range of other sites which are unused in the territory. Of course, this is consistent with the priorities that I set for the Territory Planning Authority—Access Canberra acting as their delegate—in my statement of planning priorities, where I indicated it was a priority of the government that they should enforce leases, particularly unused leases for community and recreational purposes but also shopping centres.

In relation to Hawker, there is a long history of DAs which have not been acted on at Hawker. Regulatory action and monitoring are currently underway. However, no further comment can be provided at this time from Access Canberra. When I can provide an update in relation to that matter, I will.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, what is the latest update on the long-defunct Richardson shops?

MR STEEL: As Miss Nuttall would know, the Richardson shop site is currently vacant. Whilst the Crown lease permits the use of retail and personal services, obviously activity is not occurring at the site. There are also currently no active DAs relating to the site. Access Canberra have been investigating the state of the shops since 2023 and regulatory action is currently underway.

Canberra Institute of Technology—EV Centre of Excellence

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations. In May 2024, the ACT and commonwealth governments jointly announced that CIT would host Australia's first centre of excellence focused on electric vehicle training. That has been supported by a total of \$27.3 million in joint funding, including \$4.8 million from the commonwealth, to turbocharge the project. Despite all this funding, I understand there have been extensive delays in procuring EVs to be used for training purposes. Minister, when did CIT receive the training vehicles it has procured to use for this program and what vehicles were used in the meantime?

MR PETTERSSON: I would like to thank Mr Emerson for the question and his continued interest in vocational education in our city. Vehicle acquisition was complete in March 2026. During this time, additional equipment, including portable simulators and EV components, were procured to support the commencement of training and the development of training toolkits. However, I appreciate the specifics of Mr Emerson's question in relation to vehicles, and so I will take that on notice.

MR EMERSON: Minister, how many practical training sessions using an EV had been run by the centre of excellence program from the time the EV program commenced up until those vehicles were procured in March 2026, and can you please provide the Assembly with a list of dates and locations for these training sessions?

MR PETTERSSON: I would like to thank Mr Emerson for the supplementary. I will of course take that question on notice. I can provide some adjacent information which might be of benefit to members. To date, there have been 309 participants who have been trained, including 245 existing industry professionals through the roadshow as well as 64 TAFE educators from across all states and territories. There have been a range of training options. For the benefit of members, those courses include: Statement of Attainment Depower and Reinitialise Battery Electric Vehicles, a one-day offering; Battery Electric Vehicle Inspection and Servicing Skill Set, a three-day offering; for TAFE educators, Battery Electric Vehicle Inspection and Servicing Skill Set, three days; and the Electric Vehicle Diagnose and Repair Skill Set, a six-day offering.

MS CARRICK: Minister, has the government or CIT leadership taken any steps to ensure photos, documents and other evidence relating to allegations involving this centre of excellence are not deleted, altered or removed from CIT databases, given the allegations that have been made?

MR PETTERSSON: I would like to thank Ms Carrick for the question. I appreciate the spirit in which it is asked. As members would appreciate, I am not intimately across day-to-day management matters at CIT. I will take the question on notice, and I thank Ms Carrick for raising those matters in this place.

Roads—Commonwealth Avenue

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development or the Minister for Transport. Same minister!

Minister, earlier today I raised concerns about delays to northbound rapid bus services on Commonwealth Avenue during peak periods, particularly outside the Hyatt Hotel, before buses reach the dedicated lane that begins at Albert Hall. I understand that Transport Canberra anticipated these delays and sought agreement from the National Capital Authority to extend the bus lanes south to the Coronation Drive intersection ahead of the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge strengthening works. However, the National Capital Authority has indicated that they are responsible for the bridge and that the public transport network is a matter for the ACT government. Minister, which agency is responsible for deciding whether or not to have a bus lane on Commonwealth Avenue?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. The reality is both are responsible.

Commonwealth Avenue Bridge is a commonwealth asset and the NCA has planning responsibility within certain parts of Canberra in designated areas and national land. So they are involved and any decisions would, of course, be made not just by the ACT government but with them.

In terms of the question in relation to having an extension of the bus lane or a bus lane that is provided, I think the member is talking about the section between Coronation Drive and Commonwealth Avenue Bridge. This has formed part of an earlier discussion with the NCA, but the ACT government does not believe it is a priority. It will not provide particularly significant benefits for buses. Part of the challenge with bus lanes on Adelaide Avenue, Yarra Glen and Commonwealth Avenue, is that the bus lane is on the right-hand side of the road on Yarra Glen and Adelaide Avenue, travelling northbound, and then it transitions to the other side of the road when buses need to stop at a bus stop that is on the left hand side of the road, like the Albert Hall stop. So buses are in transition at that point. So establishing a bus lane there may not necessarily provide a significant benefit for the traffic network.

Of course, we would not rule anything out. As I mentioned in my ministerial statement this morning, as temporary traffic arrangements change with the work program of the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge renewal project, there may be a need to look at the arrangements that are in place as we see things change. We will work with the NCA closely on that.

MS CARRICK: Minister, what evidence do you have to determine that you do not support a bus lane from Coronation Drive to Albert Hall?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I think some modelling was undertaken in relation to that, and that it was done quite early on in, in the life of the former disruption taskforce that was set up. I think there was some modelling done. I will take that on notice and see what information we can provide in relation to that. But it is not a particular priority at the moment. There are a range of other things that would impact on the utility of a bus lane in that area, including the temporary traffic arrangements the NCA has put in place with their bridge renewal project as well. We are looking at the system holistically, not just at one particular section, to understand what the best outcome is, to prioritise public transport and to make sure we have reliability for our buses running through that area, of which there are many.

MR EMERSON: Minister, if that bus lane is not being prioritised, which dedicated bus lanes are being prioritised?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. I consider it a Dorothy Dixier! We are prioritising improvements to bus lanes on the Belconnen Transitway, Haydon Drive. Major public transport route updates are being made to feasibility to inform more detailed design to bus priority improvements in the corridor. We have had work underway on the Cotter Road looking at opportunities for improvements to the general traffic flow, but also for buses, because, of course, buses run on the road with other vehicles and do get caught up with other vehicles. There may be potential improvements that can be made there for buses as well through the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework that we are looking forward to consulting on with the community soon. We will be considering further opportunities for enhancement and access to our

bus services and integration with future light rail systems. So there are a whole range of different opportunities that are being progressed throughout the city to make sure that buses are prioritised and that we support more multimodal use of our transport network.

Workers compensation insurance

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations. In 2022, the government signed a new contract with Finity consulting to, among other things, provide a report on the ACT workers compensation scheme. Evidence was given during the inquiry into insurance costs, which speculated that the terms of reference for this report changed under the new contract. It was suggested that the changes made it more difficult to identify issues with the scheme. Minister, why did the terms of reference change for the Finity review?

MR PETTERSSON: I will take that one on notice.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, did your office or anyone in the Chief Minister's directorate consult with any union-affiliated person in drafting the new terms of reference?

MR PETTERSSON: I will take that one on notice.

MR CAIN: Minister, will you commit to tabling the terms of reference for both the 2017 and 2022 contracts, in this Assembly?

MR PETTERSSON: I do not believe there would be any problem with that. However, I will take it on notice just to check if that is not available in some other way. But I will take it on notice.

Community service organisations—funding

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services. Minister, after extensive advocacy by the community and the Greens for an uplift in funding for the community sector, we were really pleased to see the government commit \$23.7 million in permanent uplift to the community sector—it is much needed. I want to clarify: how much new money is the community sector getting as a permanent uplift per year, and how many organisations will share this funding?

MR STEEL: I will take the question as Treasurer. We will be outlining the full scope of the investment that the ACT government is making in our community sector in the budget, when I hand it down in June. We have heard from community sector organisations and peak bodies that there is a need to respond to increasing cost in demand that they are seeing, with more people coming to them, and to provide support. We were very pleased to announce additional funding for them, which will be reflected in the budget. I am looking forward to handing that down and providing further details both to the community sector partners and the Assembly on 10 June.

Miss Nuttall: Under 118AA, I do not believe the minister was responsive to the

question of how much money is being given per year, nor how many organisations will share this funding.

MR STEEL: In the interest of not making announcements during question time, I have indicated when I will be making the announcement.

MR SPEAKER: I think he has been responsive, Miss Nuttall. He is not going to pre-empt the budget based on a standing order, as much as we might like him to. I think that even though he has not directly answered, he has indicated when he will answer, and therefore he has been consistent with the standing orders.

MISS NUTTALL: Awesome—worth a shot; thank you.

Minister, how many organisations will receive the \$894,000 in continued and expanded funding for LGBTIQ+ organisations and over how many years, and how much of that funding is for continued as opposed to expanding programs?

MR SPEAKER: Ms Orr, are you taking this one?

MS ORR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. That one sits more within my portfolio than the Treasurer's. I will take it on notice—for the same reasons that the Treasurer outlined in his response.

MR SPEAKER: Right. Noting that we will get the budget, I think, before we will get a response on notice.

MS ORR: Quite possibly, yes.

MR SPEAKER: So, there you go! Ms Clay?

MS CLAY: Can you provide the full breakdown of the \$15.4 million in funding going towards specialist homelessness services and confirm that that is new money?

MS BERRY: I will take that on notice.

Levies and taxation—gas exports

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, many Canberrans were disappointed to find out that the most recent federal budget did not include a simple, proven and popular measure—a 25 per cent tax on gas exports. In the context of generating more commonwealth revenue to fund the kind of services our territory desperately needs, the Greens have brought this idea to the Assembly time and again. Would you like to read into the *Hansard* your opposition to a fossil fuel tax, as per your amendments to the motion of 3 September 2025?

MR STEEL: Could I ask Mr Braddock to repeat the question?

MR BRADDOCK: I will repeat the final sentence: would you like to read into the *Hansard* your opposition to a fossil fuel tax, as per your amendments to the motion of 3 September 2025?

MR SPEAKER: I will seek some advice on this from the Clerk, as to whether a federal fossil fuel tax would be under the minister's administrative arrangements.

I am allowing the question. Treasurer, I will give you the call.

MR STEEL: Not in the form of words of the motion that was put to the Assembly. I think that is on the record, as well as my speech to the Assembly in relation to that matter. We have, of course, canvassed other ideas on broader revenue in relation to resources, which is available in submissions we have made to the commonwealth.

MR BRADDOCK: Treasurer, why don't you support more revenue being directed to the ACT from taxing giant gas corporations?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Of course, it is a question for the federal government, which is the decision-maker and which has the taxation responsibilities under the Constitution for those matters. We do not have any significant mining resources that we can tax here in the territory. That is a shame, because it would be helpful to the budget. Other jurisdictions do. Of course, we are partially compensated for that through CGC arrangements and GST sharing and distribution arrangements. Ultimately, those are matters for the commonwealth. We will continue to engage with the commonwealth on vertical fiscal imbalance, where they have the ability to raise revenue, but we are ultimately the ones that deliver services. We will continue to talk to the commonwealth about how we get our fair share of funding to be able to deliver the services that our community needs.

MS CLAY: Has ACT Labor or the ACT government stated that they support taxing fossil fuels to their federal counterparts?

MR STEEL: As I mentioned in answer to the first question, we have canvassed a range of other suggestions, but not in the exact form that the previous motion had suggested. That is why we took a slightly different position on that motion.

Ms Clay: A point of order on relevance. It was a simple question about whether they have advocated for this one.

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

MR STEEL: No. I have answered the question. We have put forward a different arrangement. I am happy to take on notice and provide that submission, and table it in the Assembly.

MR SPEAKER: There is no point of order, Ms Clay.

Roads—safety

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services. Minister, can you update the Assembly on new investments to improve road safety across Canberra?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the question. I really appreciate it, and I will be taking this question on behalf of the Minister for City and Government Services, in relation to the Black Spot Program. I am very pleased that there has been an announcement by local federal representatives about almost \$7 million in funding through the 2026-27 Black Spot Program to improve safety at 17 locations across Canberra, building on the two projects which received Black Spot funding of over half a million dollars by the commonwealth in April, earlier this year. These projects target known crash risks and community concerns and deliver practical upgrades, including new traffic infrastructure, pedestrian improvements, speed management measures and safer intersections. Funded works include major upgrades at the Hindmarsh Drive and Yamba Drive intersection in Garran, safety improvements in Gungahlin, and traffic calming and active travel improvements on Cowper Street in Dickson and Ainslie.

I am also pleased to report the construction of a signalised pedestrian crossing and path improvements on Canberra Avenue are underway, with anticipated completion of the crossing in August and other elements to be completed in September, weather permitting. Every road safety improvement matters because behind every statistic is a person, a family and a community. These projects are about making everyday journeys across Canberra safer and more reliable and help to ensure everyone gets home safely.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, how were these Black Spot projects identified as priorities for funding?

MR STEEL: Thank you for the supplementary. These projects were recommended by the ACT Black Spot Consultative Panel, which brings together local stakeholders with detailed knowledge of Canberra's road network and safety concerns. The panel considers crash history, known risks and community nominations to ensure funding is directed to locations where improvements can have the greatest safety benefit. Importantly, anyone can nominate a location for consideration under the annual Black Spot Program, including residents, community groups and local councils. That local input is critical because communities often know firsthand where near misses, unsafe conditions or recurring risks exist. The funded projects reflect a range of safety priorities from reducing right-angle collisions and improving sight lines through to safer pedestrian connections, lower vehicle speeds and better cycling conditions. The Black Spot Program demonstrates the value of governments working with communities together to deliver practical, evidence based road safety improvements.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what kinds of safety improvements will Canberrans see delivered through this Black Spot funding?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Tough for her question. Canberrans will see a wide range of targeted road safety upgrades delivered across the city through this funding round, and this includes new mast arm traffic signals, roundabouts, speed humps, pedestrian improvements, upgraded lighting, improved signage and safer line marking. For example, more than \$1 million will be invested at Hindmarsh Drive and Yamba Drive in Garran to improve signal visibility and intersection safety, while Cowper Street in Dickson and Ainslie will receive speed management and active travel improvements, including a reduction to 50 kilometres per hour. Other projects will improve safety around schools, strengthen protections for cyclists and pedestrians, and address roadside hazards and dangerous intersection layouts. These are practical, locally

targeted interventions that will make everyday travel safer and more reliable for drivers, cyclists, pedestrians and public transport users alike. These investments support our Vision Zero approach—that no death or serious injury on our roads is acceptable.

Crime—Braddon and Civic

MRS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Minister, yesterday you dismissed community safety concerns in Civic as fearmongering and you said the city is “more safe than ever”. Minister, if Civic and Braddon are safer than ever, why are businesses in Civic and Braddon reporting having to call the police more often and lock their doors in order to screen customers, and why are they saying the city is “way worse”?

DR PATERSON: I thank the member for the question. We have talked about this a lot over the past couple of weeks. What I answered yesterday was relying on the evidence of police statistics, based on reporting of incidents and apprehensions within the Civic and Braddon area. As I said yesterday, crime statistics demonstrate that Canberra is a very safe society. Perceptions of safety statistics also indicate that Canberrans do, for the most part, feel very safe both in the day and the night and that we lead the nation in terms of feeling safe.

As we have talked about multiple times, there is significant construction underway in the city centre. It is a time of flux and a time of change. We understand that businesses are facing some challenges. As we have talked about, these challenges exist outside of the city centre as well, in other shopping precincts around Canberra. We will continue to work with these shopping precincts. I really encourage any businesses that the Canberra Liberals are talking to, to contact the Business Liaison Officer at ACT Policing. He is a highly-engaged professional officer who is really keen to talk to businesses that might be struggling and to provide some suggestions on how they can harden their shopfronts and harden their security processes—and, of course, they can report any crime.

MRS MORRIS: Minister, why is it so hard for you and your government to admit that business owners, staff and customers are struggling with danger and antisocial behaviour?

