



DEBATES
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DAILY HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

15 September 2026

This is an **EDITED PROOF TRANSCRIPT** of proceedings that is subject to further checking. Members' suggested corrections for the official *Weekly Hansard* are requested to be lodged in writing with the Hansard office no later than **Wednesday, 7 October 2026**.

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Tuesday, 15 September 2026

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

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

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

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

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

Absence of Clerk

Mr Speaker informed the Assembly that, due to the absence of the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk would act as Clerk until 14 October 2026.

Appointment of Clerk

MR SPEAKER: I wish to formally advise the Assembly that Mr Hamish Finlay has been appointed to the position of Clerk of the Legislative Assembly effective from 15 October 2026. On behalf of all members, I congratulate Mr Finlay, and we have organised a very long “blue” for you as a baptism of fire.

Mr Alan Jessop OAM **Motion of condolence**

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Trade, Investment and the Knowledge Economy, Minister for Tourism and Events, and Minister for Major Projects): I move:

That this Assembly expresses its deep sorrow at the passing of Mr Alan Jessop OAM, an outstanding Canberran who dedicated his life to serving others and improving the lives of those in need. We honour the life of a remarkable husband, father, grandfather and community servant whose contribution to Canberra will not be forgotten.

I rise this morning on behalf of the government to pay tribute to Mr Alan Jessop OAM, who passed away on 15 May 2026 at the age of 95. We are honouring the life of an extraordinary Canberran whose decades of voluntary service touched countless lives and exemplified the very best of our community. Through his kindness, his generosity and his unwavering commitment to helping others, Alan Jessop became one of Canberra’s most recognisable and respected community figures.

After retiring and moving to Canberra in 1988, Mr Jessop sought opportunities to give back to his new community. He joined the Canberra City Corps of the Salvation Army and began collecting donations outside what was then known as the Monaro Mall. What started as volunteering quickly became a lifetime of service.

For more than three decades, generations of Canberrans encountered Alan at the Monaro Mall, and then the Canberra Centre, sitting beside his collection bucket in his Salvation Army uniform, greeting shoppers with a warm smile and friendly conversation. He became affectionately known as “the Salvos man”. He became a familiar and reassuring presence in the heart of our city. Children looked forward to receiving a sticker. Shoppers stopped for a chat, and many came to know Alan not simply as a fundraiser, but as a symbol of kindness and community spirit.

Even when the COVID pandemic brought an end to face-to-face fundraising, Alan’s contribution and reputation were such that the Salvation Army ensured his presence remained in the centre through a life-size cut-out and an electronic donation point. It was a fitting tribute to a man whose dedication had become synonymous with charitable giving in our city.

Despite periods of ill health, Alan’s commitment never wavered. Over more than 30 years of service, he helped to raise more than \$4 million for Salvation Army programs and services, supporting vulnerable people across the territory. This remarkable achievement is testament not only to his perseverance, but also to the trust and affection he inspired within the Canberra community.

His service was appropriately recognised through a number of honours, including being named the ACT’s Local Hero in 2011 and receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2022. Those who knew Alan would likely agree that his greatest achievement was the positive impact that he had on the lives of others day after day, year after year.

For those of us in this place, Alan Jessop’s life reminds us that genuine community leadership is often found not in public office or formal authority, but in quiet acts of service carried out with humility, consistency and compassion. His legacy will live on, not only through the funds that he helped to raise, but through the example that he has set for all Canberrans.

On behalf of the government, I extend my sincere condolences to Alan’s wife, Joy, his daughter, Wendy, and grandchildren Emma and James, who join us in the chamber this morning. We thank them for sharing him with the Canberra community for so many years.

MR PARTON (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition): Alan Jessop was a great man, and it is so important that we are gathered here today to pay tribute to a life of service.

I came to Canberra in the latter years of last century, and one of my first memories, whilst strolling through the city centre, was a brief chat—and it was brief—with the great Alan Jessop. I can distinctly remember stopping to make a donation—it would have been three weeks into my time in Canberra—and striking up a conversation. I told Alan that I had just moved to town, and he told me what a wonderful city it was, and he did not say much more. It was not a long conversation because, as we know, he was

a man of few words. He was a man on a mission, and he continued on that mission long after many would have given it away. Of course, it is well documented that, when he did retire, he did so under sufferance. He did not want to give it away at all; he just wanted to keep going.

The other fascinating thing about this is that everybody in Canberra knows who Alan Jessop was. So many people had the belief that he was born wearing the Salvation Army hat and that is who he was. Of course, he was so much more. He had lived a full life. He was a tailor, a gasfitter, a postmaster and a dairy farmer. What a life; what an amazing life. And what a gift this man was to all of us—certainly, a gift to his wife, Joy, the kids and the grandkids. This quiet, unassuming servant to the city was genuinely a part of the fabric of Canberra.

He symbolises service to the community. I echo the words of Mr Barr. There are a few of us in here who stand up and make a song and dance, make a splash and put out our social media videos—but this is service. He collected more than \$4 million for the Salvos, he was the recipient of the Medal of the Order of Australia, and he was named ACT Local Hero at the Australian of the Year Awards in 2011.

In a lot of ways, he reminds me of my late father—someone who just quietly got on with the job without complaint. I think that comparison really hammers home for me that he was a bloke who never had a mobile phone—did not have one—and never sat at a computer keyboard. He was untouched by the internet. I sit back and think that maybe it would be a better planet if there were more people around like Alan Jessop. There is something remarkably pure about that.

It was a privilege to know Alan Jessop. He had a kind heart. He was a fixture in the community. He will long be remembered by many. On behalf of the Canberra Liberals: Alan Jessop, thank you for everything.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra): On behalf of the Greens, I want to express my sincere condolences today to the friends and family of Alan Jessop. Alan died just before Volunteer Week this year, on 15 May, at the age of 95. I want to connect his personal story to the story of volunteering in Australia as a whole.

Alan really was a lived example of the very best in our community. He spent over 30 years stationed three days a week at the Canberra Centre—it was still Monaro Mall when he started—collecting donations for the Salvation Army. During that time, he raised over \$4 million. It is an incredible sum. It must have done so much good in so many ways. There were kids who did not go to bed hungry because of Alan. There were young people who did not do something desperate or reckless because they were so desperate to find rent money. There were parents who could send their kids off to a schoolfriend's birthday party in decent clothes and with a gift to give, instead of worrying that they would stand out in all the wrong ways.

We also know that Alan got benefits from his volunteer work. It did him good as well. After he had to give it up, when COVID hit, he spoke about how much he missed it. This is where Alan's story and the story of volunteering in Australia really connect. We all benefit when there is a strong culture of volunteering and giving back.

The 10-year National Strategy for Volunteering was released in 2023, and it gives a really fascinating overview of volunteering in Australia. It talks about the great history of volunteering in this country, on country, extending back through tens of thousands of years of reciprocal giving and shared understanding about obligation, cooperation and kinship. These are values that are so deeply embedded in our First Nations cultures. A lot of that was disrupted or destroyed during the violent displacement of First Nations peoples from their traditional lands and ways of life, but there is still a high rate of volunteering among our First Nations peoples today.

Colonisation caused harm, but it also introduced volunteer traditions of its own—the early labour, social justice and women’s suffrage movements of the 19th century; volunteering during the two world wars; and today’s sport, environment, state emergency service and rural fire service volunteering. Australia is built on volunteering, and we are a stronger and better place and a better community because we have volunteering.

I want to thank Alan’s family and Alan’s community for allowing Alan to live his life in this way and to show us the lived example of the impact of volunteering in our community.

I also want to contrast it a little bit. Australia’s two richest people, Gina Rinehart and Andrew Forrest, make around \$1.5 million an hour. Sit with that when you think about a man who spent 30 years raising \$4 million to give back to his community versus how those two people have chosen to live their lives. It took Alan 32 years to raise the money that Gina and Andrew would pocket by lunchtime every single day.

We should celebrate Alan, and we should celebrate everybody like Alan who dedicates their life to those lived values. We should not have to depend on them. We should not overburden them. As a nation, we should not offload government and society’s responsibilities onto them, but we should thank them.

On behalf of my Greens colleagues and myself today, our heartfelt condolences go to Alan’s family and friends. Thank you so much for supporting him. We are so grateful for his life well lived and for his example to all of us.

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

Leave of absence

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

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Werner-Gibbins for this sitting week due to Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference attendance.

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

That leave of absence be granted to Ms Berry from today to 24 September 2026 due to personal reasons.

Petitions

The following petitions were lodged for presentation:

Kaleen—playing fields—parking—petition 67-26

By Ms Castley, from 2 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to illegal and dangerous parking at the sport fields at Kaleen. Vehicles are parking on footpaths blocking access to pedestrians, disabled, elderly and pram/stroller access.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to take action to prevent illegal parking creating a very dangerous situation.

Paediatric Oncology and Haematology—proposed unit—petition 39-26

By Ms Lee, from 2,351 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to the Establishment of a Paediatric Oncology and Haematology Unit in Canberra.

Children living in the Australian Capital Territory and surrounding regions of Southern New South Wales who are diagnosed with cancer or serious blood disorders do not have access to a dedicated paediatric oncology and haematology service within the ACT. As a result, these children and their families are required to travel interstate, most commonly to Sydney, in order to access specialist treatment, ongoing care, and clinical review. This requirement for interstate travel places significant additional strain on children already enduring intensive and distressing medical treatment, as well as on their families.

Frequent long-distance travel and/or prolonged periods away from home disrupt family life, schooling, and employment, and separate children from their homes, family, friends, and local support networks at a time when stability and familiarity are critically important. It also contributes to fragmented care and undermines equitable access to consistent, coordinated health services for ACT and surrounding regional residents.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to take action for the establishment of a dedicated paediatric oncology and haematology unit in Canberra to provide comprehensive diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing care for children from the ACT and surrounding New South Wales regions. Delivered through a safe and appropriately staged model of care, integrated with an interstate tertiary partner where necessary, and supported by Commonwealth funding arrangements where appropriate, so that children with cancer and blood disorders can receive the full continuum of care closer to home.

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petition, having at least 500 signatories, was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

Melba—proposed pump track—petition 68-26

By Ms Barry, from 521 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to the lack of accessible, engaging play spaces for children and families in Melba, and the opportunity to improve child development and community wellbeing in the area. Melba is a family-focused suburb, yet local children have limited options for active play and often need to travel outside the area.

At the same time, Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data shows that around 30% of children in Belconnen are developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains, with some suburbs—including Melba—showing worsening trends.

This highlights the need for practical, place-based investments that support children early. A pump track on Alfred Hill Drive is a simple, cost-effective solution that fills a clear gap in local infrastructure.

Unlike the existing Melba BMX track, which caters to more experienced riders, a pump track is designed for all ages and abilities—especially younger children and beginners. Its smooth, flowing design allows children to safely build balance, confidence and skills, supporting physical activity, social connection, and active travel to Mt Rogers Primary School.

The proposed site next to Melba Oval is well-suited, with existing paths, public transport access, shade, and parking. A permanent track would formalise the current informal facility and help create a vibrant, everyday community hub for local families.

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

1. Investigate the feasibility of constructing a pump track on Alfred Hill Drive, Melba;
2. Undertake community consultation regarding the proposed facility;
3. Prioritise delivery as a targeted investment to improve child development outcomes, increase physical activity, and strengthen community connection in Melba; and
4. Report publicly on the outcomes of the feasibility assessment and consultation.

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petition, having at least 500 signatories, was referred to the Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation

Molonglo—sport facilities—petitions 22-26 and 82-26

By Ms Carrick, from 371 and 201 residents, respectively:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly that Molonglo is one of the fastest growing regions in the ACT, with the population forecast to reach 79,000 residents by 2065.

As families continue to move into the district, the need for adequate, accessible playing fields becomes increasingly urgent to support community health, provide equitable access to sport, strengthen local clubs, and foster social cohesion.

High capacity district playing fields, in addition to the proposed field at Stromlo Forest Park, will deliver long term benefits for physical and mental wellbeing, youth development, and neighbourhood identity.

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

- 1) Revisit the planning assumptions for Molonglo's district playing fields;
- 2) Identify a site that can support the required scale of playing fields now and into the future; and
- 3) Commit to delivering properly scaled, fit-for-purpose facilities that will meet the needs of Molonglo families for decades to come.

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

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Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to:

- 1) Revisit the planning assumptions for Molonglo's district playing fields.
- 2) Identify a site that can support the required scale of playing fields now and into the future.
- 3) Commit to delivering properly scaled, fit-for-purpose facilities that will meet the needs of Molonglo families for decades to come.

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petitions, having at least 500 signatories, were referred to the Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation

Roads—safety—Curtin—petition 46-26

By Mr Steel, from 12 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to dangerous parking behaviour occurring outside the Pinocchio Daycare Centre on Theodore Street, Curtin during school drop-off and pick-up times.

Vehicles are frequently parking on or very close to the corner near the daycare driveway, significantly reducing visibility for both drivers and pedestrians. This creates a hazardous environment at peak times when there is a high volume of young children, parents, and other road users.

The restricted sightlines make it difficult to see approaching traffic, increasing the risk of accidents. This situation is particularly concerning given the daycare is located on a high traffic thoroughfare between a residential aged facility, Holy Trinity Primary School, and Curtin Primary School.

The current parking practices not only contravene safe driving principles outlined in the Roads ACT publication, Traffic Management and Safety: A Practical Guide for Schools but also undermine the safety of the wider community.

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

- Conduct a traffic safety assessment of the area outside the Pinocchio Daycare Centre on Theodore Street, Curtin;
- Install “No Stopping” signage out the front of Pinocchio Daycare on Theodore Street; and
- Provide greater enforcement of penalties for illegal parking during designated school drop-off and pick-up times.

Light rail—Stage 2B—petition 25-26

By Mr Parton, from 608 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to the community’s mounting opposition to the construction of Light Rail Stage 2B (LRS2B) Your petitioners oppose the construction of LRS2B at this time and instead support consideration of more flexible, cost-effective and compelling alternative transport options. We therefore request that LRS2B not proceed until it has been subjected to a rigorous, transparent and publicly accessible independent review that addresses:

- Whether the majority of the ACT community genuinely supports and prefers the LRS2B option.
- The existence of a robust, independently validated and publicly released cost–benefit analysis, comparing LRS2B with alternative transport options.
- The financial burden on ACT taxpayers, particularly in light of the Territory’s deteriorating budget position and recent credit rating downgrade.
- Demonstrated and independently verified transport, land-use planning and network-efficiency benefits.
- Whether funding LRS2B is appropriately prioritised relative to critical community needs, including health, housing, childcare, and sport and

recreation.

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

1. Halt or pause all contractual commitments related to Light Rail Stage 2B, noting that sunk costs incurred during Stage 2A do not justify proceeding with Stage 2B.
2. Refer Light Rail Stages 2A and 2B to the ACT Auditor-General for independent examination, including:
 - financial viability and long-term affordability;
 - evidence of a favourable cost–benefit outcome compared to other transport solutions;
 - the quality, transparency and validity of community consultation processes; and
 - whether there is genuine majority community support.
3. Request a formal statement from Chief Minister Andrew Barr outlining the evidence, rationale and justification for proceeding with LRS2, despite:
 - consistent and well-publicised opposition from former elected representatives, planning professionals, transport experts, and town-planning specialists;
 - growing community opposition following prolonged disruption along Commonwealth Avenue;
 - increasing financial pressures and competing priorities across essential community services at a time of two consecutive downgradings of the ACT Government's Credit rating.

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

Health—protections for older patients—petition 80-26

By Ms Barry, from 2 residents:

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

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

- * The need to protect older people receiving care in ACT hospitals, health services, residential aged care and palliative care from inappropriate withholding of hydration or excessive medication.
- * The need to ensure hydration, nutrition, pain relief and other treatments are considered according to each person's individual needs, wishes and clinical circumstances, and are not routinely withheld or administered without proper consideration.
- * The need for every older person receiving significant or end-of-life care to have a clear, personalised care plan documenting their wishes, treatment preferences and approach to hydration and symptom management.
- * The need to ensure their medical power of attorney or legally appointed substitute decision-maker is identified, documented and genuinely involved in significant decisions when the person cannot speak for themselves.

- * The need for legislative safeguards and accountability within ACT Health and palliative care to ensure older people receive appropriate care, retain dignity and autonomy, and have their wishes respected.

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

1. Protect older people from inappropriate dehydration and over-medication in health and palliative care;
2. Require a personalised, written care plan for every older person, covering food, fluids, pain and relief, medication and their own wishes;
3. Require that a person's medical power of attorney or legal decision-maker is identified and included in major treatment decisions when the person cannot decide for themselves;
4. Put in place clear safeguards and independent oversight for decisions to withhold fluids or give strong sedating medication; and
5. Ensure every older person is cared for with dignity, respect for their wishes, and their right to proper treatment.

Housing—rental ombudsman establishment—petitions 14-26 and 84-26

By Mr Braddock, from 243 and 390 residents respectively:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to the need for a Rental Ombudsman for the ACT. Current ACT law provides strong tenancy regulation that aims to protect tenants from predatory landlords and enforce their right to safe, stable enjoyment of their homes, while also protecting landlords from unreasonable tenants. However, the cost of enforcing these rights through the ACAT, is time and money, is often unrealistic, and navigating the system can be stressful and difficult, particularly for vulnerable Canberrans or those from non-English-speaking backgrounds.

Further, there are no strong mechanisms to investigate and correct systemic misbehaviour by landlords and agents, or to redress wrongs that happen outside the term of a lease, such as those relating to advertising properties, inspections, the tenancy application process, tenancy databases, or events after the lease has concluded.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to create a Rental Ombudsman to address tenancy disputes and oversee the residential tenancy market in the ACT. The Ombudsman should have the power to:

- advise tenants, lessors and agents on their rights and responsibilities, directly and through the publication of advice material;
- mediate disputes between landlords, agents and tenants;

- advocate on behalf of tenants;
- open investigations of their own motion into landlords, agents, or systemic issues in the residential tenancy market;
- issue orders to landlords, agents and tenants requiring compliance with legislation, and issue fines or other punishments for non-compliance; refer agents for disciplinary action under the Agents Act 2003;
- collect data and statistics in relation to the residential tenancy market and publish reports based on that data; and
- make recommendations to government on the operation and governance of the residential tenancy market.

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

Playgrounds and play spaces—shade standards—petition 64-26

By Mr Emerson, from 1,128 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to the lack of sufficient shade coverage over many of Canberra's playgrounds, preventing use in summer and reducing safety for children and their families.

Notably, these adverse effects will only be worsened by climate change and associated extreme heat. Following an audit of playgrounds across NSW in 2022, the Cancer Institute NSW recommended a combination of built and tree shade in every playground, covering at least 70% of the play equipment and nearby seating, including 45% of tree shade, to reduce children and caregivers' overexposure to UV radiation. No minimum requirement of this kind exists in the ACT.

Your petitioners, therefore, calls on the ACT Government to establish evidence-based minimum shade standards for playgrounds, incorporating both built and tree shading, and develop a plan for progressively meeting these standards at existing and new playgrounds across the ACT.

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

Page—footpaths and streetlighting—petition 72-26

By Ms Clay, from 25 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to pedestrian accessibility along the Northern end of Chewings St, Page, from the bus stop on Southern Cross Drive and down along the Eastern side to the community oval.

A formalised footpath would significantly improve access to the community oval,

public transport, and other pre-existing paths, supporting students and local clubs in using this important space, while also providing a safer and more accessible route for those who regularly use this corridor, including those with varying mobility needs.

Although there are accessible ramps along this area, these lead to uneven scrub and are difficult for the public to access. There are both older Canberrans and people living with disability who must navigate the dirt track etched out from constant use along this path, and it is not safe to expect the public to navigate this every single day.

Parts of the stretch are slippery or uneven, and snakes have been sighted there too. While a footpath exists to the east of the bus stop, running through parkland, this is completely unlit at night and hilly, which can be dangerous for people with mobility needs.

This issue was raised with Fix My Street back in September 2024 and at time of submission, no action has been taken.

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

1. install a footpath along the corner of Southern Cross Drive and Chewings St, such that it intersects with the bus stop on the south side of Southern Cross Drive and extends east and then south along Chewings St to the community oval; and
2. install lighting along the existing footpath east of the bus stop, running through parkland, to improve safety and accessibility for pedestrians using this route at night.

Lyons—shops and playground—facilities—petitions 27-26 and 83-26

By Dr Paterson, from 397 and 261 residents, respectively:

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

1. We acknowledge the importance of the Lyons Shops precinct and adjoining playground as a vibrant community hub in Lyons. It is a place where families gather, children play, older residents meet, and local businesses thrive.
2. The playground and shopping area attract significant daily foot traffic, including young families, elderly residents, people with disabilities, and visitors from surrounding suburbs.
3. Despite the popularity and regular use of this precinct, there are currently no accessible public toilet facilities available to support the needs of the community.
4. The absence of toilets creates significant inconvenience and, at times, distress for families with young children, older Canberrans, and those with medical conditions who require urgent access to amenities.
5. Local businesses, report frequent requests from members of the public seeking toilet access. Unfortunately, as there are no public facilities available, many people are turned away, leaving them without a dignified solution.
6. Access to clean, safe and accessible public toilets is not a luxury – it is a matter

of dignity, public health, accessibility and basic community infrastructure.

7. The success of recently delivered toilet facilities at other high-use playgrounds across Canberra demonstrates that providing amenities where communities gather significantly improves the experience, safety and usability of these spaces.

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

1. Assess the need for public toilet facilities at the Lyons Shops and playground precinct; and
2. Commit to the design, funding and installation of accessible public toilets at this location to ensure the dignity, safety and comfort of all community members.

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

This petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention of the Assembly that:

1. We acknowledge the importance of the Lyons Shops precinct and adjoining playground as a vibrant community hub in Lyons. It is a place where families gather, children play, older residents meet, and local businesses thrive.
2. The playground and shopping area attract significant daily foot traffic, including young families, elderly residents, people with disabilities, and visitors from surrounding suburbs.
3. Despite the popularity and regular use of this precinct, there are currently no accessible public toilet facilities available to support the needs of the community.
4. The absence of toilets creates significant inconvenience and, at times, distress for families with young children, older Canberrans, and those with medical conditions who require urgent access to amenities.
5. Local businesses, report frequent requests from members of the public seeking toilet access. Unfortunately, as there are no public facilities available, many people are turned away, leaving them without a dignified solution.
6. Access to clean, safe and accessible public toilets is not a luxury — it is a matter of dignity, public health, accessibility and basic community infrastructure.
7. The success of recently delivered toilet facilities at other high-use playgrounds across Canberra demonstrates that providing amenities where communities gather significantly improves the experience, safety and usability of these spaces.

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly to:

1. Assess the need for public toilet facilities at the Lyons Shops and playground precinct; and
2. Commit to the design, funding and installation of accessible public toilets at this location to ensure the dignity, safety and comfort of all community members.

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

Housing—Unit Titles (Management) Act—petition 74-26

By Mr Emerson, from 763 residents:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to the need to change the Unit Titles Management Act to give Executive Committees in mixed use apartment developments the oversight of applications from commercial owners or commercial tenants to ensure the business being conducted is legal, and does not significantly increase insurance premiums, excess or impact the insurability of the complex.

Mixed use apartments have been set up in Canberra with no legislation to protect residential owners from illegal businesses setting up in commercial units. Residential owners have been affected recently by the setting up of tobacconists in their commercial spaces. These tobacconists and/or gift shops are selling illegal cigarettes and vapes. It has been evident that these tobacconists selling illegal tobacco and vapes have links to organised crime. Executive Committees representing the Owners Corporation currently have uncertain legal power to stop these tobacconists moving into their commercial spaces.

This brings with it all the dangers we have seen such as ram raids and fire bombings of these premises. Insurance companies are advising Executive Committees that they should not allow these businesses into the building, but there is no legislative basis in the UTMA for Executive Committees to deny entry of a tobacconist into their building. The Executive Committee has a responsibility to let their insurance company know when a tobacconist moves into their building and this has resulted in large increases in insurance premiums and huge excess provisions being applied to insurance policies.

This change to the UTMA complements the federal Government's initiatives to reduce smoking, particularly the section market/supply that focusses on initiatives aimed at reducing commercial outlets for cigarettes.

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_departments/Parliamentary_Library/Research/Issues_and_Insights/2026/TobaccoControl

Your petitioners, therefore request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to consider appropriate legislative changes to :

- a) ensure any business seeking to become a tenant in a mixed-use complex is operating legally under federal and Territory laws; and
- b) ensure that the insurability of the complex is not impacted by business operations, and any premium increases or other costs do not unfairly burden other owners.

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petition, having at least 500 signatories, was referred to the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs.

Planning—Belconnen green waste facility—petitions 71-26 and 85-26

By **Mr Cain**, from 517 and 7 residents, respectively:

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

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly that: The ACT Government is proposing to relocate the Parkwood Road green waste facility in West Belconnen to Stockdill Drive to enable the Ginninderry development to expand in the Parkwood vicinity. The ACT government has failed to identify a suitable site for the proposed green waste facility to date, resulting in significant delays to the project and uncertainty for the community.

The proposed permanent location for the green waste facility raises significant questions regarding environmental impacts, traffic, amenity, bushfire risk, odour, dust, noise, surrounding land uses, and long-term strategic planning for North Canberra. Some residents believe the decision has not adequately considered community impacts or needs and has been made on the basis of a site identification process that was too narrow in scope and did not adequately consider all reasonable alternative locations.

Community confidence in the planning process has been undermined by the absence of a transparent, evidence-based assessment demonstrating why Stockdill Drive is the most suitable location when compared with all feasible alternatives. The ACT community deserves planning decisions that are transparent, evidence-based and informed by meaningful community consultation and deserves to know why other available sites are less suitable.

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

1. Delay any decision to permanently relocate the Green Waste Facility to Stockdill Drive until a comprehensive review of all potential sites including on former CSIRO land acquired by the ACT government and sites near Hall, has been completed and made publicly available, including assessment of environmental, social, economic, transport, bushfire, planning and community impacts for each potential site.
2. Publish all supporting technical studies, assumptions, assessment criteria and decision-making documents before selecting a preferred site.
3. Undertake genuine community consultation on the shortlisted options before any planning or Territory Plan amendment proceeds.
4. Undertake an independent community needs analysis to identify the current and future green waste collection and processing needs of Belconnen and the wider ACT to inform future green waste management decisions.
5. Select a final location for a new green waste facility in North Canberra that represents the best outcome for the ACT as a whole, balancing operational requirements, environmental protection, community wellbeing and long-term strategic planning. By signing this petition, we ask the ACT Legislative Assembly to ensure that the permanent location of a Green Waste Facility to serve the Belconnen and North Canberra community is determined through an open, transparent and evidence-based process that earns the confidence of the ACT community.

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 referred to the appropriate ministers for response pursuant to standing order 100, the petitions were received.

Ministerial responses

The following responses to petitions have been lodged:

Planning—Griffith—petitions 26-26, 29-26 and 50-26

By **Ms Stephen-Smith**, Minister for Health, dated 12 June 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Ms Lee on 18 March 2026 and 27 May 2026 concerning the proposed Inner South Health Centre.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letters concerning petitions E-PET-026-26, E-PET-029-26 and PET-029-26, lodged by Ms Elizabeth Lee MLA, regarding the Inner South Health Centre.

The Inner South Health Centre is in the planning and design phase, and the size and layout of the facility have not yet been finalised. The centre is proposed to be located on Blocks 33, 34 and 39, Section 78 Griffith, with the relevant Major Plan Amendment having been supported by the Legislative Assembly. The internal layout and clinic spaces are being designed to be flexible and adaptable so they can meet changing health needs in the community over time.

The selection of the site has been guided by comprehensive feasibility studies and detailed project risk assessments to ensure it is suitable, safe and sustainable for the long term. A range of potential locations across Deakin, Fyshwick and Griffith were identified and assessed before the current site was chosen, allowing for a balanced consideration of access, service need and local context. Early engagement with stakeholders played an important role in this process, including a site tour undertaken with the Griffith Narrabundah Community Association to understand local perspectives and considerations.

Following the identification of a preferred site, broader community consultation was undertaken between 1 July and 12 August 2024, focusing on community priorities for health services, specific considerations relating to the site and its surrounding area, and the key factors that should inform the design of the new health centre to ensure it responds appropriately to community needs.

The clinical services profile for the Inner South Health Centre has been shaped by extensive community consultation and a focus on delivering services the community identified as most important. During the consultation in 2024, feedback was gathered through community pop-up sessions, an online YourSay survey and direct submissions. Throughout this process, the community was advised that the Inner South Health Centre would operate as an appointment-only facility within standard business hours. The resulting service scope reflects this feedback, with strong demand identified for medical services and chronic disease

programs, women's health, public dental services and pathology. These services will all be delivered from the Inner South Health Centre.

This service model will enable the Inner South Health Centre to provide a comprehensive range of general and specialist services for people of all ages, supported by infrastructure capable of meeting both current and future demand. It also ensures the service delivery models and clinical services complement existing community health centres, nurse-led Walk-in Centres and the Territory's hospital system, including through access to new virtual care capabilities. In doing so, the Inner South Health Centre is positioned to strengthen local access to essential health care now and into the future.

The Inner South Health Centre was declared a Territory Priority Project because it delivers significant community benefits by improving access to local, affordable healthcare and supports the ACT Government's commitment to care closer to home. The declaration also helps ensure the project can be delivered by providing greater certainty in the planning process. Importantly, the decision followed public consultation in late 2025, where community feedback was considered. The TPP does not remove opportunities for ongoing community input in the design and development of the project. The project must still go through the development application process, which will be publicly notified and allow further submissions as part of an independent assessment.

The ACT Government remains committed to investing in health infrastructure across Canberra to provide the best local care for the community. Throughout 2026 Infrastructure Canberra will continue working closely with residents, local businesses and other stakeholders to keep them informed and involved as this project moves forward. The next phase of consultation, expected later this year, will lead to submission of the Development Application and will provide the community with an important opportunity to review and comment on the proposed detailed designs for the centre.

Hawker—tennis centre—petitions 8-26 and 30-26

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, dated 15 June 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Mr Cain on 25 March 2026 concerning Hawker Tennis Centre.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter dated 25 March 2026 about Petitions E-PET-008-26 and PET-030-26, lodged by Mr Peter Cain MLA.

The Government notes the matters raised in the petitions in relation to the use of the former Hawker Tennis Court site at Block 9, Section 3, Hawker.

I can provide some background information to you in relation to this particular site. As a result of complaints from the community an investigation was undertaken by the independent regulator, Access Canberra, resulting in a Show Cause Notice to make a Controlled Activity Order issued to the lessee(s) on 23 February 2026.

- i. The Show Cause Notice related to the following controlled activities under Schedule 4 of the *Planning Act 2023*:
 - (A) Schedule 4, Item 10 of the Act failing to use land for a period of more than 1 year for its intended purpose for which the lease over the land is granted (tennis purpose as per Clause 3(c) of the crown lease).
 - (B) The block has not been used as its purpose as outlined in clause 3 (c) “To use the premises only for the purpose of a tennis centre, the sale and hire of tennis equipment and subsidiary there to a single unit private dwelling house”.

The investigation also determined that there were multiple Development Approvals issued over the site that had subsequently expired. A Development Approval (DA) 201629661 for lease variation failed to satisfy the Notice of Decision (NOD) condition dated 14 December 2016 and a second DA 201834626 for childcare built (conditional approval) dated 4 August 2020. Extension of the time to complete the construction approval was until 1 September 2024.

Notwithstanding the above, the Crown lease for the site requires the lessee to maintain, repair and keep in repair the premises to the satisfaction of the Authority, and permits the Authority to enter the premises and undertake necessary repairs and recover costs from the lessee. Carrying out maintenance or proposing future developments including for additional facilities in accordance with the legislative processes are matters for the lessee. They also may choose to sell the lease.

Access Canberra has been in communication with the lessees who have advised:

- i. They are proceeding with a further DA lodgement
- ii. That fencing has been installed around the surrounding perimeter of the block. Access Canberra has also been advised that the lessee has engaged a contractor who is undertaking regular inspection and site maintenance to ensure the block remains in good condition until the DA is considered.
- iii. This follows from the Public Land Use Compliance team’s installation of cameras over February/March 2026. The camera operation in this area has concluded with one infringement notice issued and two other cases under investigation.

Pursuant to Schedule 4 (10) of the *Planning Act 2023*, failing to use land for a continuous period of at least one year for the purpose for which the lease over the land is granted is a controlled activity. As such, the owners are subject to a range of compliance and enforcement actions in relation to the use provisions of the lease. As outlined above Delegates of the Planning and Land Authority (Authority) have issued a Show Cause Notice on this site in attempts to achieve compliance.

A decision has not been made in relation to this Notice at this time. Any regulatory action needs to consider a range of factors, must include the response of the owners to the Notice, and will also consider the work that is being undertaken to maintain the site and the stated intent of the owners to submit a DA. As this is an ongoing matter, no further information can be provided at this stage.

Given the block is privately leased, the lessee could apply to add any additional assessable uses to the Crown lease, if the use is consistent with the existing zoning

policy. A DA would be required for a lease variation to add any additional uses to a Crown lease.

A DA is assessed, independently, by the Authority against the requirements of the Territory Plan and Planning Act 2023. In particular, any future development proposals would need to be assessed against specific policy outcomes for the PRZ2: Restricted Access Recreation Zone, which includes accommodating facilities that meet the recreational needs and demands of the community, and provide for a range of sport and recreation facilities and users, whether in public or private ownership. Consequently, the Authority will consider all applications against the planning legislation including, where mandated, to consult with surrounding lessees and community stakeholders.