DR PATERSON: As I just said in my previous answer, we are talking with businesses with them around their struggles with antisocial behaviour and we will continue to do so.

MS LEE: Minister, will you apologise to the business owners, staff and customers whose safety concerns you have dismissed as “fearmongering”?

DR PATERSON: I reject that question. I dismissed the Canberra Liberals as fearmongering, not the businesses. I am very open to talking to the businesses. I do talk to businesses very regularly. As I said, ACT Policing’s Business Liaison Officer is there and ready to hear the concerns of businesses. If the Canberra Liberals are speaking to businesses, I suggest they refer them to my office, and we will put them onto the business liaison team.

Levies and taxation—Capital Gains Tax

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Chief Minister as the Minister for Economic Development. ABS quarterly data and the Eslake report show that private investment as a share of the ACT's economy is well behind that of other states and is declining. I refer the Chief Minister to comments made by the Labor premiers of New South Wales and Western Australia opposing federal Labor's change to the capital gains tax. Chief Minister, when did you or your government first become aware of the federal government's intentions to change the capital gains tax?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Milligan for the question. Well, formally aware, on budget night. There was a lot, of course, of media speculation and interviews that various federal ministers gave in the lead up to the budget. So that occurred through, from memory, the months of March and April this year.

MR MILLIGAN: Chief Minister, has the ACT government done any modelling on how this may impact the private sector's activity given you heard of speculation that this may occur two or three months prior to the announcement?

MR BARR: We would not routinely do modelling on speculation on commonwealth government policy, and obviously, the commonwealth, through its own agencies, is best placed to do modelling on its own policies. I understand the commonwealth Treasury has done extensive modelling in relation to the tax changes that have been proposed. Of course, they are yet to pass the parliament and we have been advised there are multiple tranches of legislation.

Some of the detail, particularly as it relates to startups, which is an area that we are certainly very interested in—the application of the commonwealth's policy change. We will, of course, need to see the detail of that commonwealth legislation before we can form a concluded view on that matter. Obviously the commonwealth has been very public in their engagement with the tech and startup sectors. Then there are a range of other areas that are still subject to further commonwealth engagement and detailed legislation.

Another area that will be relevant is the definition of small business within these arrangements, and I do note, for example, that questions around turnover and business size in terms of the definition of small business may not have changed for some time now.

MR COCKS: Chief Minister, will you join your two Labor counterparts now and fight against federal Labor's bad budget?

MR BARR: Well, first of all I do not think the statement and the implication of the question is accurate. I do not think either Premier Cook or Premier Minns would agree with the characterisation of the shadow Treasurer. I think it is obviously open for premiers and others in the political system to make observations about policy detail and the implementation thereof.

We certainly are interested in exactly where the commonwealth will land in relation to definitions of small business and what carve-outs there will be, particularly in relation

to startups that start from either a zero capital base or a very low capital base. The commonwealth has been clear that they are working through that and that there will be subsequent legislation. So I will be in a better position to comment on that once we have seen that legislation.

ACT Ambulance Service—stations

MRS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. In relation to ACT ambulance stations, you said on ABC radio on 20 May that the ACT government is looking at some of the old stations that may not be required any more. Minister, are you considering permanently closing ambulance stations because your government has failed to ensure Canberra has enough paramedics to keep them operational?

DR PATERSON: No. We have been very busy building stations. We have some fantastic new stations being built all across Canberra over the last few years. So, this is what the budget funding allocation that we announced last week is—to explore our station profile in the territory. This is to understand where stations are best placed, to ensure that we have the fastest priority-response times in the country. That is what we are focused on. That is what our paramedics are focused on, in terms of patient care and safety. So, we want to make sure that our paramedics are best placed around the territory.

MRS MORRIS: Minister, how many ambulance stations are you planning to close? If you are not planning to close them, then why did you say on ABC radio that some of the old stations may not be required anymore?

DR PATERSON: This is what the work we will do over the next year will be; to look at these stations. We have some really aged facilities and we would like to see our paramedics in the new facilities. So, we will look at which stations are required, so that we service the Canberra community to the best of our ability.

MR PARTON: Minister, will you rule out permanently closing some ACT ambulance stations?

DR PATERSON: I will progress the work with the ACT Ambulance Service and our emergency services agencies to understand the station profile. As we have said multiple times to the Canberra Liberals, it is really not about stations for the ambulance service. It is about having the ambulances on the road; teams out on the road—

Mr Parton: Point of order. Mr Speaker, on relevance, the Minister has been nowhere near answering the question. I am not expecting her to at any point, and I would ask you to ask her to be relevant to the question, which was very simply, “Will you rule out permanently closing some ACT ambulance stations?”

MR SPEAKER: She does not have to answer it the way you might want to, which is by being explicit in terms of “yes” or “no”. She is answering it, I guess, you could interpret by virtue of the fact she has not ruled it out—or has ruled it out—that it is not being ruled out, Mr Parton. But I will leave it to the minister to answer.

DR PATERSON: Yes, we have got more work to do. So, we want to see our paramedics and our ACT ambulance service workers in the new stations, in these new facilities that we have around Canberra. So, we will do the work over the next year to understand where our paramedics and the ambulances are best positioned.

Civic merry-go-round

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Minister for Finance. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the ACT government's work to restore and reopen the beloved Civic merry-go-round and on how these upgrades will ensure this much-loved Canberra icon can continue to be enjoyed by families like mine for generations to come?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Tough for the question. I think I am taking it as Minister for the Public Service, actually. Either way, it is great to see the Civic merry-go-round restored and reopened, ensuring it can continue delighting families like Ms Tough's for generations to come.

The merry-go-round has been part of Civic since 1974—so as long as I can remember—and has entertained thousands and thousands of Canberrans and visitors alike. From 21 April to 22 of May, it was temporarily closed to allow refurbishment, repairs, upgrades and important safety works to be completed efficiently through a single coordinated program.

The timing of the closure was carefully planned during a quieter period of the year, following the Wonderful World Festival and ahead of the July school holidays to minimise disruption for families and visitors.

Mr Speaker, the project involved substantial mechanical refurbishment works to renew key operating components of the 111-year-old attraction and extend its working life well into the future. This included repairing and reinstating horses, straightening bent poles and restoring a full row of previously out-of-service horses.

Detailed heritage paint restoration was also undertaken across the attraction, including the horses, elephants, steam engine, internal artwork and external structure, helping maintain the distinctive historic character that generations of Canberrans have known and loved.

This reopening reflects the ACT government's commitment to preserving Canberra's heritage while investing in family-friendly public spaces.

MS TOUGH: Minister, how will the refurbishment improve the safety, accessibility and reliability of the merry-go-round?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Tough for the supplementary question. The refurbishment works have delivered significant improvements to the safety, accessibility and long-term reliability of the merry-go-round. The government has invested almost \$550,000 in maintenance and restoration works this financial year, reflecting the complexity of working on a 111-year-old heritage attraction, to ensure it continues to meet modern operational and safety standards.

A range of practical safety and accessibility upgrades were undertaken as part of the project. This included repairs to the surrounding soft fall to reduce trip hazards within the enclosure, pressure cleaning of the merry-go-round platform and a deep clean of all ride touch-points. Accessibility was further improved through the removal and “make safe” of redundant cabling and the reinstatement of internal lighting, creating a safer and more welcoming environment for users.

Importantly, extensive investigation and refurbishment of the mechanical systems was undertaken to ensure all moving elements of the merry-go-round were restored to full operation and reliability.

The project also included comprehensive cleaning and repainting of the internal and external protective structures, including structural elements underneath the ride, helping protect the attraction from the elements while improving reliability over the long term. In addition, a new perspex skylight was installed to allow more natural light into the enclosure while providing greater protection for the merry-go-round itself.

The successful reopening of the merry-go-round on 23 May not only marked the completion of this year’s two-stage project—this planned package of works also supports the development of a 25-year life cycle maintenance plan. This will include annual and five-year certification inspections, helping ensure the attraction continues to enliven our city centre for future generations of Canberrans.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, how does the reopening of the Civic merry-go-round support the government’s broader vision for a vibrant and family-friendly city centre.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings for the question. The reopening of the merry-go-round supports the government’s broader vision, as Mr Werner-Gibbings has said, for a vibrant, welcoming, family-friendly city centre in Civic.

As one of Canberra’s most recognisable and enduring attractions, the merry-go-round adds charm to the heart of the city, drawing families and visitors into the precinct and supporting surrounding cafes, shops and local businesses. Indeed, it was wonderful to see so many children and their families enjoying the spaces of City Walk and Petrie Plaza during the school holidays and the Wonderful World Festival.

The government has been clear that we want Civic to be more than simply a business district. We want it to be a people-focused destination, with family-friendly attractions and cultural experiences that bring the community together. As someone who lives just one block from the city, this is certainly my experience of Civic—a busy place that is not only our CBD but the local town centre for more and more families. That is why we continue to invest in public realm upgrades, events, accessibility improvements and heritage restoration projects across the city centre.

Finally, I want to thank the wonderful staff who welcome children and families and the young at heart to the merry-go-round. It was a real pleasure to meet two of those staff the other day and see how happy they were to have their joy machine back in action.

Roads—congestion

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services. Residents in the electorate of Murrumbidgee are reporting gridlock conditions on main thoroughfares like John Gorton Drive, Cotter Road and Adelaide Avenue. As a result, congestion levels on suburban streets are rising beyond safe levels, as people seek alternative routes. This is creating a litany of consequences, from noise disturbance to crash hazards. Minister, why is this city's road network failing Canberrans?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. I certainly acknowledge that, particularly on the Cotter Road, there is quite a bit of congestion at peak times. Of course, at the end of the year, we expect the new bridge over the Molonglo River to open—an extension of John Gorton Drive that will provide access to William Hovell Drive, and another access point into the city for the many residents of the Molonglo Valley, both current and future.

It was great to receive funding from the commonwealth in the federal budget for the Molonglo parkway drive connector, which will help us to undertake the detailed design of that road, which will, in the future, provide a connection point onto the Tuggeranong Parkway. It will also provide access to the Molonglo town centre.

The Suburban Land Agency is doing their work around planning for the future subdivisions of Bandler and Sulman, with a new road that will connect John Gorton Drive through to Bindubi Street at William Hovell Drive, and provide another access point. It is also another important road for public transport.

In other areas of the road traffic network, there are a range of construction projects underway, both public and private, that are impacting on traffic. Those are temporary impacts, and many of those projects are designed to improve traffic capacity, and traffic volume flow and safety, and are critical for this city's future. Our government will continue to invest in infrastructure projects that support improved traffic conditions that connect new communities and improve road safety.

MR PARTON: Does the government take responsibility for reported increases in speeding, collisions, near misses and hooning on suburban streets located off main roads?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Of course, it is the responsibility of those in every vehicle to stick to the road rules and to support others and themselves to remain safe. That is included in all of our safety messaging throughout the year, and at particular times of the year when we do see some more of that antisocial behaviour occurring on our roads.

We will continue, through the work that Minister Cheyne outlined this week in relation to road safety, to continue to both educate the community and undertake investment in infrastructure improvements and other actions and interventions to support safety on our roads. There is no excuse for breaking the rules on our roads. They are there for a reason; that is, to keep everyone safe. The government also have a role to play, of course, in continuing to support safety in a range of different ways and guided by the expert Road Safety Advisory Board.

MR COCKS: Minister, why is suburban congestion being treated as such a low-priority issue for this government?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question, and it is not. It is one of the reasons why our government is investing in multimodal network planning, which fits into my responsibilities as Minister for Transport, in encouraging more people to use public transport. We are investing in projects like light rail to provide mass transit and encourage more people to use public transport, which, of course, takes cars off the road.

What we saw, when we introduced that system on Northbourne Avenue, was a massive reduction in traffic volumes along Northbourne Avenue. This has made a significant difference to our city already, and we are continuing to invest in it. We are about to have a debate about whether it should be extended to other parts of our city, not only to help deal with congestion but also to support more people to use sustainable modes of transport. Of course, we continue our work around active travel as well. There will be a need to invest in our roads as well, but there needs to be a multimodal approach to provide a whole range of different options for the community to use.

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

Papers

Mr Speaker presented the following papers:

Bills, referred to Committees, pursuant to standing order 174—Correspondence to the Speaker—Bills—Not inquired into—Better Regulation Legislation Amendment Bill 2026—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Environment and Planning, dated 26 May 2026.

Mr Steel, pursuant to standing order 211, presented the following papers:

ACT Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act—

Final report on the Evaluation of the Operation of the ACT Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022, dated 31 March 2026.

Appendices, dated May 2026.

ACT Housing Strategy—Year 7 Report Card, dated undated, together with a statement, dated May 2026.

Budget 2025-2026—Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 10—Budget Statement F—Education Directorate—Corrigendum.

Custodial Inspector Act, pursuant to subsection 30(2)—Healthy Prison Review of the Alexander Maconochie Centre 2025—Government response, dated May 2026.

Dog parks in Molonglo Valley and Woden Town Centre—Options Report—Assembly resolution of 28 October 2025—Government response, dated May 2026.

Gene Technology Act, pursuant to subsection 136(2)—Operations of the Gene Technology Regulator—Annual Report—2024-2025, dated 30 September 2025.

National Education & Care Services—FOI & Privacy Commissioners &

Ombudsman—Education and Care Services Ombudsman and National Education and Care Services Freedom of Information & Privacy Commissioners—Annual Report 2024-2025, dated 25 February 2026.

National Environment Protection Council Act—

Annual Reports 2019-20 to 2023-24—Statement, dated May 2026.

Pursuant to section 23—

National Environment Protection Council—Annual Report—

2019-2020.

2020-2021.

2021-2022.

2022-2023.

2023-2024.

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

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Legal Profession Act—Legal Profession (Bar Council Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-64 (LR, 25 May 2026).

Light rail stage 2B—costs

MR PARTON (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (3.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) Mr Saul Eslake’s report for the Select Committee on the Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT was published on 19 May 2026;
- (b) Mr Eslake’s report described the ACT’s financial position as unsustainable, and called on the Government to adopt a “more disciplined fiscal strategy”;
- (c) the report suggests that significant deterioration in the financial position of the ACT has been driven entirely by “conscious policy decisions taken by the ACT Government”;
- (d) the ACT’s general government net debt increased tenfold, from \$910 million at the end of the 2014-2015 financial year to \$9.15 billion at the end of the 2024-2025 financial year;
- (e) the report states that “a large number of capital initiatives, entirely funded by debt, have also detracted from the overall cash balance”; and
- (f) the report states that “in a democracy, Governments should be transparent about financial decisions, and not seek to conceal the true cost behind commercial-in-confidence rationale”;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) Stage 1 of the tram between Gungahlin and Civic was delivered in 2019 at a total cost of \$1.65 billion once the monthly payments to Canberra Metro conclude in the late 2030's;
 - (b) the Government has already spent and committed to spending over \$1.4 billion on Stage 2A of the tram including the raising of London Circuit, upgrades to the depot and the purchase of more rolling stock;
 - (c) the Government has committed to delivering Stage 2B of the tram to Woden by 2034, but refuses to release any cost estimates of the project;
 - (d) residents groups and engineers have estimated the cost of Stage 2B to be somewhere between three and six billion dollars; and
 - (e) the majority of this figure is not yet budgeted for and will likely be added to already ballooning debt; and
- (3) calls on the Government to table in the Assembly by the last sitting week in June the full early costings and timeline for Stage 2B of the tram. These costings should include early works, the extra Commonwealth Bridge span, all roadworks, tram stops, pedestrian infrastructure and additional rolling stock.

We are looking for the government to be truthful and transparent with Canberrans and table in the Assembly the full early costings and indicative timeline for the extension to Woden. Nobody in this chamber, certainly, and nobody in Canberra, believes, when cabinet is sitting around the room talking about this project—irrespective of the fact that there have not been costings released in any meaningful way—that they are not working on a ballpark figure. Of course they are. Because if, indeed, the government did not have any idea as to what this would cost, then they would not be proceeding.