It should be noted that the current leasing and planning system encourages an efficient and continual use of a site. The ACT Government will guide lessees through any required government processes and assist, where appropriate.

The Government has no intention to rezone the land away from PRZ2: Restricted Access Recreation Zone.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

South Canberra Veterans Shed—petitions 52-25 and 28-26

By **Ms Orr**, Minister for Minister for Seniors and Veterans, dated 16 June 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Ms Tough on 17 March 2026 concerning the South Canberra Veterans Shed facility.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 17 March 2026 regarding petitions E-PET-052-25 and PET-028-26 lodged by Caitlin Tough, MLA. The petitions call on the ACT Government to urgently support the South Canberra Veterans Shed by providing a permanent, affordable, and fit-for-purpose facility to ensure the organisation can continue its vital work supporting veterans, first responders, and their families.

The ACT Government is committed to improving wellbeing outcomes for the significant veteran community living in the ACT. Veterans and their families are recognised as equally important, and this commitment extends to supporting families alongside those who have served.

As highlighted by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, those who serve or have served in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) face higher mental ill health and suicide risks. Analysis by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shows that for the period between 2017 and 2023 (the most recent period for which data is available), the rate of suicide among ex-serving males was 25% higher compared with the broader Australian population, and 98% higher among ex-serving females. Regarding trauma and burnout among first responders, various studies both globally and in Australia have shown that first responders experience higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder than the general population.

The ACT Government works closely with the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council for Veterans and their Families, local veteran stakeholders, the Commonwealth and jurisdictional partners to support reform efforts and collaborate to respond to key recommendations of the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, to improve both local and national health and wellbeing outcomes for veterans and their families.

The ACT Government supports veterans, first responders, and their families through a combination of mainstream and cohort specific programs, services, and initiatives that promote health, mental health, and wellbeing. The ACT Government recognises the importance of a whole of community approach to improving outcomes for veterans, first responders, and their families and, accordingly, supports access to a broad range of government and non-government services and supports.

For those accessing health services, Canberra Health Services (CHS) offers a range of health services for the ACT community including veterans, first responders and their families, which include mental health care, transition medicals and support for life-threatening emergencies. The Veterans Liaison Service at CHS provides support for veterans and their families (including war widows/widowers) during their stay at Canberra Hospital, North Canberra Hospital, and the University of Canberra Hospital. The role of the Veteran Liaison Officer is to ensure veterans receive respectful, informed, and coordinated care tailored to their specific needs.

In 2025-26, the Health and Community Services Directorate will work alongside key partners to investigate options to tackle loneliness by supporting activities that build human connection. It has also engaged Monash University to undertake economic modelling of mental health promotion and prevention activities which could be appropriate for the ACT. This project, for which the final report is due in June 2026, will include modelling of social prescribing initiatives for adults (18-64 years of age).

The ACT Government is cognisant of the impacts service can have on veterans and their families and continues to support the roll out of the of the Australian Government funded Veterans' and Families' Hub Network, which includes a Hub located in Queanbeyan, led by RSL LifeCare. The ACT Government continues to engage with RSL LifeCare on extending these services into the ACT, to seek to ensure the needs of veterans and their families continue to be reflected in service delivery.

In line with the election commitment to provide the ACT veteran community with a place to come together and connect close to where they live, the ACT Government continues to review current offerings in services and facilities, as well as opportunities presented following the opening of the Queanbeyan Veteran and Family Hub and ACT satellite site, to inform the scope and requirements of a possible ACT facility in the future.

In acknowledgement of the needs of police, fire, ambulance, and emergency services personnel who reside in the ACT community, the ACT Government provides wellbeing and support programs and initiatives to ESA staff and volunteers including onsite wellbeing support, peer support and chaplaincy support programs. The ESA also participates in the ADF Arts for Recovery, Resilience, Teamwork and Skills program, an engaging 4-week residential program to build confidence and resilience in people who are experiencing health

and wellbeing challenges related to service in the ADF, ACT Emergency Services and the Australian Federal Police. Current and former ACT Policing personnel and their families are able to access support through a range of internal and external service providers and programs.

The ACT Government through Infrastructure Canberra has engaged with South Canberra Veterans Shed regarding potential alternative accommodation solutions and have supported a leasing application which outlines their full set of property requirements. There are very few available Government properties for lease and in consideration of the criteria outlined by South Canberra Veterans Shed there is not an immediately available option.

The ACT Government welcomes further information from the South Canberra Veterans Shed to support consideration of this matter in accordance with established ACT Government infrastructure policy and processes. Any proposal to allocate an existing permanent, fit for purpose facility for the South Canberra Veterans Shed would be assessed in accordance with the Community and Other Tenancies – Application and Allocation Policy. Any proposal regarding the acquisition of land from the Territory and/or grant funding to support the construction of a new building would be subject to a separate consideration by Government.

The ACT Government is also happy to work with South Canberra Veterans Shed should they wish to pursue a direct sale of land. The Government may consider the direct sale of land in certain circumstances, and this includes where:

- the proposed use of land meets one or more of the grant objectives as set out in the [Planning Act 2023](#) or eligibility criteria in the [Planning \(General\) Regulation 2023](#); and,
- an acceptable business case is provided

When a direct sale application is received, the Government first determines if it wants to sell the land, and then determines if selling the land directly to the applicant is the appropriate way to sell the land.

Alternatively, the City and Environment Directorate (CED) has commenced the 2025-26 Request for Expression of Interest, (REOI) first stage of a two-stage sales process for Block 1 Section 228 Gowrie – which is adjacent to the South Canberra Veterans' Shed. This stage is open from 30 April 2026 closing 2.00 pm AEST 2 July 2026.

Not for profit community organisations can respond to the REOI through Tenders ACT (<https://www.tenders.act.gov.au/tender/quickSearch?quickSearchKeywords=community%2Bfacility%2Bland>).

Subject to the outcomes of the sales process, future uses for the site will be required to be consistent with the ACT's statutory planning document, the [Territory Plan](#). As the site is close to the Gowrie Primary School, other further restrictions on the type of uses for the site have been listed within the REOI documentation. Future developments for the site could include a community activity centre, cultural facility or an indoor recreation facility. For general enquiries about the Community Land Sales Program, the public can email CommunityLandSales@act.gov.au. Information is also available at <https://www.planning.act.gov.au/professionals/land-release-sales/for->

[community-use](#).

For specific information about the current REOI, enquiries can be emailed to Procurement ACT at tendersACT@act.gov.au. The Supplementary Guide for the 2025-26 REOI is attached to provide guidance on the type of information that would be required for a response to the REOI.

Thank you for bringing this matter to the attention of the Assembly.

Narrabundah baseball fields—safety—petition 12-26

By **Ms Berry**, Minister for Sport and Recreation, dated 19 June 2026, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Lee on 17 March 2026 concerning the Narrabundah Baseball Fields condition.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter regarding E-PET-012-26 regarding the adequacy of lighting at the Narrabundah District Playing Fields, lodged by Ms Elizabeth Lee MLA.

The ACT Government continues to manage and maintain public sporting infrastructure to ensure that facilities are safe, functional, and compliant with relevant standards, while balancing operational requirements, energy efficiency, and community demand across the Territory.

The Narrabundah District Playing Fields lighting system has two operational settings — one for training and one for match play. The system was designed specifically to meet the specialist requirements of baseball lighting.

The training lighting setting provides a lower light output than the match play setting; however, it remains compliant with the relevant lighting standards for baseball, including Australian Standard AS 2560.2.

The City and Environment Directorate (CED) has undertaken onsite lighting inspections and light level testing across both the infield and outfield areas, consistent with the assessment approach required for baseball facilities. As a result of this testing, a specialist lighting contractor is engaged to realign lighting infrastructure, clean all light lenses, and replace any failed globes to ensure optimal performance of the system.

During the period, prior to the completion of these works, CED have advised that they will temporarily set baseball bookings at Narrabundah 1 to the match play lighting level to support training activities. Once work is completed, the lighting system will revert to the standard training setting, consistent with the design intent and operational practice.

Thank you again for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Firearms regulations—petition 2-26

By **Dr Paterson**, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, dated 19 June 2026, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Milligan on 26 March 2026 concerning firearms reform.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter about Petition E-PET-002-26 'Firearms Reform - Evidence Based Policy and Proper Consultation' (the Petition), petitioned by Ms Nicole Small and sponsored by Mr James Milligan MLA.

The Petition requests that the Assembly call on the ACT Government to defer the introduction of any major firearms legislative reforms, commit to an evidence-based policy process, undertake genuine and reasonable consultation with affected stakeholders, ensure that any reform measures are proportionate . and publish a Regulatory Impact Statement for any proposed reforms.

On 11 February 2026, the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs (the Committee) commenced an Inquiry into Legislation on Proposed Firearms Reform (the Inquiry). The terms of reference of the Inquiry included consideration of the Petition, as well as the Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026 and the Firearms (Firearm Prohibition Orders) Amendment Bill 2026.

To address these terms of reference, the Government Submission to the Inquiry included a response to the Petition and provided further information about the context, evidence base and consultation undertaken in respect of the Bills. The Government Submission, including the response to the Petition, was agreed by Cabinet on 8 April 2026 and submitted to the Inquiry.

The response to the Petition within the Government Submission constitutes my substantive response to the Petition pursuant to Standing Order 100. Please find enclosed a copy of the Government Submission for your consideration.

The Committee's report on the Inquiry was tabled in the Assembly on 26 May 2026, which contained 11 recommendations for the ACT Government. In accordance with Standing Order 254B, a Government response to the Inquiry will be tabled within four months of presentation of the report. I have tasked the Justice and Community Safety Directorate to consider the report and the Committee's recommendations, which will inform any further work on the matters raised in the Petition.

We acknowledge the Petition and thank the signatories for their interest in this matter.

Kaleen Indoor Sports Facility—closure—petitions 84-25 and 31-26

By **Ms Berry**, Minister for Sport and Recreation, dated 25 June 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Mr Braddock on 25 March 2026 concerning the closure of the Kaleen Indoor Sports Centre.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter about the petition No. E-PET-084-25 and PET-031-26, lodged by Mr Andrew Braddock MLA, in regard to the closure of the Kaleen Indoor Sports Centre.

I know how important it is to have high quality sport and recreation facilities close to home. The Kaleen Indoor Sports Centre has been a well-loved facility, and I was disappointed to hear that the private owner intends to close it.

I want to reassure the community that the Territory Plan requires any redevelopment on that site to include a community-accessible indoor recreation facility with a minimum gross floor area of 1,400m². The requirement for the 1,400m² indoor recreation facility as (as per page 23 of the Belconnen District Policy) does not include a fitness centre (i.e. gym/gymnasium, yoga/Pilates/CrossFit venue).

- ii. The ACT Government is aware the proponent (Bloc) for the redevelopment of the site in Kaleen lodged a Development Application ([Development Application no. 202443501 - City and Environment Directorate - Planning](#)) in July 2025. The initial proposal included residential buildings and a four-court squash facility. While under assessment it was noted the gross floor area of the squash facility was below the 1,400m² mandatory requirement detailed in the Territory Plan.

In April this year, Bloc submitted a s168 Amendment – proposed amendment prior to decision for its Development Application. This updated proposal includes three indoor pickleball courts on the basement level, underneath the squash courts.

The independent Territory Planning Authority is currently assessing the Development Application and s168 Amendment with a decision to be made in due course.

Several other existing major indoor sport facilities are also located in relatively close proximity to Kaleen, including the Belconnen Basketball Stadium, the ACT Netball Centre, National Tennis Centre, National Hockey Centre, Australian Institute of Sport, ANU and the University of Canberra.

- iii. However, the government does recognise the need for more indoor sport facilities, which is reflected in the [ACT Infrastructure Plan Update – Entertainment, Arts & Sports](#). Delivering on this includes the ACT Government’s recent announcement of the expansion of the Belconnen Basketball Stadium, boosting court capacity and access for training and competition through a major upgrade. This \$37.5 million investment will increase the number of indoor courts from four to seven, including a convertible show court with retractable seating. Other key features include additional change rooms and toilet facilities for players, officials, and spectators, increased parking and installation of solar panels and batteries.

In relation to compensation for business owners affected by the closure of the Kaleen Indoor Sports Centre, the block is privately leased, and responsibility for determining future tenants of the existing building—or any lawfully approved and constructed redevelopment—rests with the lessee. Accordingly, any consideration

of compensation is a private matter between the current tenant and the lessee.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to sign the petition, I appreciate the significance of this important facility to the community. I look forward to working with the community on opportunities to support sport participation.

Isabella Plains—roads—petition 64-25

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 21 July 2026, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Tough on 5 May 2026 concerning traffic lights at the corner of Drakeford Drive and Noorooma Street, Isabella Plains.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

Thank you for your letter regarding the petition (E-PET-064-25) submitted by residents concerning ‘Installation of Traffic Lights at the Intersection of Drakeford Drive and Noorooma Street, Isabella Plains’.

I acknowledge the concerns raised by residents about safety at this intersection and appreciate the community taking the time to share their experiences and views. The ACT Government takes road safety and neighbourhood amenity seriously and recognises the importance of ensuring our road network is as safe as possible for all users.

The Noorooma Street/Drakeford Drive intersection is a conventional wide-median, give-way controlled intersection with dedicated right-turn lanes and auxiliary lanes on the exits from Drakeford Drive. This design has been used extensively across the ACT and in other Australian jurisdictions.

The intersection is located approximately 80 metres south of a floodway underpass and around 200 metres south of the Drakeford Drive/Barr Smith Avenue intersection. Both the Noorooma Street and Barr Smith Avenue intersections have similar designs, perform similar functions and exhibit comparable crash patterns. As a result, any future upgrades or significant safety improvements would need to consider both intersections together.

Recognising the safety concerns associated with these sites, Roads ACT commissioned a Black Spot study in 2013–14 to investigate crashes at both intersections. The study examined crash data and site conditions to better understand the contributing factors and identify potential safety treatments.

Signalisation of the intersections along with proposals to install a roundabout were considered as part of the study. However, it was found that neither option achieved a cost Benefit Ratio (CBR) that would make it eligible for Commonwealth Blackspot funding.

Following the study, a number of lower-cost measures were implemented that concentrated on improving signage and line marking as well as reinforcing priority for vehicles crossing the median.

A total of 30 crashes have been reported at the Noorooma Street/ Drakeford Drive intersection between 2018 and June 2026. These included 1 fatality, 3 crashes

resulting in injury requiring hospital treatment and 26 resulting in property damage only. The majority of the crashes involved vehicles turning right.

During the same time period a total of 12 crashes occurred at the Barr Smith Avenue / Drakeford Drive intersection. This included 3 crashes resulting in injury requiring hospital treatment and 9 crashes involving damage only. Again, the majority of the crashes involved vehicles turning right.

Given the nature of concerns at this site, the crash history and the upward trend on the intersection safety ranking list, Roads ACT have informed me they will undertake further analysis to see if potential treatment options qualify for the next round of Commonwealth Blackspot funding. This study will be completed in FY2026/27.

Thank you for raising this matter. I appreciate the ongoing advocacy of local residents and the interest shown in improving safety at this location.

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

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, dated 21 July 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Ms Carrick on 28 May 2026 concerning the Curtin Presbytery development.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

I refer to the letter of 28 May 2026 from the former Clerk, Mr Tom Duncan about petition No. E-PET-038-26 and PET 052-26, lodged by Ms Fiona Carrick MLA, about the Curtin Presbytery development, Blocks 7 and 8 Section 61 Curtin, and planning requirements relating to community and social housing developments.

The Government notes the matters raised in the petitions in relation to the potential impacts on the adjacent school and operations such as traffic and parking. The following provides information addressing matters raised in the petitions.

Generally, the ACT Government is supportive of providing a variety of housing types that allow for all parts of the community to access affordable housing. The Development Application (DA) for Blocks 7 and 8 Section 61 Curtin is proposing 54 affordable rental homes. Affordable rental housing plays a critical role in supporting low-to-moderate income households who are not eligible for public or social housing but experience housing stress in the private market, consistent with the Government's focus on improving housing access and outcomes across the housing continuum. The ACT Government is committed to delivering much needed affordable housing while balancing the impact on established neighbourhoods and that it addresses community concerns.

In the ACT, development proposals for multi housing developments, such as community or social housing, are considered through the DA process. If a DA is lodged, the application is assessed by the independent Territory Planning Authority (the Authority) in accordance with the *Planning Act 2023* (the Act).

On 26 February 2026, a DA (DA-202644959) was lodged for the demolition of the existing Presbytery church and construction of three adjoined five-storey

buildings consisting of 54 community housing units, lease variation and associated works.

The subject site is located in the *CFZ - Community Facility Zone* and is privately leased to the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church. The existing Crown lease is for the purpose of community use limited to religious associated use (i.e. presbytery).

DA-202644959 is for a significant development and as such, required consultation with the National Capital Design Review Panel. A significant DA requires two stages of public notification. Stage 1 of public notification commenced on 5 March 2026 and concluded on 28 April 2026, where 74 representations were received. During stage 1, the DA was also referred to relevant entities for advice, such as the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), Conservator of Flora and Fauna, ACT Heritage, Icon Water and Evoenergy and other areas of the City and Environment Directorate (CED) that provide advice on strategic planning, traffic and parking.

The Authority provided the representations, entity advice and their assessment comments to the proponent who must respond to the matters raised. The DA is currently still undergoing the statutory assessment process and must continue in accordance with the Act.

Once the proponent has responded, further public notification will occur, providing the community a further opportunity to comment on the DA. Once received, the Authority will consider the application, representations and entity advice in accordance with the Act and the requirements of the Territory Plan.

All proposals in the ACT are subject to legislated planning requirements. In Curtin, higher-density developments must meet the provisions outlined under the Territory Plan and the Act. These developments are assessed independently through the DA process.

The current planning framework was established in 2023 and aims to achieve the best overall planning outcomes for each development. The Territory Plan includes design guides specifically for larger developments such as the development proposed. These guides establish expectations for high-quality design outcomes and aim to mitigate potential environmental, urban, and social impacts.

DAs are assessed against the assessment outcomes and assessment requirements in the relevant Territory Plan Policies. Amongst other things, a development is required to meet all assessment outcomes in order to receive approval. The assessment outcomes set the standard for a development to achieve a good planning outcome. In assessing the assessment outcomes, the Authority will consider the design guides and planning technical specifications to assist with reaching a high standard of development.

The Community Facility Zone Policy includes a range of assessment outcomes to minimise impacts from a development proposal, requiring the development to:

- i. Facilitate social sustainability and inclusion through providing accessible sites for key government and non-government facilities and services for individuals, families and communities.*
- ii. Provide accessible sites for civic life and allow community organisations to meet the needs of the Territory's various forms of community.*

- iii. Protect social and community uses from competition from other uses.*
- iv. Enable the efficient use of land through facilitating the co-location and multi-use of community facilities, generally near public transport routes and convenience services appropriate to the use.*
- v. Encourage adaptable and affordable housing for persons in need of residential support or care.*
- vi. Safeguard the amenity of surrounding residential areas against unacceptable adverse impacts including from traffic, parking, noise or loss of privacy.*
- vii. Promote active living and active travel.*
- viii. Provide safe pedestrian and cycling access to community facilities to promote active living.*

In addition to the Territory Plan, the Act requires a decision-maker to consider potential impacts from the development, including:

- i. Whether the development achieves an appropriate transition between adjoining zones.*
- ii. The suitability of the proposal in the context of the site and surrounding area, including permissible uses.*
- iii. The probable environmental impacts of the development, including their nature, extent and significance.*
- iv. The interaction of the proposed development with adjoining or nearby developments, including those already approved or under assessment.*

The Authority must take these into account when assessing a DA for all developments, as well as the specialist advice from various entities on matters such as environmental impacts, noise, traffic, parking, safety, and construction impacts.

CED has also established the ACT Planning System Evaluation Framework 2024-29 (the framework) to monitor how the planning system is delivering outcomes. The framework will span 5 years to June 2029 with implementation of the framework now underway. This work is essential to establish a strong foundation for monitoring and evaluating planning system outcomes over the next 5 years and beyond. The aims of the evaluation of the planning system, are to:

- establish processes that will help to identify if, and how well, the planning system is achieving desired outcomes
- communicate to stakeholders about how implementation of the planning system is going
- identify challenges, opportunities for improvement, successes and gaps in planning system delivery
- guide future policy changes, decision-making and investment in planning.

In relation to the subject site, the Authority must continue to assess and determine the DA in accordance with the current statutory requirements. It is noted that the Territory Plan currently includes provisions that will guide consideration of the matters mentioned in the petition.

Given the above, it is considered that the concerns raised in the petitions will be addressed through existing measures and processes.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Wombats—bare-nosed wombats—petitions 15-26 and 49-26

By **Ms Orr**, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, dated 22 July 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Ms Clay on 27 May 2026 concerning saving our wombats.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

Thank you for your letter of 27 May 2026 forwarding a copy of E-PET-15-26 and PET-49-26, titled ‘*Save Our Wombats*’. I am writing in response to the petitions in accordance with standing order 100.

I note that the ePetition and Petition calls on the Government to:

1. *rule out the declaration of bare-nosed wombats as a controlled native species and reject any policy promoting the killing of wombats by landholders;*
2. *require all wombat-related policies to adopt non-lethal, evidence-based coexistence strategies and provide leaseholders with the support needed to implement them; and*
3. *ensure that all wombat-related policies uphold the ACT’s legislated recognition that animals are sentient beings with intrinsic value, treated with compassion, and afforded a quality of life consistent with that value.*

Wombats are a protected native animal under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* (the Act). The Government recognises the management of native wildlife must consider both animal welfare and conservation commitments, alongside broader environmental and community interests.

Wombats have an important ecological role in the ACT’s environment and biodiversity. Over the past few years, the ACT Government has worked proactively with ACT Wildlife, Wombat Rescue and the University of Tasmania to improve detection of unhealthy wombats, undertake mange treatment, and to limit impacts of development on burrowing animals, including wombats.

Between early December 2025 and February 2026, the Conservator of Flora and Fauna (the Conservator) undertook targeted consultation on a draft technical report titled *Managing wombats: a review of current practice, issues and challenges*. The draft technical report has been prepared to guide and inform future policy development relating to wombat management in the ACT, including consideration of animal welfare, human–wildlife coexistence, and evidence-based approaches to minimising conflict. The draft technical report will be finalised in due course.

The Conservator will publish a listening report summarising feedback received through the consultation process, reflecting community concerns, scientific evidence, and expectations about the humane treatment of wombats. Once published the listening report will be available on the ACT Government webpage at:

- iv. www.act.gov.au/environment/animals-and-plants/animals/wildlife-management/wombats

The ACT Government supports the Conservator's work to respond to issues relating to wombats in a transparent, evidence-based and considered manner, consistent with the ACT's strong legislative framework for animal welfare and nature conservation. Animal welfare is a foremost consideration in wildlife management. Wombats are only humanely euthanised when very sick with mange or injured to the point where they cannot recover (e.g. through vehicle collision). The euthanasia of very sick or injured wombats is undertaken by trained personnel in accordance with the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*, the *Firearms Act 1996* and relevant standard operating procedures.

The declaration of a controlled native species by myself, as the Minister, and the subsequent development of a controlled native species management plan by the Conservator, are formal statutory processes under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*. It is therefore not appropriate to speculate on or predetermine statutory decisions. However, the Conservator has confirmed that there is no current intention to recommend that wombats be declared a controlled native species under the Act. Accordingly, there is no proposal or timeframe to develop a Controlled Native Species Management Plan for wombats.

To date, the Conservator has not approved any lethal control of wombats for land management purposes. The Conservator has also confirmed that any future policy development relating to wombats will prioritise non-lethal management approaches as the preferred means of addressing human–wombat interactions. As such, the formulation of guidelines or similar to support land holders to undertake non-lethal management is currently being considered as part of the finalisation of the review.

Light rail—stage 2B—Mawson—petitions 81-25 and 42-26

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Transport, dated 27 July 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Mr Braddock on 6 May 2026 concerning the consideration of Light Rail Stage 2B extension to Mawson.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

Thank you for your letter regarding petition E-PET-081-25 and PET-042-26, lodged by Mr Andrew Braddock, concerning the request to extend Light Rail (Stage 2B) to Mawson.

The ACT Government is committed to delivering a staged expansion of Canberra's light rail network. Extending the network beyond Woden to Mawson has the potential to deliver a range of benefits, including enhanced access and connectivity for the Woden Valley and southern Canberra, reduced reliance on private vehicles, and enhanced economic activity.

At this stage, the Government's priority remains progressing Stage 2B from Commonwealth Park to Woden. This is a complex infrastructure project subject to both Commonwealth and Territory environmental and planning approvals. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Stage 2B reflects the alignment from Commonwealth Park to Woden, and does not include an extension to Mawson.

An extension to Mawson is consistent with long term planning for a broader light rail network, including potential future connections further south to Tuggeranong. However, such an extension is contingent on Stage 2B being either underway or operational. Subject to a favourable determination of the Final EIS, any conditions attached to the environmental approval(s) will inform the sequencing, scope and timing of future stages.

Consistent with Government commitments, the viability, costs and benefits of extending light rail to Mawson (including the necessary steps required to facilitate design, approvals and delivery) will be considered as part of the broader Stage 2B business case process.

The ACT Government will continue strategic long-term planning for the future light rail network to support Canberra's growth as part of an integrated, multimodal transport network, and to meet the needs of our growing and diverse community.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Health—pelvic pain treatments—petition 79-25

By **Ms Stephen-Smith**, Minister for Health, dated 28 July 2026, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Tough on 5 May 2026 concerning pelvic pain treatments.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

Government Response to E-PET-079-25 - Vital pelvic pain treatment option discontinued in the ACT public health system.

Thank you for your letter regarding petition E-PET-079-25, lodged by Ms Caitlin Tough MLA, which calls on the ACT Government to reinstate pelvic Botulinum Toxin injections (“pelvic Botox”) as a treatment option for endometriosis and pelvic pain in the ACT public health system.

I acknowledge the significant impact that endometriosis and chronic pelvic pain can have on the health, wellbeing and quality of life of those affected. I also recognise the importance of ensuring women experiencing these conditions have access to safe, evidence-based and equitable care.

Botox is no longer used at North Canberra Hospital (NCH) and was not used at the Canberra Hospital, either as a stand-alone treatment or as part of a broader procedure for pelvic pain. Pelvic Botox was provided in a limited number of cases at NCH and was discontinued in late 2024 following a formal clinical review of the available evidence and treatment outcomes.

This issue was considered through a formal review at NCH. A formal Formulary Submission was requested from the specialist, which was reviewed alongside the available evidence. The review considered the available published evidence, including systematic reviews and meta-analyses examining the use of pelvic Botox for myofascial pelvic pain syndrome. While these reviews identified some evidence supporting the use of pelvic Botox, the overall quality of the evidence was mixed, and the conclusions emphasised the need for further high-quality studies before firm recommendations could be made.

Since this review was conducted in 2024, the evidence to date for the use of pelvic Botox remains consistent with the findings, and further high-quality research is required to better establish the efficacy, safety and cost-effectiveness of this treatment. Canberra Health Services (CHS) will continue to monitor emerging evidence and remains open to considering participation in future research, clinical trials and treatment innovations where supported by robust evidence.

In addition, the current Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (RANZCOG) Australian Living Evidence Guideline for Endometriosis does not include any reference to the use of pelvic Botox as a treatment option for endometriosis-related pelvic pain.

CHS remains committed to supporting those with endometriosis and pelvic pain. CHS has a centre for women experiencing endometriosis-related symptoms and introduced the Endometriosis Pelvic Pain pathway in July 2025. This pathway incorporates interdisciplinary workshops and early screening processes that support conservative, evidence-based management. These workshops include comprehensive assessment and collaborative decision-making to ensure each woman is directed to the service most appropriate for their symptoms. Since implementation, the pathway has improved access to coordinated multidisciplinary care, strengthened triage processes and supported earlier access to evidence-based treatment options for women experiencing endometriosis-related symptoms.

In relation to a broader women's health strategy to address menstrual, menopausal and reproductive health, the Commonwealth Government has announced a series of initiatives aimed at addressing these important women's health issues. The ACT Government Health and Community Services Directorate is currently considering how best to approach the development of an ACT Women's Health Strategy to address menstrual menopausal and reproductive health in this context.

The Health and Community Services Directorate and CHS will continue to support workforce training to improve the identification, assessment and management of conditions that predominantly affect women, including pelvic pain, ovarian cysts and endometriosis.

Endometriosis and chronic pelvic pain can have a significant impact on quality of life. The ACT Government remains committed to supporting women through evidence-based, multidisciplinary care and will continue to monitor emerging evidence to ensure services reflect contemporary best practice and meet the needs of the community.

Public schools—career guidance—petitions 78-25 and 41-26

By **Ms Stephen-Smith**, Minister for Education, dated 4 August 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Miss Nuttall on 5 May 2026 concerning career guidance for years 7 to 10 students.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

Thank you for your letter dated 5 May 2026 regarding petition E-PET-078-26 and

PET-41-26 – ‘Make career education a right for every ACT Year 7-10 public school student’.

The ACT Government acknowledges that qualified careers advisers (practitioners) play an important role in supporting students to make informed decisions about their future education and employment pathways. Their specialised expertise is valuable in guiding students through key transitions and providing targeted career development support. However, effective career education relies on a whole-school approach and is not dependent on a single role within a school environment.

The ACT public school system adopts a whole-school approach, with career development embedded across the curriculum, and supported by all teachers. This approach enhances student engagement, strengthens the relevance of learning, and supports more informed and sustained decisions about post-school pathways.

The ACT Government is currently funding dedicated Transition and Careers Officers in nine colleges, one combined school, and two specialist schools. It will also consider careers education as a priority area for teacher scholarships in 2027, to support teachers to undertake further study in this field.

Additional funding for dedicated career education advisors in ACT public schools with Years 7-10 is not currently a priority. However, roles and services of this nature will be considered as part of ongoing work to support the delivery of an effective and equitable public education system in the ACT.

I acknowledge that some members of the community may be disappointed by the decision not to provide additional dedicated funding at this time. However, I trust this information provides assurance that the concerns raised by petitioners have been carefully considered by the ACT Government.

Roads—Hindmarsh Drive and Tyagarah Street—petitions 23-26 and 51-26

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City and Government Services, dated 7 August 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Ms Carrick on 27 May 2026 concerning traffic lights at Tyagarah Street in O’Malley.

The response read as follows:

Dear Clerk

I refer to the letter dated 27 May 2026 from the former Clerk, Tom Duncan, regarding the petition (E-PET-023-26) submitted by residents seeking the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of Tyagarah Street and Hindmarsh Drive, O’Malley. I acknowledge and appreciate the concerns raised by the petitioners.

The ACT Government takes road safety and the amenity of local residents seriously and encourages all road users to play a role in supporting safe travel on our road network.

The intersection of Tyagarah Street and Hindmarsh Drive is a priority-controlled “seagull” type intersection, a treatment commonly used on arterial roads across the ACT and nationally.

Decisions regarding safety upgrades at intersections across the ACT are informed by a range of factors, including safety performance and network-wide priorities. These assessments contribute to a priority list that is reviewed annually. At present, the Tyagarah Street/Hindmarsh Drive intersection is not identified as one of the higher-priority locations for safety upgrades.

I am advised that available crash data indicates that between 2018 and 2025 there were 23 reported crashes at the intersection. Of these, one resulted in an injury, while the remaining incidents involved property damage only

City and Environment Directorate (CED) has previously implemented a number of measures to improve safety at the intersection, including the installation of a yellow “keep clear” marking across Hindmarsh Drive and a stop control on the Tyagarah Street approach

Based on the current safety performance of the intersection and competing network priorities, CED is not currently proposing further upgrades at this location. However, the intersection will continue to be monitored as part of the Directorate's ongoing review of the road network.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Gungahlin United Football Club—petitions 32-26 and 48-26

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Sport and Recreation, dated 19 August 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Mr Cain on 26 May 2026 concerning Gungahlin United Football Club.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

Thank you for your letter of 26 May 2026 about petition E-PET-032-26 and PET-048-26, sponsored by Mr Peter Cain MLA, seeking an Inquiry into the collapse of Gungahlin United Football Club (GUFC).

It was with sadness that I read the announcement of GUFC Executive Committee’s decision to wind up the club. I acknowledge the significant impact this decision has had on participants, volunteers and families. I understand that several clubs have stepped forward to support displaced participants by offering alternative opportunities for participation and development. It is heartening to see the football community come together during this time.

Football in the ACT has the highest rates of participation, involving more than 20,000 participants and generating more than 107,000 hours of sportsground use across the 2024 and 2025 winter seasons. Capital Football is the State Sporting Organisation for football in the ACT and, prior to its cessation, Gungahlin United Football Club (GUFC) was one of its affiliated clubs.

Prior to ceasing, GUFC was the largest football club in the ACT. Despite its size, the club experienced longstanding financial and governance challenges that culminated in significant unpaid debts to Capital Football, the ACT Government and other creditors. Following the issuance of a Final Notice by Capital Football

in September 2025 and the club's subsequent decision to cease operations, members voted to wind up the organisation. The appointed liquidator later reported that GUFC had been trading while insolvent since at least December 2021 and had accrued debts of approximately \$688,000, including around \$180,000 owed to the Territory for sportsground hire.

GUFC was primarily based at Harrison, operating from hired sportsgrounds and associated facilities. Given its proximity to the proposed Home of Football development at Throsby, the club would likely have been a major user of the facility. However, while Capital Football ultimately did not proceed with the project and alternative development of the site has not progressed, this had no bearing on GUFC's financial position or the subsequent decision to wind up the club's operations.