We are spending a hell of a lot of money to get to where we are now. And we believe, particularly off the back of the Eslake report, that now is the moment that those indicative costings must be released. I can already hear Mr Steel's remarks, and he has alluded to them in some of his answers—stunning answers—to questions earlier. He has alluded to the fact that, somehow, this is an anti-tram motion—and it is not. It is not.

Dr Paterson: You support the tram?

MR PARTON: I love the tram. I love it. I love the tram. Indeed, if we could wave a magic wand and get the tram to Lanyon—and I think the Greens have got that magic wand—we would be there. We would be there with bells on. There was a suggestion on my Facebook that if we were considering extending to Tharwa, we should push it to Adaminaby, and someone else suggested that maybe it should go to the snow! Now, that is obviously ludicrous, but all I am saying is, we love the tram. We love it. And if we could wave a magic wand and have it here tomorrow, and it did not cost much money, we would certainly be all over it—but given the state of the finances as very clearly articulated in the first instance by Mr Eslake, and of course we wait for the final committee report from the committee looking into the fiscal sustainability or otherwise of the ACT.

This motion does not reflect any party's position on the light rail. It just asks for the government to be honest with Canberrans and tell them how much the tram to Woden

will cost. We understand that that is not going to be at an exceptionally detailed level. In his report Saul Eslake states that:

... in a democracy governments should be transparent about their reasons for doing so, and should not seek to conceal them behind ‘commercial-in-confidence’, ‘security’ or other rationales.

And we fully support that. I know that Mr Steel will be very quick to say that releasing costings for a project will impact Treasury’s ability to conduct commercial negotiations; certainly, along with Mr Eslake, I think that is a bit of a cop-out.

In their negotiations with the AFL, the Tasmanian government announced the state’s funding contribution to the Macquarie Point Stadium project, and the cost appears in the budget papers that were handed down by the Tasmanian Treasurer last week. Those numbers were being bandied around very, very early on in the piece. This level of transparency with a large-scale infrastructure project is nothing new, and it is not exclusive to Tasmania. The federal government announced an indicative cost for the western Sydney airport project back in 2014—2014! They laid it on the table: “We reckon it is going to cost this much”—and that is all we are looking for—and there have been regular updates to the total project expenditure since. We are asking the government to be honest, open and transparent, like their interstate counterparts.

The Eslake report laid bare the fact that we are in a pickle in regard to our finances. And in his report—and this is not a prop, by the way, Madam Assistant Speaker; I am just reading the report, so don’t anyone panic—he goes to the impact of policy decisions:

... expense policy decisions have worsened the net operating balance by at least \$7 billion over the past decade – of which \$2 billion is attributable to decisions made in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 Budget cycles ...

But in this particular instance, I want to take you to the capital initiatives, in particular. He says:

... the ACT Government should, as part of the annual budgetary process, determine how much it can afford to spend on infrastructure investment—

which I would have thought was quite simple—

over the forward estimates period, having regard to the fiscal strategy targets which it should set, as recommended in Chapter 8 in this report, and then determine which projects are to be funded by ‘ranking’ them in descending order of benefit-cost ratios.

As a practical matter, it will not be possible to determine numerical benefit-cost ratios for every project that might be considered—

and we get that—

especially for projects which are not intended to generate revenues. More generally, in a democracy there should be some scope for elected governments to make judgements about the funding of projects on other than purely financial or

economic criteria: but, equally, in a democracy governments should be transparent about their reasons for doing so, and should not seek to conceal them behind ‘commercial-in-confidence’ ...

So that is what we are saying, as per the statements from Mr Eslake.

When we are talking ballpark figures, I want to take members back to the election campaign in 2024, and I note that this government, which continues to say that it is not possible to come up with costings for projects—these ballpark costings—when it comes to something that they do not want to build, does it pretty quickly. Because when it came to costings for the stadium that were put on the table by my party, it was just “click your fingers” and there were some figures that came to light, which were questioned, somewhat, by pretty much everyone that read them, but what I am saying is: if it is possible for the government to do that for a project that they do not want to build, it must be possible for them to do it for a project that they do want to build. I am not going to rabbit on any longer; you have heard enough. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (3.09): At the next election there will be a question for the community about who you can trust to become the government of the territory, and I think people would laugh if Mr Parton goes to that election and says in front of everyone that he loves the tram. No-one believes that. It is a completely dishonest statement.

Mr Parton: On a point of order. I would just ask whether Mr Steel rising to say that I had made a completely dishonest statement in the chamber is a suggestion that—

MR STEEL: I withdraw, Madam Assistant Speaker.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Steel.

MR STEEL: In a motion that is supposedly about honesty, I think it says a lot when that kind of statement is made. The government will not be supporting today’s motion brought forward by Mr Parton, nor will we be moving any amendments, because the Assembly has already passed resolutions on this direct subject. I direct Mr Parton to the debate from the previous Assembly, when he brought forward a very similar motion, on 8 February 2024. I also direct Mr Parton to the contents of Tuesday’s debate in the Assembly in response to the motion brought forward by Ms Clay and Mr Braddock, particularly in relation to the indicative timeline for the light rail stage 2B project, which I have tabled and updated on several occasions, including this term on multiple occasions. I would also direct him to the documents available to members in response to the Assembly resolution of 17 March 2025 moved by his colleague Ms Castley regarding the production of documents under standing order 213A, the scope of which has been parroted in today’s motion.

The government will not buy into this annual show of debate by the Canberra Liberals, reinforcing their opposition to building infrastructure our city needs. This is just another anti-light rail motion by the same old, tired Canberra Liberals. This motion is another attempt by the Liberals to justify their pulled-from-the-hat so-called costings of

delivering stage 2B—which actually conflate operating costs for the delivery of light rail stage 1, unless the party themselves are operating under the assumption that the ongoing cost of running another public transport service like our bus network is \$0 per financial year—in an attempt to conflate the cost of delivering light rail stage 2A by again refusing to accept that the supporting project, raising London Circuit, not only supports the delivery of light rail but is in fact also an important city-shaping and public realm improvement project in its own right, supporting land release, including the revenue that comes from land release, and enabling a range of other projects in the city and better connections to the Acton Waterfront for pedestrians. Then, of course, yet again, there is the refusal to acknowledge the \$343.9 million in funding contributed by the commonwealth government for light rail stage 2A.

The fact is that this tired, old, anti-light rail campaign by the Canberra Liberals has coloured their interpretation of the report by Mr Eslake to the Select Committee on the Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT, a report which refers to light rail just once. Mr Eslake noted that the level of service in transport in the territory is at average levels, as he acknowledges expenditure choices before the Assembly about the budget are fundamentally political choices. The government believes that investing in light rail as an essential piece of mass transit infrastructure for Canberra's future is critical. Mass transit is a level of service that is needed for a growing city, and it is a choice that our community has endorsed over and over at election after election. We are a progressive government, and we do not shy away from the transport investment that makes our city more sustainable and accessible for everyone, just like cities have done around the world.

The ACT government stands by our record of investment in once-in-a-generation infrastructure that supports our growing city and will be used by generations of Canberrans—from new and expanded hospitals, the construction and modernisation of public schools, improvements to Canberra's roads and in public transport, including light rail. I am looking forward to updating the Assembly on our investment in these areas through the upcoming budget. We will continue to make infrastructure investment decisions that are sustainable and responsible.

An investment decision in light rail stage 2B will not be made now, but will be made once Infrastructure Canberra prepares a comprehensive business case for the government to consider after all of the required environmental and planning approvals for the project have been completed. These approvals will provide for the final scope of the project to inform the costings. Because these planning approvals will take some time, undertaking the final business case after they are completed will enable an up-to-date analysis of the costs and benefits of the project to inform government decision-making.

The business case will also enable the government to understand the best financing options available for the project. This will take into account the cash position of the territory and other demands on the budget, including other infrastructure projects. The decision will also need to consider the context; that, in a similar time period in the mid-2030s, the territory is projected to pay down the unfunded superannuation liability that we inherited at self-government. It is important to note that the financing approach that we have taken with light rail today is that, excluding territory contributions, part of the infrastructure costs have been paid for through annual availability payments under the

public-private partnership contract in addition to operating costs. This has limited the impact of the projects on the budget by spreading the cost over time.

The business case for stage 2B will also inform the approach to the federal government and Infrastructure Australia for funding the capital component of the project. The ACT government will not be paying for 100 per cent of the construction costs of the project. Commonwealth joint funding is essential to get the project built and make the project financially viable for the territory.

As the government has already committed to multiple times in this Assembly, the costs of the project will be published once contracts are signed and the procurement is finalised along with the release of the business cases and contracts. I think that is consistent with the intent that Mr Eslake outlined in his report. This is an appropriate and responsible thing to do, and it is the approach that we have taken on previous stages of light rail. The approach to these sensitive procurement matters is different for each different project and each different tier of the project, and the government will need to make a decision about what we want to do in relation to that.

The commercially sensitive nature of this type of procurement needs to be emphasised. We must achieve value for money for this project through the procurement—we must do that—and the government must seek to use the range of levers to reduce procurement risk. Pre-conditioning the market by effectively telling tenderers what to bid may be directly counter to the ACT government achieving value for money during procurement. These are very sensitive matters that are considered by cabinet through the business case and investment decision process to ensure that the procurement approach gets the best outcomes for the territory. There will be very strict probity requirements around those commercially sensitive matters—very strict. This is a position that has long been backed by independent experts like Infrastructure Partnerships Australia.

But, if you are the Canberra Liberals, you do not care about value for money. That is a concept that only parties of government care about. If you are the Canberra Liberals, all you care about is wrecking and doing everything that you can to undermine the delivery of major infrastructure projects in the ACT rather than building them. We will not be supporting this motion today.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (3.18): I rise to support Mr Parton's motion. Transparency is critical. The people of Canberra deserve to clearly understand the full projected cost and timeline of stage 2B of light rail, so they can make an informed decision about whether this project is the right solution at the right time. The commonwealth government already publishes indicative costs and annual cash flow forecasts for its \$120 billion infrastructure investment program, which supports road and rail projects over 10 years. The commonwealth updates its infrastructure investment program twice a year, including revised project costs and cash flows. So it is not clear why the ACT government cannot provide the same level of transparency and indicative costs for this project.

I note that costs at the beginning of a major infrastructure project have a high level of contingency in them. As time goes by and the costs are refined, the contingency comes down and we get a more refined cost over time. But at the beginning, you can have an

indicative cost. I appreciate the concern that publishing figures may affect commercial negotiations. However, if the government is prepared to bring more providers into the tender process, beyond Capital Metro, that would create genuine competitive tension and help ensure value for money. Canberra deserves openness, accountability and the information needed to have confidence in decisions of this scale.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (3.19): Before I start on my prepared speech, I just want to reflect on some comments by Professor Brad Tucker, an astrophysicist from the ANU, who was on ABC Radio this morning. He made the point that there will be two semi-permanent manned stations on the moon before we will actually see light rail 2B established—which I found a bit of a pause. He was actually talking about the Brisbane Olympics at the time, but it just made me think.

Anyway, back to my prepared speech. How do you oppose light rail without insulting common sensibility? The answer is in Mr Parton's motion today: you complain about it costing far too much, using inflated assumptions and present it as economically unwise. The Canberra Liberals are no strangers to this tactic, which has been strategically deployed over the decades. You can read Kate Carnell's response to the light rail from Gungahlin to Civic proposal in the early 1990s and you will recognise the exact same arguments used to delay or kill light rail projects. There is a pattern. The Canberra Liberals have an instinctive aversion to city-building initiatives that benefit wide sections of the community. They therefore reach for any convenient calls or excuse to oppose such initiatives, and exaggerating cost estimates are a fun favourite.

I think the Minister for Transport has done a pretty good job of demolishing the inflated claims in part 2 of this motion. Given the deliberate errors in part 2 of the motion, it is not possible to treat the call in part 3 as being in good faith. All of this exposes the call at part 3 of this motion for what it is. The reason that Mr Parton is asking for the total cost estimate of light rail stage 2B is so that he can dress it up and use it as clickbait.

I have good news and bad news for Mr Parton. The good news for him is that this is not reason enough for me to oppose his motion. The bad news is: I have another. There is good news for Mr Steel too. There is also bad news for Mr Steel, in that he is not going to like it. The other reason why I will not support Mr Parton's motion is because there is no point. The information being requested does not exist, and the government does not intend it to exist. It is, by my interpretation, central to the criticism of Mr Saul Eslake's report. These estimates are simply not made and are therefore not included in the forward estimates. An estimate will not exist until a business case is prepared, which will be no earlier than in 2029 on the current anticipated schedule. I think it should exist, but it does not and this motion will not change it. It is a product of the government's go-slow on light rail, itself a byproduct of their lack of commitment to delivering a city-wide rail network. This is because the Labor Party have become a centrist party which fiddles around the edges of society's problems—always managing them, but never planning to fix them lest it disrupt the status quo, including their grip on power.

Mr Parton: Go to the gas tax, mate. Go to the gas tax.

MR BRADDOCK: I am glad you are on board with the gas tax, Mr Parton. It is good to have an ally in the chamber for that particular thing, because I am not getting any

luck from ACT Labor at the moment on that issue.

Mr Emerson: You have an ally—come on, mate.

MR BRADDOCK: Okay; I have a second one for the gas tax.

Ms Carrick: And I—

MR BRADDOCK: Excellent. I think we have a majority now. Maybe I should start on a motion on the gas tax at this rate.

The Greens support the light rail project in its entirety. We support it as a significant piece of essential city-building infrastructure, without which we will face a substantial escalation of costs across municipal services, enhanced environmental damage from urban sprawl and elevated greenhouse gas emissions. As I mentioned on Tuesday, the state of our public transport system and active travel network is such that it demands investment, in contrast to the domain of roads, where the costs are a reaction to urban sprawl in the absence of critical public transport investments.

Budgets are about decisions, made in the context of other decisions. The Greens approach to balancing capital budgets involves giving precedence to critical infrastructure, such as public transport projects, which alleviate operational costs over the long term and in turn creating space for other discretionary work that improves our lives. That is how we make space for a project like the lyric theatre, an expanded convention centre or maybe even a new sports stadium one day. In the current state of the budget, these things sit down on our priority list. Light rail rises to the top.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (3.24): I rise to speak to Mr Parton's motion, and I will be reiterating a similar stance to the one I put forward during the debate on the light rail motion brought forward by the Greens earlier this week. At the centre of the light rail debate lies the clear question: why does the government continually struggle to budget for, justify and deliver major projects like this on time and within cost? Every other jurisdiction seems capable of building and maintaining connected public transport systems. Why can't we do it here? It is important to have answers to these questions, and this motion obviously seeks to address some of them, in a way, through more scrutiny, transparency and accountability.

Members of this Assembly and the public more broadly deserve confidence that, when billions of dollars are being spent on major infrastructure projects, projects are being managed responsibly—that we are not overspending on things like design consultants. Cost blowouts need to be properly explained and lessons need to be learned, and, importantly, we need an assurance that taxpayers are getting value for money. There are too many examples where we have not seen that occur here in the ACT. Even among supporters of light rail, the lack of transparency and clarity here risks undermining confidence and long-term support. I think we are seeing that in our community to an extent.

That makes greater scrutiny entirely reasonable. It would be valuable for the Assembly and our community to properly examine these costs and compare them against similar projects. Important questions need answers. Are these costs in line with national

benchmarks? Are there local factors driving higher prices? Are the government's own procurement processes contributing to cost increases? Are there governance issues that need to be addressed? These are legitimate questions, and I appreciate the opposition's push for greater transparency in this area. We do need to answer these questions.

I also understand the government's concerns around commercial sensitivities and conditioning of the market. There are valid reasons why some information should not be released in full detail. But commercial sensitivity, as Mr Parton reflected on, cannot become an excuse to avoid scrutiny altogether, particularly when, as he rightly pointed out, the government seems comfortable releasing cost estimates for projects when it does not want to deliver them, such as for a stadium in the city or as we saw with a motion of mine on footpaths for every street. So what is different about light rail? There is a balance that can and should be struck here: protecting legitimate commercial interests for the ACT government in the interests of the territory, while still ensuring transparency and accountability for our community.

Almost every debate in this place at this point is framed around the fiscal pressures being experienced by the territory. Given that, it is important that massive spending decisions that will constrain the decisions we can make in this Assembly, and are effectively being made by a small number of members, are not done without broader Assembly scrutiny. It is important that the rest of us and our community are not just finding out about those decisions when contracts have already been signed.

There are practical solutions available. At the federal level, confidential briefings are provided when publication of information is not in the public interest, and, of course, that happens in the Assembly as well. Parliamentary committees can be used to good effect for these purposes. While I am not saying during this debate, one way or another, whether this is the exact model we should adopt when it comes to light rail, I want to make clear that mechanisms do exist to balance oversight with confidentiality, and I think we should get serious about implementing those mechanisms here. Surely we can work constructively to find a framework that gives both the Assembly and our community greater confidence in significant ACT government spending decisions. If we are asking Canberrans to support these projects and carry the financial burden that comes with them, then we also have a responsibility to demonstrate that every effort is being made to deliver them efficiently, responsibly and as transparently as possible.

With all of that said, while I very much support the intent of Mr Parton's motion, I do not believe this particular mechanism is the right one and not necessarily at the right time either. As Mr Braddock reflected on, I do not imagine accurate costings for this project actually exist yet, making the proposed timeframe contained in this motion problematic. I am keen to return to this at an appropriate time. I am sorry to say I will not be supporting this particular motion from Mr Parton, on the basis of what I have just said, but I genuinely thank him for bringing it to the Assembly today.

MR PARTON (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (3.29), in reply: I am happy to close. Firstly, I want to go to Mr Braddock and Mr Emerson, who indicated that the government cannot release these figures because they do not have them. Again, I go to the basic premise: of course they have them; of course there is an indicative ballpark figure of how much this is going to cost, because, if that were not available, we would not have gone this far. So, irrespective of whether they are public figures—and

obviously they are not—they would have figures that they are dealing with.

I want to paraphrase Mr Steel, who today in the chamber basically said, “Yes; we will tell you. We’re going to tell you how much this is going to cost once we have signed the contract. Once we have signed you, your children and your grandchildren into debt, once it is too late to back out, we will tell you what the damage is.” Given the words by Mr Eslake, I am just not sure that cuts the mustard. In his report, Mr Eslake suggested that capital initiatives have added \$5.7 billion to forward estimates of net purchases over the past 10 annual budget cycles, or just under half of total purchases of non-financial assets over the period covered by these budgets. Particularly given that these capital initiatives are all on the credit card, he said:

... as a general principle, ‘operating expenses’ which are undertaken entirely in order to provide services to current generations of residents and taxpayers should ordinarily be paid for by those current generations (out of current revenues), rather than passing on some of the cost of those services to future generations who (for the most part) will not benefit from them...

He then said:

While it is in general appropriate for at least some of the cost of providing infrastructure and other long-lived public assets from which future generations of residents and taxpayers will derive benefits, to be paid for by those future generations which can be achieved by funding part of that cost by borrowings, that there is no compelling reason why all of the costs of providing long-lived public assets should be devolved to future generations.

Further, he said:

... while it is, in general, appropriate for at least some of the cost of providing infrastructure and other long-lived public assets from which future generations of residents and taxpayers will derive benefits to be paid for by those future generations – which can be achieved by funding part of that cost by borrowings ... there is no compelling reason why all of the costs of providing long-lived public assets should be devolved to future generations ...

He then said government “has passed the responsibility to pay for long-lived public assets from which current as well as future generations of ACT residents will benefit entirely to future generations”.

Mr Steel speaks of the federal funding that has come to the territory for this project, and he is right—there has been a fair bit of it—but I would say that, when it comes to the feds, they give with one hand and they take with the other. We know, because it was pointed out very specifically, that during the light rail project, some already-announced federal road funding that was allocated to specific projects was then redirected to the tram.

Again, there is no way that the government would have got this far in this project without some idea of a ballpark figure. It is not good enough to basically say, “Once it’s too late, we’re going to tell you. Once we’ve signed the contracts, once you cannot possibly get out of it, we’re going to tell you what the damage is.” That is simply not good enough.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Chiaka Barry
Peter Cain
Fiona Carrick
Jeremy Hanson
Elizabeth Lee
James Milligan
Deborah Morris
Mark Parton

Noes 12

Yvette Berry
Andrew Braddock
Jo Clay
Thomas Emerson
Laura Nuttall
Suzanne Orr
Marisa Paterson
Michael Pettersson
Chris Steel
Rachel Stephen-Smith
Caitlin Tough
Taimus Werner-Gibbings

Question resolved in the negative.

Public schools—New South Wales residents

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (3.37): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) in the February 2025 school census, 50,159 students were enrolled in ACT public schools;
- (b) the February 2026 Report on Government Services (RoGS) shows the Government in 2023-2024 spent \$1,119,399,000 on government schools, equating to an ACT Government spend of \$22,265 per student in that year;
- (c) the same RoGS report shows the Government subsidised non-government schools with \$70,645,000 across 32,378 students, equating to an ACT Government spend of \$2,182 per student;
- (d) the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) 2025 annual report shows 17,000 course enrolments;
- (e) the ACT's primary and secondary schools and the CIT serve a NSW population that use services in the ACT but pay rates, car registration, stamp duty and other taxes and levies in NSW;
- (f) many cross-border developments in NSW do not include schools because residents use ACT schools (though NSW Government has recently built public schools at Murrumbateman, Jerrabomberra and Bungendore), which encourages the climate and environmental impacts of cross-border sprawl and means ACT ratepayers subsidise NSW developments;
- (g) the Eslake report notes that in contrast to health services, the NSW Government does not contribute to the costs of ACT public education and also notes that the Commonwealth Grants Commission takes this into account in assessing the ACT's expenditure needs but does not

- provide details on how much the ACT loses in funding from this arrangement; and
- (h) when asked why the ACT does not get a contribution for NSW students in ACT primary and secondary schools and CIT, the Minister for Education and Early Childhood advised it was a historical arrangement and the Government had not raised it in cross-border collaborations;
- (2) further notes that the ACT is uniquely and disproportionately impacted by the obligation to provide education services to students whose households do not pay ACT rates because they live in NSW or do not pay payroll taxes because their household employment is with the Australian Public Service. There is no other Australian jurisdiction with such a disproportionate fiscal disadvantage, faced with the costs of educating such a high ratio of non-resident students; and
- (3) calls on the Government to:
- (a) fully cost the amount the ACT Government is spending on NSW students in primary and secondary ACT government and non-government schools and detail existing arrangements for CIT;
 - (b) fully cost the allowance the Commonwealth Grants Commission makes to the ACT for this expenditure;
 - (c) invoice NSW Government on a cost recovery basis, including capital and depreciation, for all NSW students attending educational institutions receiving ACT Government funding from Term 3 onwards;
 - (d) pursue an update to the Chief Minister and Premier signed *ACT and NSW Memorandum of Understanding for Regional Collaboration* to create an ongoing mechanism for payment via the next Senior Officials Dialogue on Regional Collaboration; and
 - (e) report back and table all correspondence and replies and explain representations made by Ministers and officials to the Assembly by 15 September 2026.

As we often note, the ACT is unique in Australia for being an island entirely within a single jurisdiction. We serve as the employment, education and cultural capital for much of southern New South Wales. The relationship is mutually beneficial, but there are some challenges that emerge because of our geography and our status as a service hub. In the ACT, we benefit from people's skills and labour—from their ideas and from the contribution they make to our key professions, our industries and our culture.

Many ACT residents were educated elsewhere, and not just in New South Wales or in other Australian states and territories. With a third of people born overseas, many have been educated in international jurisdictions, and we benefit from all that diversity here. The ACT Greens want to see that Canberra continues to be a magnet for people from across Australia and globally. We also know there is a world beyond our borders, and we should encourage the next generation to experience that world while working and ensure they have great opportunities to do so. The more diverse our schools are the better our kids will be set up for their future. To take one example, students coming from New South Wales might be involved in farming or viticulture, and that is less likely if you come from an urban environment. That undoubtedly opens a world which might otherwise be a mystery. Cross-border engagement and pollination is essential.

I also want to acknowledge the work of the Canberra Region Joint Organisation for ensuring the ACT and New South Wales border communities have joint programs of work that bring us together. There is another example, the Trade Skills Program, which promotes women taking leadership planning roles in councils. It can be completed in-person in Canberra as well as online, and that shows excellent cross-border collaboration. There are approaches to waste and sustainability where working in a cross-jurisdictional manner leads to better results. There are civil resilience programs preparing for disasters like fire, flood and drought. It is another great area where the relationship between New South Wales and the ACT is crucial. We love having people from our region work and study in Canberra and we love working across our region, but we need to make sure we are able to look after all of our people properly.

The ACT caters for around 1,000 students from New South Wales in ACT public schools daily. These places are largely funded by the ACT government. We also have New South Wales students in the non-government sector, and, while that is primarily funded by fees and commonwealth government payments, it is also partially funded by the ACT government. The Report on Government Services showed that the ACT government spent around \$22,265 per student per annum in 2023-24 in ACT public schools. Spread evenly, that means the annual cost for us of educating New South Wales students is around \$22 million each year. The ACT government subsidy to non-government schools is lower, at around \$2,182 per student, but even that has an impact. If five per cent of the more than 32,000 in the sector were students from New South Wales, the ACT government would still be providing annual funding of around \$1.4 million for New South Wales students in private ACT government schools.

That \$23.4 million is quite a lot of money for us to leave on the table here in the ACT. It is \$23.4 million that we cannot invest in other services. And, as a reference point, the Greens asked for a funding uplift for the community sector—the entire community sector—of \$20 million. It is a chunk of dollar for us here in the ACT. Only this week we have heard the outcomes of the school resourcing review, which highlighted the need to invest in system changes to reduce the burdens on teachers and give them back time to teach. If a fraction of that were invested in coordinating the delivery of those changes recommended, we could deliver a better public education system for everyone, no matter whether they reside in the ACT or New South Wales.

This dynamic of the ACT providing services to New South Wales ratepayers is not restricted to the education system. It is increasingly embedded in the way our capital region is growing. We see development just across the ACT border in New South Wales that does not include the infrastructure that our growing population requires. Many of those developments do not provide the services their residents need—and not just for schools. Often those developments are not providing water; they are not providing early childhood centres; they are not providing healthcare facilities. Schools have been built in some of those communities, but many are relying on being close to Canberra to fill that gap.

All of that also risks creating some really perverse incentives. It encourages cross-border urban sprawl. It encourages developments that can be built more cheaply because they do not actually need to provide the infrastructure that the people living there need, but those suburbs have higher long-term costs. We are consigning people to the climate and environmental impacts of longer commutes in distant regions. We are

setting up places that do not have the infrastructure to look after their people in fires, droughts and floods, and in day-to-day life. What we are seeing in practice is the ACT subsidising developments in another jurisdiction. It is encouraging urban sprawl and it means that we are not collecting the revenue we need to fund our schooling system. The ACT is absorbing the service demand; another jurisdiction is collecting the revenue from rates. It is not sustainable or equitable and it is not going to let our region thrive.

The ACT does not exist in a vacuum when it comes to funding arrangements. We are part of a federation. The Chief Minister laid out in his ministerial statement how funding flowed into the territory from taxes collected by the commonwealth. I want to recognise that funding does not always flow in ways that neatly correspond with state or territory boundaries. In rail and roads, commonwealth funding plays a greater role, and of course ACT residents make use of that infrastructure. They also contribute through federal income tax, GST and corporation tax. I know many ACT patients use hospitals in New South Wales, much as New South Wales patients use our hospitals, but there are clear funding mechanisms already in place to connect those who are collecting the revenue with those who are paying for the buildings and the services.

There is no such connection for education. After health, education is one of the ACT's largest and most significant areas of public expenditure, and so it should be. What a worthy investment: the places and the education that we need for our next generation. Of course we need to invest in this. It is labour-intensive, it is capital-intensive and it is the foundation for a good and fair society. We must invest properly. We need to ensure our teachers and educators are regarded as one of our most respected and resourced professions, but we need to make sure we have the resources to do the job.

It is not possible to balance every dollar perfectly, but for education we have not even made an attempt here in the ACT. The ACT gets no funding from New South Wales for New South Wales students in our schools, and that imbalance is structural, it is persistent and it is growing. It actually goes to a broader structural challenge for the ACT: we have a lot of spending obligations to deliver services both for our residents and for residents in New South Wales. And, unlike other border areas, we have less balance flow. We do it with a really limited revenue base. We cannot levy payroll tax on a quarter of our workforce. We cannot collect resource royalties, because we have no mines. We do not have the large corporate headquarters of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. Again, as the Chief Minister pointed out this morning, the undercount of our population by 22,000 means our budget is underfunded by more than half a billion dollars. He did not mention this morning the historic housing debt, which governments in South Australia and Tasmania have managed to negotiate waivers for. We need our ACT ministers to lobby for this. We need the Chief Minister, the housing minister and Treasury to lobby for this and explain to their counterparts that, if other governments can get that, so should we. That housing debt is now \$56.7 million. We have paid \$196.7 million on the principal and almost \$202 million in interest. We have paid more in interest than on the principal, and we have no waiver.

We also need to work on some of the other sources of funding. Here in the ACT, we find ourselves in a situation where we are expected to deliver high-quality universal services. We are relied on by our surrounding community, but we do not have the full set of revenue tools or the tax base that the larger state enjoys. This is why I have consistently advocated for a greater share of commonwealth revenue to make up for it.

Our situation here in the ACT is unique, and we need our ministers to speak up to get the ACT's fair share. I asked the education minister last week why we are not getting any funding from the New South Wales government for New South Wales students in our schools. We do in our health system, but we do not in our schools. And the answer was, "Because we never asked." It is time to ask.

Today I am presenting a really clear opportunity to right a longstanding wrong; to get an unpaid bill from the largest state government, which is likely to add up to hundreds of millions over years. It is like asking a rich aunt or uncle who has been living rent-free in your house for many years: "Can you please contribute to the rent?"

The Eslake report gives us a really important lens on the broader issue of fiscal sustainability, with a few specific points for action, including today's. It notes that, unlike in health, there is no direct contribution from the New South Wales government towards the cost of educating New South Wales students in ACT schools or through the CIT. The Treasurer has since said that an arrangement is in place for New South Wales students at the CIT to be funded by the New South Wales government. Here in the Assembly, we would love to hear the details of that. It was good to hear that that exists.

Mr Eslake also observes that the Commonwealth Grants Commission attempts to account for some cross-border service provision obligation, and his report highlights the lack of transparency about how much is actually being recognised and whether it is adequate. There is a live and essential conversation about school funding, outcomes and equity. We have heard a lot about the review this week. We have some really strong voices in the space, including parents, teachers and the Australian Education Union advocating for properly-resourced public education. Today I am just making sure that we have available another funding source that we should have asked for.

First, we need clarity. We need to understand exactly how many New South Wales students are studying in ACT schools and in the CIT, what services they are using, and what those services cost. That analysis needs to cover the full system: public schools, non-government schools that receive ACT support, and the CIT. And it needs to include not just operational or variable costs for each student but also the costs of building, utilities and maintenance.

Second, we need transparency about how these costs are treated at the commonwealth level. What assumptions are being made by the Grants Commission? What allowances are built in? Are those allowances keeping pace with reality? Without that visibility, we cannot effectively advocate for fair resourcing. And, third, we need to see our ACT Labor ministers and officials engage constructively and firmly with their New South Wales government counterparts. The ACT government needs to work through existing mechanisms—including the Memorandum of Understanding for Regional Collaboration, which is scheduled to meet yearly at director-general level—to develop a model that ensures fair contribution on an ongoing basis. Likewise, the Chief Minister has many opportunities to engage with New South Wales counterparts, including through national cabinet.