The ACT Government actively engaged with GUFC regarding outstanding sportsground hire debts. Through regular account management processes, financial concerns were identified and communicated to the Club and Capital Football. This included issuing account statements and correspondence, establishing payment arrangements where appropriate, and setting clear expectations regarding payment obligations and timeframes. While seeking to recover outstanding debts, the Government continued to provide GUFC with access to sports facilities to support participation by approximately 2,000 club members. Restricting access to training and competition facilities was not considered a proportionate response while efforts to resolve the Club's outstanding liabilities were ongoing.

State Sporting Organisations are autonomous entities governed by their members and operating in accordance with their constitutions and relevant legislative requirements. As a company established under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth), Capital Football has obligations relating to governance, financial management, reporting, record keeping and director responsibilities. These obligations do not extend to prescribed requirements regarding oversight of affiliated clubs.

The ACT Government's relationship with Capital Football is primarily exercised through sport and recreation funding programs. As part of the ACT sport categorisation process, organisations are assessed against a range of criteria, including governance standards benchmarked to the Australian Sports Commission's Sports Governance Standards. While these assessments consider organisational governance, strategic direction and operational capability, they are not designed to evaluate the adequacy of oversight, compliance or financial monitoring arrangements for affiliated clubs.

The ACT Government does not have a direct role in the operational management of Capital Football, nor does it have the power to compel the organisation to undertake specific governance or operational reviews. However, government funding programs may provide opportunities to encourage continuous improvement in governance and organisational capability.

The circumstances leading to GUFC's collapse have already been subject to independent examination through the formal liquidation process. In the Statutory Report to Creditors released on 6 March 2026, the appointed liquidator concluded that the club had been trading while insolvent from at least 31 December 2021 and identified significant deficiencies in financial management, governance, record keeping and expenditure controls.

The liquidator's investigation was undertaken under established legislative and regulatory frameworks, with powers to access financial records and examine the conduct of the club's affairs. As a result, the principal factors contributing to GUFC's financial failure have already been independently examined and documented.

In light of these findings, the ACT Government does not consider a separate inquiry into GUFC's collapse to be warranted. Such an inquiry would likely duplicate matters already investigated through the liquidation process and would be unlikely to identify material new information beyond that already identified by the liquidator. The available information indicates that the club's failure was primarily associated with longstanding internal financial and governance issues.

Similarly, the ACT Government does not consider that a Territory-led governance review of Capital Football is justified at this time. Capital Football is responsible for its own governance, competition administration and arrangements for oversight of affiliated clubs. While questions may be raised regarding the effectiveness of club monitoring and intervention processes, there is currently no clear basis for government intervention in the organisation's governance arrangements. Matters relating to affiliated club oversight, financial sustainability monitoring and compliance frameworks are more appropriately addressed through Capital Football's existing governance processes. Should the organisation identify opportunities to strengthen these arrangements, improvements may be pursued through its own governance mechanisms and, where appropriate, supported through existing ACT Government funding programs.

The ACT Government remains committed to supporting community sport and ensuring that sporting organisations are well placed to provide safe, sustainable and accessible participation opportunities for Canberrans. I thank everyone who took the time to sign the petition. I am confident that both Capital Football and the ACT Government would be open to supporting any new entity that may seek to establish itself.

Canberra Health Services—staff uniforms—petition 43-26

By **Dr Paterson**, Minister for Health, dated 28 August 2026, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Parton on 11 June 2026 concerning Canberra Health Services—Fun Scrubs.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

Thank you for your correspondence of 11 June 2026 to former Minister for Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA, regarding E-PET-043-26, lodged by Mr Mark Parton MLA, which call on the ACT Government to amend the Canberra Health Services' (CHS) uniform policy. Following the *Administrative Arrangements 2026 (No 1)*, responsibility for this matter has been referred to me in my capacity as Minister for Health.

CHS is aware and supportive of fun scrubs having a place and recognises the therapeutic value they may offer in certain circumstances, and the positive contribution they can make to morale and team culture. At the same time, uniforms help present a professional image and maintain health and safety, infection control,

and security obligations. Nursing and midwifery staff are the only classification of CHS staff supplied with a uniform as part of their enterprise agreement.

There are currently two CHS policies referring to uniforms, *Nursing and Midwives and Assistants in Nursing – Dress Uniform and Personal Appearance Policy* and *Workplace Attire and Appearance Guideline*. The former outlines arrangements regarding a uniform but also allows for deviation from that uniform in line with the CHS Workplace Attire Guideline, while maintaining work health and safety and infection prevention and control obligations for those classifications.

The two existing documents have now been consolidated into the *Team Members Dress and Personal Appearance Policy* which is ready for consultation. A key issue to be managed in the revised policy is the safety value of uniforms, including enabling identification of staff in an emergency and the identification of staff authorised to be in specific areas. In some circumstances, having staff in scrubs that are not identifiable CHS uniform may compromise an aspect of safe functioning in our hospitals.

I thank the petitioners for their interest in this matter and in the wellbeing of the ACT's nurses and midwives, and hope this information is helpful.

Kaleen community hall—petitions 37-26 and 63-26

By **Mr Steel**, Acting Minister for City and Government Services, dated 1 September 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Mr Braddock on 12 June 2026 concerning the condition of the Kaleen Community Hall car park.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

I refer to the letter dated 12 June 2026 from the former Clerk, Tom Duncan regarding petitions (E-PET-037-26 and PET-063-26) submitted by residents about permanently fixing the Kaleen Community Hall carpark in the 2026/27 ACT Budget. I am responding as the acting Minister for City and Government Services.

The ACT Government takes road safety and the amenity of local residents seriously, including for carparks and footpaths. The ACT Government acknowledges that residents' perceptions of safety are important and understands the concerns raised for users of the Kaleen Community Hall.

Remediation works were undertaken at the Kaleen Community Hall carpark in March 2023 to address immediate safety concerns from potholes that were causing water pooling. The potholes were filled with cold mix to reduce the extent of the water pooling.

Officers of the City and Environment Directorate (CED) have recently inspected and assessed the Kaleen Community Hall carpark. The assessment identified that compacted gravel is suitable at this location. I am pleased to advise that a new layer of gravel will be applied on the surface of the carpark before the end of September 2026, weather permitting.

In relation to damaged footpaths, Roads ACT have advised that works to replace damaged path segments that pose tripping hazards are planned to be completed

before the end of December 2026.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Braddon bowls club—petition 44-26

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, dated 3 September 2026, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Braddock on 10 June 2026 concerning development of the former Braddon Bowls Club site.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

I refer to the letter dated 10 June 2026 from the former Clerk, Tom Duncan regarding the petition (E-PET-044-26) submitted by residents calling on the Government to protect the Former Braddon Bowls Club site (Block 16 Section 25 Braddon; the site).

The ACT Government notes the matters raised in the petition regarding the future use of the private site including concerns about building scale and character, landscaping, public domain interface and traffic impacts on Elder and Farrer Streets. The following information responds to the matters raised in the petition, and the relationship between the development application (DA-202443065) and Draft Plan Amendment 07 (DPA-07) for the site.

For background, the site is privately leased for the purpose of a bowling club and associated incidental purposes, with the lease also permitting a childcare centre with a maximum gross floor area of 1,232 square metres. It is currently vacant following demolition of the club facilities in 2020. There is also current approval, from a previous DA (DA-202240531), to subdivide the site into a northern and southern portion.

Regarding DPA-07 for the site, the Territory Planning Authority (the Authority) has advised this only relates to the northern portion of the site. This a proponent-initiated amendment to the Territory Plan, and it has not come from the ACT Government.

Following statutory public consultation, the Authority prepared a Consultation Report (the Report) summarising the issues raised by Government entities and the community. The Report notes that concerns relating to building height and scale, traffic and parking, neighbourhood character and the planning process were raised during consultation and were considered where appropriate as part of the preparation of DPA-07. No changes to DPA-07 were proposed following consultation and the amendment has now been referred to the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee for inquiry.

Under the planning framework, draft major plan amendments must be referred to the Standing Committee prior to any decision being made by the Minister. The inquiry into DPA-07 is being undertaken by the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning, with the Committee due to report by 11 September 2026. Public submissions received by the Committee will also be considered as part of the Inquiry process.

Further information regarding the Inquiry process is available at <https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/parliamentary-business/in-committees/committees-11th-assembly/EPC/inquiry-into-dpa-07#tab3045776-1id>.

Regarding DA-202443065, this is being assessed separately by Authority in accordance with the requirements of the *Planning Act 2023* and the Territory Plan. The Authority have also advised this DA only relates to the southern portion of the site. Under the *Planning Act 2023*, DA decisions must consider whether a proposal meets the requirements of the Territory Plan which contains controls relating to building height, landscaping, and residential amenity. During this process the assessing officers will also consider whether the proposal appropriately transitions between zones and responds to the surrounding environment.

Although DPA-07 and DA202443065 relate to the same site, they undertake different functions within the ACT planning framework and are assessed through separate statutory processes.

The draft plan amendment process considers whether a proposed change to zoning is appropriate having regard to strategic planning objectives and broader planning considerations across the Territory. This includes assessment against the ACT Planning Strategy, the Inner North and City District Strategy, and other relevant government policies and planning frameworks. By comparison, the DA process focuses on the detailed assessment of a specific proposal, including built form, design, traffic, servicing, landscaping, amenity, and other technical matters.

The ACT planning system also considers cumulative impacts at multiple stages. Broader strategic matters, including infrastructure implications and consistency with planning objectives, are considered through the Territory Plan amendment process, while the DA process requires detailed technical assessments and consultation with relevant agencies to ensure impacts are appropriately managed. Assessment of DAs will consider the current situation – including how this evolves as a result of other developments being proposed and progressed.

If DPA-07 were to be approved, many of the matters raised as part of DPA-07 will be more comprehensively resolved at the DA stage, as the detailed design will be finalised. A future DA process would be required for development on the northern portion of the site will also include public notification – providing further opportunity for community input and consideration by the Territory Planning Authority.

The statutory assessment processes that are currently underway must continue as per the legislative processes and will be determined once the decision makers have thoroughly considered all relevant considerations.

In relation to the specific request to defer the decision on the DA, there is no process requirement for a DA to be deferred while a separate Territory Plan amendment process is underway. Further to this, a deferral would undermine the independence of the Authority in performing their DA decision-making function. With this, the DA will continue to be assessed on its merits and in accordance with the applicable legislative and policy framework.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Mawson—playing fields—petitions 86-25 and 55-26

By **Mr Barr**, Chief Minister, dated 4 September 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Ms Carrick on 10 June 2026 concerning the Mawson playing field path.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

I refer to the letter of 10 June 2026 from the former Clerk, Tom Duncan concerning petitions PET-055-26 and E-PET-086-25 from residents requesting a path through Mawson Playing fields.

The ACT Government acknowledges the importance of a well-connected and accessible path network that provides safe, convenient and attractive routes for people walking, riding and wheeling throughout the Territory. The Government is continuing to improve Canberra's active travel network by strengthening connections between existing paths and delivering new links where demand and community need are demonstrated.

The ACT Government manages and maintains approximately 3,800 kilometres of community paths across Canberra. Each year, a range of maintenance, renewal and improvement works are undertaken across the network, including upgrades to existing paths and the delivery of new connections where appropriate.

As constituents may appreciate, the City and Environment Directorate receives many requests from the community for new or missing path connections. These requests are assessed to determine whether a safe and accessible path can be provided for all users and are then prioritised against a range of factors, including demand, network connectivity, proximity to community facilities such as schools, shops and public transport, and alignment with broader strategic objectives. The list of proposed path projects is dynamic and is regularly reviewed as new requests are received and assessed.

The requested path along the desire line across the north-eastern corner of the Mawson Playing Fields, forms part of a connection between the Mawson Group Centre and Farrer that has been identified as a potential future route within the ACT Active Travel Plan. At present, funding has not been allocated to design or construct upgrades to deliver improvements for this route.

Accordingly, the proposed connection will continue to be considered through the Government's annual review and prioritisation processes and, subject to available funding and relative priorities across the Territory, may be included in a future capital works program.

Information on the ACT Government's current walking and cycling projects is available on the City Services website, including details on projects that are in feasibility, design or construction phases.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Planning—Woden—CIT Plaza—petitions 24-26 and 61-26

By **Mr Steel**, Acting Minister for City and Government Services, undated, in response

to petitions lodged by Ms Carrick on 12 June 2026 concerning general traffic access to CIT Plaza.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petitions E-PET-024-26 and PET-061-26, lodged by Ms Fiona Carrick MLA and received by the Assembly on 12 June 2026, regarding the CIT West Plaza access to general traffic.

The ACT Government recognises the strong interest of petitioners in ensuring the CIT West Plaza is a high-quality public space that supports community connection, social activity and local identity. These outcomes are consistent with the intent of the CIT Woden Campus and the broader Woden Town Centre revitalisation.

The design of the CIT Woden Campus, including West Plaza and the Bowes–Bradley connection, has been informed by extensive community engagement undertaken between November 2020 and October 2022. YourSay Listening Reports consistently identified community priorities for safe and accessible public spaces, strong pedestrian connections, activated places for community use, and convenient access to services. The shared zone design responds directly to this feedback by prioritising pedestrians, while maintaining safe and efficient local traffic movement.

The approved Development Application identifies West Plaza as a key public domain element supporting pedestrian movement, connectivity and activation within the town centre. It forms part of an integrated public realm linking Woden Interchange, CIT Woden Campus, Woden Youth Foyer and surrounding businesses and services.

Reflecting contemporary urban planning practice, the shared zone model is a central element of the CIT Woden Campus design framework. The operation of the Bowes–Bradley connection as an open shared zone within CIT West Plaza also supports the broader transport network for the precinct.

The inclusion of four accessible parking spaces within the Bowes–Bradley connection road is a deliberate part of this design. These spaces align with the ACT Urban Design Guide and are located to provide safe, practical and equitable access to nearby services, including medical centres, the post office and Access Canberra. Locating these spaces within the shared zone ensures they operate in a low-speed, highly visible environment.

Traffic within the shared zone will operate under a 10 km/h speed limit, with pedestrian priority and traffic-calming features in place. These measures are designed to ensure the space remains safe, welcoming and primarily oriented towards people.

The CIT Woden Campus includes a network of connected public spaces such as CIT Boulevard, North Plaza and West Plaza, each with a complementary role. This approach reflects community feedback captured in the Listening Reports and ensures activity is distributed across the precinct, allowing spaces to function flexibly and to adapt to future needs. It also reinforces the role of West Plaza as

part of a broader, integrated public realm that balances place-making outcomes with accessibility and connectivity.

The ACT Government notes the request from petitioners to continue a full restriction on general traffic and to implement alternative arrangements such as retractable bollards and relocating accessible parking. These options have been carefully considered. However, a fully closed arrangement would limit flexibility, reduce equitable access and is not consistent with the approved shared zone design, which is intended to accommodate different uses over time while maintaining pedestrian priority and safety.

Following the completion of enabling works, the Bowes–Bradley connection is expected to open to vehicles in Q3 2026. The ACT Government will continue to monitor how the space operates and make evidence-based adjustments, as needed, to support safety, accessibility and amenity. While I know this is not the outcome you were hoping for, I trust this information is useful.

Mawson—community facilities—petitions 85-25 and 54-26

By **Mr Barr**, Chief Minister, dated 7 September 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Ms Carrick on 10 June 2026 concerning proposed Mawson community facilities.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

E-PET-085-25 and PET-054-26

Thank you for your letter of 10 June 2026 in relation to the above petitions lodged by Ms Fiona Carrick MLA. Below is the Government response to these petitions.

The Mawson Group Centre and surrounds, identified in the petition as Southlands Community Centre, includes Block 26, Section 47 Mawson, and is currently being considered in a suite of work underway to facilitate the Government commitment for a second supermarket.

In addition to facilitating a second supermarket, the work underway prioritises considerations for outdoor recreation improvements, sporting venues, facilities to support better access to open space including play equipment, and the enhancement of public domain infrastructure. The work also investigates an improved residential experience with new opportunities for housing developments.

Changes to land uses within the Mawson Group Centre and surrounds, including for community uses, will be subject to future strategic planning considerations included in the Draft Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework (the Framework).

The Framework considers community and recreational facilities and will assist in informing land use decisions for the Mawson Group Centre. Community consultation is underway on the Framework and the ACT Government welcomes feedback from the community on what community facilities they would like to see in the Woden district.

The activities and uses listed in the petition will be considered as part of these planning considerations, or via other Government processes and deliberations underway – such as the Community Garden Grants program.

Roads—safety—Plimsoll Drive, Casey—petition 36-26

By **Mr Steel**, Acting Minister for City and Government Services, dated 7 September 2026, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Braddock on 10 June 2026 concerning the condition of Plimsoll Drive, Casey.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

I refer to the letter of 10 June 2026 from the former Clerk, Mr Tom Duncan regarding the petition (E-PET-036-26) submitted by residents in relation to road safety on Plimsoll Drive Casey.

The ACT Government takes road safety and the amenity of local residents seriously and encourages all road users to play a role in safe travel on our road network. The ACT Government acknowledges that residents' perceptions of safety are important and understands the concerns raised regarding pedestrian safety, particularly for children accessing the Casey Recreational Playground.

The City and Environment Directorate (CED) installs traffic calming measures such as speed humps on road sections where inappropriate high speeds by the majority of motorists and/or crash history is identified as a major safety concern. Plimsoll Drive already has a number of traffic calming measures on the road, including narrow lane widths, indented parking bays and pedestrian refuge islands.

The most recent traffic surveys on Plimsoll Drive indicate motorists are travelling at average speeds of about 48 km/h which is within allowable limits for the road environment. An analysis of crash history indicates that there have been no crashes reported on Plimsoll Drive over the last 7-year period which involved pedestrians or cyclists in the vicinity of the Casey Recreational Playground. As such, there are no immediate plans to install any traffic calming measures on Plimsoll Drive. However, CED will continue to monitor traffic conditions on the road and take action when warranted.

As Plimsoll Drive is subject to the ACT's default urban speed limit of 50 km/h and has the characteristics of a residential street, additional speed limit signage is not currently considered necessary. The ACT Government is aware that some motorists speed on many roads across the ACT residential street network. Law enforcement, alongside other tools including safe system road design principles and traffic calming measures (where appropriate), work effectively to control speeding and other anti-social driving behaviours. I encourage the reporting of such driving behaviours to ACT Policing on 131 444 or to Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 so that appropriate action may be undertaken, and records of incidents maintained.

A representative from City Services has inspected the intersection of Plimsoll Drive and McGovern Street, Casey following this request to prune overgrown vegetation. All potential line-of-sight issues on Plimsoll Drive have been resolved.

In relation to potholes, the condition of the road surface has been identified for detailed investigation and pavement testing. The results of this assessment will determine the most appropriate repair, and renewal works for Plimsoll Drive. In the short-term, Roads ACT will continue to monitor the area and undertake ongoing maintenance as necessary.

Gungahlin—cinema—petition 16-26

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, dated 9 September 2026, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Braddock on 10 June 2026 concerning a cinema in Gungahlin Town Centre.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

I refer to the letter dated 10 June 2026 from the former Clerk, Tom Duncan regarding the petition (E-PET-016-26) submitted by residents regarding the Government development of the Gungahlin cinema site.

The ACT Government notes the concerns raised in petition E-PET-016-26 in relation to the development of Block 1 Section 12 Gungahlin (the “Gungahlin cinema” site/the site) and provides the following information in addressing each of the matters raised.

History on the Gungahlin cinema site, including release of the site by the ACT Government and subsequent planning approval activity, is outlined in the [Government Response to the Assembly Resolution of 29 August 2023 regarding the Gungahlin Cinema Development](#) (the Government Response). Since then, the development approval for the construction of a two-storey building, including a cinema, referenced in the Government Response (DA-201936502) has lapsed and a new development application (DA) would be required to progress this development. I am advised by the Territory Planning Authority (the Authority) a new DA for this site has not been submitted to date.

I understand there is a building covenant clause contained within the Crown lease for the site which requires the cinema development to be completed by 28 February 2024. Under the *Planning Act 2023*, a lessee may pay a non-compliance fee in lieu of complying with certain building and development provisions contained in a Crown lease. The *Planning (General) Regulation 2023* prescribes the calculation of non-compliance fees and provides a four-year fee-free period following the date by which development is required to be completed under the lease. The current fee-free period is a continuation of provisions originally introduced under the *Planning and Development (Extension of Time) Amendment Act 2014*. These reforms were intended to support economic activity by providing flexibility for lessees experiencing delays in commencing or completing developments and reducing financial pressures associated with development delivery.

Given the above, the Authority have advised me that regulatory action, being the issuance of controlled activity order under Schedule 4 of the *Planning Act 2023*, cannot be undertaken for non-compliance with the building and development provision as the non-compliance fee-free period has currently not expired, therefore the lessee is taken to be in compliance with the requirements of the

Crown lease under section 374(5) of the *Planning Act 2023*. There is currently no legislative mechanism available to the ACT Government to compel delivery of the cinema ahead of these statutory compliance timeframes, therefore the Authority must continue to monitor and administer lease compliance matters in accordance with the legislative requirements.

The Government acknowledges there are unacceptable instances of land banking and underutilised leases across the Territory, including in some of the core commercial zones, and is currently investigating measures to compel land development with agreed timeframes as part of sales. This investigation is considering whether the existing non-compliance time frames and fee settings remain appropriate, and will determine whether amendments to the legislative framework are needed to strengthen existing, or implement new, lease enforcement powers. The Standing Committee on Environment and Planning is also undertaking an [Inquiry in to the use of controlled activity orders](#) and the Government will consider any recommendations made by the Committee as part of its review.

The ACT Government recognises the importance of a cinema and associated entertainment facilities to the continued growth, liveability and vibrancy of the Gungahlin Town Centre. You may be aware of a mixed-use development proposed by Englobo Group at the adjoining Block 2 Section 11 Gungahlin, which is designed so that it could incorporate a cinema as part of a broader development proposal. I am advised Englobo Group has undertaken community engagement activities, including providing a project update to the Gungahlin Community Council on 10 September 2025 and conducting public consultation on the proposal.

The Authority have advised me a DA for early works associated with this proposed development was lodged on 8 December 2025 (DA-202544256), which was then publicly notified between 15 December 2025 and 23 January 2026 and subsequently approved with conditions on 3 July 2026, was approved with conditions. The Authority have also advised me a DA for the main works was then lodged on 19 May 2026 (DA-202544854), and that documentation and plans in this DA indicate that the development has the potential to cater for a cinema. As the development is a significant development, it will undergo two stages of public notification. The first stage was publicly notified from 25 May 2026 to 26 June 2026 and one representation was received.

All development proposals in the ACT are subject to legislative planning requirements. As a result, the ACT Government's ability to take regulatory compliance action in relation to the cinema requirement is limited by the legislative requirements.

Development applications are assessed by the independent Territory Planning Authority in accordance with the *Planning Act 2023* and the Territory Plan. These statutory considerations relate to a number of planning matters raised in the petition. Under the *Planning Act 2023*, the Authority is required to consider the requirements of the Territory Plan, public representations and entity advice in assessing and deciding development applications. As part of this, the Authority must consider matters including:

- the relationship of the proposal to adjoining zones and developments;
- the suitability of the development within its site and surrounding context;
- the likely environmental, social and amenity impacts of the proposal; and

- the interaction of the development with existing, approved and proposed developments in the surrounding area.

The Authority will continue to assess and determine development applications in accordance with the statutory requirements, while lease compliance matters will continue to be monitored and administered under the *Planning Act 2023*.

The ACT Government acknowledges the importance of equitable access to cultural and entertainment facilities for Gungahlin residents and recognises the role such facilities play in supporting community participation, social connection and the liveability of town centres. I am committed to keeping the Assembly and the community updated on the above matters.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information provides further context.

GIO Stadium—petitions 35-26 and 60-26

By **Mr Barr**, Chief Minister, dated 12 September 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Mr Cain on 12 June 2026 concerning the current condition and future of GIO Stadium.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

Thank you for your letter regarding e-petitions E-PET-035-26 and PET-060-26, lodged by Mr Peter Cain MLA, concerning GIO Stadium Canberra (the Stadium). The ACT Government appreciates the significance of the Stadium to our community and the surrounding region, and I thank those who took the time to sign the e-petitions.

The Government recognises the importance of sporting infrastructure in delivering economic, social and community benefits, and is indeed pursuing a pathway for the future of stadium infrastructure in our city in a way that is responsible and is sequenced alongside the full range of priorities to meet the needs of our growing community. The Stadium is highly-valued by the community and Canberra's sporting teams, and plays an important role in growing our visitor economy. This is why the Government has committed to securing a broader program of events at the venue, supporting both community engagement and economic activity.

The Territory currently leases the Stadium from the Australian Sports Commission. As part of this arrangement, the Government is responsible for ensuring the venue is maintained to a safe and usable standard, including undertaking structural or capital works. Venues Canberra manages cyclical asset management and planning, and performs capital works to ensure compliance, safety and the comfort of patrons.

The Stadium is in good to fair condition and remains fit-for-purpose, with its overall condition consistent with the age of the facility. The stadium continues to operate, attract and host high-level sport and major events and does so while long-term planning for its future is considered.

I note that between 2016 and April 2026, \$4,786,936 was spent on repairs and

maintenance at the stadium and, between July 2016 and June 2025, \$15,479,128 has been spent on stadium improvements.

This has included new Video Replay Boards, turf replacement, IPTV upgrades, concrete repairs, fire systems and smoke detector upgrades, emergency exit lighting upgrades, signage, changeroom refurbishments (including improved suitability for women's teams), kitchen and retail catering upgrades, and other condition assessment upgrades.

The Government has committed \$15 million in capital upgrades to the Stadium over the next three years in the 2026-27 Budget. The funded works include upgrades to field-of-play lighting, public amenities and lifts in the East and West grandstands. Planning is well advanced to ensure these works can be delivered without disrupting games and events. These upgrades will improve the experience for patrons in the short term while ensuring the Stadium continues to host elite sport and major events.

Further, I would note the Australian Government's Bruce Precinct Master Plan, released this week, reinforces the importance of considering the Stadium as part of a wider precinct that includes expanded and upgraded health, education, housing, transport, employment and community infrastructure. Looking at the Stadium within this broader context creates opportunities to better integrate future infrastructure investments, including public transport, parking, retail and hospitality, with the long-term development of the precinct.

The work undertaken through the Master Plan highlights opportunities that warrant further investigation, including future land ownership arrangements, precinct renewal opportunities and how stadium infrastructure can support the long-term growth and development of Bruce.

The Territory will continue to work closely with the Commonwealth and key stakeholders on the Stadium Business Case, ensuring all viable options are properly assessed before further decisions are made about the future of stadium infrastructure in the Territory.

In closing, the Government agrees better stadium infrastructure is needed in our city, is committed to it and is working to deliver it. We regularly engage with key users of the stadium to ensure investment is strategically prioritised in the current facility, such as through the 2026-27 Budget, and in parallel are actively engaged with the Australian Government on the Bruce Precinct process to inform and communicate a clear pathway forward for the future of stadium infrastructure in the Territory.

School curriculum—Armenian, Assyrian and Greek genocides—petitions 13-26 and 62-26

By **Ms Stephen-Smith**, Minister for Education, dated 14 September 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Mr Braddock on 12 June 2026 concerning recognition of genocides in World War One.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

Thank you for your letter of 12 June 2026 regarding petitions E-PET-013-26 and PET-062-26, which call on the ACT Government to amend the primary and secondary school curriculum to include education about the systematic mass killings and deportations of Armenian, Assyrian and Greek communities under the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. I apologise for the delay in providing this response.

I acknowledge the deep significance of this issue for many members of the community, particularly those whose families and cultural identities have been shaped by these historical events. I recognise that education plays an important role in fostering understanding of difficult chapters in human history, encouraging empathy, respect and critical reflection among young people, and helping communities preserve and share their intergenerational experiences.

The ACT Government is committed to supporting safe, inclusive and respectful learning environments, including ensuring curriculum content is regularly reviewed and updated. As Members may be aware, curriculum content is primarily a national responsibility, and the ACT Government does not have unilateral authority to amend the Australian Curriculum, which is developed and maintained by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). Decisions about curriculum content, including any amendments or additions, are considered through nationally agreed processes and structured review arrangements.

Major revisions to the Australian Curriculum are undertaken as part of a 10-year review cycle overseen by Australia's Education Ministers, ensuring the curriculum remains nationally consistent, evidence-based and responsive to contemporary educational priorities. In addition, the ACT works closely with ACARA providing feedback on the curriculum via the annual jurisdictional scanning process. During 2026 the years 7-10 history curriculum has been identified as a review focus area.

Students in ACT public schools learn about the First World War through the Australian Curriculum, with schools determining how curriculum content is delivered and teaching approaches. At the primary level, the First World War is incorporated into the Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) curriculum to help students develop foundational empathy and an understanding of historical context. In Year 9, the First World War is studied as a mandatory Depth Study. This study provides a strong focus on both the global significance of the conflict and Australia's specific role and experiences during the war.

There is currently no proposal before ACARA to amend the Australian Curriculum in relation to this matter. However, I understand that, from 2027, the NSW history syllabus for years 7-10 will include the mandatory study of 'Australia's civic action and humanitarian response during World War I', and the content will include learning about the actions of everyday Australians who participated in the humanitarian response to these terrible events for the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek communities.

The ACT Education Directorate will seek feedback about the implementation of the NSW syllabus in 2027 and provide advice on any opportunities to learn from schools' experiences in teaching the new material. The ACT Government remains committed to working collaboratively with the Australian Government, ACARA and other jurisdictions on national education initiatives that support high-quality teaching and learning and that promote understanding, inclusion and respect for the diverse histories and experiences of communities in Australia.

I thank the petitioners for raising this important issue and recognise the depth of commitment so many people have shown to remembrance and awareness raising.

Canberra Institute of Technology—senior fitness programs—petitions 45-26, 53-26 and 59-26

By **Mr Pettersson**, Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations, dated 14 September 2026, in response to petitions lodged by Mr Cain on 10 and 12 June 2026 concerning senior fitness classes at the CIT.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

Thank you for your letters regarding petitions E-PET-045-26, PET-053-26 and PET-059-26, lodged by Mr Peter Cain MLA calling on the ACT Government to reverse cuts and restore senior classes at the CIT Fit & Well Gym. The petitions also call for a guarantee to long-term funding for senior fitness programs.

CIT is an independent Territory Authority with a governing board. CIT have advised me that the adjustments to CIT Fit & Well Fitness Centre operating hours and group exercise offerings followed a comprehensive internal review by CIT. This review considered financial sustainability, staffing availability, safety requirements, participation trends, and broader policy settings. Importantly, CIT Fit & Well operates primarily as an education training facility supporting accredited student learning, teaching, and assessment for the health and fitness sector. The changes were made to ensure the long-term viability of the facility while prioritising high quality, industry-relevant student education training during weekday teaching hours to achieving a more effective use of public education infrastructure and managing operating costs responsibly.

For these reasons, there is currently no intention to restore the Fit & Well classes and facility access as requested in the petition.

There are many alternative senior fitness programs available within Canberra which offer services for Seniors, including the Council of the Ageing, Senior Citizen Clubs, Community Centres, and Canberra Health Services. The ACT Government provides supports seniors fitness and wellbeing through several grant programs, including the Seniors Grant Program which provides \$80,000 (GST exclusive) annually for projects that promote older Canberrans to engage, stay connected and actively participate as valued members of the ACT community.

I thank Mr Cain MLA for his advocacy in this matter, and I thank you for bringing the petition to my attention.

Motion to take note of petitions

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

That the petitions and responses so lodged be noted.

Paediatric Oncology and Haematology—proposed unit—petition 39-26

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (10.23): At its heart, the petition calling for a dedicated paediatric oncology and haematology unit in Canberra is not about buildings, budgets or bureaucracy; it is about children and it is about families, and it is about what happens when some of the sickest children in our region are forced to leave their homes, their schools, their siblings, their support networks and their community just to access the treatment they need to survive.

This issue first came to my attention earlier this year when I received a heartfelt letter from Robyn, who shared the story of her young son, Emmett, and their family's journey through childhood cancer. Robyn described the reality of regularly travelling more than 3½ hours to the Children's Hospital at Westmead in Sydney for essential care and specialist treatment. For most families, a medical appointment is an inconvenience; for families like Robyn's, it becomes an exhausting all-day or multiday ordeal. It means time away from work, school and daycare, long hours spent in a car, and separation from family and support networks, and for Emmett it means being away from his six-year-old brother, his biggest supporter. When a child is already fighting cancer, every journey takes a toll. Every kilometre travelled is another burden on a family already carrying more than what most of us can even imagine.

Robyn's letter spoke about one particularly difficult trip home after treatment. Emmett became unwell in the car and vomited over himself and his mum. They were forced to stop at McDonalds and clean up in a public toilet. No parent should have to change and comfort their child undergoing cancer treatment in a public bathroom on the side of a highway because specialist care is hundreds of kilometres away. No family should have to endure that.

She also spoke about the occasions when they have presented to the Canberra Hospital Emergency Department, only for local clinicians to need to telephone Sydney for oncology and haematology advice. Think about that for a moment: the nation's capital, serving a region of hundreds of thousands of people, still does not have a dedicated paediatric oncology and haematology service. At the very moment families are experiencing fear, uncertainty and crisis, they are reminded that the specialist care their child needs is hundreds of kilometres away.

In Robyn's letter she spoke about how her family has given up on claiming access to the Interstate Patient Travel Assistance Scheme because of the volume of paperwork involved and having to repeatedly compile and submit detailed evidence of travel, accommodation and appointment details, all at a time when a family is dealing with extreme emotional and physical distress and when their focus is literally on their child's survival.

Robyn's story is not unique. I also heard from Kara, a single mother whose three-year-old daughter, Tilly, was recently diagnosed with cancer. Tilly is facing six to seven months of treatment in Sydney, away from her home, her friends, her extended family and the support networks every parent relies on during the most difficult times of their lives. Imagine confronting your child's cancer diagnosis while simultaneously working out where you will live, how you will travel, how you will pay the bills and how you will keep life together. That is the reality for too many Canberra families. And, further,

this is not just a Canberra issue. Families from across regional New South Wales look to Canberra to access health care, yet, when a child is diagnosed with cancer, many of those families are forced to travel even further, all the way to Sydney. This petition represents families from across our region who have one simple ask—that their sick children can access specialist cancer care closer to home.

Robyn started this petition to highlight what families like hers are going through. Robyn understands that, even if the ACT government committed tomorrow to establishing a dedicated paediatric oncology and haematology unit, it would take years to become operational and may never directly benefit her own son. That is why her advocacy is so remarkable. She is fighting for progress; she is fighting for the next child diagnosed with cancer; she is fighting for the next parent who receives the devastating news no parent ever wants to hear; and she is fighting for a future where those families can remain closer to home, surrounded by the people who love and support them.

We have heard arguments against establishing this service, about workforce challenges, cost pressures and that patient numbers are too low. But surely the measure of a health system is not whether a service benefits the greatest number of people. Surely the measure of our society is in how we take care of the most vulnerable in our community. The 2,364 people who signed this petition have delivered a clear message: the community wants action. The families affected by childhood cancer deserve action and the time for excuses has passed. It is time for this government to make that commitment for the sickest children in our region.

Playgrounds and play spaces—shade standards—petition 64-26 Housing—Unit Titles (Management) Act—petition 74-26

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (10.28): I would like to speak to a couple of petitions that I have sponsored—first of all, the petition on shade at playgrounds across the ACT. This petition calls on the ACT government to establish evidence-based minimum shade standards for playgrounds, incorporating both built and tree shading, and to develop a plan for progressively meeting these standards at both existing and new playgrounds across the ACT.

This was brought forward by a local mum named Simone, who, having a young child, discovered that there is not enough shade at many playgrounds in our community, and especially in my electorate of Kurrajong, so she approached me about sponsoring this petition. I was very happy to do so. It has since garnered over 1,000 signatures—1,128 signatures—and has received the support of a number of organisations, including the Cancer Council ACT, Parents for Climate, ACT Playgroups, Kidsafe ACT, and Families ACT.

Two of the most compelling examples of this issue are in Watson. Some members will be familiar with these examples: Maliyan Park, an incredible new playground in Watson, which cost more than \$3 million, and the Inner North Playground, near the Watson shops, which cost more than \$4 million. Neither have built shade structures, so they are basically unusable in summer. They are fantastic in winter. Even on warmer days, like over the weekend when I was at one of these playgrounds with my children, it starts to get extremely hot, and not just for the kids; the equipment also gets hot. Three different listening reports were prepared prior to the construction of the Inner North

Playground and all identified shade as a top priority, including built shade structures, so community members are confused as to why they were not included.

This petition comes on the back of an audit of playgrounds across New South Wales in 2022, after which the Cancer Institute NSW recommended a combination of both built and tree shade in every playground, covering at least 70 per cent of the play equipment and nearby seating, including 45 per cent tree shade. We have some requirements, or perhaps suggestions, in the ACT government's Municipal Infrastructure Standards. They say that "shade cover should be provided for play space users—wherever possible". Shade sails and other freestanding shade structures "shall only be considered", though, "in central community and district play spaces", which excludes the more than \$3 million playground, Maliyan Park, which is considered a local neighbourhood play space. This is of concern. I think it is clear to anyone with young children that shade is needed everywhere.

Interestingly, there is a note in the Municipal Infrastructure Standards that says that, where designing shade sails, it is important to "consider forward planting of trees that will provide the required shade after the lifespan of the shade sail", but the inverse does not exist. There is no mention of installing shade sails as an interim measure when young trees have been planted and they will have to grow to where they can provide shade, which is exactly what has happened at both Maliyan Park and the Inner North Playground. A response from the minister to a question on notice said they have been designed with a strong emphasis on long-term tree canopy establishment to provide shade, which, on the face of it, makes sense; but, if your kids are going to be grown up by the time the trees grow tall enough to provide any shade, it does not really make sense for you. The simple solution here is to—

Mr Cain: Have more kids, mate!

MR EMERSON: I was speaking with Peter Cain about having more kids—install some shade sails as a solution. The government has done this at some playgrounds. It is unclear why they have not done it at others. In 2020, they spent \$155,000 for shade sails at five playgrounds; in 2024, 19 shade sails at Lake Ginninderra cost \$42,000—there was a pretty good deal on that procurement; and, just last year, the Education Directorate spent \$100,000 for a couple of shade structures at Woden School. So it does happen, but it seems to be relatively arbitrary. I hope that this petition leads to consideration of this and makes it a firm requirement at all playgrounds so that they are usable and safely usable all year round.

I want to briefly touch on another petition that I sponsored, on the Unit Titles (Management) Act—our legislation in this area. I thank Ms Elizabeth Thurbon for bringing forward this petition. The petition calls on the government to consider appropriate legislative changes to the act to ensure that mixed-use apartment complexes and their insurability are not impacted by business operations that may increase insurance premiums or excesses for the complexes, or even make them uninsurable, unfairly burdening apartment owners with increased costs. This comes in response to revelations that, when perhaps tobacconists move into mixed-use complexes, there can be a significant increase in insurance premiums, which existing residents of those complexes have no say in but are required to bear the cost of. This is an area that needs to be looked at, to ensure that the system that we have is fair and people are not being

unfairly burdened.

Melba—proposed pump track—petition 68-26

MS BARRY (Ginninderra) (10.33): I happily rise today to present this petition calling for the government to investigate the feasibility and broader community appetite for a bike pump track in Melba, on Alfred Hill Drive. Before I was approached about this petition, I had no idea what a pump track was, but, as was explained to me, a pump track is essentially a beginner-friendly version of a BMX track. It has a smoother, rounded design so that all ages and ability levels can race around the track without fear of injury and younger children can build their confidence before graduating to a more difficult track. I want to take a moment to congratulate the principal petitioner on the sheer number of signatures they have gathered in support of this petition. Five hundred and twenty-one locals have signed their name in support, which is a fantastic effort for a grassroots idea from a local parent.

A petition like this is reflective of the unique nature of our territory. Certainly, we have the weighty debates on technical areas of law and policy, but also, as a small jurisdiction, we perform the function of what many people joke about in good nature, referring to us as a local council. I love that, as local MLAs in the ACT, we get to wear both hats. I love the fact that the local parents, families and community groups get to have what is essentially a direct line of contact to all of us in order to share their grassroots ideas on important issues for their suburb, and, as a small jurisdiction, we should be humble enough to give those ideas real consideration.

Once again, I thank the principal petitioner and all of the parents and local residents of Melba who have signed this petition. This is exactly the kind of engagement that we love to see. I encourage families and parents in Ginninderra to bring their ideas forward so that we can operationalise them. I again thank the parents of Melba for bringing this idea before me. I commend the petition to the Assembly.

Rental ombudsman—establishment—petitions 14-26 and 84-26

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong) (10.36): There are indeed many very worthy petitions to speak to today. I recognise the community taking up this important way to present their views and voices to members of this house. I would like to speak to the petition that was tabled in regard to a rental ombudsman in the ACT. I particularly thank the principal petitioner, Mr Greg Tannahill, for his extremely considered petition and his advocacy on this important matter.

This petition addresses an important issue. While we benefit from strong tenancy protections in the ACT—probably some of the strongest in Australia—this means nothing in a system where tenants have difficulty accessing their rights. Sometimes the only way that renters can access their rights is through a timely and costly tribunal process. This is a process where the power dynamic is well and truly weighted against the tenant, leaving many scared to take up action as it might see retaliatory action and someone losing their home.

A rental ombudsman would be empowered to mediate and investigate individual cases, but they would also be able to monitor the state of renters' rights in the ACT. This

actually changes it to a much more proactive model. New South Wales and Victoria have commissioner models, as well as improved dispute mechanisms to support tenants in accessing their rights. This is a simple idea that would see a material difference to the more than a third of households that rent their homes across the ACT. Everyone has a story about an unreasonable landlord and a tenant unfairly done by, from the dreaded “landlord special” in place of real repairs and maintenance to illegally withheld bonds and breaches of tenants’ rights to enjoy their home in peace. It also provides a pathway for landlords to resolve issues in a way that is not legalistic and focuses on restorative practice. This is a proposal that landlords wanting to do the right thing should embrace.

A rental ombudsman would be another win for our community against the big end of town. The Greens will continue to fight to see this role established to ensure that everyone is secure and safe in their homes.

Lyons—shops and playground—facilities—petitions 27-26 and 83-26

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, and Minister for Gaming Reform) (10.38): I rise this morning to speak to the petition concerning the provision of public toilet facilities at the Lyons shops and adjoining playground precinct. This petition has attracted 667 signatures—397 online and 270 on paper. This demonstrates strong community support and highlights the significance of these issues to the local community. Public spaces work best when they are inclusive, accessible and welcoming to everyone. Ensuring that people have access to appropriate amenities is an important part of achieving that goal. I thank the principal petitioner, Mr Tim Muller, and all who have supported this petition.

The Lyons shops precinct is an important community hub. It is a place where families gather, children play, older residents meet friends, and local businesses serve the community. The new adjoining playground across the road from the shops is well used and attracts visitors from not only Lyons but also the surrounding suburbs. Despite this high level of use, the area currently has no accessible public toilet facilities. At first glance, a public toilet may seem like a relatively minor piece of infrastructure; however, for many members of the community, it is anything but minor. Accessible toilet facilities are essential for parents with young children, older Canberrans, people living with a disability, and people managing medical conditions. The absence of such facilities can create inconvenience, anxiety and, at times, genuine distress. The petitioners make an important point: access to clean, safe and accessible public toilets is fundamentally a matter of dignity. I commend this petition to the Assembly.

Molonglo—sport facilities—petitions 22-26 and 82-26

Lyons—shops and playground—facilities—petitions 27-26 and 83-26

Roads—safety—Curtin—petition 46-26

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (10.40): I rise to speak in support of three community petitions: the Molonglo district playing fields petition, the Lyons shops public toilets petition and the Theodore Street road safety petition. Firstly, the Molonglo district playing fields petition highlights a significant gap in community infrastructure in Canberra’s fastest-growing district. The Molonglo Valley is expected to grow to around 79,000 residents by 2065. It is a community of young families, with a growing need for

accessible sporting and recreation facilities.

Playing fields are not a luxury; they are essential community infrastructure. They provide space for children to play sport, families to spend time together and communities to connect. They support physical health, mental wellbeing, social inclusion and local sporting clubs. Yet Molonglo remains under-served compared with every other district in Canberra. While other districts have well-established sporting facilities, Molonglo residents continue to lack centrally located district-level playing fields needed to support a rapidly growing population. The proposed Stromlo Forest Park playing field is welcome but it is not sufficient. Even with stage 2, the facilities would still fall short of the ACT government's benchmark for district playing fields. This petition, therefore, makes a sensible request: revisit the planning assumptions, identify a site capable of supporting true district-level facilities and commit to infrastructure that will meet the needs of current and future residents.

I also support the petition calling for public toilets at the Lyons shops. Public toilets are a basic community service. They support families with young children, older residents, people with a disability, shoppers, visitors and those using nearby parks and playgrounds. As local centres become increasingly important community hubs, amenities such as public toilets should be considered standard infrastructure.

Finally, I support the petition regarding road safety on Theodore Street in Curtin, outside the Pinocchio daycare centre. The proposal to install and enforce no-stopping zones during drop-off and pick-up times is a practical measure that would improve visibility and safety both for drivers and pedestrians. When it comes to the safety of young children, simple improvements that reduce risk should be supported.

While these petitions address different issues, they share a common theme: ensuring community infrastructure keeps pace with community needs. Whether it is playing fields in Molonglo, public toilets in Lyons or safer streets in Curtin, these are practical investments in livable, connected and family-friendly communities. I commend the petitioners and look forward to a positive response from the government.

Paediatric Oncology and Haematology—proposed unit—petition 39-25 Light rail—Stage 2B—petition 25-26

MR PARTON (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (10.43): I rise to speak on a couple of petitions—firstly, the petition calling on the ACT government to take action towards establishing a dedicated paediatric oncology and haematology service at Canberra Hospital. This petition was driven by Robyn Wakefield, whose advocacy reflects a very simple proposition: when a child is diagnosed with cancer or a serious blood disorder, families should be able to access as much of their care as possible close to home.

We understand that the world is not perfect. We understand that a number of the things that are being called on in this petition are horrendously expensive, and we understand that there is not much money to go around. But we also understand that it is not Robyn's fault that the current government has run this territory into the level of fiscal unsustainability that currently exists. At present, some children and families must travel interstate to access specialised treatment and care. For families already dealing with the

fear and uncertainty of a seriously ill child, those journeys can add another layer of stress, disruption and financial pressure. This petition received 2,300 signatures, because it is extremely important. It is a significant demonstration of community concern and a clear indication that Canberrans want this issue properly considered.

I acknowledge that highly-specialised paediatric oncology care will continue to require strong relationships with tertiary services interstate. There is no way we can get away from that. But the question is whether we can do more in Canberra, safely and sustainably, to reduce the amount of care families have to travel for. It is why this petition deserves serious consideration by the government, and it is why the Canberra Liberals will introduce more in this space calling on the government to do just that. I thank Robyn Wakefield, I thank Elizabeth Lee and I commend the petition to the Assembly.

Petitions, Mr Speaker, as you well know, sitting in that chair, are a way that we as elected members can hear from the community. I move to the petition regarding light rail stage 2B that came from a community member who approached me wanting to do this petition. I have to say straight up that this petition does not specifically represent a Liberal Party position on the light rail project, but there are some serious questions that remain. On the day that the final report from the fiscal sustainability committee will be tabled—the first finding of which is that we are on an unsustainable path—I think it is important that we talk about this stuff. I think it is extremely important.

In the lead-up to the election in 2020, the Chief Minister made the promise that the tram would arrive at Woden in 2025—and we are at the back end of 2026 and it has not left Alinga Street yet. We are told time and again by the government that they are committed to light rail 2B and beyond. They basically say, “Trust us”—in the same way that they said, “Trust us” about the ice rink, the Throsby home of football and a bunch of other things—and say that they are committed to getting it done. In the context of the discussions that have been going on behind closed doors with the Greens, it is incumbent upon the Labor government to make the Greens believe that they are indeed rusted onto this.

At the end of the day, we are all elected to represent our community and to be their voice in this place. We were happy to facilitate the passage of this petition through the Assembly, because we think it asks some questions that need to be answered.

Standing orders—suspension

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

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent debate to continue for an hour.

South Canberra veterans shed—petition 28-26

Health—pelvic pain treatments—petition 79-25

Isabella Plains—roads—petition 64-25

School curriculum—Armenian, Assyrian and Greek genocide—petitions 13-26 and 62-26

MS TOUGH (Brindabella—Minister for Human Rights, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Women, Seniors and Veterans, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence) (10.47): I rise today to speak to a number of petition responses: the South Canberra veterans shed; traffic lights in Isabella Plains; pelvic pain treatments; and World War I genocide education. I will begin with the petition on the South Canberra veterans shed, responded to by Minister Orr in her previous role as Minister for Seniors and Veterans.

In the intervening time since that petition response was lodged, I have since become the Minister for Women, Seniors and Veterans. So I am really looking forward to working with the South Canberra veterans shed on this petition and meeting with them again soon to work to find them a permanent solution. Since lodging the petition, I have been talking to my colleagues across the government on the potential avenues there are for the veterans sheds and how we can find them a permanent home. So I am really looking forward to now, in my ministerial role, helping them achieve that and helping them grow the community at the shed.

Speaking briefly on the pelvic pain petition concerning pelvic botox injections within the ACT public health system, which was brought to me by QENDO Canberra, the petition raised concerns about the discontinuation of this treatment, which had been introduced locally and is used in a couple of other Australian hospitals as part of chronic pelvic pain and endometriosis management. Petitioners highlighted clinical evidence supporting its use and note that some patients experienced positive outcomes while the service was available here. While the response itself does not commit to reintroduction, it does talk about looking into the future about monitoring emerging evidence and remains open to considering participation in future research, clinical trials and, where supported by robust evidence, treatment innovations. I am really looking forward to the social policy committee's inquiry into endometriosis and pelvic pain report early next year because, in my time in that inquiry, we heard some people talk about their experience with pelvic botox and the changes they have had to go through since it was removed.

I will turn to the petition from residents of Isabella Plains and its nearby suburbs regarding the intersection of Drakeford Drive and Noorooma Street. As a not-infrequent user of that intersection, it can sometimes be definitely worrying. Since the response was provided, some people got very stressed at the idea of more traffic lights along Drakeford Drive. While I do sympathise with them—because when you get every red light from Lyneham to the city, it is a long drive—there have been some pretty bad accidents at that intersection since the last study in 2013-14, including a fatal accident within the past 10 years. I really welcome the response from Minister Cheyne that this financial year there will be a further study undertaken to see if any potential treatment options qualify for the next round of commonwealth black spot funding. That does not mean traffic lights at that intersection; it means looking at what more can be done to make that intersection safer in addition to that which has been done since 2013-14.

Finally, I will turn to the petition sponsored by Mr Braddock about teaching the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek genocide as part of Australia's role in World War I, and I really thank him for bringing that petition to the Assembly. I thank Minister Stephen-Smith, not just for the response but also for the conversations I have had with her since she became education minister and the conversations with her office

about the genocide, the importance of recognising the genocide in our curriculum and how New South Wales is going to be teaching it from next year. While I appreciate the curriculum is nationally regulated, I welcome that the ACT is actively going to be monitoring what New South Wales is doing and, given they are also bound by the national curriculum, seeing how New South Wales actually walks that line, and whether that is something we can follow once we know what they are doing.

I thank the community, who have put so much time and effort into getting so much support for this petition, for their ongoing advocacy for getting genocide recognised here in the ACT. While that fight is not over yet, I do not think I am wrong in saying there are many of us here in this chamber who are on your side.

I thank the petitioners for engaging with this Assembly and contributing to informed discussion on matters affecting our community in so many different topics.

Planning—Belconnen green waste facility—petitions 71-26 and 85-26
Canberra Institute of Technology—senior fitness programs—
petition 59-26
Hawker—tennis centre—petitions 8-26 and 30-26
GIO Stadium—current condition and future—petitions 35-26 and 60-26

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (10.51): I rise to present, in particular, my response to the lodgement of the North Canberra green waste facility petition, but I also have a handful of other petitions I would love to touch upon. The petition that I presented, supported by over 500 residents, regarding the proposed permanent relocation of the green waste facility currently in West Belconnen along Parkwood Road, particularly focused on the process that the government is undertaking and the transparency of that process and really demonstrating to our community that the most appropriate site has been chosen.

There is certainly universal support from the community to have a green waste disposal site in West Belconnen, in North Canberra—in that part of our city. Members would be aware that, at the moment, the site along Parkwood Road offers residents the opportunity to deposit their green waste free of charge—green waste that is then, of course, mulched, shredded and recycled for community purpose and purchase. It is a great facility, and I certainly do not want to see it disappearing from North Canberra. Members who were here back in 2021 might recall that I sponsored a petition that called on the government not to close the site and that, once that hit over 2,000 signatures, the government decided to not close it until they found an alternative site. So we are dragging the chain quite a bit.

There is genuine concern, particularly in Ginninderry and the surrounding farm areas, about whether the site currently along Parkhill Drive is the most appropriate site. The site under consideration has been presented to the community as the site chosen, but I think the community deserves proper disclosure on what other sites were examined; the environmental impacts; the traffic and transport pressures; the bushfire risk—the current proposal is in a very bushy area of West Belconnen; dust, noise and odour; the impact on surrounding land uses—as I mentioned, there is an adjacent farm which has raised some concerns about the location next to them and its impact on the quality of the water that they would be using; community amenity; and long-term strategic planning for North Canberra.

I think the community deserves to have a more transparent response from the government, and I certainly look forward to the government's response on this one. Then, subject to that response, I would certainly encourage the relevant committee, the environment and planning committee, who may choose to wait for the government response—as is standard practice, which I understand—or may just have a think about the petition itself and decide to do their own inquiry.

I would like to also talk about the response from Minister Pettersson yesterday to the petition regarding the closure of seniors classes at the CIT Bruce site. The minister's response was unsurprising but very disappointing. I quote: "There is currently no intention to restore the fit and wellness classes and facility access as requested in the petition." This is a really well-loved and supported seniors fitness program at the Bruce CIT that the government has decided to cut. I am exploring, as the minister would be aware, the reasons for that, the dollars that are being saved and what is really behind this change to deny our seniors in that part of our city—and some who come from elsewhere—the opportunity to participate in a recreational fitness activity. I do hope that the social policy committee, which I believe is looking at this petition and this government response, will consider an inquiry into what is available to our seniors in this space.

Time evades me, but the GIO Stadium response, the Hawker Tennis Centre response and other responses show that the government is lagging behind keeping up with our community's expectations.

Gungahlin—cinema—petition 16-26

School curriculum—Armenian, Assyrian and Greek genocide—petitions 13-26 and 62-26

Kaleen community hall—car park—petitions 37-26 and 63-26

Kaleen Indoor Sports Centre—closure—petitions 84-25 and 31-26

Roads—Plimsoll Drive, Casey—safety—petition 36-26

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (10.57): Firstly, I would like to speak to the government's response to the petition on the long-promised cinema in Gungahlin. This was originally released back in 2012, when it was promised to the community that they would get to enjoy the delights of a cinema. Yet here we are nearly 14 years later and all we have got is a fenced-off—not even a hole in the ground—just flat earth.

This was a case of the residents continuing to see no progress in this area. For a region that has experienced substantial population growth and continues to attract young families, this absence is increasingly difficult for us to justify. Gungahlin remains the only major town centre in Canberra without a cinema. The petition put forward a number of reasonable and constructive requests. These included greater transparency regarding the causes of the delay, a public update on the status of the development, consideration of all available mechanisms to ensure the lease obligations are met and a clear pathway forward for the site.

The government's response highlights a broader flaw in the existing legislative framework. At present there is no mechanism available to compel delivery of the cinema before the statutory compliance timeframes are reached. This is despite that

there have been written and agreed building caveat clauses in the contract with the developer. We cannot enforce them. We have no leverage until a period of five years of noncompliance has been reached. I have passed this on to the environment and planning committee, who are currently undertaking an inquiry into controlled activity orders, as an example of a limitation of our current legislative system and why we are not ensuring that land is being able to be utilised by the community for all.

The government's own response acknowledges there are unacceptable instances of land banking occurring across the territory, including with key commercial precincts such as Gungahlin. If the government is serious about addressing land banking and ensuring that the promised developments are delivered, they should bring forward those legislative reforms to strengthen lease enforcement powers and address this lease squatting. The current framework is clearly inadequate. I would like to acknowledge the many residents, the community advocates and the Gungahlin Community Council, who have continued to raise this issue and advocate for a cinema in Gungahlin.

I also would like to talk to the genocide recognition of World War I affecting the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek communities. This is something the community felt very strongly about and have advocated very hard for. I appreciate the government's response in terms of doing what it can to update the school curriculum to include recognition of this. This is important because we only learn if we teach people what happened in our past; otherwise, we are doomed to repeat history. I will also echo the community call in terms of that they really want to see recognition that a genocide occurred here in this Assembly, and that is something I will keep advocating for and seeing how that can become a reality.

I also want to call out two other petitions related to a local electorate. Firstly, the Kaleen Community Hall car park is only a gravel car park. It is seriously, let's just say, in danger of becoming a swimming pool. We nicknamed one of the puddles Lake Barb because it took up over 50 per cent of the car park. It was disappointing to see that we have not been able to see resolution of this issue in terms of creating a sealed car park in that location.

There was a second petition in terms of the Kaleen indoor sports centre, where unfortunately we are seeing a development that is going to see the closure of a very popular gym in the Kaleen area and a loss of so many amenities for the local community—fitness classes for seniors that are held there and other community activities that occur within that gym. Unfortunately, it has been replaced by a much smaller indoor sports centre than what is currently there, as we see development happening in terms of creating more residential areas.

Finally, there is Plimsoll Drive, Casey. It was good to see the government has committed to some improvements in the local area to improve the road safety of this area, and I thank the government for its cooperation there. It is unfortunate that it required a petition to be able to push forward with this one.

Paediatric Oncology and Haematology—proposed unit—petition 39-25

MRS MORRIS (Brindabella) (11.01): I would like to speak very briefly on the petition calling for a paediatric oncology and haematology unit in Canberra. I want to thank Ms

Lee for bringing this petition before the Assembly, the thousands of Canberrans who signed it and particularly Robyn, the principal petitioner, who has spoken very bravely about her own family's experiences as they deal with the trauma that comes with having a three-year-old child who is battling cancer.

Caring for a sick child is emotionally and physically exhausting, and it demands every single inch of your being to respond to. That comes even without the added complication, stress and expense of having to take an almost seven-hour return commute to Sydney to get life-saving care for your child. My heart breaks for Robyn and for any Canberra family who is currently navigating this situation and dealing with this trauma and stress.

I know from my own experience in dealing with a medical emergency for my baby girl that we felt like we were stranded in Sydney, and there were times when we were so shattered and overcome and overwhelmed just by the medical needs of our child that the thought of physically getting ourselves back home to Canberra seemed unbearable. How could you safely do that when you are so overcome by the needs of your child? It grieves me that there are so many families in Canberra who are dealing with that for their children, not just in response to a medical emergency but as a matter of routine as they seek ongoing treatment for their child.

I just think, as the nation's capital in Australia, surely we can do so much better for the families in Canberra who are caught in this situation. It is exactly for issues and reasons like this that it is so important that the ACT does have a strong economy and that we have a government who is financially responsible and who can manage a budget, because if you cannot do all these things, then you cannot deliver the life-saving services that Canberrans rely on. It is so important that we have a government of integrity, who acts with integrity, who manages the budget responsibly and who is not engaging in corrupt conduct and handing out taxpayers' money in corrupt deals, because Canberrans and Canberra families rely on these services, which, as it currently stands, seem almost impossible for this ACT government to afford.

This is the most important petition that has been brought to the Assembly. I thank Ms Lee for bringing it, and I hope it is given the attention that it deserves by this government.

Wombats—bare-nosed wombats—petitions 15-26 and 49-26

Page—footpaths and streetlighting—petition 72-26

Hawker tennis centre—petitions 8-26 and 30-26

Melba—proposed pump track—petition 68-26

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.04): I note that we have 48 petitions and government responses. Our community does not take a three-month break from the things they need from us and they need to tell us about, and this is why our parliament should not take a three-month break because then we have 48 petitions and responses and none of these issues will get the attention that they need.

I want to speak about a few of the petitions today. The save our wombats petition response has come back. The community is actually really pleased with this response. Government has actually listened to this petition. There were over 3,000 signatures

from Canberrans and 20,000 from across Australia on this petition. It looks like government has taken some really sensible steps. They will not be reclassifying wombats as a controlled native species. I would say there was a sudden upsurge in horror that that decision might be made, and I think that is where a petition this large suddenly pops up from. Government will be working with landholders on nonlethal ways to assist them to live with wombats on their properties and deal with some of the concerns being raised. I think that is also a really, really good approach. We should be supporting our farmers and our landholders, but that does not mean we should automatically be declaring that our wombats are a species that should be shot and killed. The government's response to that petition was actually really good, and I think the community is satisfied that the government is now taking that problem seriously and they will get a good result.

I want to speak briefly to a petition I have tabled calling for a footpath in Chewings Street in Page. There are so many people across Canberra who are calling for crossings and footpaths. We do not have the sorts of infrastructure that we need for people to walk and ride safely around our town. In Page there are a lot of older Canberrans living in this area in particular, and I think that is probably why this area has popped up. But I do just want to remind the government once again that we are asked on a daily basis for better footpaths, better basic infrastructure. We are seeing it across the board. This is brewing up in Victoria with the Labor government, who has not been doing some of their basic maintenance. We actually need to make sure that we are putting these really simple facilities in place for Canberrans. We certainly want to be doing it in a cost-of-living crisis when people frankly cannot afford to be driving everywhere and just need really good, easy ways to get around town and to go about their business.

I also want to mention the Hawker Tennis Centre petition, which was brought by my colleague, and has got 1,265 signatures. This is another one of these lease squatting issues—long-term lease squatting issues—that is causing huge concern for the local community. I played tennis with the Larkhams at that facility back last century. It has been destitute for over a decade now. It is way too long to leave that facility sitting there. There is now a committee inquiry looking into that specific site, six other specific sites and the sites that the community are bringing to us. We are very much looking forward to working with government to make sure we are getting quicker action on that. As our suburbs densify, it is really important that we get these community and recreational spaces back out to community and recreational use. As we have more people living here, we need to give them better facilities, and we need to maintain the facilities that we have and not allow developers and leaseholders to squat and keep a place, waiting just in case they are going to get some kind of profit down the road. Those facilities need to be back out in use as quickly as possible.

I also want to thank my colleague Chiaka Barry for bringing the pump track for Melba petition. I am really glad that it has got over 500 signatures. I think there are a lot of people in Canberra who are very enthusiastic about having pump tracks around. They are a great way to get out and get active. I think they had a real moment during COVID when people suddenly realised how much of a difference it really, really makes in the quality of life of people to have that hyperlocal infrastructure and those facilities right on your doorstep. They are exactly the right sort of thing that we should be supportive of doing at the moment. They cost very little, they are popular, they bring a huge amount of joy to the people who are using them and they fit in around our community spaces.

They are a really great use of what we have already, and we should be doing more of those kinds of really, really modest community-based sporting infrastructure and facilities. (*Extension of time granted.*)

I was pleased to meet with the save senior fitness programs at CIT Bruce, and I thank Mr Cain for bringing that petition, which has got over 600 signatures. I share Mr Cain's disappointment with the government's response there. We do understand the difference between public facilities and facilities that are not directly public facilities, but I think this program was providing enormous community benefit. It was providing enormous health and mental health benefits for a cohort of people whose health may actually deteriorate now. This is a very good example of where I think government is not taking seriously preventative health. We know that government understands that our hospital bills, our acute care and our emergency care are absolutely spiralling, increasing year on year on year. This has gone from 26 per cent of our budget to over a third of our budget and is increasing. We know that the former health minister Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith well understood this problem. She understood this during the fiscal sustainability committee. She told us that we needed to invest more in preventative health, but we do not seem to do it when the small, specific examples come our way.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Gaming—government gaming reform commitments—update Ministerial statement

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, and Minister for Gaming Reform) (11.11): Mr Speaker, I rise today to update the Assembly on the government's progress in delivering reforms to reduce gambling harm in the ACT. Today's reforms are for every person whose life has been broken, damaged or deeply affected by playing a poker machine, or by a family member or partner playing a poker machine.

For 20 years I have worked in gambling research and policy in Australia. For 20 years I have heard the personal stories of harm. I have heard the stories of fun with friends becoming deep addiction. I have heard the stories of families left behind by loved ones choosing suicide because they felt they had no way out. I have heard the stories of parents choosing to feed a poker machine over their children. I have heard the stories of drugs and loneliness and trauma leading people to the solace—or the dopamine hit—of a poker machine.

I have heard the stories of the young tradie who sells his tools, who steals from his parents. I have heard the stories of the partner who finds out all their money is gone; everything they have worked so hard for, gone. I have heard the stories about the lies that get told, the broken trust that destroys relationships. I have heard the stories of family generational wealth, all gone. One person may place the bet, but they are rarely the only person who pays the price. Today that changes.

Today I am announcing the most significant reform package in Australia to address gambling harm, most specifically the harm from poker machines. ACT Labor went to the last election with a bold reform agenda. Today I am putting on the parliamentary record our program to reduce gambling harm in the ACT.

The reform package addresses the short- and medium-term harm, with actions based on machines and venues, as well as legislating the long-term systemic change that is required over the next two decades.

The 2024 ACT gambling survey provides an evidentiary basis for the foundation of this work. The survey found that approximately one in six ACT adults, or 15.8 per cent of the population, had experienced at least some form of gambling harm. This includes harm arising from their own gambling, harm caused by another person's gambling, or ongoing impacts from gambling-related harm. That equates to more than 58,000 people in our community. The survey also identified poker machines as a significant source of gambling harm in the ACT.

The ACT Labor government's gambling harm reduction reform package includes: reducing EGM operating hours to address the heightened risk of gambling harm during the early hours of the morning; revolutionising the territory's self-exclusion scheme, making it easier for people to exclude themselves from gambling venues; introducing mandatory account-based cashless gaming, including banning EFTPOS transactions and ATM withdrawals in clubs that operate EGMs; continuing the reduction of gaming machine authorisations to 1,000 machines in the ACT by 2045; and delivering the government's leading independent inquiry into the future of the ACT clubs industry.

The reforms are not standalone measures. Rather, they form part of a coordinated gambling harm reduction program, with measures designed to complement and reinforce one another in reducing gambling harm and supporting a sustainable club sector that will move away from a reliance on gaming machine revenue.

I will now provide the Assembly with a detailed overview of the reforms being progressed.

In terms of the reduction of operating hours for EGMs, currently the ACT has one of the shortest EGM shutdown periods in the country. The ACT government recognises that this is not consistent with harm reduction. That is why, today, I will sign the Gambling and Racing Control (Code of Practice) Amendment Regulation, which will introduce longer shutdown periods for EGMs.