Let me be really clear: this motion is not about closing our borders or limiting access. We love the diversity we have here in Canberra. This is not about telling families they

cannot attend ACT schools. We love having people in our schools. Our community is interconnected and we want to continue that. This is simply about fairness. It is about ensuring that, when services are provided, the costs of those services are shared properly. It is about protecting the sustainability of the systems we all rely on. It is about making sure that we do not ask ACT ratepayers to cover the costs of New South Wales services. Good regional cooperation is not just about sharing access; it is about sharing responsibility.

So I am calling on the ACT government to start by invoicing the New South Wales government for students attending ACT schools from term 3 onwards, commencing from 21 July. I am also calling on the government to solidify this arrangement through an updated memorandum of understanding with New South Wales—one that establishes an ongoing, transparent mechanism to fund all New South Wales students and associated costs. I am also calling on the government to come back to the Assembly with a full account of that work by the first sitting day in September. Table the correspondence, outline the negotiations, make it clear to Canberrans how you are representing and protecting their interests.

Our position here in the ACT as an island in New South Wales is not something we can change, and it is not something we would want to change—it benefits us—but how we respond to this reality and the fiscal challenges we are facing is entirely within the ACT government’s control. This is a relatively small portion of money in our budget, but it is \$23.4 million by our estimates. We would love to see the ACT government come up with a more accurate estimate, but it is a significant amount of money and it is funding that we need to make sure that we can provide the services that Canberrans and people from interstate are using.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (3:51): I thank Ms Clay for bringing this important motion to the Assembly today. It is very timely given what we have seen in the ACT Public School System Resourcing Review, released yesterday, which has revealed a series of deep and systemic failures within the ACT government education system—findings that support what teachers, parents, principals, school communities and the opposition have been warning about for years. But Ms Clay’s motion is not about the review findings; it is about fairness to ACT taxpayers and it is about responsible government—a government that fights for the interests of Canberrans.

As Ms Clay’s motion points out, we know the ACT’s schools and CIT serve a substantial cross-border population. Families that live over the border in New South Wales rely on ACT schools, ACT teachers and ACT facilities. This motion is not about stopping that or closing it off. But we must acknowledge that those households do not pay ACT rates and do not contribute through ACT taxation streams. That is unfair; it is that simple. The Eslake review made an important point. Unlike health services, where arrangements exist, there is no contribution from New South Wales for ACT education services. We are told that the Commonwealth Grants Commission “takes it into account”. But there is no transparency or clarity around this. So are ACT taxpayers just supposed to take this government at its word?

As Ms Clay has already pointed out, we are a unique jurisdiction in that we are wholly within the borders within New South Wales—an island within New South Wales. It is different to the other jurisdictions in that regard. Most concerningly, on Tuesday when

we asked the Minister for Education what action she had taken to negotiate reimbursement or funding contributions from the New South Wales government, her response was nothing; she had taken no action. She had not picked up the phone and had not written a letter—had not raised it at all. In the 10 years that she has been education minister, she had not done one thing to discuss reimbursement or even a contribution from the New South Wales government for cross-border enrolments. As is the case with this Minister, she is just happy with the status quo. “It was a historical arrangement.” she said. That is not a justification; it is an admission of inaction over the last 10 years. But I guess when we look at what’s come to light with the ACT Public School System Resourcing Review, we should not be surprised.

Here we have a glaring blind spot: we do not even have a clear accounting of how much ACT taxpayers are subsidising non-resident students. How can the government claim to manage education funding effectively if it cannot quantify a major cost pressure in its system? How can it ask Canberrans to accept funding trade-offs when it has not pursued fair contributions from neighbouring jurisdictions?

This motion is not radical; it is practical, measured and overdue. It calls for the Act government to fully cost what we are spending on New South Wales students; clarify what, if anything, we receive through the Commonwealth Grants Commission for this; seek cost recovery from New South Wales on a proper basis, including capital costs; and, importantly, formalise this through intergovernmental arrangements, rather than letting it drift as an unaddressed “historical” anomaly.

No-one disputes the importance of regional cooperation, especially in a jurisdiction like the ACT. But cooperation does not mean one side carries the bill indefinitely. A mature, confident government would approach New South Wales armed with evidence and negotiate a fair outcome—an outcome that is in the best interests of Canberrans. It would not hide behind history.

The Canberra Liberals support this motion.

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) (3.55): I just wanted to note for the record that the ACT government, the Chief Minister and I have, on a number of occasions, requested both the coalition government and the current Labor government for the ACT’s housing debt to be waived. We have unfortunately been unsuccessful to date. However, that does not mean that we have not advocated and do not continue to advocate for the ACT and for that housing debt to be waived. Ms Clay suggested that I said in answer to a question that we had never asked. I believe—and I am just trying to check the *Hansard* now—that that is not the answer that I gave but that I did say it was a legacy and historic matter and that we would look into it, I think. I am going to double-check that. I just wanted to make sure, because it is not a good record of events when people are misrepresented in this place. So I just want to make sure that the record is correct there.

As the question has been asked in committees, I know that the Education Directorate are making calculations on the cost but those are not complete now. While I accept Ms Clay has made some calculations of her own, I would much rather go with an official figure once that becomes available. I believe that the motion goes to that question as

well. So we will provide that information when it becomes available.

But I am today rising to speak to the motion on the cost to the ACT government for delivering school services to families residing in and around the New South Wales region. Yes, the ACT is surrounded by regional New South Wales communities, and it is no surprise that families are seeking access to our incredible ACT public schools for their children. In addition to geographical convenience, ACT public schools continue to deliver strong and stable performances in NAPLAN testing across years and level domains. Our public schools have great student retention, with 92 per cent of public year 10 students proceeding to public secondary college education to Year 11. Eighty-nine per cent of year 12 students in public schools receive an ACT senior secondary certificate.

In many cases, parents and families of the children living in New South Wales are also working in the ACT and are considered a strong part of our community. Cross-border enrolments have always been a feature of the ACT public school system. In the past, New South Wales residents could apply to enrol at any public school in the ACT but could not have their enrolment confirmed until the start of the school year. This is why I ensured that ACT schools retained capacity to guarantee enrolments for all local school students. In 2018, the ACT facilitated New South Wales enrolments into public schools via New South Wales pathway schools. This was to manage our local school capacity as well as provide enrolment certainty for those New South Wales families. There are currently six public primary schools, five high schools and three colleges that are accessible to New South Wales students. In limited circumstances, New South Wales enrolments can be accepted into non-pathway schools. New South Wales pathway schools do not disadvantage ACT students, with ACT families always guaranteed enrolment at their local priority enrolment area school.

This is a reciprocal arrangement with New South Wales, which means that ACT resident families can also apply to enrol their young person at a New South Wales public school. These enrolments are treated as out of area and can be accepted, subject to school capacity. These decisions are made at the local New South Wales school level. Over recent years, the New South Wales government has invested in increasing its school capacity across the region, with several new public schools opening in recent years. I am also aware that New South Wales is investing in a new public school in Googong, which is scheduled to be open in 2027, and an additional public primary school in the same area opening in 2028. There is also a new permanent Bungendore High School, which will open in 2027.

As seen in the August 2025 school census, there were 979 New South Wales students enrolled in the ACT's public school system. This represents less than two per cent of ACT public school enrolments. In return, I am advised that there are 170 ACT resident students who are enrolled in New South Wales public schools or who were enrolled in New South Wales public schools in 2025. New South Wales enrolments in ACT public schools peaked in 2014 at 1,813, but that number has declined since. Increasing school capacity across the New South Wales side of the border is anticipated to further decrease demand from New South Wales residents to enrol in ACT public schools.

Cross-border school arrangements, of course, are not unique to us. Cross-border enrolments happen between New South Wales and Queensland and between New South

Wales and Victoria. I am advised all jurisdictions allow cross-border school enrolments subject to individual school capacity and local enrolment policies. However, there are no arrangements where states make payments to other states or territories for providing school education for cross-border enrolment.

I acknowledge the ACT's smaller size means that cross-border enrolments have proportionally a greater impact on the ACT compared to other states and territories. Commonwealth school funding provided under the Australian Education Act 2013 and the Better, Fairer Schools Agreement is calculated on school enrolments, not place of evidence. This means that the ACT still receives commonwealth schools funding for New South Wales resident enrolments in ACT public schools.

However, as the majority funder of ACT public schooling, it is true that the ACT government is funding the territory portion of the national School Resourcing Standard of New South Wales enrolments. The ACT government is provided some compensation for enrolling New South Wales students through the GST process. The Commonwealth Grants Commission assessments recognise that states and territories with a higher proportion of school students have higher spending needs. The Commonwealth Grants Commission also adjusts for the differences in wage costs between states and territories. New South Wales students attending the ACT schools are counted into ACT enrolment numbers. This additional spending is then reflected in the GST-sharing relativities.

With all that said, I am happy to support Ms Clay's motion today. I am always happy to explore opportunities for additional funding. That does not mean, however, that the ACT will close its doors to New South Wales students. I will, of course, seek additional support from New South Wales for their students and report back to the Assembly.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (4.03): I want to thank Ms Clay for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. We all understand the importance of investing in quality education. I think that is something every member in this Assembly agrees on. Clearly, New South Wales families recognise the value of our education system too.

This debate should not be framed as rejecting New South Wales students from our schools. It should be about ensuring the ACT receives its fair share of funding for the services we provide. When ACT schools are educating a large number of students from surrounding New South Wales regions, that places real pressure on our system: our classrooms, teachers, infrastructure and resources. We have learnt about those pressures through the ACT Public School system resourcing review that was released this week. It is reasonable that the cost of these pressures be properly recognised in funding arrangements.

While I appreciate the Commonwealth Grants Commission does attempt to account for these matters through its assessments, it does seem like an unnecessarily complicated way of dealing with what is, ultimately, a relatively straightforward issue.

We already track cross-border usage in health. We know how many New South Wales residents access ACT hospitals and health services, and funding arrangements somewhat reflect that reality. Surely, we can apply a similarly transparent and fair approach when it comes to education.

My concern is not with the principle of redistribution itself. My concern is that, when ACT taxpayers are funding services used significantly by non-residents—particularly given the state of the territory budget—there should be clearer and more direct recognition of, and compensation for that contribution. As I have said, we already have arrangements like this in health. It makes sense that we should pursue similar arrangements in the area of education, which is why I will be supporting Ms Clay’s motion today. Again, I thank her very much for bringing it forward.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (4.05): I would also like to thank Ms Clay for bringing this motion forward, and I will be supporting it. It is about keeping things simple and fair. Right now, ACT schools and CIT teach many students who live in New South Wales, and we do not clearly know how many there are or how much it costs to educate them.

That is the first step. We need to count how many New South Wales students are in our system and work out the full cost of teaching them. Once we know that, the next step is to talk to the New South Wales government and ask them to pay their fair share.

This is not about turning anyone away, it is about making sure ACT taxpayers are not paying the bill on their own. Determine the numbers of students, work out the cost to educate them and ask New South Wales for a fair payment. I support this motion. Thank you.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi—Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations) (4.05): I would like to thank Ms Clay for bringing this motion here today. I thought, for the benefit of members, I would explain how vocational education and training funding operates between CIT and New South Wales.

As Ms Clay identifies, CIT plays a vital role in both the city and in the region. CIT has students from New South Wales who choose to study at CIT because of the reputation for excellence that it holds. Where this occurs, the funding for their education will depend on what kind of study they are undertaking.

For apprentices and trainees, this turns on where their employer is located. If their employer is in the ACT, then funding is available under the ACT’s User Choice apprenticeship and trainee funding program. If their employer is in New South Wales but CIT is delivering their training, then CIT receives funding under the New South Wales Smart and Skilled program.

This has not always been the case. I am pleased to say that the ACT and New South Wales governments were able to collaborate on providing CIT access to the New South Wales Smart and Skilled program in mid-2023. I would like to acknowledge the work of Minister Steel in delivering that funding arrangement. Since that time in 2023, CIT has received over \$11 million in New South Wales Smart and Skilled funding for New South Wales-based apprentices. Our approach with the New South Wales government ensures that CIT can play the proud role it has in delivering world-class vocational training whilst ensuring that the funding arrangements are fair.

Regarding students who are undertaking non-apprenticeship studies, CIT trains approximately 600 to 700 New South Wales students. In these circumstances, students will pay a fee appropriate for their course, in line with CIT's publicly available fee schedules.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am deeply grateful for Ms Clay's interest in this matter. It is important that we are properly funding our VET sector in a way that is fair for employers and students. It is for this exact reason that the government undertook this work several years ago.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (4.08): I rise to speak in support of my colleague, Ms Clay's motion, which seeks a fair contribution from the New South Wales government to our public education system here in the ACT.

This week especially, as Ms Lee said, we have had many conversations about our public schools; how we need to resource them better; and how we need proper reform to make sure the system is working for the teachers, workers and students within it. It is a conversation that is long overdue and it is one that has come about because of the tireless voices of educators, parents and students calling for the government's attention.

What this motion is seeking, in my eyes, is one revenue-making measure—a fair one—which will provide funds that can be fed back into our ACT public schools. By now, you really must have had your head in the sand if you cannot see how desperately our public schools need it. The measure proposed by this Greens motion is based on fairness, and I am proud of the solution it is seeking. It is looking to align with other funding contributions that we already get from the New South Wales government for ACT public services used by New South Wales residents. As Ms Clay highlighted, we do it for health already, and we should do it for education too.

I would like to take this opportunity to speak to a few of the things that we may need to resource in our ACT public schools—because we have recently been given many of the answers in report form, in the public schools resourcing review.

The report found that for years now, students with a disability have been getting left behind. Under the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) on school students with a disability, 25.1 per cent of K to 12 students in ACT public schools are now assessed as requiring a level of adjustment. That is compared with 19.9 per cent in 2022. Resourcing to ensure these students are supported has not grown in tow with this figure. As I said yesterday, it is very disappointing that it took getting to this point for our government to act. At least we have material now that the government appears willing to listen to.

The percentage of ACT school students with English as an additional language or dialect, or EALD, is growing. It is up by 37 per cent since 2018, while the budget for resources and support has increased by only 19 per cent. That is about half. The EALD student-to-teacher ratio in ACT public schools has gone up from approximately 38:1 in 1999, to around 135:1 in 2025.

The resourcing review report suggests that an overall picture of adequate staffing across the system is not reflected in the reality of some schools—tending to be those in lower

socioeconomic suburbs, being harder to staff.

It is clear that if we do not act now, if we do not find those revenue measures, we will continue into long-term damaging cycles in our education system—in which, for example, inadequate staffing leads to teacher burnout, which leads to more struggling students, which leads to more teacher burnout, which leads to more inadequate staffing.

As my colleague Ms Clay suggests, the foundations we lay in our communities by giving kids a good education simply cannot be compensated for later, no matter how much money is thrown at things like health, policing and the social safety net. Education is one of those important budgetary “stitch in time saves nine” tools that we have available to us.

Funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the ACT does not meet recommended standards and is lower than in other jurisdictions. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their schools only get direct access to about one tenth of the funding they are entitled to, under the Schooling Resource Standard.

Now, we heard ministers and members speak about Reconciliation Week this morning and the actions we must undertake to close the gap and do better by our First Nations young people. Well, giving them proper access to education is perhaps the most critical part of that and we must work out why these students have not been getting the maximum funding they are entitled to. We need more transparency.

Infrastructure is another major issue. Forty-eight per cent of the ACT’s school sites are more than 50 years old, with more than two-thirds dating from before self-government—so twice as old as me, for anyone keeping count. When we look at the design of some of our schools, we see that zero attention was paid to the kind of energy efficiency that can significantly reduce running costs and help classroom attention spans in hot and cold weather, in intensifying weather systems and climate crises.