The amendment regulation extends the shutdown period of EGMs by an additional 15 hours a week, which provides for longer breaks in play than the current shutdown of five hours per day. This change reduces the hours that gaming machines can operate during the week and retains the later trading hours on Friday and Saturday nights. These longer shutdown periods will provide extended breaks in play and reduce the availability of gaming machines during times when the risk of harm may be higher. The new operating hours will commence on 1 July 2027. This transition period will support clubs to plan and prepare for the change. There is a body of compelling evidence that shows longer shutdown periods are protective against gambling harm. The change to operating hours is intended to prevent this harm experienced by individuals.

In terms of reform to the ACT's gambling exclusion framework, this afternoon I will introduce legislation to strengthen the legal framework underpinning gambling exclusion and licensees' risk response obligations in the ACT. The Gambling and

Racing Control (Gambling Exclusion) Amendment Bill will make it easier for people to choose to take a break from gambling by establishing a new statutory self-exclusion scheme, with clearer and more streamlined processes. People who want to self-exclude will no longer need to navigate the current complex process, which requires them to enter into a deed, including signing and having the deed witnessed in wet ink. These reforms are important because we know gambling harm is prevalent, and help-seeking, particularly through self-exclusion, remains low.

Importantly, the bill will also strengthen and clarify licensees' obligations by introducing new requirements that will place a clear, positive obligation on gambling licensees to take active steps to identify and respond to gambling harm. These reforms will make it clear that venues have an active role in identifying and responding to harm, rather than relying solely on the individuals to seek assistance themselves. Recent events in the ACT have demonstrated the need for greater clarity in these provisions, and we have been working to prioritise and address areas of ambiguity identified by ACAT. The reforms will place greater clarity for licensees, and strengthen consumer protections for people participating in gambling activities in the ACT.

The bill will also modernise the definition underpinning these obligations, and replace outdated concepts and language. The language we use is important. The current concept of problem gambling will be replaced with risk of gambling harm, supported by an updated evidence-based approach to identifying risk. Using the term "problem gambler" places the blame on the individual. Instead, the legislation will be reformed to talk about the risk of harm. It recognises that harm is caused by unsafe products, risky environments and industry practices.

Part of our election commitment relating to self-exclusion was also to explore a third-party exclusion model. The bill that will be introduced today will provide the legislative framework that a deed-based exclusion scheme did not, for the possibility of third-party exclusion. I note that, in the last fortnight, New South Wales has announced that they will also implement a third-party exclusion scheme. This is a complex policy area, so I will continue to work closely with the New South Wales government as the ACT continues to consider how a model could operate in our jurisdiction.

ACT Labor went to the 2024 election with a clear commitment to introduce mandatory account-based gaming in all venues in the ACT that operate EGMs. Since the election, we have extensively engaged with technology providers, the club industry, gambling harm reform advocates and other state and territory governments to inform the development of the legislation that is feasible within the current technological environment.

In October, I will present the Gaming Machine (Harm Prevention and Reduction) Amendment Bill, which will establish the legislative framework for mandatory account-based gaming in all venues with EGMs, accompanied by additional measures to reduce harm. This bill will also implement a ban on EFTPOS and ATM withdrawals in venues with EGMs. In October, once I have introduced the harm prevention and reduction bill, I will sign a notifiable instrument which will ban EFTPOS withdrawals in venues with EGMs.

The ban on ATMs requires legislative change and will commence 12 months after the

passage of the legislation. Banning ATM and EFTPOS withdrawals will reduce a person's immediate and convenient access to cash during gambling sessions, which will effectively act as a form of pre-commitment in itself.

Mandatory account-based gaming represents the core of ACT Labor's harm reduction agenda. People wishing to play EGMs in the ACT will be required to first set up an ID-verified account with a venue. They will then be issued a unique player account card. This player account card can then be loaded with funds for EGM use. Players will be required to set a maximum loss limit when they set up their account. A person's account will track their expenditure on EGMs within a venue and provide them with a clear picture of their gambling losses.

One aspect of the reform that has been limited by the advancements of technology is the mandated breaks in play. While a technology solution would have been in everyone's best interest, I am informed by the gambling industry that this is not a measure that is currently available. So, to address that, this bill will have measures in the code of practice to see clubs have a responsibility to work with patrons to take breaks.

The bill will also provide the necessary legislative architecture to enable additional requirements for licensees who transition to an updated network communications protocol, including QCOM which is happening in New South Wales, as industry standards evolve. This may include the requirement to implement digital wallet-based systems, similar to systems currently being trialled in New South Wales.

We know new gaming machines are more harmful and more addictive than the current ones. That is why this bill will future-proof the legislation and ensure that there are tighter harm reduction controls on more harmful machines in the future.

As part of the account-based cashless reforms—the work that will continue over the next two years—the ACT government will also conduct a review of the code of practice. This will allow the government to ensure the code is fit for purpose in the future, and ensure our reforms can be given their greatest effect.

The ACT government will also explore implementing a positive duty on gambling venues with EGMs, as far as practical, to prevent gambling harm in their venues. If venues want to operate machines that are known to cause significant harm in our community, there should be a greater onus on them to prevent that harm from occurring.

In exploring such a duty, which has been recommended through the ACAT inquiry, we have been exploring how it could be implemented here. The ACT government will learn from international experiences such as those in the UK, Ireland and Norway, which have already implemented positive duties to prevent gambling harm. I welcome the recent announcement by the New South Wales government on its reform package. It is also encouraging to see New South Wales moving in a direction that is closely aligned with the ACT's reform agenda. The New South Wales reforms reinforce the importance of the approach the ACT has been taking and demonstrating that there is growing momentum across jurisdictions to strengthen protections for people experiencing gambling harm. The ACT has been ahead of this curve in progressing these reforms and will continue to build on this work.

This bill will continue the territory's long-term trajectory of reducing the number of EGM authorisations to 1,000 by 2045. Gaming machine authorisations have steadily reduced in the ACT, from 4,946 since 2018, following the first surrender scheme known as the Pathway to 4,000. In 2022, a subsequent 70 gaming machine authorisations were voluntarily surrendered. Last year the government's voluntary EGM surrender program exceeded its target, resulting in the surrender of 296 gaming machine authorisations, which reduced the number of EGMs in the territory to below 3,500. I am proud of this progress and of the government's continued momentum behind the machine reduction agenda that will ultimately reduce access to machines over time.

This bill will build on a phased reduction scheme. The reduction will occur through a predictable pathway to achieve this target. By embedding a long-term reduction schedule in the statute books, the clubs industry will have a clear timeline to diversify their business away from a reliance on gaming machine revenue. The government will mandate that every four years there will be a reduction of no less than 500 EGM authorisations until we reach the target. Evidence shows that proximity to EGMs can be associated with higher participation rates of EGMs and higher rates of gambling harm. These reforms, over the long term, will reduce the accessibility of machines and therefore the harm.

I recognise that the reforms I have outlined will require clubs to adapt the way they operate, and diversify their sources of revenue. The transition is important to reducing reliance on gambling revenue while supporting the long-term sustainability of the club sector. The release of the final report from the independent inquiry into the future of the ACT clubs industry fulfilled the government's commitment to undertake an independent review and develop a plan to help clubs diversify their revenue and reduce their reliance on gaming income.

The independent clubs inquiry found that clubs play an important social, cultural and economic role in our community, but that reliance on gaming machine revenue is not sustainable. The inquiry made 24 recommendations to support clubs through this transition. The government's initial response to the inquiry is deliberately measured. As part of our response, the government has committed to establishing a joint clubs transition governance group to work with the sector on the inquiry's recommendations and identify practical opportunities to support clubs as they transition.

The government is also progressing practical measures to support diversification, including a clubs concierge service to assist clubs with planning and development matters. The government recognises the diversity in the characteristic zoning and provision of community and recreational facilities for club sites across the territory. The government, through the City and Environment Directorate, will lead work with all clubs on site-specific development opportunities on their land that will support their transition away from a reliance on gaming revenue. As part of this, CED will commence an expression of interest process later this year where clubs can propose rezoning—to permit residential, for example—to be included in an amendment to the Territory Plan where it achieves good planning outcomes and results in no net loss of community facilities.

These changes will be progressed through a major plan amendment initiated by the

Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development and facilitated by the Territory Planning Authority this term. The clubs participating will be required to enter a deed to ensure that the amendments result in a reduction of poker machines and ensure that future development includes ongoing access to community facilities.

Alongside this work, the government is considering options for how clubs can be supported to manage increases in rates or charges, including lease variation charges, resulting from land re-evaluation associated with developments or lease variations. This will ensure alignment when new facilities enabled by these zoning changes are operational.

The government is also considering legislative changes which would streamline planning approvals, and support the expansion of events for clubs to fast-track their diversification pathways by allowing development applications to be submitted whilst the major plan amendment process is underway, and allow temporary site uses and activation when there is a demonstrated community benefit—that is, to expand events, conferencing, hospitality and community uses without needing to vary their lease; therefore without attracting lease variation charges. This work, alongside the inquiry's recommendations, is about giving clubs practical pathways to diversify their revenue, reduce their reliance on gaming, and remain sustainable community institutions into the future.

In conclusion, the reforms announced today represent a very significant step in the ACT government's long-term commitment to reducing gambling related harm in the ACT. Together, measures—including mandatory account-based cashless gaming, a progressive reduction in EGM authorisations, reduced operating hours, and a strengthened gambling exclusion framework—form a cohesive program of reform designed to reduce gambling harm and strengthen protections for those who may be at risk or are experiencing harm.

The government recognises that these reforms will change the operating environment for the ACT club sector. As we progress this long-term reform agenda, we will work with clubs to support a considered transition through the joint clubs transition governance group and other measures to assist clubs to diversify and reduce their reliance on EGM revenue.

I would like to thank the many stakeholders who have contributed to this work over the past couple of years, including people with lived experience of gambling harm, community organisations and advocates, and the ACT club sector. I look forward to continuing this important work with the ACT community as we progress the next phase of the government's gambling harm reduction agenda.

I present a copy of the statement:

Update on gambling reform commitments—Update—Ministerial statement,
15 September 2026.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong) (11.30): I rise to make some comments in response to the minister's statement on gambling reform. Gambling reform is an issue that has been debated extensively in this place for well over a decade, and rightly so. The evidence of harm is overwhelming. As the minister outlined, the latest ACT Gambling Survey found that while overall participation in gambling has declined, the harms associated with gambling remain stubbornly persistent.

More than half of ACT adults, 53.2 per cent, reported gambling in the previous year, and almost one in six adults experienced some form of gambling harm. That equates to around 58,000 Canberrans experiencing the real impacts on their finances, their relationships, their wellbeing and their quality of life. Poker machines alone account for about one-third of the harm experienced by people who gamble, and it is very alarming to see that gambling revenue is increasing, up from \$188 million in 2022-23 to \$202.6 million in 2025-2026. So to all of you in this chamber and outside it who say that there has been too much reform and clubs are becoming less profitable, I ask you to explain these figures.

It has been a real struggle to get reform in this area. We acknowledge that there were significant disagreements about how to best progress change in the previous term of this Assembly. As a result, we have not seen the progress that many of us would have hoped for. I will once again note that the proposals put forward by Minister Rattenbury, which were not supported, would have provided a pathway to significantly stronger safeguards on poker machines, a product that we know is designed to keep people playing and losing money.

Given that history, it is important to say plainly that, while the minister has outlined some worthwhile reforms, and while there are certainly steps in the right direction, those of us who have long argued for meaningful action to reduce gambling harm are entitled to feel somewhat underwhelmed. If we are claiming that these are Australia's most significant gaming reforms, maybe it is because there is so much reform that is needed after decades of inertia, or maybe it is because the focus on merely reducing pokie numbers has done little to effectively regulate a product that we know is harmful.

In summary, the actions coming out of this announcement are reduced hours, but a lesser reduction than what was agreed to and announced by cabinet in 2024; an upcoming reform of the self-exclusion regimen; and a re-announcement of Labor's election commitment regarding account-based play and machine number reductions, although the commitment about mandatory breaks in play will be left to clubs to enforce.

Let us start with venue operating hours. In 2024, the Chief Minister publicly announced a reduction in gambling venue operating hours, with venues to close between 2 am and 10 am. What has emerged now is a much weaker proposal, with extended trading hours retained on weekends and implementation delayed until 2027. Anyone who has doubted the influence of the gambling industry need only to look at this backdown. Let us be clear, nothing good happens in a poker machine venue at 3 o'clock in the morning.

Delaying these reforms and watering down previous commitments represents a capitulation to industry pressure and a betrayal to the community that expects stronger

action on gambling harm. It would be useful for the minister to explain why the government is no longer implementing a shutdown between 2 am and 10 am across the board.

I have some sympathy for the minister in relation to the challenges associated with implementing mandatory account-based cashless gaming. She has inherited a difficult policy environment and an industry that has resisted meaningful reform at every turn. However, the industry using technology difficulties as a way to delay reform is not surprising. The ACT Greens would once again suggest that looking at solutions such as a central monitoring system should once again be on the table. If we are to move to account-based gaming, we need to find ways to use technology that has already been introduced by industry. I think the claim that technology cannot support breaks in play needs testing. Anyone who has tried to use an application and has been locked out of their account for a time period knows that this is a pretty common and basic technology in other parts of our life.

Pre-commitment measures are good, but one has to question how effective they will be without a linked system that allows for people who have multiple accounts with multiple amounts pre-committed. Removing ATMs and EFTPOS cash withdrawal facilities from gambling venues is also good. This builds on reforms from a decade ago, which were hard fought and difficult to achieve. With a move to account-based gaming, however, it is questionable what the material impact will be.

Moving to a public exclusion scheme administered through the Gambling and Racing Commission is good. Frankly, it has always been absurd that we have expected people experiencing gambling harm to walk back into the gambling venues and ask those venues to exclude them. The move toward third-party exclusions is also welcome. However, the fact that we do not have a linked system renders the impact muted.

It is also good to see the beginning of an exploration about positive obligation and duty of care. Recent tribunal decisions have laid bare the need to do more work in this area, but this work is urgent and needs to be prioritised. We also need to recognise the significant shortcomings in this reform package. A system that allows people to obtain cards across multiple venues weakens the effectiveness of reforms. A break-in-play system that relies on manual intervention and is practically impossible to monitor is not a robust harm minimisation measure, and the abandonment of daily loss limits is deeply disappointing.

The measures outlined today will help, but they fall well short of the reforms that many experts have argued are necessary. The centrepiece of Labor's gambling reform agenda remains the reduction of poker machine numbers. The ACT Greens support reducing machine numbers. It matters, and it will reduce harm. The gambling survey found that two-thirds of Australian adults support further reductions in pokies. However, we continue to note that the pace of the reduction is far slower than what the evidence suggests is needed. We are still waiting too long to reach machine numbers that are likely to make a substantial difference to the levels of gambling harm.

Over recent years we have seen poker machine numbers reduce significantly, and yet poker machine revenue has increased. The latest data shows that Canberrans are losing record amounts from poker machines, over \$200 million just last year. Reducing poker

machines alone just does not work. As Mr Emerson said the other day, we do not see people queuing for poker machines.

Ultimately, gaming reform is not simply about reducing machine numbers or changing venue hours; it is about planning for a future where clubs are no longer dependent on gambling losses as a business model. Clubs will need to pivot away from gambling revenue. They will need to transition away from poker machine revenue. It is essential for their long-term sustainability, and it is essential if we are serious about protecting the community from harm.

While it has been important to have the conversation about how to support the industry's transition, it is also important that we now expand the conversation to include a discussion about how we support community sport and activity that has been dependent on pokie revenue, with the decision to essentially outsource the funding of these activities to the gambling industry by governments. That is why I look forward to further conversations about the community contribution scheme and other measures that can future-proof support for community support, local organisations and clubs.

The reality is that gambling harm is not inevitable; it is a result of policy choices, and if one in six Canberrans is experiencing gambling harm, we cannot pretend that the job is done. The reforms announced by the government deserve acknowledgement where they represent genuine progress. But they should also be recognised for what they are: they are an incomplete response to a significant public health challenge. The ACT government expects us to stand up to the influence of a powerful industry and continue to push for stronger reform, and that is what the ACT Greens will continue to do.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (11.40): I rise to respond to the minister's statement and to express my disappointment with it. I recognise that gambling harm absolutely occurs and, when it does, it is devastating. I have seen it and lived through it, to a certain degree. I know that, if someone is determined, the reduction of machines does not stop them. There are many ways for those people to access whatever they need to help that addiction, if you like.

I do not, however, believe that this reform is going to address the gambling harm. What I do believe it will do is push problem gamblers outside the territory's jurisdiction—either to venues across the border or online. Once those gamblers are outside the territory's jurisdiction, our ability to monitor, intervene and provide support is basically non-existent, which could actually exacerbate gambling harm for those displaced from the ACT.

The minister is very keen to describe this reform as “nation-leading”, but it is actually a reminder that Labor, federally and in the ACT, is putting their thumb on the scale and pushing gamblers from pubs, clubs and other local venues to online, where the restrictions and the protections are much less onerous. I do not know if the Labor Party is doing this as a deliberate, coordinated effort to advantage multinational gambling companies at the expense of local clubs, but that is the effect of what they are doing.

The end result of this reform will not be an end to gambling harm in the ACT; it will be the displacement of it. In doing so, it will put at risk the viability of one of our few successful local industries. It will put them at risk because it takes away their main

source of revenue before an alternative can be locked in. Remember, Labor promised a club of the future at last year's election, yet what have we heard of that since? In two years, the minister has said almost nothing about it—perhaps because the government knows that a club of the future is simply unviable.

I will look more closely at the minister's housing proposals, but I am sceptical. Frankly, if the government was serious about addressing housing supply and affordability, they would not be tying housing policy to gaming policy. It seems quite likely that we will end up with reform that hurts clubs and fails to deliver them with a sustainable alternative revenue source. That puts the future of pubs and clubs at risk. We could end up losing an industry that does a whole lot for our community.

After all, our ACT clubs support community groups. They support sports teams. They support thousands of Canberrans with safe, secure, well-paid jobs. Just as importantly, they provide a place where Canberrans, including the underemployed, older people and our migrant communities, come together for an affordable meal and an enjoyable night out with their families and friends. Those are the people who once depended on Labor to protect and improve their lives.

When we put clubs at risk, we put all of those benefits at risk as well. We are not even putting clubs at risk to solve the problem of gambling harm; we are simply putting them at risk to displace the problem so that someone else can deal with it. The minister, despite all her years of advocacy—and I recognise she has done a lot of work in this space—I believe has the wrong target with this reform. The target should be gambling harm, not the number of poker machines.

MR PARTON (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (11.44): I rise to respond to the statement from the “Minister for Closing Clubs”. I know that we are going to have a substantive debate on a number of things in this space—we have got legislation that is coming, so we are going to have an extended debate on a lot of things. I do not intend to respond to the entire statement. I just want to pick on one thing that I feel the need to respond to this morning.

The minister is steadfast in her commitment to moving to account-based cashless gaming. She speaks in her statement about mandatory account-based cashless gaming and that it represents the core of the ACT's latest harm reduction agenda—that people wishing to play at EGMs in the ACT will be required to first set up an ID-verified account with a venue, and they will then be issued a unique player account card, and on we go. So my question, initially, is this: if we are steadfastly pursuing account-based cashless gaming reforms, why are we getting rid of ATMs?

It is almost as though the minister is standing here and saying, “Well, my commitment is to go down the path of establishing account-based cashless gaming reforms, but I am well aware of the fact that I am a part of the same government that kind of stuffed up MyWay+ and stuffed up HRIMS”—and that has been promising to deliver digital licences for almost as long as they have been promising a stadium. So although she is standing here and saying she is committed to doing cashless gaming, I am not sure that she believes in her capacity to deliver. Because if, indeed, we are going to establish account-based cashless gaming reforms, I just need to understand why it is that we are targeting ATMs.

There has also been a fair bit of discussion, obviously, about diversification. I spoke on the radio this morning about the example involving the Magpies in Belconnen, who made the call that this was going to be a very difficult space for them to remain in, and they got out. They, of course, used to have the venue at Kippax; they used to have the venue in the city, and they made the call to diversify.

I am balancing this against the fact that I was at Vikings at Erindale after I got kicked out of the emergency department at the hospital on Saturday night, and it was chock-a-block—absolutely chock-a-block. When we first went in there without a booking to get a table, they did not know whether they could squeeze us in, but they did eventually. There were lots of families and lots of sporting groups, couples and all sorts of people who were enjoying the club atmosphere at Vikings at Erindale. There was a guy delivering a musical set with a guitar, and it was just wonderful to see a bunch of kids that were dancing around in front enjoying that. It was a sensational atmosphere at Vikings.

Let's go back to the Magpies: they got rid of their clubs and they decided to continue to support the football club by buying warehouses. That is what they have done. They have got a stack of warehouses. No-one is going to those warehouses with their families. They are not. They are not actually congregating. There is no social cohesion out of that. We do not have musicians that are playing songs at those warehouses, and we certainly do not have kids dancing to those songs.

I think we really need to consider what it is that we are trashing—because we are trashing it. We have had club closures in the last 12 months, and I think it is absolutely inevitable that there will be more to come. There is a lot of substantive debate to come on this. I just wanted to make the point about the ATMs. It is pleasing to hear the words from Ms Castley. Ms Vassarotti and I rarely agree in this space and today is not one of those occasions either! That is my say.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (11.49): I will have a go as well. I would like to welcome the minister's commitment to introduce the nation-leading harm reduction reforms. This is welcome, and on the whole—and I will go into some details—I think it is a strong package and something that we should be welcoming as a community.

I would also acknowledge that I am sure she has experienced a fair bit of industry pushback on the way to getting to today's announcement, based on some of the pushback I have started receiving since even just speaking about issues in this space, as well as in relation to my bill seeking to ban political donations from the gambling industry. So I am pleased that we are hearing of this announcement and look forward to seeing further detail in the bills to be introduced.

I welcome the minister's commitments to introduce a new self-exclusion mechanism, replacing an outdated, essentially paper-based, system that makes it far harder to self-exclude than to continue gambling. This is something that does need to be addressed, and I am glad to hear it will be. I also welcome the mandatory account-based cashless gaming that will be introduced, although I think Mr Parton raises a valid question. It is unclear why ATM withdrawals and EFTPOS withdrawals would need to be banned if the government is committed to cashless gaming. I do not have a problem

with people paying for their chicken parmi with cash. I look forward to hearing the rationale for this.

I am glad the government will be reducing game machine authorisations. I think there is incredibly strong community support across the ACT for having fewer poker machines in our community, but I also note that the rate of 500 per term of government is painstakingly slow. Again, I reiterate research from ANU that has indicated that this will have no harm reduction impact until we hit 2,000 machines, which will not be for another three terms—so three more terms of government until this particular measure actually leads to any harm reduction, according to their research.

We know there is absolutely a strong public mandate for ambitious and urgent gambling reform in the ACT, and while there have been some contrary remarks from some members, there is strong support—or majority support at least—across the Assembly for such reform. It follows, then, that any decisions to step back from ambitious reforms reflects an ACT Labor party policy that has been shaped, in some way along the way, by gambling industry influences rather than reflecting the views of the broader community that we are here to represent.

I recently conducted a community survey on gambling reform in the ACT, which received over 500 responses. I was sure to pay to boost the survey on social media to reach people who do not normally follow what I am up to, and it did capture the views of Canberrans who do not ordinarily follow or engage with the work of my office. Based on some of the responses we got, it was clear that not every respondent wanted to see government involvement in what is happening in pokies venues across the ACT, and some were quite upset I was even conducting the survey. But, on the whole, it did show overwhelmingly strong community support for strong gambling harm reduction measures in the ACT. Eighty-four per cent of respondents supported mandatory gaming room closures from 2 am to 10 am. Thirty-two per cent of them thought that closure periods should go even further than that. I understand Ms Vassarotti reflected on this. The original closure time committed to in 2024 was from 2 am to 10 am, seven days per week.

As the minister indicated this morning, there is a body of compelling evidence that shows longer shutdown periods are protective against gambling harm, with late night EGM use associated with increased risk of gambling harm. I think Ms Vassarotti is right to point out, and surely we can all agree, that people visiting clubs to play poker machines at 3 am, or even 9 am, are some of the most vulnerable cohorts to gambling harm.

So I am curious to understand why the government's policy has been watered down from that original commitment to now being 2 am to 9 am on Fridays, 4 am to 9 am on Saturdays, and 4 am to 10 am on Sundays—particularly the 10 am shift to 9 am. A 10 am opening time was too much to ask it seems. That is alarming to me—that there was enough pushback to say, “No, we need to be open at 9 am on weekends because that 9 am to 10 am opening window is really critical for our viability.” It does not seem to have been done to reflect evidence or the will of our community.

My survey also found that 77 per cent of respondents supported lowering bet limits for poker machines and 72 per cent supported introducing maximum loss limits of no more

than \$100 per day per person for poker machines. It is unclear from today's announcement whether the maximum \$100 per day loss limit that I understand the government has been consulting on will be imposed, or if there will be any mandatory upper limit at all. I look forward to seeing the details on that and debating them in this chamber.

I do want to acknowledge the planning reforms flagged in the minister's statement today. Pushing gaming venues to diversify while maintaining roadblocks that keep them from doing so is a problem. I think this does need to be addressed. I am aware of multiple examples of this just in my electorate of Kurrajong, where venues—whether they currently have poker machines or have already gotten rid of all of their poker machines—are attempting to develop land to put housing, as a way out of this, and to provide a kind of pro-social contribution to our community in place of those gaming machines, and they are really struggling to do so from a viability perspective. So I think this is something that should be acknowledged and addressed urgently so that the barrier to diversification is dissolved as soon as possible, rather than it being used as a reason to delay proper implementation of these measures into the distant future.

It would be remiss of me in these remarks not to mention the associated entity of the ACT Labor Party, which is the Canberra Labor Club, which appeared again on its annual returns that have just recently been released. The minister has announced—and there has been some criticism, to be fair—a significant package of reforms calling for clubs to reduce their structural reliance on gaming machine venues, but the Canberra Labor Club itself has really struggled to do this. The Electoral Act defines an associated entity as one that is controlled by or operates, completely or to a significant extent, for the benefit of the party. The Canberra Labor Club is listed as such. It currently holds over 400 gaming machine licenses. I think people will rightly be asking, “Is there actually a commitment that we will see at some point soon to sever that tie?” Until that occurs, there will be questions asked across our community about whether the government is willing to sever those ties with vested interests in this area. There is a long history there, of course, and it is a confusing one.

On the back of today's announcement, it is clear, I think, that the government does need to come to the table to pass reforms and to negotiate reforms that reflect the expectation of the strong majority of Canberrans. I do look forward to engaging constructively on that front across the Assembly, and I really do hope that what occurs alongside this package, whether it is this year or next, is a severing of financial ties between political parties and the gambling industry in this town.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, and Minister for Gaming Reform) (11.57), in reply: I have some closing remarks. Firstly, I would like to thank all the members for their input today. It is really exciting to finally be at this point and to be able to debate these things in the Assembly.

I do want to make a few comments to Ms Vassarotti. I very strongly reject the assertion that we have been influenced and that the opening hours have been watered down. These shutdown periods will exceed the national average and be the longest shutdown periods on average across a week in any jurisdiction. So I reject that. By Mr Emerson's own criteria that he put on the table last week, the mere fact that I am introducing these

reforms today exempts me from influence.

I would also like to speak to Ms Castley's and Ms Vassarotti's comments. There was a bit of whiplash there, with one saying we are going too far and the other saying we are not going far enough. On the machine reductions, we have aimed to hit a middle ground. I think that suggests we have.

With the account-based gaming, to answer Mr Parton's question, I would recommend that Mr Parton go to the casinos, Crown casino or Star casino, or go to one of the venues within New South Wales—Ramsgate is one that I have been to to look at their card-based gaming system. The way that it works is that you establish an account, you have a card, you put the card into the machine and then you load the cash onto the card. This is a form of cashless gaming, but it still requires cash to load onto your account-based card. It is for that reason that it is still important to see ATM and EFTPOS withdrawals banned from venues.

As I said in my speech, part of the reforms that we will be progressing will see a future-proofing of the legislation for new technology. For example, New South Wales is progressing to a QCOM operating system of machines. If ACT venues would like to progress to move to this new operating system, they will need to move to more advanced technology in terms of digital wallets, which will provide for completely cashless gaming.

Again, I thank members for their input today, and I really look forward to the process over the coming months as debate on these issues continues.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

ACT Ambulance Service—station closures—order to table documents

Documents tabled

Pursuant to standing order 213A, and the resolution of the Assembly of 25 March 2026, the Clerk presented the following documents:

ACT Ambulance station closures—Documents—Order to table—Copy of—

Transmittal letter from the Head of Service, ACT Government to the Acting Clerk, undated.

Index of returned documents.

Interpretation of Scope.

Privilege not claimed on documents—Letter to the Acting Clerk from the Chief Minister, dated 24 June 2026.

Returned documents (1 Folder) (see Appendix 1).

Budget management system—order to table documents

Documents tabled

Pursuant to standing order 213A, and the resolution of the Assembly of 12 June 2026,

the Clerk presented the following documents:

Budget initiatives—Documents—Order to table—Copy of—

Transmittal letter from the Acting Head of Service, ACT Government to the Acting Clerk, dated 10 July 2026.

Index of returned documents.

Interpretation of scope.

Privilege claimed on certain documents—Letter to the Acting Clerk from the Acting Chief Minister, dated 10 July 2026.

Returned documents—

Budget initiatives excluding initiatives with amounts not for publication—
Spreadsheet (CMTEDD 1.1).

Budget initiatives with amounts that are not for publication—Spreadsheet
(CMTEDD 1.2).

RSPCA—ACT—order to table documents

Documents tabled

Pursuant to standing order 213A, and the resolution of the Assembly of 28 May 2026, the Clerk presented the following documents:

Animal welfare management data—Order to table—Copy of—

Transmittal letter from the Acting Head of Service, ACT Government to the Acting Clerk, dated 13 July 2026.

Index of returned documents.

Interpretation of scope.

Privilege claimed on certain returned documents—Letter to the Acting Clerk from the Chief Minister, dated 13 July 2026.

Returned documents (4 Folders) (see Appendix 2).

Amendment to order

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

That this Assembly

(1) notes that:

- (a) pursuant to the resolution of the Assembly of 28 May 2026 in relation to animal welfare management data records, documents were returned to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly under Standing Order 213A on 13 July 2026.
- (b) documents provided to the Clerk under this standing order are taken to have been authorised for publication by the Assembly;
- (c) it was subsequently identified that several approved targeted redactions required correction; and
- (d) the incorrect documents have been replaced.

- (2) withdraws its authorisation to publish those identified documents and approves their removal from the records.

North Canberra Hospital—order to table documents

Documents tabled

Pursuant to standing order 213A, and the resolution of the Assembly of 10 June 2026 the Clerk presented the following documents:

North Canberra Hospital redevelopment—Documents—Order to table—Copy of—

Transmittal letter from the Acting Head of Service, ACT Government to the Acting Clerk, dated 17 July 2026.

Index of returned documents.

Interpretation of Scope.

Privilege claimed on certain returned documents—Letter to the Acting Clerk from the Chief Minister, dated 17 July 2026.

Returned documents (4 Folders) (see Appendix 3).

ACT public service—order to table documents

Documents tabled

Pursuant to standing order 213A, and the resolution of the Assembly of 11 June 2026, the Clerk presented the following documents:

ACT Public Service workforce redundancies—Documents—Order to table—Copy of—

Transmittal letter from the Acting Head of Service, ACT Government to the Acting Clerk, dated 17 July 2026.

Index of returned documents.

Interpretation of Scope.

Privilege claimed on certain documents—Letter to the Acting Clerk from the Chief Minister, dated 17 July 2026.

Returned documents (1 folder) (see Appendix 4).

Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT—Select Committee

Final report

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (12.03), by leave: I present the following report:

Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT—Select Committee—Report 2—*Final Report—Inquiry into the Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT*, dated 18 August 2026, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings.

The report was circulated to members on 26 August 2026, pursuant to standing order 254C. I move:

That the report be noted.

This is the second and final report of the Select Committee on the Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT for the Eleventh Assembly. The Assembly established the committee on 4 December 2025. The committee received 24 submissions and held five public hearings. Witnesses took 39 questions on notice. A feature of the inquiry was the appointment of Mr Saul Eslake, who conducted a thorough analysis of the ACT's economic and fiscal position. His interim and final reports gave the committee a strong platform for the inquiry.

The 26 recommendations addressed topics including the government's processes for financial management, making federal financial relations fairer for the ACT, and improving decisions around infrastructure. The report also made 15 findings. These include that, based on the information available in the 2025-26 financial year, the ACT's financial position is not sustainable. The committee found that the budget deterioration has been driven by government policy decisions.

We thank the people and organisations who took time to write submissions and appear at hearings for their significant contributions to this inquiry. I thank the ongoing members of the committee, Mr Cocks and Ms Carrick, and I thank Ms Tough, who was a member for almost the entire inquiry, and Mr Werner-Gibbins MLA, who assisted us towards the end. It was a really difficult report to pull together across party lines, and I genuinely thank my colleagues for their collaborative input into that report. The committee notes that important decisions await the government, and we trust that this inquiry and report will inform these decisions. Accordingly, I commend the report to the Assembly.

I want to make some remarks, not in my capacity as committee chair, but in my capacity as a Greens member for Ginninderra and leader of the Greens. The Greens and the Canberra Liberals pulled this committee together last December because we were worried that the ACT government was failing to provide the services that Canberrans need. We were also worried that we were not getting our fair share of commonwealth revenue. The committee found that the ACT budget was not sustainable. It also found that the budget has deteriorated sharply since 2024. The ACT government has been spending more money than it raises, and it has not been transparent about where and how it spends that money.

The ACT has failed to receive our fair share of commonwealth revenue. In September 2025, the Assembly agreed to my call to seek fifty-fifty funding on large projects. The government has taken steps to progress this, but our committee found that there is still a lot of work to do in that area. The ACT government did not seek commonwealth funds for a dive pool with the new Canberra aquatic centre, nor for the arts elements of the now indefinitely deferred Kingston arts precinct. The new national health deal is better than the previous one, but it still falls short of our costs.

The ACT government did not bid for a single public home in round 1 of the Housing Australia Future Fund. The former minister told our committee that government did not know that they could bid. The ACT government signed up for the commonwealth-funded Specialist Disability Accommodation, then deregistered without receiving a dollar. Unlike South Australia and Tasmania, the ACT will receive

no waiver for our historic housing debt, and we will pay more in interest than that debt itself is worth.

Our commonwealth municipal services payments do not keep up with inflation. Our allocation of GST revenue undercounts our population. We are missing out on over half a billion dollars each year because we cannot collect payroll tax on commonwealth public servants. That applies to all states but, unlike any other jurisdiction, that affects 42 per cent of our workforce here in the ACT, including many of our highest-paid positions and many of our executives.

The committee found that the ACT government has no coordinated process to find and seek commonwealth funding, so the ACT is missing out. We often do not know how much we are losing, and we often do not ask for the funds.

The ACT government is an island in New South Wales. We provide significant services to interstate residents, but we do not receive a fair contribution for this. The ACT government only recently sought a contribution for New South Wales students in our ACT schools. That happened because I asked the ACT government to do that in parliament. We get a contribution for New South Wales patients that make up 20 per cent of our hospital admissions, but that contribution falls far short of our costs.

Our most obvious funding source, our best and easiest new funding source, is clearly from the commonwealth. We also have some opportunities here, though, to raise revenue. We could also save money here. There has been a lot of commentary about what the options are to save money. The Greens have put up one very simple suggestion: how about not giving another \$40 million or \$50 million to the horseracing industry outside any procurement or grant process? That is one really easy saving. That industry gets more than the entire professional and community sporting sector combined.

There was another great suggestion that Saul Eslake highlighted in his report: ACT could raise gambling taxes to the national average. We are taxing below the national average on that harmful industry. The ACT government could revisit the tax breaks that we give to the private sector, like our highest-paying private schools and the airport.

There are quite a lot of areas, and it is important that government does this work. We have seen government make a lot of decisions and announcements; then, a few years or a decade later, they wind those back. This is really worrying people. When you bid for big, flashy, new capital works projects that you clearly have not done the legwork on, ahead of an election, and when you take the public service from 24,000 to 30,000—I agree; we think more public servants is a great idea to deliver more public services—and immediately start doing voluntary redundancies to reduce it again, we get worried that you do not have a clear plan about what it is that you are doing.

It is really important that we both raise more revenue, particularly from the commonwealth, and look very carefully at what we are spending our money on, because we need more investment in housing, climate and community services. More upstream investment will take care of our people now, and it will also avoid the higher costs that we will incur in the future.

That is not what we are seeing, though. The ACT government has delayed key investments that would reduce climate emissions, like light rail and more frequent buses. Our committee did not look at the long-term costs of failed climate action, but we know that they are extreme. People understand this.

The public housing waitlist has grown from around 3,000 to over 3,600 households just in this term, and it is still rising. Homelessness is one of Canberra's great shames. It comes at a high financial cost as well as enormous human cost. The ACT government right now is spending over \$40,000 per person per year to provide extra services for someone who is homeless. We spend that money whilst keeping them homeless.

Last budget, the ACT government cut the Rent Relief Fund, which was a tiny fund that helped thousands of people to keep their homes. The ACT government cut that, whilst spending \$40,000 per person to keep someone homeless. The government has agreed to restore access under the Housing Crisis Support Fund. The last time I checked, we were still waiting for that fund to be up and running again.

Our health costs are rising. The minister agreed that investing more in preventive health would take the pressure off our acute services, but the ACT government is not tracking or investing properly in that preventive health care.

Canberrans are already protesting about a lack of frontline services. For the first time in almost 15 years, Canberrans are taking major industrial action on education. We are seeing strikes in health services. The state of the sector report shows our community sector is still on the brink of collapse, and that was before the commonwealth government NDIS cuts.

Over 3,000 people have objected to cuts in library services. The services that you are providing—those frontline services—are not meeting the needs of Canberrans, and Canberrans are telling you this. It is not politicians like me who are saying this; it is the community and the workers that you employ who are telling you this, really clearly.

The ACT government, as I mentioned, is now reducing public service positions. We heard a lot of generic public announcements that the ACT government would not cut frontline services. When we dug into the detail on that, and we said, "Which jobs are you cutting and how many frontline services are there?" the ACT government was not counting. The ACT government said, "We won't cut frontline services," but in actual fact the ACT government does not know whether it is cutting frontline services. When you close the library because you do not have enough librarians, that is the clearest example we can give you of cutting a frontline service.

We are now seeing voluntary redundancies roll out. I am still waiting for the details on this. I think we have some more information on this being tabled today, but I cannot see, from the inquiries we have made so far, that the ACT government is making sure that frontline services are not part of that VR round.

We want to see the plan that you have to make sure that these changes will not have a direct impact on our community, and we have not yet seen that plan. The government is not setting the right priorities, and the Greens are really worried about this. We are worried about our community right now. We are worried about our community's ability

to be looked after when there are future shocks.

We have seen COVID and climate change disasters. We are seeing fires and floods, and hail and smoke. We are seeing increasing global disruptions to our supply chains. We are concerned that you are not taking the steps that you need to take to look after our community.

We need to prioritise community care. We need really careful resource management. We need the government to think very carefully before they bowl up big capital works projects—and it is primarily the Labor government that is bowling these up. It is not other parties here who have been leading the charge on that. It is before elections that Labor comes out with these big capital works projects, and it often comes out with them without having done the work.

We remember the stadium. We have just seen what happened to the Tuggeranong ice facility. The work has not been done before you are making these promises, and people are getting tired of it. We need better advocacy and better delivery from both our ACT and commonwealth governments, and our people expect our commonwealth Labor reps to be getting us our fair share of commonwealth revenue. This is what they expect from their representatives.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (12.15): This is a landmark report at the conclusion of an inquiry that Labor never wanted. It is a landmark report, not because it contains new claims or major new revelations in a lot of ways; we, on this side of the chamber, have been trying to warn about a lot of what is stated in the report for well over a decade and a half. In a statement that could have been written this year, Canberra Liberal members of the 2010 estimates committee observed this:

The Government is responsible for managing spending. Despite record revenues it is planning to deliver record deficits. The long list of cost blow outs, mismanagement, inefficiencies and poor priorities grows every year...

They warned:

The refusal again by a number of Ministers to answer basic questions about what actually makes up the budget means that much of the wasteful expenditure in this budget will only become apparent as the year goes on.

That was 16 years ago. It has been 16 years and the pattern has continued. It has been 16 years and the government has dug us deeper and deeper into debt. Sixteen years ago, the government was not in net debt. The budget position that the current Chief Minister inherited when he became Treasurer was one of net credit. Today we are looking down the barrel of a billion-dollar-a-year interest bill alone, which is well over 25 per cent of the ACT's entire own sourced taxation. That has impacts.

What is different today is not the approach of the government; what is different today is that Labor can no longer deny the reality. Labor can no longer dismiss the warnings, because this report—the final report—is a multipartisan report from a committee with representatives from across the chamber and a report to which two Labor members contributed. It was unanimously supported by members of the committee. There was no dissent.

This is a landmark report and it lays bare the extent to which Labor has betrayed the trust of Canberrans—the trust that Canberrans placed in them to manage the territory budget and the finances responsibly. Despite more than a decade of promises of surpluses and service improvements, this multipartisan committee reached the unavoidable conclusion that the budget position is not sustainable, and responsibility for that deterioration rests entirely with the government and the choices that it made. The government has chosen to increase spending faster than the revenue it had available to pay for it. It has run persistent operating deficits, and the independent economist that the committee engaged concluded that the government has effectively made future generations pay for the entire cost of long-lived infrastructure.

You can have a debate around the proportion that current generations should pay versus future generations, but surely this government should be bearing the responsibility of paying for some of it, not handing the entire burden on to future generations. Canberrans are now beginning to pay the price of more than 15 years of Labor's fiscal failure. Interest is consuming money that should fund the services and infrastructure that people rely on every day. The deteriorating budget has added even more pressure on the government to extract more from households and businesses by increasing taxes, rates, fees and charges by well above inflation, and that is exactly what we see in this year's budget again.

Mr Speaker, you could see this in the public comments when the interim report of the committee came out. The only thing that the Treasurer seemed interested in talking about was how to extract more from Canberrans—from Canberra households and Canberra businesses. Canberrans cannot keep paying for Labor's failure. As I said, when the Labor Chief Minister inherited the Treasury portfolio, the ACT was in net credit. Today, debt and interest are increasing exponentially. Not only has the ACT's fiscal position collapsed; it is also clear and demonstrable that that deterioration was driven by Labor's policy decisions and its unaffordable promises made before every election. The deterioration in the territory's finances is structural. It has developed over the course of years of bad decisions.

The deterioration in the territory's finances has been accompanied as well by a deterioration in how this Labor government present, explain and defend their budget. Our budget should allow the Legislative Assembly and the community to understand what government intend to spend, what they expect to receive, the risks to those forecasts, and the consequences of the choices that they have made, but that is not what we seem to have under Labor. Under Labor, the driving motivation now seems to be protecting the government from any criticism. They claim they are not breaking any rules with their budget, but that does not mean that the information that they provide is complete, transparent or accessible. Labor's so-called forward estimates these days look like pure spin.

During the inquiry, the Treasurer confirmed that election commitments are not incorporated in the budget until the government decide to formally fund them, even when the government remain, as they say, committed to delivering them. Treasury also confirmed that programs funded for limited periods can simply fall out of the forwarded estimates, pending a future decision to continue them, even when the government have no intention of ending that funding. The result is that the budget can appear to improve,

while the government already know that significant additional spending will be added later.

We know the budget that we have in the period that this committee looked at and the budget that this Assembly will be considering in the debates this week and next week factors in cuts to employee expenses, in both raw and real terms, while the government promises to grow the public service. At the same time as the government is promising no deep cuts, the employee expenses line of the budget says otherwise. It is important to remember that this happens at the same time as the government is pursuing an ideological insourcing agenda that adds to the work of the public service, at the same time as we are expecting to see the expenses magically go down.

The government could not even be up-front about the amount that it is increasing rates this year, using creative math to make an eight per cent increase look like a claimed five per cent. Canberra is feeling the consequences with public service redundancies, service cuts, massive rates and rental taxes. Households are stretched. Local businesses are stretched. The community sector is stretched. Rentals are drying up. This government is suffering from collapsing credibility. This is the betrayal at the heart of this government. It is exactly why people are walking away from Labor and it is why trust in political institutions is collapsing.

It is important to understand the extent of this, because, under this Labor government's watch, their federal colleagues are now questioning the very viability of self-government. Our community is not dumb. They should not be treated as if they are. When the news is bad, the community expects and deserves leadership—the sort that says it straight so we can fix the problem. It seems that is not the Labor way, but it cannot go on. It is past time to recognise some important truths. Despite all of the assurances and promises Labor made over the last decade and more, Labor's budget is not sustainable, and responsibility rests at the feet of Labor-led governments over the past decade or more.

The systematic erosion of Canberra's fiscal position cannot be fixed by a government persistently disguising the true trajectory of the budget. A problem created principally by Labor's choices cannot be repaired by waiting for an additional commonwealth grant or some extra commonwealth funding. It cannot be repaired by relying on favourable economic conditions. It cannot be repaired by increasing the burden on households and businesses. Labor cannot simply tax its way to budget repair without inflicting significant economic damage on the ACT, and it cannot be repaired by hoping that future revenue growth will magically eventually catch up with its expenditure.

After years of Labor pretending there is no problem, they cannot deny it any longer, but the opportunity to turn things around is limited. There is now a relatively narrow window for the budget trajectory to become sustainable, and the problems outlined in this report cannot be fixed with minor adjustments. Canberra needs a fundamental change in attitude to the budget and to the government. Budgets must be grounded in respect for Canberrans—a recognition that the current government is a temporary custodian of the territory's finances and that today's custodian has a responsibility to leave the ACT and its finances in a better position than it inherited. The government has a duty to today's community and to tomorrow's Canberrans, because returning to a sustainable budget is going to require honest budgets, disciplined control of expenditure,

rigorous spending choices and an absolutely relentless focus on delivering value with every dollar Canberrans entrust to government.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (12.26): I rise to speak as an independent member for Murrumbidgee. I support the committee's findings and recommendations on the 2025-26 budget. However, I wish to make several observations about the 2026-27 budget and whether the government's revised fiscal strategy is sufficient to place the territory on a genuinely sustainable path.

The budget acknowledges the challenges identified by the committee and Mr Saul Eslake. The introduction of new fiscal targets, the reprofiling of approximately \$700 million in infrastructure expenditure and a greater focus on expenditure restraint are welcome steps. However, transparency remains a concern. The government has not provided a clear project-by-project explanation of the capital works delays. The Assembly and the community deserve to understand which projects have been deferred, for how long and what impact those delays will have on local communities.

The more important question is whether the new fiscal strategy goes far enough. While the government aims to return the headline net operating balance and operating cash balance to surplus, it has not adopted stronger measures focused on reducing debt and interest costs. Returning operating balances to surplus is important, but it does not by itself address the underlying challenge if borrowing continues rising and interest costs continue to be the fastest-growing area of expenditure. Every additional dollar spent on interest is a dollar that cannot be invested in community infrastructure, maintenance, housing, health, education and frontline services. The government needs to stop penny-pinching on these community services.

The government argues that borrowing is funding generational investments. There is merit in that position—infrastructure delivers benefits over many decades—however, future generations should not bear the entire cost of assets that current generations use and benefit from today. Fiscal sustainability requires a better balance between borrowing and contributions from current revenues. There needs to be a conversation about the timing of discretionary major infrastructure projects while debt and the cost of servicing it is rising.

Housing is something we should invest in. I welcome the additional investment in public and community housing, but the evidence shows supply is still not keeping pace with population growth. The proportion of public housing relative to the ACT population has declined, placing ongoing pressure on waiting lists and homelessness services. Importantly, investment in public housing should not be viewed solely as expenditure. It is also an investment that can reduce future costs associated with homelessness, poor health outcomes and social disadvantage.

Ultimately, fiscal sustainability is about intergenerational fairness. Future Canberrans should inherit strong public services, quality community infrastructure and a housing system that meets demand, not an ever-increasing debt burden and rising interest costs that limit the choices of future governments. We need better visibility of expenditure through program reporting and evaluations to find savings and business cases that set out an analysis of options for major infrastructure projects.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage, and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (12.30): The government thanks the committee for their work and will consider the report and provide a formal response in due course. But it is important to note, as the government identified when the committee was established, when the motion was first brought to the Assembly, that there are no silver bullets when it comes to addressing the underlying factors that every state and territory faces, with limited revenue sources and high expectations and demand for services. This report, unfortunately but not unexpectedly, identifies no specific savings measures, but in fact calls on the government to spend even more. Process answers detailed in the report do not deal with the core questions about what Canberrans need and want to fund. The parties, including the Canberra Liberals, should be up-front about where they want to cut the public service and what services they want to defund.

The government has set out a clear and measured pathway to return the budget to balance and surplus over the forward estimates with a revised fiscal strategy in the budget, and we will continue to make progress in each budget over this parliamentary term. I note that the 2025-26 estimated outcome shows that the government is making strong progress on this strategy, delivering a net cash operating surplus two years ahead of target and one year ahead of forecasts in the budget.

The Assembly, with this report now being tabled, has a responsibility to move beyond a political culture that continually demands new investment, new programs and additional spending without identifying how those commitments will be funded. It is no longer credible for parties and independents in this place to advocate simultaneously, as we have heard in the debate on this report today, for significant increased spending and reduced revenue while expressing concern about debt and deficits. Fiscal sustainability requires discipline from all parties and all members, not just the government.

The Assembly's task now cannot simply be to criticise spending growth in the abstract. The era of simultaneously demanding more infrastructure and more services, lower taxes and lower debt must come to an end today. Every party and every member in the Assembly should be prepared to state clearly whether they support or oppose major areas of expenditure and what trade-offs they propose to make. Fiscal sustainability will require difficult choices, and all parties and independents should be expected to contribute constructively to that discussion rather than confining themselves to a critique of government decisions.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Standing orders—suspension

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

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent Assembly business and committee business scheduled for today being called on at a later hour this day.

Sitting suspended from 12.33 to 2.00 pm

Questions without notice

Government procurement—conduct in procurement—Campbell Primary School

MR PARTON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, the Campbell Primary School tender corruption scandal report found that senior officials within your government had, in effect, cheated Manteena by denying the company a fair and transparent assessment of its tender for the Campbell Primary School project. The report found that Manteena was preferred by two tender evaluation teams, while the successful bid was reportedly more expensive, to the tune of almost \$1 million. Has your government formally apologised to Manteena for the treatment it received? If so, who made that apology and when?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Parton for the question. I understand there has been a considerable amount of engagement with Manteena, but I will check with officials in relation to whether that has extended to a formal apology. They may certainly have had verbal conversations. I will need to absolutely confirm that, and I will take that part of the question on notice.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, regardless of whether an official has contacted Manteena, do you accept that the company, its employees and subcontractors have been wronged by your corrupt government, and will you offer them an unreserved apology today?

MR BARR: Obviously, I reject the use of the word “corrupt” in the question. I am not sure that that is entirely parliamentary.

MR SPEAKER: If you are taking it as a point of order, I would agree.

Mr Barr: If I need to formally make it a point of order, I will make it a point of order, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: On the expression “corrupt government”, Mr Parton, I would ask that you not use that. The reasons have been given by Speakers previously. If you are referring to a specific action, as found by the Integrity Commissioner, that is one thing, but to characterise the whole government as “corrupt”, as has been found, you cannot do that. That is disorderly, and I would ask you not to do that, Mr Parton.

Mr Parton: Mr Speaker, I am not sure whether I am able to respond—

MR SPEAKER: On the point of order, you may.

Mr Parton: Can I suggest that other Speakers have ruled on that in the past, but other Speakers did not have this report in front of them, which very clearly signals that this is a corrupt government. I am suggesting that I think things have changed since previous rulings have been made by previous Speakers.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Parton, if you want to bring forward a substantive motion, you

can. I have ruled that you are not to use that term. You can use the word when it relates to specific findings from the Integrity Commissioner, but to characterise a government as “corrupt”—as we have found before—you cannot do that as a grouping, because it is the same as characterising an individual. You have ruled on those matters, and I am ruling that you are not to use that language. If you want to bring forward a substantive motion, you can do so.

Mr Parton: Mr Speaker, would you like me to repeat the question?

MR SPEAKER: No, I do not. I want to move on. You have asked your supplementary?

Mr Parton: Yes.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Barr, on the supplementary.

MR BARR: I am not sure that he has asked a supplementary, but on the substantive question, I reject the premise contained within it, that you have ruled to be unparliamentary.

MR SPEAKER: He did ask a supplementary. Are there further supplementaries?

MRS MORRIS: Chief Minister, have you or any member of your government offered to meet with Manteena to discuss appropriate redress for the commercial and reputational harm arising from this corrupt procurement process? If not, will you now undertake to do so?

MR BARR: I am aware that there have been engagements with Manteena. In terms of the territory’s legal position in this matter, I will not be providing legal commentary in question time. We will take advice in terms of the next steps in relation to the findings of the Integrity Commission. It is not something on which we are running a public commentary in question time.

Government procurement—conduct in procurement

MRS MORRIS: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, the Integrity Commissioner says union involvement in a corrupt tender process is—and I quote—“business as usual”. Chief Minister, how many other instances of corrupt conduct within the former Deputy Chief Minister’s portfolios have occurred?

MR BARR: I think you have just verbalised the Integrity Commissioner, Mrs Morris.

Mrs Morris: I was just quoting evidence.

MR BARR: You gave context in the preamble of your question that does not accord with the statements that the Integrity Commissioner has made. Nevertheless, the government has commenced a process of review in relation to large infrastructure procurements. I am not aware of any other examples at this point, and I will let that review process conclude.

MRS MORRIS: Chief Minister, has anyone raised any allegations of corruption with

regard to procurement processes that have occurred under any of your ministers?

MR BARR: I will interpret that question as meaning “raised it with me”. No. Of course, there are other avenues, particularly through the Integrity Commission process, that I would not be privy to, so I cannot give an answer that covers other entities. But to me, no.

MR COCKS: Chief Minister, have you directed any officials or any of your colleagues to inquire whether there has been further corruption in the government’s procurement processes?

MR BARR: I have commissioned a review of procurements during that period. That is the area that we would focus on first in relation to procurements, particularly in the Education Directorate, and that review commenced some months ago.

Macquarie—swimming pool

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. Minister, it is clear that Big Splash will not reopen on 1 November. Will the government or Access Canberra terminate the lease on 2 November? If not, which section in which act do you think is stopping you?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. As she well knows, matters for the independent Territory Planning Authority—and Access Canberra acting on behalf of them—are independent decisions. So, no, I am not going to, as the minister, make a decision to terminate a lease with a power that I do not have as the minister.

MS CLAY: Will the government take a role in subsidising or operating a pool and waterpark, noting these are not working with private developers alone at the moment?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question and note that Big Splash was previously operated as a privately-owned commercially viable business. The ACT government has announced today that, noting that we do not believe that the lessee’s commitment to open the pool on 1 November will be complied with, we will be commissioning a comprehensive options analysis for the future of the facility, which will look at a range of options for what might be possible on the site to bring back aquatic facilities. It will properly cost those and help to inform a potential future buyer and operator of the facility.

We think this is a practical thing that the government can do to support the potential of Big Splash coming back as an aquatic facility—by giving information to a potential buyer and operator, to the government, to the lessee and to the community. Importantly, it will give the community an opportunity to have their say on the future of the site—an opportunity which the lessee has not given them.

MS VASSAROTTI: Minister, if you do not think you have the legal power to terminate a lease that has been in breach for three years, why haven’t you fixed the law so that you can?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question and certainly note that, as she is

already aware, we are undertaking a review of the range of powers available to Access Canberra under the Planning Act to be able to undertake lease enforcement. So that review is underway and will no doubt provide findings and recommendations for consideration by government. I have already flagged that I think the range of penalties that are available are not adequate. So that may be one area. It will no doubt also look at the current suite of powers around lease termination.

Ultimately, the government wants to see the site brought back online as an aquatic facility. It is very clear that the current lessee is not a waterpark owner and operator by trade. We hope that, by commissioning this report, it will provide a range of information that is required for a potential buyer-operator to consider in potentially acquiring the site themselves and bringing it back into operations.

Importantly, the review will also give an opportunity for interested parties—and we know that there are some, including the Canberra Southern Cross Club and the previous owner-operator of the site—to come and engage with the consultants about what they think the opportunities for the site are what potentially could be viable on the site in the future, not just the range of facilities that were available before but potentially new facilities as well that could be brought online on the site within the current zoning. I want to be clear that we are not planning to change the zoning of the site away from restricted access zone PRZ2; we are looking at what options are available at the current site to bring it back.

Bushfires—community fire units

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the minister for emergency services. After a warm winter and an early start to spring, concern is growing about bushfire risk in my community of Yerrabi. Two years ago an Assembly inquiry into bushfire preparedness recommended the government establish community fire units in north Gungahlin, including Casey, Moncrieff, Jacka, Ngunnawal and Taylor. Has that recommendation been implemented, and if not, why not?

DR PATERSON: I thank the member for the question. We are just preparing at the moment for the start of the bushfire season, which will be 1 October. We just announced the start of storm season as 1 September. There has been a lot of preparation going on within our emergency services and our volunteer organisations, including our community fire units. Our community fire units play a really important role. I have a regular meeting with volunteers of the community fire units to hear about some of the challenges that they face. I will have to take the exact question on notice, because I am not clear about what has been implemented, but I will do that.

MS CASTLEY: Further to the first question that you have taken on notice, if you could also let us know when you will be communicating this with the electorate.

DR PATERSON: I will take it on notice.

Gaming—Canberra Labor Club

MR EMERSON: My question is for the Minister for Gaming Reform. Regulation 7 of the ACT Labor Party's rules requires the party to nominate six of the board directors of

the Canberra Labor Club. The Canberra Labor Club is listed as an associated entity of ACT Labor, which under law means it is an entity that is controlled by the party, or that it operates completely or to a significant extent for the benefit of the party. Minister, how do you reconcile your role as Minister for Gaming Reform with your membership of a political party that has longstanding financial and organisational ties to a club group that profits significantly from its more than 400 poker machine licences?

DR PATERSON: I will start by saying that Mr Emerson does not have any context or understanding of why the Labor Club was set up in the first place, to support the party. So, this happened—

Mr Cocks: Point of order.

MR SPEAKER: So soon!

Mr Cocks: Indeed, Mr Speaker. Because I am pretty sure that under the standing orders—

MR SPEAKER: Can we stop the clocks? Is this on relevance, or what is it?

Mr Cocks: It is on relevance, because I am not sure that an attack on the individual asking the question is actually a direct response to the question.

MR SPEAKER: Well, she just started. I am sure she is going to move on from that initial commentary to answer the question, so there is no point of order, but if she continues in this vein, you might be onto something, Mr Cocks.

DR PATERSON: The club was originally established to support the party so the party could self-sustain, without having to receive external donations. Obviously, the Labor Club, like many other clubs in the ACT, then acquired poker machines when poker machines were allowed. So, ACT Labor has a long history with the club. The club is a separate entity of the party. And anyone can go on the Elections ACT website to see all the financial statements from the Labor Club, from the 1973 foundation and from the Labor Party.

Mr Emerson: A point of order, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: A point of order, Mr Emerson?

Mr Emerson: Yes, on responsiveness to the question. It was essentially a question about the irreconcilable conflict of interest between being Minister for Gaming Reform and the relationship with the Canberra Labor Club. I do not think we got an answer to the question of how the minister—

MR SPEAKER: On that point of how you reconcile that as the minister—if you could go to that point, it would be useful, minister.

DR PATERSON: I can absolutely reconcile it because I am supported by my party, supported by my caucus and supported by the community to implement gambling reform as the minister responsible for gambling reform. This morning, I gave an

extensive overview of the policy direction of, I would say, the most comprehensive policy package to address gambling harm in Australia.

MR EMERSON: Minister, shouldn't ACT Labor be willing to hold itself and its associated entities to a higher standard compared to other clubs in the ACT, given what you have said this morning, and just now, about the social harm caused by poker machines and the need for regulation in this space?

DR PATERSON: We have very robust discussions and debates within our party and will continue to do so.

MR PARTON: Minister, do you accept that it is hypocritical for the ACT Labor government to push clubs to diversify away from poker machines while your party's own clubs—the Canberra Labor Clubs, with six board of directors from the Labor Party—continue profiting from having hundreds of poker machines in their venues?

DR PATERSON: The party does not profit from the poker machines. There have been no donations to—

Members interjecting—

DR PATERSON: You can go into the ACT Elections website; all the financial statements are there for over a decade. Sorry, I have lost the train of Mr Parton's original question.

Mr Parton: Do you accept it is hypocritical for the ACT Labor government to push clubs to diversify when you are obviously getting—

DR PATERSON: The diversification and the surrender strategy is applied equally to all clubs in the ACT including the Labor Club. It is an expectation that all clubs, by law, participate in the surrender scheme.

Government procurement—conduct in procurement—Campbell Primary School

MR PARTON: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, with regard to Operation Kingfisher, when did you first become aware of possible corrupt conduct within the former Deputy Chief Minister's office?

MR BARR: Well, I guess the public hearings of the Integrity Commission process provided a public insight into some of the potential issues. Of course, there is no finding until the commission issues its report and makes that a final report and finding. So, certainly at the point of the public hearings, as well as, obviously, at the conclusion of the process.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, what action did you take when you first became aware of possible corrupt conduct, whether it was during those public hearings or before?

MR BARR: The employment relationship between at least one of the individuals and the Deputy Chief Minister concluded in, I believe, early 2021. In relation to the former

head of the Education Directorate, obviously her contract expired and she left that role, I think about 18 months ahead of the final findings of the Integrity Commission report. There is no action possible without a final report and that action is outlined—

Mr Parton: Just as well you delayed it all, with that legal action.

MR BARR: The actions that the government have taken are in response to the final commission report. I do need to remind Mr Parton that one cannot take action until a report has been finalised and presented.

Mr Cocks: Point of order on responsiveness to the question, Mr Speaker. The question was very specifically about the actions that the Chief Minister undertook when the Chief Minister became aware of possible corrupt conduct within a minister's office. The Chief Minister has responded with broad comments around things that happened within government. He has not outlined what he did when he became aware of possible corrupt conduct.

MR SPEAKER: I think that what he said was that he became aware of it during the hearings and because those hearings were ongoing there was no action that he would be taking, or should be taking, until there was a finding. That is a summation, I think, of what he said. So he has answered the question. You may not agree with his answer, but I think he has been relevant to that answer, Mr Cocks.

MRS MORRIS: Chief Minister, did Manteena ever approach you or your office to share their concerns of irregularities in the procurement process?

MR BARR: I do not think so. I have no recollection of them approaching me. I will double-check with my office, but they would not necessarily come to me, because they would have gone to the agency and potentially the minister's office. I am many steps removed from a procurement in the Education Directorate from seven years ago. To be clear for Mrs Morris, not every issue and every complaint that someone might raise about any matter across the totality of ACT government is personally raised with me. I think people—

Mrs Morris: I did not ask about other matters; I just asked about this one.

MR BARR: Well, in relation to this one, I have no recollection of Manteena approaching me. I will check with the office to see whether anyone in my office was, but I understand from the public record that the approach was made to the directorate, which was involved in the procurement assessment process.

Government procurement—conduct in procurement—Campbell Primary School

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, in the recent estimates hearings, the Director-General of the Education Directorate confirmed that where comments had been made in the Operation Kingfisher report that related to actions of other Education Directorate staff—that is, not the former director-general, Ms Katy Haire—those matters would be looked at by the Public Sector Standards Commissioner. Minister, how many existing Education Directorate staff are currently being looked at

by the Public Sector Standards Commissioner in relation to comments made in the Operation Kingfisher report about their actions?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Lee for the question—my first question as Minister for Education, a portfolio I am very pleased to be holding, although, obviously, the circumstances are challenging.

I do not hold responsibility for the Public Sector Standards Commissioner and that process, and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on who may or may not be, or even how many people in the Education Directorate may or may not be, currently subject to processes under consideration by the Public Sector Standards Commissioner. I would note that the commissioner can only continue to investigate in relation to matters of current public servants, and not all the people that may have been named in the Operation Kingfisher report potentially for some further investigation are still employed by the Education Directorate.

MS LEE: Minister, have you had any contact with the Public Sector Standards Commissioner in relation to the Education Directorate staff that he is looking at, and has he confirmed for you whether he will release those findings publicly?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: No, I have not had any contact with the Public Sector Standards Commissioner in relation to this matter. I have had a brief conversation with the Director-General of the Education Directorate, to be assured that the Education Directorate itself had undertaken a response to identifying any staff that may be subject to further investigation or consideration, following the release of the Operation Kingfisher report, and that the Education Directorate itself was ensuring that it was taking any action that was required in relation to those staff to preserve the integrity of that process and any procedural fairness. Beyond that, these are matters for the public service; these are matters for directors-general, the Head of Service and the Public Sector Standards Commissioner, who all operate in these matters independently of ministers and the executive.

MR PARTON: Minister, have any staff who were named in the Kingfisher report resigned from the Education Directorate since the release of the report? If so, who resigned and when?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: The answer to the first part of the question is yes, and I am not going to go into matters of individual public servants, out of respect for privacy and confidentiality.

Gaming—mandatory shutdowns

MS VASSAROTTI: My question is to the Minister for Gaming Reform. The Chief Minister announced in 2024 that the government would regulate the operation of poker machines so that they could not operate “between 2 am and 10 am each day, providing a mandated break in play and reducing harm”. This is because, as you know, gambling harm is concentrated in those late hours, especially after 2 am. However, in your commitment today you note that pokies will be allowed to operate until 4 am on Friday and Saturday nights, and also with earlier starts, from 9 am, on those days. What is the reason that you have compromised on this harm reduction measure and not met the

original public commitment?

DR PATERSON: We are in a new term of government, and the reform that I announced this morning will see slightly extended opening hours, by two hours, each Friday and Saturday night. Ultimately, this is around supporting the night-time economy. We know that people like to go out on Friday and Saturday nights and, with the implementation of the reduced operating hours on the other nights of the week, that seemed a reasonable measure.

MS VASSAROTTI: Taking into account the evidence that suggests that it is particularly those late night hours when most harm is caused, and particularly over weekends, did licensed gambling venues or their representatives lobby you or other ministers to water down the original commitment that would have seen pokies turned off between 2 am and 10 am on weekends?

DR PATERSON: I do not believe I got a single piece of feedback and I have not had a conversation with ClubsACT around the operating hours. I notified them that we were intending to do this. I do not believe I ever got a response to that. I will check. The directorate was going to follow up with ClubsACT around that. I will come back to the Assembly and to the chamber if I am incorrect, but to my knowledge I never got a response from ClubsACT to that proposal.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, why will the reduced operating hours not commence until the middle of 2027, almost three years after the commitment was originally made?