As we were saying yesterday, the Assembly ran two inquiries into school infrastructure last term. There were definitely recommendations about strategic planning for infrastructure renewal. The Inquiry into the Future of School Infrastructure in the ACT by the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion recommended that the government prioritise equity in public school infrastructure by: finalising the minimum property quality standards for all ACT public school sites; auditing all school infrastructure against these standards; setting out a schedule for improvement until all sites reach minimum standards; and reporting progress against these standards in annual reports.

To the best of our knowledge—and not for want of asking—none of these things have happened yet. In the meantime, one of the most frequent comments I get from Tuggeranong parents is, “Do you know how bad my kid’s school infrastructure is? The heating does not work. The cooling does not work. There is no privacy in the classrooms, and the bathrooms are terrible.”

The kids, teachers and school assistants just laugh. Year-level staffrooms are just four people stacked on top of each other. They take it in good humour because they are used to it and because if you do not laugh, you will cry. But we should not accept this

standard for our schools in the ACT, for our educators and all the school-based staff who work in them, and our kids who learn in them. I mean, if we are looking for places to spend money, teachers, learning support assistants and all our school-based workers are seeking fair pay and conditions—and the sooner this government responds to all their claims in a positive manner, the better.

As I end, I want to make it clear that we are proud of our connected and diverse region, which goes across the border. It is awesome. These shared communities and their place in ACT schools are things that we should all continue to value and support. Getting this fair funding contribution from the New South Wales government serves to do that through proper investment. It can contribute to our schools getting the resourcing they so desperately need and it can be a step toward better supporting every student in our schools, and toward fixing our ACT system. I commend Ms Clay's motion to the Assembly.

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) (4.14): I seek to make a statement under section 47.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you claim to be misrepresented?

MS BERRY: I do.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed.

MS BERRY: I just wanted to correct the record. I have found the section in the Hansard for the committee hearing where Ms Clay asked the question:

Minister, you may not have had a chance to read it yet, but the Eslake report came out today and one of the points he has made is that for health we get a contribution from the New South Wales government but for education we do not get a contribution from the New South Wales government for the New South Wales students who are here. Why is that?

And I said:

Good question. I think it is probably just an historical arrangement that we have had with New South Wales for school education to be provided in public schools in the ACT, noting that, across the region, there had not been a lot of public schools available for some of those sort of little cities around the ACT. That has changed in recent years. I like to think that we had some impact on that when we changed our priority enrolment areas at some of our schools across the ACT, where we were getting a lot of New South Wales students coming in. There are new schools at Yass, Bungendore and Murrumbateman. That has changed the number of students that are coming into the ACT and accessing public education here in the ACT, which is great, and they have their own school communities in New South Wales. Is there anything more historic that the—

And it goes on, but there is nowhere in that answer that I used the words “we never asked”, and I just wanted that on the record.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.16), in reply: Minister, most fortunately, I think we are both looking at the same transcript at the same time, and I am glad you have done the first bit. I will carry on right from where you were. I then said:

We do not deny anyone access to the services. It is just why they are not paying for the services where we have that very clear precedent for health. It is unusual. Has it been raised before?

And then the official said:

We do have cross-border collaborations, but it has not come up as an issue.

And then I said:

Okay, have you done any modelling? You must know how many New South Wales residents you have in primary schools, in high schools, in colleges and in CIT. Have you done—

And then we got a question taken on notice, saying they have done some modelling. So, I did get very clear answer from the official that it had not been raised. We are still waiting on that answer that was taken on notice from last Tuesday, which I think would probably be about due by now. And if there is a correction and if the official misspoke, of course we would love to have the correction. But that is where the information came from. We did ask, and we were told that there is a cross-border collaboration, but it has not come up as an issue. My apologies if I have misquoted you. I was reading from the transcript there.

I do want to bring it back to principles though, because I think this is a really simple one and it is great to hear how much support we have across the chamber on this issue. It is about fairness. It is about fairness for our residents. It is about making sure that our government is speaking up for the ACT's fair share. I think that is becoming more and more stark, and when we are finding we have budget constraints it is even more important. And it is about making sure that we have the resources that we need to provide the services that Canberrans expect.

All of these things are really, really important. I am pleased to see that this request will now be clearly modelled and framed, and it will be really clearly put to New South Wales.

I do understand that there is an allowance from the commonwealth for some of this. We have heard that when we get the details on some of these commonwealth allowances, the allowance does not always meet the expense. We found that out in a different context, for commonwealth payroll tax. I believe the figures were that we were getting an allowance of \$50 million for an amount that we are losing of half a billion or so. So, the details are important.

But I think the clearest precedent is that we have allowances from the commonwealth and payments from New South Wales in our health system, and it seems really appropriate that we should have exactly the same arrangement in our education system. It is great that we will now seek that. I hope that we will get that. It is really, really

simple and straightforward, I think, to make sure that we do that.

We love having people from our region in our schools and in our community. That is fantastic. We just need to make sure that we have the resources we need to provide the services that Canberrans expect. I think a lot of people are getting increasingly concerned about that. So, I commend my motion to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Motion to take note of papers

MR SPEAKER: Pursuant to standing order 211A, I propose the question:

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

Evaluation of the Operation of the ACT Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022—report—government response

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (4.19): I rise to speak to the tabling of the final report of the evaluation of the implementation and impacts of the ACT Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022. These nation-leading reforms, which commenced on 28 October 2023, aimed to divert people from the criminal justice system into health-based support. These reforms reduced maximum penalties for possession of illicit drugs in limited quantities for personal use and expanded diversion options for possession of small amounts of certain illicit drugs.

In October 2025, I appointed internationally recognised drug policy scholar Professor Alison Ritter AO to review the first two years of operation of the reforms, as required under the legislation. Professor Ritter was supported by a team of researchers from the University of New South Wales and the Australian National University and the Executive Director of the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy, Chris Gough, who ensured the evaluation included appropriate representation of people with lived and living experience of drug use. The evaluation included in-depth analysis of available data and broad consultation with implementing agencies, the non-government alcohol and other drug treatment and support sector, other healthcare providers and people who use drugs. The broader ACT community was also consulted, via a YourSay survey.

I am very pleased to report that the evaluation's findings are positive overall. Contrary to some of the commentary from those opposite at the time, the sky has not fallen in—far from it. The evaluation found that the reforms are operating as intended, reducing harm for people who use drugs by diverting them away from the criminal justice system. Contrary to some of the ongoing scaremongering, the implementation of the reforms were found to have produced no significant negative outcomes in the first two years.

The ACT community continues to support the reforms, and a wide range of stakeholders

reported positive views about the reforms. People who use drugs and the police reported that the reforms had led to improved respect, trust, rapport and more positive interactions between them. People who use drugs highlighted the positive impacts that receiving a diversion instead of a charge had on their lives. Health workers also noted that people seemed less inclined to hide their drug use, which improved capacity to clinically respond to patients. These are positive findings, demonstrating that the reforms are delivering on the intended outcomes of harm reduction.

As recommended by the evaluation, the ACT government will continue to implement the reforms as enacted and monitor for ongoing outcomes and impacts. The report also made recommendations relating to public communication, program delivery and training for frontline service providers. These recommendations will be reviewed by government in consultation with key stakeholders to consider potential next steps.

I thank Professor Ritter and her team for their thorough and considered work and everyone who took part in consultations to inform the evaluation. I also want to acknowledge Chris Gough, whose input and advocacy has been critical to the success of these reforms. I commend our health services, particularly the team at Canberra Health Services that supports the Illicit Drug Diversion Program for their work in line with the intention of the reforms. I particularly want to acknowledge ACT Policing for the amount of training and support that they have provided to frontline police officers. I know that they were concerned about some of these reforms at the beginning. But, now, listening to the Chief Police Officer Scott Lee on the radio talking about the impact of these reforms, it is clear that they have not seen a negative impact from these reforms. He has been very clear about that, and wanting to distance any conversation about drug use in our community from the impact of the reforms.

In conclusion, this evaluation has produced valuable insights which will inform future drug policy in the ACT and will be of significant interest across Australia and, I have no doubt, internationally.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Standing orders—suspension

Debate resumed.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (4.25): I would like to advise the Assembly that the government has had the opportunity to seek advice in relation to these matters, and I can advise the Assembly that both complaints have received appropriate treatment and attention, and I can advise on referrals by the public sector to appropriate entities and, in accordance with obligations under the Public Interest Disclosure Act, matters have been referred to the Integrity Commission. The Integrity Commission has made a determination in relation to one matter and replied to the complainant. Following further allegations, the Head of Service referred further matters under section 47 of the Public Sector Management Standards Act to the Public Sector Standards Commissioner.

We have seen in the media this morning, and in further commentary over the course of

the day, the formal response from the Canberra Institute of Technology in relation to those particular matters. Obviously, there are processes underway. So it is the government's view that, in relation to the substantive matter before the Assembly around the suspension of standing orders for the Assembly to authorise the publication of those particular documents, the premature release of them may adversely affect the fair treatment of individuals involved and may also undermine applicable whistleblower protections for several persons.

So it is the government's view that we will not be supporting a suspension of standing orders and the documents should not be authorised for publication. I have confidence in the processes that are underway and are being handled by the Integrity Commission and the Public Sector Standards Commissioner, and I believe the matters should reach their conclusion through those processes and the Assembly should not seek to interfere and should not be authorising the publication of those particular documents. So we will not be supporting the suspension of standing orders.

MR PARTON (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (4.27): We have formed the same view as the government. So we will not be backing the suspension of standing orders. We are extremely worried about the precedent that would be set by doing this. We certainly understand the intent from Mr Emerson. We just think that there are rules and protocols in place around these sensitive matters for a reason. I am pleased to hear that both matters have been considered or are being considered by the Integrity Commissioner. We are in support of the position that has been laid out by Mr Barr, and we will not be supporting the suspension of standing orders to allow the publication of these documents.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (4.28): Fundamentally, the Greens operate for pro-whistleblower platform. We prefer to trust that, when a member of parliament forward to present information on behalf of a whistleblower, that member of parliament knows what they are doing and the consequences it can have for the whistleblower in the realm of public debate. The whole point of revealing something under parliamentary privilege is to take something out of the realm of the courts and emeritus assessments and the administrative process and into the realm of public debate and the public interest. Yes, it can prejudice natural justice from occurring. That inevitably happens with that step.

We, as members of parliament, have both the privilege to be able to do this and the responsibility to use that power responsibly. We have a responsibility to ensure that any prospective whistleblower we deal with knows that going public like this can provide vindication but simultaneously may prejudice the administrative processes and/or justice. Indeed many whistleblowers come forth precisely because they have given up getting justice for administrative processes and they have reached a point where they just want to see systemic reform that protects others. I need to trust that Mr Emerson, in his dealings with Mr Moyle and the anonymous whistleblower from CIT, has had these delicate conversations. If he has not had those conversations, then the reputational consequences and any potential administrative impacts that arise from these decisions will be his to wear.

This morning, Mr Speaker, you drew our attention to continuing resolution 7 on the freedom of speech, a resolution that reminds us of our responsibilities while exercising our rights. That resolution does not limit what we can do but it does alert us to how our

actions are never without consequences. Ultimately, personal responsibility applies. I have spoken to Mr Emerson and he has satisfied me that he has taken those responsibilities seriously. Therefore, in this situation, I do not intend to stand in his way. Mr Emerson has made a conscious choice to support two whistleblowers to bring their concerns out of the systems of natural justice and administrative process, regardless of whether they exhausted other options available to them, and into the daylight of public debate. A decision to publish these documents or not does not really change the fact that, if the recent media coverage is anything to go by, if anything, publishing these documents will provide a more fulsome picture and ensure that media reporting is informed on the whole documents rather than only the extracts already on the *Hansard* record.

I note that these documents contain individual perspectives and views of the authors. An individual view may or may not be correct. It may or may not be complete. It may or may not accord with the views of others involved in the matter. I note CIT CEO Dr Margot McNeill was on ABC Radio this morning describing the furious reaction of other CIT staff involved and their rejection of the assertions in the documents. I am not saying what the truth is in the matter, as I am not in a position to do so; I am only saying that the truth is not always clear or agreed. If someone were to come forward feeling they have been identified and misrepresented by these documents, they would have access to the provisions under continuing resolution 4, the citizens' right of reply. They can then be heard with the same protections of parliamentary privilege as is provided to the allegations made inside these documents.

If going public like this turns out to be a mistake, that is on Mr Emerson, and I will defend his right to make that kind of mistake. He has assured me he has fulfilled his responsibilities under continuing resolution 7, and I will take him at his word until demonstrated otherwise. I will state that this should not be interpreted as a precedent for any position on other similar matters. Each matter is unique and context-specific.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (4.32): I want to take a moment to address the current situation regarding publication of the documents for the CIT EV complaint and the Mr Brendan Moyle complaint and to clarify the importance of following the proper process. There are, in reality, two ways to view what has occurred. On the one hand, we have the professional advice provided that this matter is currently under active consideration by the Public Sector Standards Commissioner and there have been substantive discussions with the individual concerned. At this stage, the material consists of unsubstantiated allegations. Public disclosure could risk undermining procedural fairness, prejudicing any potential investigation and could negatively affect the rights and protections afforded to all parties, including whistleblowers. However, most of the claims are already in the public domain.

There is also a second, equally important, lens through which we must look at this issue, and that is compliance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act. The act is very clear that individuals who make disclosures must be kept informed of progress, including updates, at least every three months. In this case, that requirement does not appear to have been met. As a result, the process has not been followed in full, and that has led to a loss of confidence in how the matter has been managed. It is therefore not surprising that the situation has escalated beyond the internal framework, including to a member of the Legislative Assembly and to the media. That escalation is, in many respects, a

direct consequence of the process not being followed as required.

So what we see here is a tension between two legitimate considerations: the need to protect the integrity of an ongoing matter and ensure procedural fairness, and the obligation to comply with the statutory requirements around transparency, communication and accountability. Both of these are essential. The key point is this: processes exist for a reason. They protect individuals, they protect institutions and they maintain trust. Where those processes are followed fully and consistently, they reduce the likelihood of escalation. Where they are not followed, even for understandable reasons, confidence can erode and matters can move outside the intended framework. Section 27A provides for giving public interest disclosure to the Legislative Assembly or a journalist disclosure. So I am not clear why the people disclosing the claims have not gone straight to the media with the documents.

We must ensure that both elements are met, that the integrity of any investigation is preserved and that all legislative obligations, particularly around communication with a disclosure, are complied with. That is how we restore confidence, uphold fairness and ensure the matter is handled appropriately.

Standing orders—suspension

Motion (by **Mr Emerson**) agreed to, with the concurrence of an absolute majority:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the debate to extend past 15 minutes.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (4.36), in reply: I must admit that the Assembly's response to this matter has not been what I had expected. Yesterday, I tabled and sought to have published whistleblower statements and public interest disclosures in alignment with the wishes of the whistleblowers. They got independent legal advice and came to the informed view that this was the most appropriate course of action. I undertook to use the mechanisms available to me to ensure they were protected under parliamentary privilege. Up to this point, this process has not unfolded exactly as our legislative framework envisages it should.

I did not release these documents, to quote the Chief Minister and Opposition Leader, "as a stunt" or "to make the biggest splash possible". I did this because it was a tool available to me as a parliamentarian to support whistleblowers escalating serious concerns in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act. I did this in the public interest, on behalf of the people this Assembly is supposed to represent. Let's not forget that these statements relate to matters of significant public safety risk. Like every member in this place, allegations are brought to me regularly—all the time. This is the first time I have sought to table a PID in the Assembly. I did so because there was a critical difference in these cases. I was provided with evidence that internal escalation pathways had been pursued and had failed. I am not asking this Assembly to give special treatment to these whistleblowers; I am asking the Assembly to give a voice to whistleblowers who have followed the proper internal processes, unsuccessfully, and made the courageous decision to escalate their concerns externally in the public interest.