DR PATERSON: My understanding is that it was a statement was made by the Chief Minister in the Assembly. The operating hours were not part of our election reform. We are in a new Assembly, and I have worked for the last two years on developing a really extensive package of reform. Operating hours are one part of that and a relatively small part of that. As to why the 1 July decision was made, it provides a timeframe for clubs to work with their staff around reduced hours and to manage their staffing operations.

Public schools—funding

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Education.

Minister, during the recent estimates hearings, the Australian Education Union gave evidence that some ACT government schools do not have sufficient funding to put a teacher in every classroom. This week, the AEU again raised concerns publicly, while parents tell us about the growing practice of splitting classes because there are not enough teachers available. Minister, what has gone so wrong under this government's watch that ACT government schools cannot reliably provide a teacher for every classroom?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Lee for the question. Of course, the ACT government has invested significantly in additional resources for public education and for education more broadly in this city, including \$1.2 billion in the most recent budget. That will see budgeted full-time equivalent staff grow by more than 100 from the 2025-26 budget to the 2026-27 budget and it will be a growth from the actuals estimates in 2025-26 to the budget for 2026-27.

However, I do recognise that some schools have had challenges in staffing. That is why the school resourcing review pointed very clearly to the fact that we needed to look again at funding distribution to be fairer and more equitable across schools and also to improve the way that schools are supported by the Education Support Office, the Education Directorate, to provide that central support to our schools, particularly in relation to those schools that have the challenges with staff absences that they are not able to manage in an autonomous way. That is part of the conversation that the Education Directorate is having with principals at this time.

I was very pleased to meet with a number of principals, teachers and learning support assistants, with the support of the Australian Education Union ACT branch, yesterday and heard their concerns about the splitting and collapsing of classes when teachers are away. That is obviously an ongoing conversation, but it is not something that we are unaware of. It is specifically something that the Education Directorate is working with principals to address through the response to the school resourcing review.

MS LEE: Minister, how many out of the 100 new staff that you just spoke about will be teachers? Do you accept that forcing schools to split classes is a direct consequence of your government's failure to properly plan and address the workforce shortage?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take the first question on notice in relation to the breakdown of the FTE from last year to this year—so 2025-26 to 2026-27—but I do not know accept the premise of Ms Lee's question. Indeed, I very clearly recall at the beginning of the last school year that the ACT was well staffed in terms of teachers—we are in an environment where nationally there is a teacher workforce shortage—and the ACT having been very successful in recruiting to its teaching workforce positions.

Of course, during the year, things happen—people may relocate or go on leave for a wide range of reasons. So, ensuring that we can support schools when those vacancies arise, when staff are on leave for a range of reasons, is exactly the kind of work that the Education Directorate is looking at in terms of the casual staffing pool, the relief staffing pool, and making sure that it can back in the arrangements that individual schools make. Schools have a wide range of different challenges in this space. For some small schools, one staff member being away is going to have a really significant impact for that school. For other schools, they will have a range of other challenges in terms of student complexity and cohorts. Those things are for individual conversations between the directorate and principals about how they can best support those schools to manage those issues.

We also continue to work with the University of Canberra and the Australian Catholic University in terms of a workforce pipeline, including through UC STEP, which is encouraging mature-age, experienced people to go into teaching through a shortened pathway.

MS BARRY: Minister, isn't the reality that, despite repeated warnings about teacher shortages, your government has allowed the situation to deteriorate to the point where some schools cannot even do the bare minimum by staffing every classroom?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: No; that is not the reality.

Public schools—funding

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, earlier this week the AEU stated, “The minister is very proudly announcing that there’s an increase to the education budget in 2027. I am yet to find a principal who has had their budget increased. I am constantly contacted by people who have to make very substantial staffing cuts.”

Minister, given reports that schools are being forced to make significant staffing cuts, will you guarantee that no ACT government school will be required to reduce staff as a result of your funding decisions?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: We are in a very interesting situation with the opposition here—the opposition that insisted on establishing a school resourcing review, that criticised the government and its management when 77 out of 93 schools were over budget and said this needed to be back under control. When the school resourcing review recommended—I point to recommendation 5—that school staffing currently above the Student Resource Allocation should be redeployed to schools based on identified need and equity principles or to support system-wide strategic priorities, the first call from those opposite was to back in the school resourcing review—

Ms Lee interjecting—

Mr Parton: Point of order on relevance: the question is not about us.

MR SPEAKER: There is a point of order. Minister, you are starting to debate the question. You have been asked about a guarantee on staffing levels. It is not about the opposition’s position on this; it is about whether you can guarantee those staffing levels or not.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: What I will guarantee is that all ACT schools will continue to be funded at or above 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard and that we will implement the recommendations of the review, which everyone in this place supported and called for and everyone backs in until hard decisions have to be made.

MS LEE: Minister, if education funding is increasing, as you claim, why are principals and the Education Union reporting that they have to make substantial staffing cuts?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will refer Ms Lee to my previous answers, but I will also say, as I have said publicly and as I said to the principals, the teachers and the union yesterday and previously, the Education Directorate will continue to work with those schools, which will see their budget reduced from the 26 school year budget to the 27 school year budget as a result of applying a fair and equitable student resource allocation approach. Some of those schools will find it challenging to make that adjustment, and the Education Directorate will work very closely with those schools to manage that. That includes having an additional amount of money that is available for an exceptions process where schools are going to need either additional support or support to make this transition over a longer period. This is specifically what was raised with me yesterday by one of the principals, who said, “For some of us we will need

support to transition over a longer period. We recognise that this change is important, but we will need support to transition over a longer period.” That is exactly what the exceptions process is about, and that is exactly the process that the Education Directorate is currently undertaking with principals.

I want to take this opportunity to thank those principals—all of the principals who are engaging in this process. I recognise it is really challenging being a school principal and having to set budgets. This is a year-to-year proposition. Final budgets are not known until April of the school year. This is an early budget conversation. It is challenging. I recognise that and I thank them, but I also want to assure them that they are not alone. The Education Directorate will work with every principal and every school to ensure that the implementation of the school resourcing review is manageable.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, how do you justify the cuts to college budgets for next year when the resourcing review stated:

... there is not scope to rebalance within the existing funding envelope. Instead, this requires medium-term consideration within the national context.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Miss Nuttall for her supplementary question. I agree—a much better informed question than I have been getting from those opposite!

Again, this is a challenging situation. There is not an unlimited resource here. Some colleges will continue to have an increase in their budget; some colleges will be challenged with their budget circumstance. Again I want to reassure those schools, the students, the parents, the carers, the college staff and particularly the principals and school leaders that the Education Directorate will continue to work with them to understand any potential impacts and what needs to be done to ensure that that transition can be made smoothly, but there are no easy answers to these questions. It was very clear in the school resourcing review that primary schools have been challenged with the existing Student resource allocation model, and that is why one of the responses to the review is actually to review the student resource allocation model. We look forward to doing that work in partnership with schools, with school leaders and principals and with parents, carers and, of course, members of this place and the wider community.

Foundational Supports and Thriving Kids

MR CAIN: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Autism and Neurodiversity. The ACT government has stated that Thriving Kids services will commence from 1 October 2026—not very far away. Minister, will you give the Assembly an unequivocal assurance that the ACT government is ready and all services will commence on 1 October as planned?

MS ORR: In answer to the member’s question, I can commit as per our agreement that we will begin the phased rollout of Thriving Kids on 1 October 2026.

MR CAIN: Minister, what is this assurance? And what do you mean by a phased rollout, given the concerns raised by numerous stakeholders for the readiness of the implementation of Thriving Kids? What is the first phase of this?

MS ORR: I would refer the member to the Thriving Kids web page which has the road map that was put up by the date, as outlined in his motion previously—

Mr Cain: What is the first phase?

MS ORR: which answers his question of what the first phase is. My office did make sure it was brought to people's attention that that had gone up. Hopefully we can send through another link.

Mr Cain: And what is it? Tell us what it is.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Cain.

MS ORR: The first phase will be looking at meeting current known areas of demand and increasing and expanding services that we currently have in place. Future stages will look at how we put in place our newer services that might be responding to an identified gap or further expanding or scaling up services, depending on how we—

Mr Cain: What is the first thing that is actually going to happen?

MS ORR: Mr Speaker, it is very hard to answer the question.

MR SPEAKER: I agree. Mr Cain, I would ask that you would stop interjecting, please.

MS ORR: Apologies, I have lost my train of thought. But we will look to work through those phases. It is all outlined in the road map. It has been outlined in countless ministerial statements that I have made to this place, and in comments that I have made across the public record in various forums.

Mr Cain: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Cain.

Mr Cain: I have asked a question, and the minister said that it is all on the website. At least she could tell us something that is actually going to happen on 1 October 2026. Tell us something that is going to happen.

MR SPEAKER: I heard what she said, which is that she going to rollout the services that are currently—

Ms Lee: Doing the same thing—that is what she said.

MR SPEAKER: I think she did. She might not have been entirely specific about exact services, but she certainly addressed it.

Mr Cain: But that is the point of the question, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Cain, I think she has answered enough to be in order.

MS ORR: Mr Speaker, just to assist in the 20 seconds I have left: the first phase, as has

been repeatedly said, will be an expansion and scaling up of existing services where there is known unmet demand. As to the further details, they will be announced pending final decisions and agreements with the commonwealth government, in line with the intergovernmental requirements that we have.

MS LEE: Minister, what advice, if any, did you receive from your directorate, or your federal colleagues, about Thriving Kids being implemented on 1 October, and will you table that advice?

MS ORR: The advice is consistent with what I have said publicly on the record, and that is we will need to commence the phased rollout, as per every jurisdiction that has signed up to Thriving Kids, from 1 October. The phased rollout means that we have a plan in place and that we will be doing it. That is what we have. That is what we are focused on doing. I would be hesitant to table the documents that Ms Lee has asked for. It was quite a broad statement and could take in a lot of documentation that, I think, would be an unreasonable burden on the public service.

Again, I would point the member to the previous part of my answer, which is that we will commence the phased rollout, which means that we are working towards our implementation plan and we are putting those services in place. This is consistent with everything that I have said to date and should not be news to the opposition.

Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Minister for Planning. Minister, the Southern Gateway framework proposes new urban villages around Curtin, Deakin and Southlands. While many residents support increased housing density, I hear their concerns that detailed planning for social facilities and public spaces will not keep pace with the proposed development.

Minister, what population targets has the government set for the catchments for the urban villages and the Woden town centre, and what modelling has been undertaken to determine the social facilities and public spaces that will be required to support the residents living in these catchments?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question and for her interest in planning in the Southern Gateway corridor. The whole purpose of this consultation with the community is to understand what might need to come with more housing in the future, including the community and recreational needs and facilities to support a growing population. So that is exactly what we have been consulting on with the community. The consultation ends today, so there is still a small opportunity for the community and members to have their say on what is in the draft framework. We are interested in hearing that feedback. We will take that feedback into consideration before then finalising this framework.

Ms Carrick: Point of order. I asked what the population targets were for these urban villages, to be able to plan.

MR STEEL: We have not set out targets for the population in the draft framework. There will be some further work that will be occurring to finalise the framework and

then develop specific major plan amendments to the Territory Plan to enable more housing. That will be informed by more detailed analysis of what those specific zoning changes might enable in terms of the exact number of new homes and the potential future population.

Treasury has previously provided estimates of population around the ACT, which of course we have discussed previously in this place, and they are published. But obviously it will come down to what specific changes are enabled through the planning system and that is the work that is going on now. So, at the moment, we are consulting on a vision for the corridor and then we will move to those more detailed stages of work. All of the issues that Ms Carrick alluded to in her question are being considered through this process based on community feedback.

MS CARRICK: Minister, will the government prepare detailed precinct plans for each proposed urban village and the Woden town centre before significant additional development occurs, and will those plans identify government-owned sites for social infrastructure and public spaces?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. As I said in my earlier answer, we will, in certain urban villages and precincts, be developing major plan amendments in the future to be able to support the vision of the Southern Gateway framework. That could include a range of different things within that, depending on the group centre being looked at and the urban village being considered in those plans. It could include a range of things from community facilities to enabling more housing and more commercial development. We do expect that the first major planning amendment that will be coming forward will be from the SLA in relation to the Mawson precinct, which will be considering a range of different issues. That will be the point where that more detailed planning and design is provided to the community. Then, of course, there will be further opportunities through potential future development applications through those major plan amendments.

Ms Carrick: Point of order. I asked the minister if there would be government-owned sites for social infrastructure.

MR SPEAKER: You have been pretty extensive.

MR STEEL: I did say that some of those amendments may consider community infrastructure and yes, many of those urban villages do have government-owned car parks, for example, that may be utilised for a range of different land uses. So those plans will be coming forward for further consideration. We are keen to hear about the high-level vision for the corridor at the moment and then we will undertake that detailed work. There will be further opportunities to engage with the community as the process continues.

MR COCKS: Minister, why are you embarking on yet another plan for a plan?

MR STEEL: We are getting on with the job of enabling more housing in the territory and we are doing that in consultation with the community. Last time I checked, which was back at the 2024 election, you campaigned against more housing in this corridor. So you do not support more housing or the community facilities and benefits that come

with it. We do.

Mr Cocks: Point of order. The minister has ventured very quickly into debating the question, notwithstanding the fact that he is just wrong.

MR SPEAKER: Well played.

Mr Steel, we will leave it there thank you. If not, if you have more to add, I urge you not to debate the question.

MR STEEL: I have plenty more to add Mr Speaker.

We will not be mucking around when it comes to changes to the planning system to enable more housing. We are doing this work and the SLA is already out there consulting on their early engagement with the community ahead of a precinct-based major plan amendment that will be coming forward for the Mawson precinct to deliver on our election commitments such as a second supermarket, but also more mid-rise housing in the Athlon Drive corridor, which is part of the vision of the Southern Gateway plan.

So yes, there will be staged changes that will need to be made through statutory planning processes and the Assembly will be engaged in those discussions as they come forward. We have already shown with the missing middle that we are delivering on the commitment that we took to the election to enable more housing. We were pleased to get the support of the Assembly to take forward those reforms without disallowance. Now we are keen to get on with transport oriented development and more housing near shopping centres, close to services, jobs, amenities and good public transport, the places where people want to live and the places where it makes sense for more housing. We are also consulting on what needs to come with that to make sure that we have a great quality of life.

Sport and recreation—Tuggeranong ice sports facilities

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, after 10 years of promising Tuggeranong a competition-standard ice sports facility, your ACT Labor government walked back on that promise, citing unacceptable risks to the territory. That is a very difficult pill for the community to swallow, if you are unable to elaborate. We need to see the work. Minister, what were those “unacceptable risks to the territory” and when did they become apparent to government?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. They became apparent to government when the government was briefed, following the Chief Minister’s directorate undertaking an evaluation of the updated proposal which was presented to the government via the consortium in January this year. For commercial and probity reasons, I cannot release the full details of that evaluation. What I can say is that the proponents were asking the territory to contribute more than double the original territory contribution of \$16.265 million, and there were a range of other unacceptable risks to the territory. As a result, the proposal did not represent value for money.

When the government invests in infrastructure, we have to go through processes like

this to make sure that those projects stack up. We came to the table, ready and willing, with money on the table, to work with those proponents to make this project a reality. But the reality is that the updated proposal that they presented, which was different from what they had presented in the past, was not a proposal that the ACT government could accept.

We are being up-front with the community that that is a very disappointing outcome. We will continue to work with the ACT ice sports community around further opportunities to improve ice facilities in the ACT. Importantly, we have made a commitment to Tuggeranong of the same, equivalent amount, \$16.265 million, that will be invested in upgrades of other sporting infrastructure in the region. This money will not be lost for Tuggeranong; it will remain in Tuggeranong. It will go to upgrading a range of other sporting facilities.

MISS NUTTALL: What was the ACT government doing for the past 10 years on this project and when was the writing on the wall that it would not proceed?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. Throughout, we have been committed to the site in Tuggeranong. I know other parties have had different views on that, saying that we should not have committed to build an ice sports facility in Tuggeranong. We believed that it should have been built there. We put the money on the table and engaged in an EOI process that went out. There was a shortlisted consortium of Pelligra and Cruachan, which we worked with. We then went through the process of signing a non-binding agreement. We secured the money and put it on the table—\$16.265 million—with the agreement that we would work towards a binding agreement, based on an updated proposal, which was provided in January 2026. That is the proposal that we simply could not accept. I think even the proponents have said that we should not have accepted it.

It is a disappointing outcome that we were not able to find agreement on that proposal to deliver this facility in Tuggeranong. It has been a long process, but we are continuing to work with our ice sports community on future opportunities, and this money will not be lost for Tuggeranong. We will still invest it back into community sporting infrastructure, and we have released an infrastructure survey, which has gone out to every single sporting club in the ACT to seek their views on their sporting needs. That will help to inform the future needs of Tuggeranong. I look forward to updating the Assembly on the future process for the allocation of that funding, which is still being considered.

MS CLAY: Minister, why did you take a poorly developed idea to two elections and lead the Tuggeranong and ice sports communities on for 10 years?

MR STEEL: I disagree with the premise of the question. There was a lot of interest and support for providing an ice sports facility in Tuggeranong. We backed our Ice Sports Federation, who were behind this proposal, and put out a fair tender process. We put money on the table, and we worked constructively with the shortlisted proponents throughout the process, to try and achieve the outcome of a Tuggeranong ice sports facility.

We overcame some challenges during that process, particularly environmental

challenges on the site. We wanted to see this project become a reality; but, ultimately, there were a range of risks, which did not all relate to cost, that meant we could not agree, and we could not move forward with a proposal that did not represent value for money. That is disappointing, but we absolutely did the right thing by going through a tender process to try and achieve this outcome for Tuggeranong.

It has been disappointing that we cannot move forward with that, but we will work with our ice sports community to explore other opportunities, and this funding will still be committed to Tuggeranong sporting infrastructure.

Firearms—legislation

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. The government has said its firearm reforms are about improving community safety and reducing the risk of firearm related crime, including by limiting the number of firearms a licensed holder can own. Minister, has the government assessed how much firearm crime in Canberra involves legally owned firearms compared with stolen or illegal firearms? If so, what did it find?

DR PATERSON: It is always really exciting to get a question from Mr Milligan.

Mr Milligan: Of course it is!

DR PATERSON: Yes—a great moment. The whole nation was shocked by what occurred in Bondi at the end of last year. It absolutely rocked New South Wales and rocked Australia. We saw from that incident the damage that firearms cause and the risk that they pose to our community. Our government is committed to improving public safety around licensed firearms and illegal firearms. We know that a substantial number of illegal firearms circulate in our community. There are thefts of legal firearms as well in our community. The majority of crime and seizures of firearms occur when there are illegal firearms. There is a range of measures, such as through protection orders and family violence orders, where legal firearms are seized by police and licences are suspended. We have introduced the Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026 to the Legislative Assembly and are working closely with the commonwealth on the buyback scheme. We also have legislation around firearms prohibition orders. As a government, we are committed to addressing and reducing the risk of firearms, both regulated, licensed firearms and unlicensed, illegal firearms.

Mr Cocks: Mr Speaker, under standing order 118AA: the question was very clearly about whether the government has assessed how much firearm crime in Canberra involves legally owned firearms compared with stolen or illegal firearms, and, if so, what it found. I do not believe the minister actually got to the assessment.

MR SPEAKER: Do you want to respond to the point of order, Minister?

DR PATERSON: Yes. I said the majority of firearms issues in the ACT relate to illegal firearms. But what we have seen is a national push, a national agenda through the Firearms—

Mr Cocks: But not whether she assessed it.

DR PATERSON: By ACT Policing.

MR SPEAKER: I think that it is close enough. I accept that there is no detail, but she has gone to the relevance of the question. In an attempt to answer it, she has gone to that point, so there is no point of order, but I accept that there was not a great amount of detail, Mr Cocks. I accept that. Mr Milligan, a supplementary.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what evidence does the government have that limiting the number of firearms a licensed firearm owner can have will reduce firearm crime or make Canberra safer?

DR PATERSON: Part of the National Firearms Agreement, which is an agreement that is negotiated between all states and territories with the commonwealth, is to establish caps on firearms. The ACT government is committed to working with the commonwealth and supports the National Firearms Agreement. Also, we are an island within New South Wales, and New South Wales, as a result of the Bondi massacre, recalled their parliament and passed legislation to see a cap of four firearms unless you have an exemption. We are an island within New South Wales. We looked at other jurisdictions. Western Australia had already done a buyback and had already done significant work around firearms.

Mr Parton: Mr Speaker, on a point of order on relevance: the question was very specifically about what evidence the government has that limiting the number of firearms will reduce firearm crime, and all she is talking about is a commonwealth agreement and what other states are doing. I am not sure that she is answering the question at all.

MR SPEAKER: Minister, if you can point to the evidence you have drawn on, that would assist in answering the question.

DR PATERSON: This is exactly the evidence that we have drawn on. WA did extensive committee inquiries and extensive research and implemented a buyback scheme, and they have a cap of five firearms, with exemptions for up to 10. We have looked at their evidence and looked at their justification for the five. We also looked at the context of the situation that we are faced with, in that we are an island within New South Wales. We see it as appropriate to align with the National Firearms Agreement and to align as closely as we can with New South Wales.

Mr Cocks: Mr Speaker, under standing order 118 AA: while the minister has responded to the broader issues that the government has taken into account on this matter, the question was extremely specific on the evidence of effectiveness. I will quote from Mr Milligan's question: "What evidence does the government have that limiting the number of firearms a licensed firearm owner can have will reduce firearm crime or make Canberra safer?" The minister's response did not touch on effectiveness.

MR SPEAKER: I think you are getting a little bit technical, Mr Cocks. She was responsive. She said that they had looked at the WA evidence and that is what they had drawn upon. She said that they had done studies and she had drawn upon the evidence that had been drawn on in WA. I think she has been responsive in providing that answer,

so there is no point of order.

MR PARTON: Minister, how many firearm offences in Canberra over the past 10 years would have been prevented if the government's proposed firearm limits had already been in place?

DR PATERSON: I think that is a hypothetical question.

MR SPEAKER: I just wrote "hypothetical" as you asked the question. It is impossible for the minister to answer that. It is a hypothetical question and it is out of order.

Libraries ACT—opening hours

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for City and Government Services. Minister, since the government announced its reduction in weekend opening hours of ACT libraries, the Canberra community have come out in support of their libraries, with over 3,562 signing the petition, at last count. Minister, will you reopen Kippax and Erindale libraries on Saturdays and, if so, by when?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Braddock for the question. I note that today my response to the motion of 12 June is due. In fact, it will be tabled in papers today and we will have a motion to note that later on—in which case, Mr Braddock will be able to read in full the government's response to that. But, given it is imminent, I am happy to talk to some of that detail.

I think we have laboured over the point that it was not just about the visits to the libraries or the hours; it was also about uneven shift distribution, the fragility and inequity of a system and our published opening hours not being able to be met. That is why we were consistently seeing libraries shut. But it was not about more staff. We in fact have more staff now. It was about making sure that we had a model that did not fail people; a model where people knew that they could rely on the hours that were advertised. The government response has an evaluation framework, and we will continue to use that framework in advance of considering how we can further improve access to ACT libraries both in terms of bricks and mortar but also as a whole—

Mr Cain interjecting—

MS CHEYNE: And that includes weekends.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, when will the smart collection lockers that the ACT government promised become available for use by the ACT community?

MS CHEYNE: By the end of the year.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, how many ACT Libraries casual staff's employment was discontinued with these changes?

MS CHEYNE: I will have to take the exact number on notice. We have been very heavily reliant on casual staff, which was creating a cost pressure of more than \$600,000 per annum. With this new roster and with our revised opening hours, we have been able

to provide certainly across our library staff. Already we have seen a really pleasing result, with more library staff on the floor of our libraries on our Saturday openings and on our Monday openings. Monday openings have historically been an area where we have seen real pressure in being able to keep our libraries open. Overall, there are more staff. There has been an uplift in staff. Also, I think there are about 25 staff going through a pretty significant professional development program now as well. We will look to see how we can further support staff and the community with programs and services.

Mr Barr: Mr Speaker, further questions can be placed on the notice paper.

Supplementary answers to questions without notice

Foundational Supports and Thriving Kids

MS ORR: In answer to Mr Cain's question earlier, I said that we had circulated to members notice of the roadmap being published. Upon clarification from my office, we actually wrote to you, Mr Speaker, in response to your letter about the motion that was passed in the Assembly, believing that it would be forwarded. We are not sure whether it has or it has not been, but we have learnt never to assume anything and we will be more diligent in future.

MR SPEAKER: I will have to check. I will take that on notice!

Gaming—mandatory shutdowns

DR PATERSON: In addition to my answer to Ms Vassarotti, I wrote to ClubsACT on 2 July and never received a response.

Government procurement—conduct in procurement—Campbell Primary School

MR BARR: I was asked a question—and I now cannot remember who asked it, but it was one of the opposition members—in relation to whether there had been any contact from anyone, Manteena related, in relation to the Kingfisher report. My office has advised that I have one email—it arrived last Monday, 7 September—from an architecture group, the subject of which is future procurement reform. They have indicated that they are not seeking to revisit the findings, but they would seek an opportunity to contribute constructively to future reform that is proposed or as a result of the findings, and they would welcome the opportunity to meet with me or officers leading the work to share their experience and perspectives. That arrived last Monday, 7 September. We will ensure that that particular architecture firm has the opportunity to contribute to the future procurement reforms that the minister has outlined.

Gaming—mandatory shutdowns

MS VASSAROTTI: I want to clarify my question to make sure that the minister does not inadvertently mislead the Assembly. I asked a question about whether clubs or their representatives had lobbied the minister or other ministers to change the pokies operating hours commitment. To clarify, lobbying would include submissions or correspondence or discussing their position in person—for example, during meetings

that were held with the minister and ClubsACT in April this year, September last year or August last year. I just want to be really clear about what I meant when I was asking about lobbying.

Papers

Mr Speaker presented the following papers:

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to section 17—Auditor-General’s Report—

No 6/2026—ACT Corrective Services rostering, dated 18 June 2026.

No 7/2026—Changes to the Territory Plan requirements for the Phillip pool, dated 19 June 2026.

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

Bills—Inquiry—

Electoral (Gambling Industry) Amendment Bill 2026—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders, dated 23 June 2026.

Emergencies Amendment Bill 2026—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Legal Affairs, dated 17 June 2026.

Road Transport (Alcohol and Drugs) Amendment Bill 2026—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Transport and City Services, dated 18 June 2026.

Urban Forest and Planning Amendment Bill 2026—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Transport and City Services, dated 18 June 2026.

Estimates 2024-2025—Select Committee (Tenth Assembly)—Revised answer to Questions on Notice No 207 from the Minister for Transport, dated 22 July 2026.

Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Act, pursuant to section 20—Independent Reviewer—Report for the period 1 January 2026 to 30 June 2026, dated 3 September 2026, prepared by Bill Campbell AO KC.

Integrity Commission Act, pursuant to section 189—Investigation Report—Operation Kingfisher—An investigation into whether the procurement for the Campbell Primary School Modernisation Project was conducted with probity and whether it was affected by corrupt conduct, dated 23 July 2026.

Legislative Assembly (Members’ Superannuation) Act, pursuant to section 11A—Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly Members Superannuation Board—Annual Report—2025-2026, dated 3 September 2026.

NDIS—Proposed change—Reform—Assembly resolution of 10 June 2026—Response from the Office of the Federal Minister for Health and Ageing and the Minister for Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the Hon. Mark Butler MP, dated 27 August 2026.

Standing order—

99B—Petitions—Referral advice—Correspondence—

Petition—Inquiry—e-Pet 078-25 and Pet 041-26—Make career guidance a right for every ACT Year 7-10 public school students—letter to the Speaker from the Standing Committee on Social Policy, dated 1 September 2026.

Petitions—Not inquired into—

e-Pet 004-26 and Pet 020-26—Save Big Splash and e-Pet 008-26 and Pet 030-26—Hawker Tennis Courts—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Environment and Planning, dated 26 June 2026.

e-Pet 015-26 and Pet-049-26—Save our wombats—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Environment and Planning, dated 10 September 2026.

e-Pet 029-26 and Pet 050-26—Inner South Health Facility—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Environment and Planning, dated 26 June 2026.

e-Pet 038-26 and Pet-025-26—Reject the Curtin Presbytery development—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Environment and Planning, dated 10 September 2026.

e-Pet 043-26—Canberra Health Services Uniform Policy—Fun Scrubs—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Social Policy, dated 8 September 2026.

e-Pet 044-26—Protect the Former Braddon Bowls Club site—a community, social and recreation site—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Environment and Planning, dated 9 September 2026.

e-Pet 052-25 and Pet 028-26—South Canberra Veterans Shed Facility—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Social Policy, dated 23 June 2026.

e-Pet 084-25 and Pet 031-26—Closure of the Kaleen Indoor Sports Centre—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation, dated 7 July 2026.

e-P 024-26 and Pet-061-26—CIT Plaza access to general traffic—Letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Environment and Planning, dated 10 September 2026.

191—Amendments to the Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, dated 23 and 25 June 2026.

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

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to section 21—Auditor-General's Report—

No 2/2026—Management of the Home Buyer Concession Scheme—Government response, dated July 2026.

No 3/2026—University of Canberra financial governance arrangements—Government response, dated 22 July 2026.

No 4/2026—Implementation of the Carers Recognition Act—Government response, dated 15-17 September 2026.

No 7/2026—Changes to the Territory Plan requirements for the Phillip pool—Government response, dated September 2026.

Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act (Cwlth)—

Pursuant to paragraph 41—Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Ministerial Appointment 2026 (No 2)—NI2026-364, dated 29 July 2026.

Pursuant to paragraph 43—Administrative Arrangements 2026 (No 2)—NI2026-407, undated.

Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan Review—Assembly resolution of 7 May 2026—Government response, dated September 2026.

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—Bimberi Headline Indicators Report—June 2026—Annexure A—Second Healthy Centre Review of Bimberi 2024 recommendation updates.

Budget 2026-2027—Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 10—Budget Statements—

E—City and Environment Directorate | Transport Canberra Operations | ACT Gambling and Racing Commission | Cemeteries and Crematoria Authority | Suburban Land Agency—Corrigendum.

G—Infrastructure Canberra—Corrigendum, dated July 2026.

Caretaker Conventions—Select Committee—Report 1—Inquiry into Caretaker Conventions—Government response, dated July 2026.

Community Sector Sustainability—Assembly resolution of 19 March 2026—Government response, dated September 2026.

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

Economics, Industry and Recreation—Standing Committee—Report 3—Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2024-25—Government response, dated August 2026.

Environment and Planning—Standing Committee—Report 7—Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2024-25—Government response, dated August 2026.

Estimates 2026-2027—Select Committee—Report—Inquiry into the Appropriation Bill 2026-2027 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2026-2027—Government response.

Financial Management Act—

Pursuant to section 26—Consolidated Financial Report for the financial quarter ending—30 June 2026.

Pursuant to subsection 30F(3)—Capital Works Program—Progress report—2025-26—Year-to-date performance as at 30 June 2026.

Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT—Select Committee—Report 1—Interim Report, Inquiry into the Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT—Government response, dated July 2026.

Freedom of Information Act, pursuant to section 39—Copy of notice provided to the Ombudsman—Freedom of Information request—City and Environment Directorate—Decision not made in time—26-083, dated 13 August 2026.

Housing supply—Additional targets—Improvement—Assembly resolution of 5 February 2026—Government response, dated February 2026.—Part 3 (a) (b) and (c)—updated—Government response, dated September 2026.

Independent inquiry into ACT Clubs—

Panel Report, dated May 2026.

Panel Report—Government response, dated September 2026.

Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders—Standing Committee—Reports presented—2026—Report 6—Inquiry into Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Amendment Bill 2025—Government response, dated July 2026.

Legal Affairs—Standing Committee—

Report 4—Inquiry into the Liquor Amendment Bill 2026, Restrictions on same-day delivery of alcohol—Government response, dated June 2026.

Report 6—Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2024-25—Government response, dated September 2026.

Report 7—Inquiry into the Family, Personal and Sexual Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2025—Government response, dated August 2026.

Report 8—Inquiry into the Management of strata properties—Government response, September 2026.

Report 9—Inquiry into legislation on proposed firearms reform—Government response, dated September 2026.

Letter to NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning on Public School Funding Cost Recovery, dated 15 September 2026.

Libraries ACT—Service—proposed opening hours changes—consideration—Assembly resolution of 12 June 2026—Government response, dated September 2026.

Light Rail Stage 2A—Business Engagement Report—April to June 2025, dated 15 September 2026.

Occupational violence—ACT public health system—Legislative review and reporting—Assembly resolution of 27 May 2026—Government response, dated September 2026.

Planning Act—

Pursuant to section 75—Planning (Telopea Park School) Major Plan Amendment 2026—Notifiable Instrument, dated 10 September 2026

Pursuant to subsection 268(2)—Statement of Leases Granted—1 April to 30 June 2026, dated September 2026.

Public Accounts and Administration—Standing Committee—

Report 6—Inquiry into the CIT CEO recruitment process—Government response, dated August 2026.

Report 7—Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2024-25—Government response, dated August 2026.

Public School funding cost recovery—Assembly resolution of 28 May 2026—Government response, dated 15 September 2026.

Public Sector Management Standards 2016, pursuant to section 56—Engagements of Long-term ACT Public Service Senior Executives—1 March 2026 to 31 August 2026, dated 15 September 2026.

Social Policy—Standing Committee—Report 4—Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2024-25—Government response, dated August 2026.

Sporting Facilities—Independent Report, dated 15 September 2026.

Sportsgrounds Management and Maintenance—Improvement—Assembly resolution of 11 June 2026—Government response, dated September 2026.

Transport and City Services—Standing Committee—

Report 1—Can We Fix It? Report of the inquiry into the effectiveness of Fix My Street—Government response, dated June 2026.