Brendan Moyle's complaints were only referred for investigation by the Public Sector

Standards Commissioner seven months after his disclosure was made to the Head of Service, and that only happened after his complaints became public through an FOI request I lodged. Likewise, one of the allegations raised by the CIT whistleblower in their statement is that their complaint had not been escalated appropriately, including to the Integrity Commission. I know that to be the case because, after yesterday's debate, the Integrity Commission itself requested the disclosure from my office. They clearly did not already have the public interest disclosure, which was lodged four and a half months ago and which they would have had if the internal processes had functioned properly. Now the Integrity Commission's investigation, brought about by the whistleblower making their allegations public through this Assembly yesterday, is being used as the justification to block the publication of the whistleblower's disclosure today.

Yesterday, this Assembly voted to improve protections and supports for whistleblowers. Today, the major parties are voting to silence two whistleblowers who have taken immense personal and professional risk in bringing their concerns to this Assembly. These individuals trusted the people that were elected to represent them that they would protect them. They trusted that this Assembly would uphold transparency and accountability, not shut them down and protect the system that failed them. They trusted that this Assembly would amplify their voices, not suppress them. The Public Interest Disclosure Act provides specific protections for whistleblowers to disclose information to members of the Legislative Assembly or journalists when their concerns have not been investigated or when they have not received an update within three months. According to the whistleblowers, that is precisely what happened in both of these cases. This safeguard exists because there will always be cases where systems fail and where institutions protect themselves instead of the public interest.

The CEO of CIT has categorically denied the allegations aired in this Assembly, using a public platform and the power of her position to do so. This Assembly can give the CIT whistleblower the power to have their voice heard too but is choosing instead to disempower them. By blocking these disclosures from being published, the major parties are choosing to silence those without power, rather than stand with those who have had the courage to speak up. They are choosing to be part of the problem, rather than part of the solution. This Assembly has a responsibility not just to praise whistleblowers in principle but also to protect and support them in practice.

Part of me understands why the government is doing this—and I accept they have received legal advice—but the opposition's refusal to support the publication of these documents astonishes me. Who are they protecting? Isn't scrutiny and transparency central to an opposition's role? I want to thank the crossbench for their support. I would urge all members to support this motion—and you still have a chance to—to stand by people who have shown incredible courage in entrusting a parliamentarian to bring their formal disclosures to this place; to demonstrate with their vote that they do support a speak-up culture and that they respect the role that whistleblowers play in strengthening our democracy, not to vote to silence people seeking to speak truth to power.

Question put:

That so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the public interest disclosure documents tabled by Mr Emerson today from being authorised for

publication.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 5

Andrew Braddock
Fiona Carrick
Jo Clay
Thomas Emerson
Laura Nuttall

Noes 17

Andrew Barr	Suzanne Orr
Chiaka Barry	Mark Parton
Peter Cain	Marisa Paterson
Tara Cheyne	Michael Petterson
Ed Cocks	Chris Steel
Jeremy Hanson	Rachel Stephen-Smith
Elizabeth Lee	Caitlin Tough
James Milligan	Taimus Werner-Gibbings
Deborah Morris	

Question resolved in the negative.

Personal explanation

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (4.45): Under standing order 47, I seek leave to make a personal explanation as I have been misrepresented.

MR SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

MR BARR: In the opening remarks from Mr Emerson in that previous debate he in fact cojoined me with the Leader of the Opposition in suggesting that we had described yesterday as a “stunt” or “making a big splash”. I have checked the *Hansard*. I said no such thing. Perhaps in a rare moment of bipartisanship, in an unusual sense, on behalf of Mr Parton, I think he has also been misrepresented in that characterisation and the context of his remarks did not imply that Mr Emerson was undertaking a “stunt” or seeking to “make a big splash”. I think we have both been misrepresented, and I would ask Mr Emerson to reflect upon that.

Papers

Motion to take note of papers

Motion (by **Mr Speaker**), pursuant to standing order 211A, agreed to:

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

Statements by members

LGBTQ+ Domestic Violence Awareness Day

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform) (4.46): I rise today to mark LGBTQ+ Domestic Violence Awareness Day. This day raises awareness about

domestic and family violence experienced by people in the LGBTIQ+ community.

As highlighted in the ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy released yesterday, 61 per cent of LGBTIQ+ people have experienced intimate partner violence. This violence often includes identity-based abuse, where perpetrators exploit stigma and discrimination based on a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, including threats to out someone, misgendering and shaming gender expression, and restricting access to gender-affirming care. Let me be clear: this violence is not acceptable.

I want to acknowledge the incredible work happening in our community every day to support this community, particularly by A Gender Agenda, Meridian and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, who work to support LGBTIQ+ people to have safe spaces to seek support. We will continue to support these efforts through the ACT strategy and ongoing investment, including the establishment of a support service in the ACT in the coming years. But there is more to do.

To LGBTIQ+ people impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence, on this important day, we see you, we believe you and we commit to turning this recognition into action and working every day to create a future free from violence.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—healthcare access

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (4.48): I want to acknowledge in the gallery the CEO of the Yerrabi Yurwang Health Hub, Professor Dea Delaney-Thiele, and Ngunnawal elder Selina Walker, and express my support, as a local member on the north side of Canberra, in saying how disappointing it is that north Canberra's only dedicated Indigenous health service has effectively been closed.

I thank Professor Delaney-Thiele for the advice that there are some very minimal services being provided now at low cost; but, having regard to the full spectrum of services that once operated from that centre, and in part due to loss of funding from the ACT government, those full and comprehensive services are now not available.

I am a member for the Ginninderra district, which comprises most of Belconnen. It is about having a dedicated Indigenous health service in the north part of Canberra. It is where over half of Canberrans live, and it has a significant Indigenous and First Nations population. I urge the government to do better.

Active Democracy Bean

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (4.49): Last Thursday, I participated in an excellent event organised by Active Democracy Bean at the Slovenian Club in Woden. It was about doing densification well in the bush capital. A big thanks to all the 70-odd people that came along, and particular thanks to Jane and Cath from Active Democracy Bean for organising the event.

I would also like to acknowledge experienced urban planner Richard Nash and Vincent Learnihan from the University of Canberra for their excellent presentations, and I thank the lovely folk at the Slovenian Club for hosting the event. I was very pleased to see

such a great turnout and to be part of a lively discussion about how to keep Canberra livable as the city continues to densify.

Lions Club—Operation Formal Wear

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (4.50): I rise today to take a moment to promote a really important community initiative by the Lions Club—Operation Formal Wear. The program supports students across Canberra and the surrounding region by providing access to formal attire for end-of-year celebrations. As many of us are aware, the cost of formal wear can place additional pressure on families, and this initiative helps to ensure that all students have the opportunity to attend their formal with confidence, looking fabulous.

While Operation Formal Wear will officially kick off on Monday, 1 June, a donation drive will be held this Sunday, 31 May from 1 pm to 4 pm at the Tuggeranong Repair Cafe. Donations of new or high-quality pre-loved formal items, such as dresses, suits, shirts, shoes and any accessories would be greatly appreciated. If you are in a position to contribute, your support can make a meaningful difference in the lives of local students.

Last year, I was lucky enough to be invited along to the Operation Formal Wear open day at the Youth Haven in Kambah, and there was so much fun in the room, while all the teenagers tried on dresses and suits, and picked out shoes, knowing they were going to have an absolutely fabulous end-of-school formal, because there were options there for them to pick up formal wear, without having to break the bank. I commend the Lions Club for this.

Discussion concluded.

Ms Merryn Gates—retirement

MR SPEAKER: I would like to make a short statement to the chamber about Ms Merryn Gates, who has been our Assembly art adviser on the committee for a period of time. She has had a huge impact, I think it is fair to say, on our art collection. She has been part of some notable acquisitions, including the possum-skin cloak, the large-scale Nicola Dickson artwork depicting the Jerrabomberra Wetlands, the artworks for the brush-tailed rock wallaby and fossil postcards, as well as many others.

Merryn has been working with the education team to document all processes and procedures, to make it as easy as possible for all future Assembly curators, and most recently compiling all our artworks into lists, ready to update the art section on the Assembly website. She has received thanks and comments, I know, from members of the committee, including Tony Oates, Miss Nuttall, Helen Musa, Jodie Cunningham and Mr Taimus Werner-Gibbings.

On behalf of the committee and the Assembly, our thanks go to Merryn for the great work that she has done. We are all the richer for it.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Ms Merryn Gates—retirement

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) (4.54): On behalf of the government, and as someone who has served on the Assembly art committee, I have only just learned about Ms Gates's departure. She certainly has been here for as long as I can recall. I think it is at least 10 years—a pretty extraordinary tenure.

It is actually an intense role, because the arts sector in this city is so incredible, and the choices that we have about the art collection that this Assembly collects and holds in perpetuity mean that it is a heavy obligation. It is not only a privilege, but also an obligation, in making sure that all our artworks are representative of this city. There are artworks in this Assembly that I adore and there are artworks that I do not. That is the beauty of art, Mr Speaker.

Ms Gates has been pretty incredible in that effort, in making sure that we have a true representation of Canberra in these halls and in our offices. I truly appreciate all the effort that she has gone to, in providing recommendations to the Assembly art committee, and all the effort that has gone behind that. I simply thank her on behalf of the ACT government.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—healthcare access

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.55): At every meeting, on every sitting day, we start with an acknowledgement of country. When it comes to concrete actions to meet the needs of our First Nations people, we are not so good.

This week, on Sorry Day, we were reminded of a truth that this nation cannot ignore: an apology without action is not justice. Real reconciliation demands that we listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and it demands that we trust and invest in the solutions they have built for themselves. That is exactly what Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations represent.

These are not just clinics. They are a powerful expression of self-determination and community strength. Founded in response to systemic barriers and inequity, ACCHOs are run by the communities they serve, delivering health care that is culturally safe, holistic and grounded in lived experience. That is why ACCHOs matter so much. When communities lead, outcomes improve. When services are designed locally, they are trusted, accessible and effective. These organisations do not just treat patients; they strengthen communities and build healthier futures.

If we are serious about Closing the Gap, if we are serious about honouring the promise of Sorry Day, we need to put our money where our mouth is and invest in these important services. We cannot expect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to simply fit into a system that was never designed for them, a system that too often ignores

culture, connection and community.

Most Aboriginal people in the ACT did not access any Medicare 715 health check between 2019 and 2024, and the ACT shows the second lowest rate of access in the country. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data highlights lower access in the north versus southern Canberra. Only 10 per cent of ACT Aboriginal children and young people access health checks, while 52 per cent of ACT-based Aboriginal children were assessed by the Australian Early Development Census 2024 as having at least one area of developmental vulnerability.

What is contributing to this? 8,908 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in the ACT, with a larger population in the Canberra region. Nationally, there is an average of one Aboriginal community-controlled health organisation—one ACCHO—per 5,490 people. In Canberra, we have one for all 8,908. That means that even if the national average is enough to meet community need—and I suspect it is not—the ACT has about half the number of ACCHOs we need. It also means the ACT has the worst ratio of ACCHOs per First Nations person in the country.

When culturally safe health services are not easily accessible, Aboriginal patients often delay or skip an appointment. The May 2026 Eslake report highlights underspending on preventive health care as a reason for the ACT's above-average spending on acute health services, with evidence showing every dollar invested in prevention returns up to \$14 in benefits from reduced hospital demand. We need another ACCHO in the ACT, not just to provide First Nations patients with sufficient health services that are easily accessible, but also to provide choice. It is something everyone expects and appreciates in mainstream health, and I do not see why it should not be offered in the Aboriginal healthcare sector, too.

When a new Aboriginal health hub delivering culturally safe health services was set up in Belconnen, off their own bat, the system should have leapt to their aid to help them survive. We are joined here today by Selina and Dea. Yerrabi Yurwang in Belconnen has been providing community services since 2022, with commonwealth funding, ACT government funding and self-funding, with support services in early childhood, kinship care, family support, family and domestic violence, housing and advocacy.

They opened an Aboriginal health service in 2025 to complement these wraparound services, but they closed in April 2026, due to a lack of funding. Instead of being rewarded for setting up a much-needed health service, instead of getting a leg-up, they faced a series of barriers that made it difficult to maintain an ACCHO. If three new bulk-billing clinics can be given three years of seed funding by the commonwealth, why can't a similar approach be taken for our ACCHOs? ACCHOs should not have to compete for limited funding. Funding should expand to meet the need.

The ACT has a commitment, under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, to build the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector. We must invest more in preventive and community health to save on hospital and ambulance care. And we must support self-determination and allow people to provide the services that they know their people need. A person's health cannot be fixed with an acknowledgement of country, but healing cannot commence without real action that follows the words.

Cost of living—sport and recreation

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.00): Today I am going to read a speech written by Archer Wynack, a Year 11 work experience student from Daramalan College. Archer has actually joined us in the gallery on his own time, Mr Speaker. So, he clocked off from my office—I think a couple of hours ago, given the schedule—and he is delighted to hang around. I hope he is pleased. So, I am going to read a speech that Archer has written to indicate something of importance to him that certainly has relevance to how the ACT is governed. These are Archer's words:

While sport becomes more popular here in Canberra, sport is also becoming less and less affordable and accessible for parents. If parents want to put their kids through sport, they have to fork out hundreds of dollars for registrations and equipment just to start the season. There is an additional time burden that parents face, taking kids to and from training and games which adds a big fuel cost.

Without sport, young people will suffer. Sport brings people together. However, when we lock sport behind a massive paywall, we see the effects. Kids lose enjoyment and a community. There are amazing benefits to a child's development if they do team sports. It teaches kids teamwork and helps kids to make lifelong friends. It provides memories for children and their families that last a lifetime.

I understand that these problems are not just a result of the lack of funding from the government, but also issues within clubs and organisations. However, the government does need to be doing more to support sport, especially now when families have to deal with increasing costs of living. And with more rate rises expected, it will not get easier. While there has been some work that the government has done, it is unfortunately not enough.

Affordability is not the only thing that is impacting the future of sport here in Canberra though—accessibility is also a big issue. With game venues changing week to week for a lot of sports, not every family is able to drive to the other side of Canberra. Even a 15-minute drive to training might not be accessible for some. The government needs to increase the funding for not only club sports but also school sports, to help tackle the accessibility issue.

Sport is a lifeline for many young people. It is their community. And if we want to keep these communities and lifelines, we should pay more attention to these issues in sport.

Mr Speaker, these were the words of Archer Wynack, a Year 11 work experience student from Daramalan College, who I have had the privilege of having in my office this week. Thank you, Archer.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—healthcare access

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (5.04): I also wish to speak to the issue of access to primary health care by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Canberra's north—and I thank Mr Cain and Ms Clay for their comments in this regard; and Yerrabi Yurwang for bringing this matter to the Assembly's attention, and I recognise its board chair Selina Walker and CEO Dea

Delaney Thiele who are in the gallery today. I also acknowledge, with great sadness, the recent loss of founding board member Uncle Fred Monaghan.

I also thank those community members who signed the recent petition that was considered in this place, and to which I have responded.

We, as a government, agree that continuing to expand access to culturally safe and high-quality community-controlled services is a priority. It is one that has been a focus of the government's investment in health and in other portfolios. Indeed, we will be making an announcement tomorrow in this regard, which I will not pre-empt in detail this evening. The ACT is very well aware of its obligations under the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which set out shared obligations to support self-determination, strengthen formal partnerships, and build the Aboriginal community-controlled sector.

I acknowledge with yindyamarra—respect—the work Yerrabi Yurwang has done in establishing a range of community-controlled services. It has grown very quickly—remarkably quickly—since its establishment in 2019 and is, of course, the only community-controlled registered care and protection organisation in the ACT; something I have welcomed and championed.

I have a strong record of supporting not only Yerrabi Yurwang but the broader community-controlled sector, including through the establishment of the ACCO Establishment and Expansion Fund, from which Yerrabi Yurwang has received funding. I have engaged and listened, and continue to engage regularly and openly with representatives from Yerrabi Yurwang around the issues of the future funding of the health hub. I have done so since last year, as has the Health and Community Services Directorate.

But it is important to recognise that the commonwealth government administers, regulates and funds primary care, including through the Medicare benefits schedule, and the supplementary funding provided to Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations through the Indigenous Australians' Health Program. I have advocated to the federal minister for health, Mark Butler, for establishing and sustaining a culturally safe community-controlled primary health service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Canberra's north. A new grant opportunity will be opening in 2026-27 and will be available for new and existing community-controlled organisations to apply to expand the Aboriginal community-controlled health organisation footprint across Australia, based on comprehensive needs assessments.

I understand that Yerrabi Yurwang was also invited to participate in the recent bulk-billing round governed by the Capital Health Network—and had conversations with Capital Health Network—and I am sorry that that was not an appropriate avenue for Yerrabi Yurwang. We were hoping it would be. We have also invited Yerrabi Yurwang to participate in the process for \$1.6 million being allocated to support bulk-billing for children and young people up to the age of 16—a round of funding from the ACT government which complements commonwealth funding for primary care, which has recently closed.

I can assure the Assembly that we will continue to support our ACT community-

controlled organisations to harness these and other opportunities to improve access to culturally safe and high-quality services. But I do think it is important to put some facts on the table.

Mr Speaker, Ms Clay spoke about the number of people per Aboriginal community-controlled health service. And I think it is important to recognise that, in fact, the number of people per Aboriginal community-controlled health service in the ACT region is the lowest in the country, on a regional basis.

We have one Aboriginal community-controlled health service in the ACT that is currently funded by the commonwealth as an ACCHO. That is Winnunga Nimmityjah. It serves an estimated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of 7,525 people. This is a lower population-to-service ratio than several other urban regions, including Adelaide and the New South Wales central and north coasts. It is also below Brisbane, Perth, Sydney, Wollongong and Melbourne—indicating comparatively higher service coverage per person.

So, while I sympathise with the argument about choice, and I will continue to advocate to the commonwealth government for a new service in Canberra's north, I think it is important that we have facts on the table. Thank you.

Community language schools

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.09): I have been a consistent and repeated supporter of Canberra's community language schools, which provide a valuable service to our community. Across the ACT, these schools operate quietly but powerfully, on the weekends and after hours, in classrooms and library spaces. They are run by dedicated volunteers, passionate teachers and families who believe deeply in the importance of language as a bridge between generations and culture.

For many students, community language schools are where they connect with their heritage. They learn not only vocabulary and grammar but history, culture and a sense of belonging. For parents and grandparents, these schools help keep language alive at home, ensuring that connections to culture are not lost, but strengthened.

For Canberra as a whole, the benefits are enormous. Multilingual communities are more resilient, more connected and better equipped to engage with the global world. Language learning fosters empathy, broadens horizons and builds these skills that our young people need in the future, whether it be in diplomacy, trade, education, or community language and leadership.

But beyond all of that, these schools are about identity. They say to every child, "Your culture matters, your language matters, and your story matters here in Canberra."

Despite their importance, community language schools often operate with very limited resources. They rely on goodwill, volunteer time and modest funding, and yet they deliver these extraordinary values—not just educationally but socially and culturally. And it is the question of resources that is why I am back here in the chamber, wishing to draw attention to a government that is in the process of a reform to the grant system for community language schools.

On the surface, the changes appear to have significant and detrimental impacts to this community. This includes a loss of funding for public liability insurance and a loss of funding for preschool and play groups, despite these being the age groups which are most effective in learning and picking up another language. There also appears to be a drop in total funding for the sector and a disproportionate impact particularly on the smaller schools. Many questions remain about this drastically new model of support for community language education here in the ACT.

I have started asking questions here in the chamber and in private with the minister, and seeking out information on why these decisions are being made. Why is this particular community sector facing such an uncertain future?

It should be remembered; this is not happening in isolation. Recently, we have seen CIT Solutions no longer providing language training to our school students. Then the Education Directorate deliberately decided to not continue with that support. Now we are seeing the ACT decreasing the level of support for the community language schools here in the ACT, a city which is home to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, AusAID, embassies, high commissions and the intelligence community—all of which understand the value of understanding languages as a means of communicating with the world.

Academic research clearly demonstrates the social, academic and community outcomes of learning another language. So, it is time for the ACT government to recognise this and to maintain its support of our community language schools.

Armenian, Greek and Assyrian genocide—anniversary

MS TOUGH (Brindabella) (5.12): While I am a bit late in marking it this year—I had hoped to do last sitting week—last month marked the 111th anniversary of the Armenian, Greek and Assyrian genocide by the Ottoman empire. These events are commonly dated from 24 April 1915, when Armenian community leaders and intellectuals were arrested in Constantinople. This occurred just one day before the allied forces, including Australians, landed at Gallipoli during the First World War; a reminder that these events unfolded within a broader context of global conflict.

Over the years that followed, large numbers of Armenian, Greek and Assyrian civilians living within the Ottoman empire were subjected to forced relocations, violence, deprivation and loss of life. Estimates suggest that more than two million people died in this time. These figures reflect the devastating human toll on communities that had existed in the region for centuries.

At the time, the term “genocide” did not exist. It was later developed in response to this event.

Australia does not formally recognise these events as a genocide at the national level, although some states have done so. But at the time, during the First World War and in the years that followed, Australians serving abroad witnessed the genocide and what was happening, and wrote home about it. And at home, Australians contributed to humanitarian efforts, sending aid, sending money and establishing Australian

orphanages in the area. We have many in our community now who are descendants of the survivors of that genocide.

So, through reflection and understanding, we honour the past while reinforcing our shared commitment to human dignity and compassion.

I also want to take a moment to recognise Mr Braddock for his work at the moment, sponsoring a petition calling for the Armenian genocide to be recognised in the ACT school curriculum. I also want to recognise Angie and her team of volunteers across Canberra who have put countless hours into seeking support from the ACT community for this petition, and recognition of the genocide more broadly.

New South Wales will be recognising the genocide in their school curriculum as part of Australia's civic action and humanitarian responses during World War I, from next year.

I want to take a moment to talk about an event that I have been invited to—and I think everyone in this chamber has been invited to—because each year the Canberra community does come together to commemorate the genocide. Last year it was held here in the Assembly. This year the event will take place at the Hellenic Club on 2 July, and it is jointly held by the Canberra Association of Pontos and the Armenian National Committee of Australia.

The keynote speaker will be the Australian genocide scholar, Dr Deborah Mayersen whose work focuses on the causes of genocide, atrocity prevention, and the pathways to preventing mass violence—someone I think we all benefit from hearing from. I have had conversations with Dr Mayersen, and she is a really insightful person to speak to.

So, I wanted to put my voice on the record in acknowledging and commemorating the genocide and I hope to see fellow MLAs at that event.

Planning and development—Molonglo Valley town centre

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (5.16): The Molonglo Valley Community Forum has written to the chair of the Assembly Committee on Environment and Planning requesting a formal inquiry into the Molonglo town centre planning process. And I wanted to reflect on what the Molonglo Valley Community Forum has said publicly today, because, essentially, the Suburban Land Agency has released the full town centre master plan today and, frankly, it does not look like much of a town centre.

I am very proud to have been closely connected with the community campaign for a town centre. We had to push for a very long time in order for the government to come to the party on this. A town centre is meaningful. It is not just another group centre with a few more storeys. A town centre should be the sort of place where we bring economic life as well as a few apartments. A town centre is a place that brings our communities together. It should be a hub for economic life, for social life, for all of those very important things which underpin a large community such as the Molonglo valley is going to be.

The Molonglo valley is going to be home to 70,000-plus people. The people living in

that area deserve the same sort of opportunities as every other town centre across Canberra. We deserve to have a town centre that has an identity from the start—not another Gungahlin that takes a long time to find its feet; not another Coombs shops, which takes an extraordinarily long time to even become established.

It is about time that the government came to the party and delivered a genuine town centre for the Molonglo valley, because that is what the people in Molonglo deserve. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.18 pm until Wednesday, 10 June 2026 at 10 am.

Questions without notice taken on notice Alexander Maconochie Centre—performance

Dr Paterson (*in reply to a question by Mrs Morris on Tuesday, 26 May 2026*):

The most recent Report on *Government Services* shows that real net operating expenditure per prisoner per day in the ACT decreased from \$641 in 2023-24 to \$574 in 2024-25, following an increase in average daily detainee numbers. This remains higher than the national average of \$331 in 2023-24 and \$326 in 2024-25.

The higher per-prisoner cost reflects the ACT's unique circumstances as a small jurisdiction operating a single correctional facility. Fixed costs must be spread across a relatively small detainee population, limiting economies of scale and resulting in a higher per detainee figure compared to larger jurisdictions.

The same Report on *Government Services* also shows that while 37.1 per cent of adults released from custody returned to custody within two years in the ACT, this was the fourth lowest recidivism rate nationally and below the national rate of 44.5 per cent. Broader indicators also show improvement with the proportion of people returning to corrective services – either to custody or community corrections – falling significantly from 62.4 per cent to 44.3 per cent. In 2024-25 financial year the ACT had the lowest crude rate of imprisonment per 100,000 head of population at 107.8 and well below the national average of 210.8.

The 75 per cent figure referenced in the AMC Masterplan reflects the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) measure of 'prior imprisonment' published in *Prisoners in Australia*. This measure fluctuated between 73.5% and 80% between 2014 and 2023; however, dropped to 48.2% in 2024 and 46.7% in 2025. This indicator shows the proportion of the current detainee population who have ever previously been in adult prison in any jurisdiction, either sentenced or not and is not directly comparable with return-to-custody rates reported in the *Report on Government Services* which measures return to custody with a new sentence within two years of release.

Taken together, these factors demonstrate that while the ACT's per detainee costs are higher due to structural factors, they are supporting comparatively strong rehabilitation outcomes with lower rates of return-to-custody rates compared to the national average. The ACT Government continues to focus on further reducing reoffending and improving community safety, including through initiatives under *Reducing Recidivism by 25 per cent by 2025 and Beyond*, such as strengthened case management across custodial and community settings, expanded throughcare, targeted frameworks for priority cohorts and practical supports like transitional housing and post-release programs that address the underlying drivers of reoffending, including mental health, substance use and housing instability.

Weston Creek Bowling Club—closure

Mr Steel (*in reply to a question by Ms Carrick on Tuesday, 26 May 2026*):

The concessional status of the lease over Block 5 Section 24 Stirling (the site of the Weston Creek Bowling Club) was paid out by the lessee in June 2013. It has since become a market value lease.

Canberra Hospital—building defects

Ms Stephen-Smith (*in reply to a question by Mr Parton on Wednesday, 27 May 2026*):

It is not unusual to have Defects highlighted post Practical Completion, and during the contractual Defect Liability Period (DLP). Items identified on the Canberra Hospital Expansion Project have ranged from cosmetic to minor operational defects e.g. cracked tiles, misaligned doors, chipped paint, water leaks, passive fire and hydraulic items. Defect rectification works have and will continue to be advanced smoothly and efficiently in accordance with the contract and CHS operational processes.

All these Defects have been identified during the DLP. The Territory retains rights under the Contract to direct the Contractor to rectify these Defects.

Planning and development—Manuka

Mr Steel (*in reply to a question and a supplementary question by Ms Carrick on Wednesday, 27 May 2026*):

The matters raised have been investigated by Access Canberra as the independent regulator and no compliance actions were identified that required compliance action at this stage. However, this remains an active investigation and no further information can be provided.

Development Applications (DAs), and any amendment applications, are assessed by the independent Territory Planning Authority (the Authority) in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act 2023 (the Act).

For a DA relating to retrospective development, section 215 of the Act requires the Authority to assess the application as if the development was not undertaken. The Authority may approve, conditionally approve or refuse a DA (or subsequent amendment) that includes a development that is already constructed.

Canberra Institute of Technology - EV Centre of Excellence

Mr Pettersson (*in reply to a question by Mr Emerson on Thursday, 28 May 2026*):

Prior to the establishment of the EV Centre of Excellence, CIT had been conducting its certified EV training courses using EVs and hybrid vehicles stored at the Fyshwick campus. The EV Centre had access to one of these vehicles to deliver training during the procurement process of the other vehicles. Additional vehicles used for Centre training programs were provided by industry clients whose staff were undergoing training at the Centre. To date CIT has identified one instance where a EV hire vehicle was used for demonstration purposes, including pointing out safety features and key components.

After a comprehensive procurement process in accordance with ACT Government procedures and regulations - the Electric Vehicle TAFE Centre of Excellence fleet of training vehicles was received on the following dates: one vehicle was delivered in November 2025 and the other five in May 2026.

Mr Pettersson (*in reply to a question by Mr Emerson on Thursday, 28 May 2026*):

Number of practical training sessions conducted (July 2025 – May 2026) – 32

Locations and dates:

2025

21 - 24 July	Melbourne
5 - 7 August	Kangan TAFE
4 June.	Dubbo
18 - 20 August	CIT
26 - 29 August	CIT
2 September	Wodonga
9 September	Sydney
16 - 18 September	CIT
25 September	CIT
14 October	Sydney
29 October	CIT
3 - 5 November	CIT
10 November	CIT
11 - 13 November	CIT
17 November	Narooma
19 November	CIT
24 November	CIT
1 - 2 December	CIT
3 - 5 December	CIT
9 - 11 December	CIT

2026

9 - 10 February	CIT
25 February	CIT
3 - 5 March	CIT
17 - 19 March	Sydney
21 - 23 April	CIT
29 April - 1 May	WA
29 April - 1 May	Sydney
5 - 7 May	Sydney
19 - 21 May	Melbourne
11 - 13 May	WA TAFE
26 - 28 May	CIT
26 - 28 May	Tas TAFE

Mr Pettersson (*in reply to a question by Ms Carrick on Thursday, 28 May 2026*):

As ACT public servants, all CIT employees are governed by the ACT Government's frameworks, Acts, regulations and standards around the management, confidentiality, storage, and retention of government information. As employees of the ACT Public Service, CIT employees are subject to the provisions of the *ACTPS Code of Conduct*, *Public Sector Management Act 1994*, *Crimes Act 1900 (ACT)*, *Information Privacy Act 2014*, and the *Territory Records Act 2002*. CIT staff are also reminded regularly of their obligations under the above. I am advised CIT is confident that staff are aware of and compliant with their roles and obligations in this area.

Roads—Commonwealth Avenue

Mr Steel (*in reply to a question by Ms Carrick on Thursday, 28 May 2026*):

In early 2022, the ACT Government engaged a traffic engineering consultant to explore opportunities to improve bus priority in the Adelaide Ave/Commonwealth Ave corridor. The study identified a number of constraints that limited the ability to install additional bus lanes in sections of the corridor. Most problematic was Capital Circle which is constrained by the width of an existing bridge and tight curves which have unsafe sightlines.

As part of the study the performance of the intersection of Commonwealth Ave and Coronation Drive was assessed with the inclusion of bus lanes. The analysis showed extensive queuing for all vehicles as a result, particularly in the AM peak. The modelling identified potential queuing extending over 1km heading towards the City. This meant that any citybound bus would be in this queue and delayed (due to inability to install bus lane on Capital Circle), negating any benefit to a bus lane at the intersection.

The report states *'Bus performance could be further improved by addition of an advance bus phase at the signals in the combination with a dedicated bus lane, however the improvement is very minor and would result in significant negative impacts to all other users'*

The findings of this study were presented to the Disruption Taskforce in March 2022.

These findings were considered by both NCA and ACT Government when determining the most appropriate lane configurations during construction of the NCA's Commonwealth Ave strengthening project (currently in place).