Report 2—Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2024-25—Government response, dated August 2026.

Trauma informed support services—ACT Courts and Tribunal—Improvement—Assembly resolution of 4 December 2025—Government response, dated September 2026.

Victims of Crime Act—Statutory Review—Charter of rights for Victims of Crime—Final Report, undated.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act and Financial Management Act—ACT Teacher Quality Institute Board Appointment 2026 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-81 (LR, 15 June 2026).

Adoption Act—Adoption (Fees) Determination 2026 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-96 (LR, 22 June 2026).

Agents Act—Agents (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-97 (LR, 23 June 2026).

Animal Welfare Act—

Animal Welfare (Advisory Committee Member) Appointment 2026 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-80 (LR, 11 June 2026).

Animal Welfare (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-129 (LR, 25 June 2026).

Architects Act—Architects (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-162 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Associations Incorporation Act—Associations Incorporation (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-102 (LR, 23 June 2026).

Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act—Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-111 (LR, 24 June 2026).

Blood Donation (Transmittable Diseases) Act—Blood Donation (Transmittable Diseases) Blood Donor Form 2026 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-84 (LR, 15 June 2026).

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Act—

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2026 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-75 (LR, 4 June 2026).

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2026 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-76 (LR, 4 June 2026).

Building Act—Building (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-163 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Canberra Institute of Technology Act and Financial Management Act—Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT Board Member) Appointment 2026 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-147 (LR, 29 June 2026).

Casino Control Act—Casino Control (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-88 (LR, 18 June 2026).

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act—

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency (Agency Board Member) Appointment 2026 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-82 (LR, 15 June 2026).

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency (Agency Board Member) Appointment 2026 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-83 (LR, 15 June 2026).

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency (Authority Board Member) Appointment 2026 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-161 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Act—Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-98 (LR, 23 June 2026).

Clinical Waste Act—Clinical Waste (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-128 (LR, 25 June 2026).

Community Title Act—Community Title (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-164 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act—Construction Occupations (Licensing) (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-165 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Co-operatives National Law (ACT) Act—Co-operatives National Law (ACT) (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-103 (LR, 23 June 2026).

Court Procedures Act—

Court Procedures (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-112 (LR, 24 June 2026).

Court Procedures Amendment Rules 2026 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2026-9 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Crimes (Sentence Administration) Act—

Crimes (Sentence Administration) (Sentence Administration Board - Chair) Appointment 2026 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-69 (LR, 2 June 2026).

Crimes (Sentence Administration) (Sentence Administration Board) Appointment 2026 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-70 (LR, 2 June 2026).

Crimes (Sentence Administration) (Sentence Administration Board) Appointment 2026 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-71 (LR, 2 June 2026).

Crimes (Sentence Administration) (Sentence Administration Board) Appointment 2026 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-72 (LR, 2 June 2026).

Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Act—Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Fees and Charges Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-116 (LR, 24 June 2026).

Dangerous Substances Act—Dangerous Substances (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-117 (LR, 24 June 2026).

Domestic Animals Act—Domestic Animals (Fees) Determination 2026—
Disallowable Instrument DI2026-130 (LR, 25 June 2026).

Duties Act—Duties (Pensioner Duty Deferral Scheme) Determination 2026—
Disallowable Instrument DI2026-141 (LR, 29 June 2026).

Electoral Act—Electoral (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument
DI2026-78 (LR, 9 June 2026).

Electricity Feed-in (Renewable Energy Premium) Act—Electricity Feed-in
(Renewable Energy Premium) (Normal Cost of Electricity Calculation
Methodology) Guideline 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-73 (LR, 2 June
2026).

Electricity Safety Act—Electricity Safety (Fees) Determination 2026—
Disallowable Instrument DI2026-166 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Emergencies Act—Emergencies (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable
Instrument DI2026-94 (LR, 18 June 2026).

Emergencies Act, Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act, Road
Transport (General) Act and Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act—
Emergencies, Road Transport (General), Waste Management and Resource
Recovery (Embassy and Diplomatic Residence Fees) Determination 2026—
Disallowable Instrument DI2026-138 (LR, 25 June 2026).

Environment Protection Act—Environment Protection (Fees) Determination
2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-122 (LR, 25 June 2026).

Firearms Act—Firearms (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument
DI2026-93 (LR, 18 June 2026).

Fisheries Act—Fisheries (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument
DI2026-123 (LR, 25 June 2026).

Gaming Machine Act—Gaming Machine (Fees) Determination 2026—
Disallowable Instrument DI2026-90 (LR, 18 June 2026).

Gas Safety Act—Gas Safety (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument
DI2026-167 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Government Procurement Act—Government Procurement (Non-Public Employee
Member) Appointment 2026 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-87 (LR, 16
June 2026).

Guardianship and Management of Property Act—Guardianship and Management of
Property (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-113 (LR, 24
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DI2026-140 (LR, 29 June 2026).

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Electricity to Certain Small Customers on Standard Retail Contracts) Terms of
Reference Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-95 (LR, 18 June
2026).

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DI2026-86 (LR, 18 June 2026).

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Land Titles Act—

Land Titles (Fees) Determination 2026 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-104 (LR, 23 June 2026).

Land Titles (Verification of Authority) Rules 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-137 (LR, 25 June 2026).

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Legal Aid Act—

Legal Aid (Commissioner—ACTCOSS Nominee) Appointment 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-176 (LR, 13 July 2026).

Legal Aid (Commissioner—Financial Management) Appointment 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-177 (LR, 13 July 2026).

Legal Aid (Commissioner—Specialist Assistance) Appointment 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-65 (LR, 28 May 2026).

Legal Profession Act—Legal Profession (Solicitors) Conduct Rules 2026—Subordinate Law SL2026-6 (LR, 22 June 2026).

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Act—

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Members' Salary Cap Determination 2026 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-107 (LR, 23 June 2026).

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Liquor Act—Liquor (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-105 (LR, 23 June 2026).

Litter Act—Litter (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-132 (LR, 25 June 2026).

Lotteries Act—Lotteries (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-89 (LR, 18 June 2026).

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Planning Act—

Planning (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-168 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Planning (Lease Variation Charges) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-142 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Planning (Reduction and Deferral of Lease Variation Charges—RZ1 and RZ2) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-143 (LR, 29 June 2026).

Professional Engineers Act—Professional Engineers (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-169 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Public Health Act—

Public Health (Chief Health Officer) Appointment 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-139 (LR, 29 June 2026).

Public Health (Notifiable Conditions) Determination 2026 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-66 (LR, 28 May 2026).

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Public Place Names Act—Public Place Names (Watson) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-149 (LR, 2 July 2026).

Public Trustee and Guardian Act—Public Trustee and Guardian (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-114 (LR, 24 June 2026).

Public Unleased Land Act—Public Unleased Land (Fees) Determination 2026 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-148 (LR, 29 June 2026).

Race and Sports Bookmaking Act—Race and Sports Bookmaking (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-91 (LR, 18 June 2026).

Rates Act—Rates (Age 65 and Over—Rates Deferral) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-144 (LR, 29 June 2026).

Rates Act, Duties Act, Land Rent Act and Land Tax Act—Rates, Land Tax, Land Rent and Duties (Certificate and Statement Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-145 (LR, 29 June 2026).

Registration of Deeds Act—Registration of Deeds (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-109 (LR, 24 June 2026).

Retirement Villages Act—Retirement Villages (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-110 (LR, 24 June 2026).

Road Transport (General) Act—

Road Transport (General) (Vehicle Registration and Related Fees) Determination 2026 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-146 (LR, 1 July 2026).

Road Transport (Offences) Amendment Regulation 2026 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2026-7 (LR, 25 June 2026).

Scaffolding and Lifts Act—Scaffolding and Lifts (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-120 (LR, 24 June 2026).

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Stock (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-124 (LR, 25 June 2026).

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Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Duty) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-155 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Home Buyer Concession Scheme) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-157 (LR, 30 June 2026).

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Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Motor Vehicle Duty) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-154 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Pensioner Duty Concession Scheme) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-159 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Rates) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-150 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Taxation Administration (Newly Unit Titled Duty Exemption Scheme) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-156 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Taxation Administration (Off the Plan Unit Duty Exemption Scheme) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-158 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Traders (Licensing) Act—Traders (Licensing) (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-101 (LR, 23 June 2026).

Unit Titles (Management) Act—Unit Titles (Management) (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-115 (LR, 24 June 2026).

Unit Titles Act—Unit Titles (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-171 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Unlawful Gambling Act—Unlawful Gambling (Charitable Gaming Application Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-92 (LR, 18 June 2026).

Urban Forest Act—Urban Forest (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-131 (LR, 25 June 2026).

Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act—Utilities (Technical Regulation) (Gas Metering Code) Approval 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-175 (LR, 9 July 2026).

Utilities Act—Utilities (Greenpower obligations) Exemption 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-68 (LR, 28 May 2026).

Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance) Act—Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance) Amendment Regulation 2026 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2026-8 (LR, 26 June 2026).

Victims of Crime Regulation 2000—Victims of Crime (Fees) Determination 2026 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-135 (LR, 26 June 2026).

Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act—Waste Management and Resource Recovery (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-134 (LR, 25 June 2026).

Water and Sewerage Act—Water and Sewerage (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-172 (LR, 30 June 2026).

Water Resources Act—Water Resources (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-127 (LR, 25 June 2026).

Work Health and Safety Act—Work Health and Safety (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-121 (LR, 24 June 2026).

Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act—Working with Vulnerable People Background Checking (Fees) Determination 2026—Disallowable Instrument DI2026-85 (LR, 15 June 2026).

Housing—Thoroughbred Park precinct

MS CLAY(Ginninderra) (3.16): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) Thoroughbred Park racecourse and surrounds are identified as Category 2 change areas in the 2023 Inner North and City District Strategy;
- (b) the Canberra Racing Club lodged a draft plan amendment for Thoroughbred Park in 2024, which was refused in October 2025;
- (c) the Territory Planning Authority opted for a precinct-level approach and prepared a draft plan amendment for the whole Thoroughbred Park Precinct (DP-08) which was released for public comment between 17 October and 1 December 2025;
- (d) DPA-08 received 151 comments including some supporting retention of the racetrack, greater density, expressing concerns about transport, community infrastructure and liveability and some supporting removal of the racetrack;
- (e) the precinct anticipates 6,200 homes and a population between 11,400 to 16,400 people;
- (f) redevelopment of Yowani Country Club could have 1,000 to 1,200 dwellings with a population of between 3,000 and 5,000 people plus a hotel;
- (g) 2026 enrolment data shows many schools in the area are near capacity: Lyneham High 93 percent, O'Connor Cooperative 93 percent, Dickson College 90 percent, Lyneham Primary 90 percent, Majura Primary

- 84 percent, North Ainslie Primary 78 percent, Ainslie Primary 77 percent;
- (h) the Government has committed to establishing inclusionary zoning and is working on what this will involve, and on 24 July 2026 Government officials said the Thoroughbred Park Precinct will have inclusionary zoning but did not commit to specific numbers or community facilities; and
 - (i) the Government has committed to a Suburban Land Agency target to allocate at least 15 percent of annual land releases for public, community and affordable housing;
- (2) further notes that:
- (a) the redevelopment of Thoroughbred Park Precinct and Yowani Country Club will add a population equivalent to three Ainslie's to the Inner North;
 - (b) existing schools may be expanded to meet demand, but Government will not find land in future for a school unless it's set aside now; and
 - (c) rent-fixed public and community housing and community infrastructure needs to be built into the zoning framework, so developers factor it into planning and financing; and
- (3) calls on the Government to:
- (a) require developers to provide 10 percent of homes in the Thoroughbred Park Precinct as rent-fixed public housing plus some community housing, all of which is salt-and-peppered throughout the precinct;
 - (b) require developers to provide playgrounds, parks and community infrastructure;
 - (c) ensure that the planning for the Thoroughbred Park Precinct sets aside land and accounts for future primary and high school capacity to support additional housing development in the Inner North; and
 - (d) report to the Assembly on progress on (3)(a) to (3)(c) every six months, starting by the first day of the last sitting week in December 2026.

This motion makes sure that the ACT will get public and community housing in the redevelopment of Thoroughbred Park, not just housing based on market prices. When Canberra Racing Club was first developed, it was on the outskirts of Canberra. Planners at the time may not have realised that Canberra would grow this far. The passage of time has seen the city wrap itself around the racecourse. This precinct is now at the heart of our city. It is on light rail. It is a short distance from Civic. It is central, and a great location in which to live. It is the opposite of urban sprawl. It is smart consolidation. It is exactly where we should have a whole new suburb.

Ahead of the last election, the Greens commissioned architects Munns Sly Moore, who put up our vision for the area—schools, shops and playgrounds, fully walkable with bike paths, with a re-naturalised Sullivans Creek, lots of homes, between 5,200 and 5,400, and lots of public housing and community housing, with 10 per cent of each. This resonated with so many people. I got so many comments from people who were sick of driving past an empty racecourse day after day and wondering why Canberra had chosen to dedicate so much well-located space to that underused area when we are

in a housing crisis.

When the racetrack was built, horseracing was part of our society. Lots of people supported it and participated in it. Attitudes have changed. Interest in horseracing has declined, as have the fortunes of the Canberra Racing Club, which now relies on public money from the government to stay solvent. Most years, they are half-funded by the ACT government.

At a time of mass privatisation and cost-cutting, the horseracing industry is one of the few hold-outs. They are a public service, apparently, with multiyear, secure funding and government workers compensation insurance that they get without having to go through any kind of grant or public procurement process.

Many in our community are tired of this. They do not understand why the horseracing industry gets special treatment when community groups, sporting groups and environment groups have to bid for funds in open processes and get far, far less than the \$40 million fixed multiyear secure funding.

That pressure has led the Canberra Racing Club to look at how they can use the Thoroughbred Park land to generate income. They have looked ahead and realised that future MOUs simply are not plausible. They proposed a zoning change to permit commercial and residential development. They have proposed a change that benefited themselves. It did not put the needs of Canberrans first. The Territory Planning Authority have rejected that proposal, and they have adopted a precinct-wide perspective. That was a really good decision.

The future of the Thoroughbred Park precinct is one of the most significant urban renewal opportunities facing Canberra in the coming decades. This precinct has the potential to deliver thousands of new homes in a well-located part of the city, but it needs to be planned properly from the outset. We need every decision on this site to put the community first. Public interest, not profits for the horseracing industry, should dictate what goes here and how it is done.

The Assembly should recognise the scale of what is proposed. Together, the Thoroughbred Park precinct and the new Yowani Country Club development could add over 20,000 people to Canberra's population. These developments are in addition to all the people that will be living in the new buildings that have been built along Northbourne Avenue in recent years.

That level of growth presents an opportunity and a responsibility. The opportunity is to demonstrate how Canberra can address housing supply while creating a well-planned, sustainable and inclusive neighbourhood, accessible to people of all incomes. The responsibility is to ensure that housing delivery is accompanied by the infrastructure, services and community facilities necessary to support the people who will live there.

Inclusionary zoning must be at the heart of this development. Inclusionary zoning is zoning that requires public and community housing. That is the only way we will guarantee that we get public and community homes there. Government has to require them. The government has already committed to introducing inclusionary zoning, and officials have indicated that the Thoroughbred Park precinct will be subject to such

requirements. That is great news. But to date we have had no commitment regarding the scale of public and community housing, or the community facilities that will come with it. I have asked government to commit to a set amount of public housing; so far, government will not. That is why I have put this motion up. It seeks that commitment.

Inclusionary zoning is a simple but powerful planning tool. It recognises that when governments create development opportunities and uplift land values in established areas, the broader community should share in those benefits. This helps to deliver areas that include housing for essential workers, low income households, older Canberrans, people with disabilities, and families who would otherwise be priced out of desirable locations. It is about creating mixed communities, ensuring that our teachers, our nurses and our hospitality workers, our public housing and community housing renters and our carers can also live close to their jobs, close to the services that they need.

Importantly, inclusionary zoning only works when it is established before a development begins. Government needs to make a choice. Government needs to say, “This development here will have 10 per cent of homes as public homes.” If government does not make that decision, it just will not happen. You cannot come in after the planning work, after the feasibility work, after developers have locked in all their financing, and after the planning amendments are in place, and ask whether developers might be able to fit in some public housing at the end. The time to commit is now.

The motion calls on government to require at least 10 per cent of homes within the precinct to be delivered as rent-fixed public housing, that government also support community housing, and that these homes be distributed throughout the precinct rather than in isolated locations. That salt-and-pepper approach is what promotes great communities and genuine social inclusion.

The government public housing portfolio is in decline. In 1989, 11 per cent of all ACT homes were public homes. As of late 2024, only 5.9 per cent were public homes. That has dropped again; the most recent data was 5.7 per cent. And a tiny proportion at the moment—0.6 per cent—is community housing homes. These numbers are dropping because government is not choosing to prioritise public housing.

Labor governments in the past did prioritise public housing. They did it after the war. They did it when Canberra was built. They did it consistently, and they did it with commitment. But this century our public housing stock has been in decline, and we can turn that back today.

I know the government has looked at the concept of affordable housing in that district. Affordable housing is not public housing. Affordable housing means housing pinned to market rent. Typically, it is 75 per cent of market rent. We FOI-ed the Treasury brief on this precinct. That Treasury brief said there was no point building affordable housing here because it would not be affordable, anyway. That brief said that 75 per cent of market rent in an area like this is still so far out of reach of Canberrans that there is no point.

I happen to agree with Treasury on this one. That is why we need public housing. We do not just need luxury apartments. We do not just need housing that the commercial

sector claims to be affordable and that is not in fact affordable. We actually need public homes here. We need this because, if we do not do this, our waitlist will keep growing. It has grown from 3,000 at the start of this term to over 3,600 on the waitlist at the moment, and that is still going up.

Government has committed to growing the public housing portfolio to 13,200 by 2030. This is how we can do it. We can do it at the start of a development. We can make it part of that development. We can make developers pay for it. It can be part of the profits of that development that would otherwise leave the public purse. Government can choose the amount, government can set the amount, and government can make sure that that is feasible. Government cannot do any of those things if it does not decide to prioritise public housing and set the amount that we need.

This one precinct alone could add over 600 homes to our public housing stock. That would clear our high-needs waitlist. Why wouldn't the government choose to do this? This is precisely where we need public housing most—located with great public transport, with good access to shops and jobs, great community services and great infrastructure. This site ticks every box, but we have to be clear about our expectations at the start of the planning process. We need the property developers, the site proponents, to know what government requirements are.

This motion does not just call for public housing. We also need community facilities for all those thousands and thousands of people who will move in. Those community facilities need to be managed in such a way that people are encouraged to use them. They need to be set through low fees and charges so that people can connect with each other. We need to make sure people can build those networks that make a community great. When we are planning for tens of thousands of new residents, we also have to plan for their daily lives. The kids need to go to school. Families need playgrounds and parks. Community organisations need spaces to operate. Residents need places to gather, connect and participate in civic life.

On schools alone, the evidence is already showing us that schools in that area are approaching capacity. Lyneham high is at 93 per cent, O'Connor Cooperative is at 93 per cent, Dickson College is at 90 per cent, and several of the local primary schools are already operating at 78, 84 and 90 per cent capacity. These schools are already nearing capacity, and we are about to put in a suburb here that is the equivalent of three Ainslies. We need more schools.

Once an area is developed, that land is almost impossible to recover for future public purposes. If we do not reserve space for schools now, any future government may not have any realistic opportunity to do so. That is also why my motion calls for planning that explicitly accounts for future primary and high school capacity and that sets aside land options before the development proceeds.

Similarly, developers should be required to provide the parks, playgrounds and community infrastructure necessary to support a growing population. Those facilities cannot be an afterthought. They have to be part of the foundational planning framework from day one. We need more housing, but not just more dwellings; we need complete neighbourhoods and we need neighbourhoods where 10 per cent of the homes are public homes.

The Thoroughbred Park precinct is an enormous opportunity to get this right. It is an opportunity to demonstrate what we mean by inclusionary zoning, to commit to and provide public and community housing alongside that for-profit housing. It is an opportunity to make sure we are planning the schools, the parks and the facilities that we need for that whole precinct.

I want to thank Minister Steel and his office for working with me on this motion. We are in furious agreement on the principles here. I am really pleased to see that his office and his directorate are progressing with the work to develop inclusionary zoning. But we are not in agreement about the commitment and the delivery, and I think this is now a familiar story. We do not just want a top-level agreement that inclusionary zoning is a good idea. We need the ACT government to decide how much public housing we need here, to decide if we need to set aside land for schools, and to commit to that.

There is a development already in the planning process. If we do not make these decisions now, I am really concerned that there will not be a chance to make these firm commitments later. This work has been coming through the system for several years. This is the right time to say, “Yes, we need 10 per cent of public homes here.” We need to make sure that we are setting aside land here. This will give everybody the certainty that they need in order to be able to proceed with the feasibility, the financing and the plans that they wish to proceed with, so that we will get that great suburb that Canberra is so desperate for.

I commend the motion to the Assembly, and I urge all members to support it.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage, and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (3.29): I rise today to speak to Ms Clay’s motion on Thoroughbred Park. I thank Ms Clay and her office for the open communication on this proposal. I also thank Mrs Morris and her office for their genuine and open engagement on this matter.

The government’s first planning priority is to plan for more housing in well-located areas near high-frequency public transport stops. Building a greater density of housing near high-frequency public transport stops provides opportunity for more convenient and affordable access to transport for a larger portion of the Canberra population. This helps reduce congestion on our road network while promoting more sustainable and walkable communities. More people living near transport hubs helps to expand public transport services and active travel with improvements to public spaces, benefiting new and existing residents.

The Planning Strategy from 2018 established that the majority of Canberra’s future urban growth will occur within our existing urban footprint, with a focus on shopping centres and along transport corridors. The ACT government has also agreed in the National Housing Accord to prioritise planning control amendments to support diverse housing across a range of areas, including promoting medium- and high-density housing in well-located areas close to existing public transport infrastructure connections, amenities and employment.

The key to achieving these housing and transport goals is the integration of transport

and land uses, which is an approach known as transit-oriented development. The district strategies identified change areas with good access to rapid public transport where urban change would occur in the future. Planning for these areas will also be progressed to support the development of high-quality transit-oriented development on rapid public transport corridors and the light rail line—both the existing line in the north and the future line in the south together with the existing rapid bus corridors. The Thoroughbred Park site is located in close proximity to the city centre and to two light rail stops and has the potential to contribute to the provision of housing that our city needs within the existing urban footprint, close to transport, jobs, services and other amenities.

Thoroughbred Park is currently subject to a proposal for a major plan amendment under the Planning Act 2023. The proposal is currently being considered by the independent Territory Planning Authority. As members are aware, major plan amendments to the Territory Plan must follow the statutory process set out in part 5.2 of the Planning Act and decisions on the amendment must be made in accordance with the act. Nonetheless, this motion raises a range of issues which are relevant to the broader planning in the inner north as the population grows and are being considered both in the MPA process and, subject to these decisions, will be considered further through the future subdivision design processes.

With land in the territory becoming scarce, the government recognises that there is a need to examine further opportunities to encourage more social housing on leased land through inclusionary zoning reform. An inclusionary zoning policy for the ACT is currently in development. At its most basic level, inclusionary zoning is a type of land use planning that incentivises or mandates the delivery of affordable, community or public housing as part of a redevelopment. The ACT government has previously committed to ensure that social housing is provided in the Thoroughbred Park precinct, and I believe the racing club is quite open to this.

There clearly cannot be a new subdivision that is the size of a new suburb without social housing included. So the principle of ensuring that developments come with affordable and public housing put forward in this motion is one that the government is happy to support. However, there is more work to do to ensure that any requirements applied to this site or the precinct are feasible and result in timely, well-located new homes for Canberrans.

Members will have seen that Ms Clay's motion seeks to include specific targets for social housing. While I agree with the intent of Ms Clay's motion, we are unable to support the specific targets which are still being tested. The City and Environment Directorate are currently working through the inclusionary zoning policy development. There is testing that is going on, particularly looking at Thoroughbred Park, to see what is feasible. At the end of the day, if it is unfeasible, picking a number out of the air, like 10 per cent, which may be unfeasible, may result not only in social housing homes not being built but also the entire precinct not be redeveloped at all.

So it is important to consider the feasibility of different levels of social housing requirements in the new neighbourhood first and ensure that it is feasible to build, which is crucial to the future sustainability of the Canberra Racing Club as well. As the inclusionary zoning policy is still in development, the requirements for social housing on the site will be determined at a later stage. Indeed, there may be an opportunity to

further scrutinise that through the statutory process and engagement with the Assembly.

It is important to note that inclusionary zoning is different to land releases by government, where the government is able to set more specific targets as the land custodian prior to any sale to the private market. When we are talking about inclusionary zoning, we are talking about requirements or incentives on leased land. The government's aim for this redevelopment is to provide more social housing but also help to diversify the club's revenue streams and to enable the sustainable provision of facilities and amenities for the community, which are also mentioned in this motion. I look forward to updating the community as the planning for the site progresses and work on an inclusionary zoning policy is developed.

I would also like to thank Ms Clay for raising the need for school facilities in the inner north. School capacity and planning are being considered in the inner north in relation to not just Thoroughbred Park DPA-08 but also the Northern Gateway DPA-09 and implementation of the broader District Strategy and the Planning Strategy. It is expected that rezoning enabling more housing in these well-located areas in the inner north will result in a gradual and staged change to the population over time.

The ACT Education Directorate have advised that there is capacity within the surrounding schools that will be able to cater for increased growth in the short term. However, cumulative development of change areas in the District Strategies, including the Northern Gateway, Thoroughbred Park and the Yowani areas adjacent to the site as well as the missing middle reforms which have already passed through the Assembly will likely see the need for extensions to existing schools or the development of new schools in the inner north at some point in the future.

The supporting report for DPA-08 also notes that this part of Lyneham is in the priority enrolment area for East Gungahlin High School, Dickson College and Gungahlin College. Depending on the type of residential development that occurs in this precinct, the demand for school placements will vary. The supporting report notes that, if a retirement or aged-care development contributes to a large part of the development in the residential zoned areas proposed in the major plan amendment, there will not be as great a demand for school places from that kind of development. DPA-08 is currently under consideration in the statutory planning process and planning is underway for school facilities more broadly.

While it is not appropriate to require a school site to be provided on the Canberra Racing Club site within the broader Thoroughbred Park district through this motion, my amendments recognise that planning for the precinct should account for future primary and high school and college capacity to support additional housing development in the inner north.

The government is pursuing transit-oriented development in the north and the south to support the development of sustainable walkable communities that are close to good public transport, jobs, services and amenities. The government remains committed to ensuring that precinct-scale developments like the Thoroughbred Park precinct provide social housing. This needs to be carefully considered to ensure that the precinct is feasible and sustainable, which is work underway as part of inclusionary zoning reform. Education infrastructure is also being carefully planned to ensure that the growth of the

city's inner north over time is aligned with school capacity.

Finally, DPA-08 is the subject of statutory planning processes, and it is likely that there will be many more opportunities for the community to have their say and for the Assembly to consider the matters raised in this motion and any future subdivision design approvals which will provide a more detailed design of the new estate. I seek leave to move the amendments circulated in my name together.

Leave granted.

MR STEEL: I move:

1. Omit paragraph (3)(a), substitute:

“(a) ensure developers provide public and community housing in the Thoroughbred Park Precinct;”.

2. Omit paragraph (3)(c), substitute:

“(c) ensure that the planning for the precinct accounts for future primary, high school, and college capacity to support additional housing development in the inner north; and”.

MRS MORRIS (Brindabella) (3.39): I rise to speak to Ms Clay's motion and to the minister's amendment. The Canberra Liberals have consistently addressed the problem of housing supply and affordability in the ACT. Earlier this year, I brought forward a motion to address the housing crisis in the ACT and to improve the government's reporting against its objective of 30,000 new homes by 2030. Since then, the Canberra Liberals have supported the government's missing middle policy, while also warning against introducing impediments to increasing housing supply, such as adoption of the National Construction Code. We have been consistent on the need to get on with the job, and it is in this spirit that we support Mr Steel's amendments to Ms Clay's motion.

We accept that the government knows it will need to assess and address a range of planning considerations as the Thoroughbred Park and Yowani developments proceed. This naturally includes public and community housing and school planning. The calls-on in 3(a) and (c) of Ms Clay's motion are unnecessarily prescriptive, and the development of these two precincts will require that these, and many other issues, will be assessed and addressed by the government and developers as they get on with the job.

During a housing crisis, the important thing is to get on with it, so we will be supporting the minister's amendment, which we consider to be quite reasonable. I thank Ms Clay for bringing this motion to the attention of the Assembly. I thank the minister for his amendments.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (3.41): I recognise that there are sincere intentions behind this motion. I believe the Greens have a genuine desire to see more public and social housing delivered in the ACT and that they are increasingly cognisant of the very real fiscal challenges that the territory is facing. But, while I recognise those sincere intentions, I do have concerns with the way they are going about this. In fairness to them, my concerns go well beyond this particular motion.

Here in the ACT, both the executive and the parliament have become very comfortable in imposing a whole range of obligations on third parties without any real consideration of the consequences for those parties. In terms of administration, regulation and taxation, we put so much burden on private organisations that it can become unviable for them to do the one thing that they are here to do. This is true for many businesses, NGOs and volunteer organisations, and it is certainly true for organisations involved in developing and building new housing. There is much less interest from investors, developers and builders in the ACT nowadays because of the cumulative impact of the burdens and the mandates we put on them, and everyone loses from that. There is less work for businesses, fewer jobs for tradies, less revenue for government, and fewer homes for Canberrans. Nobody benefits from it, but we keep doing it. We do it because it is cheap and it is easy for government to make a rule that somebody else has to do something, and, because there is no real political price for the burden of those mandates, it causes developments to stall or developers to walk away completely.

That is exactly what we have seen with the Whitlam local centre. The Suburban Land Agency failed to sell that site. The CEO openly said the government's rules for the site were so prescriptive that it simply was not viable for anyone to develop, so, instead of selling the site and realising \$10 million to \$20 million in revenue, plus construction jobs, tax revenue, and new homes, businesses and community spaces, we are left with nothing. There are lessons that we need to learn from our experience at Whitlam—lessons that have obvious implications for Thoroughbred Park. If we do some quick back-of-the-envelope maths, we can say the public housing requirement will probably mean forgone revenue of around \$200 million. If that is passed on to the buyers of other units, the impact is about \$74,000 per dwelling. And that is before we consider the other obligations that this motion would impose.

These really are enormous numbers, and I think it is hugely important that the Assembly is asked to make a decision regarding such large financial implications through a private member's motion with so little notice. I thank Ms Clay for sending this motion through—I think it was on Friday. This is something, though, that ought to go to an inquiry by an Assembly committee before it comes to us as a motion. Members should be able to fully understand the consequences that a significant proposal would have before they are asked to vote on it, because the last thing we want is for developers to look at the cost of capital, which is very high, to look at the risk in the housing market, which is also quite high, and to look at the impact of these new changes and decide to walk away, as they did in Whitlam. That would be an absolutely terrible outcome for our community, and I worry that it might be the outcome we end up with if we are not cautious.

I had intended to propose that we hold off on considering this matter until an inquiry has been undertaken, but I note the amendments from the minister. I thank his office for briefing me on those earlier today. I appreciate the communication. We will support those amendments, I will forego my amendments for an inquiry, and we will watch this space.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong) (3.45): I rise to speak in support of Ms Clay's motion and speak to Minister Steel's amendments as well. I would like to thank Ms Clay for bringing forward this important issue for consideration by the Assembly. The redevelopment of Thoroughbred Park is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for

Canberra. This is an opportunity to create a new suburb that puts our community's biggest needs at its heart. This redevelopment will add a population equivalent to three Ainslies to the inner north. I cannot wait to meet my new neighbours.

The motion before us puts forward the Greens's view of the world. The Greens do not work for the big end of town. We will always put the community at the heart of the decisions that we make. In this case, the redevelopment of Thoroughbred Park cannot be about property developers putting luxury apartment towers up. The Greens know that rent-fixed public and community housing and community infrastructure need to be part of the plan for this new suburb.

Young people, essential workers, retirees, people doing it tough and people just trying to get by have all been let down by a housing system that prioritises profit over people, a system that treats housing like a wealth-generating commodity rather than what it is—a home. More and more people are struggling in the private rental market. We know that around one third of Canberrans are renters and they are paying record high rents. More than half of lower income renter households were in rental stress in 2023. In 2025 Anglicare's *Rental Affordability Snapshot* found zero properties advertised in the ACT during their survey period that were affordable for someone on JobSeeker. Only one per cent of listings in the ACT were affordable for a full-time minimum wage earner. We are in a cost-of-living crisis and a housing crisis, and housing costs are contributing to the significant stress that people have. While some in our community are well off, many are not immune from the housing crisis. In fact Canberra can be a very expensive place to live. The factors driving our housing crisis are complex, but in part they have been exacerbated by deliberate decisions by various governments to move away from providing public housing in a way that is truly affordable and stable housing for people in the community.

The Greens will always stand up for the community, which brings me back to Thoroughbred Park, the redevelopment and our opportunity for the community to flourish in this new neighbourhood. The Greens's vision for this redevelopment recognises that more and more people are struggling in the private rental market. It makes it clear that public housing must be part of the solution to the housing crisis. Decades of underinvestment in public housing stock have seen the number of public homes in the ACT decline, while the public housing waiting list grows longer. Public housing has now become the landlord of last resort, and people spend years on the waiting list before they are offered a home.

The government will talk about affordable housing, but many of these so-called affordable homes remain out of reach for average workers. Rents in these projects are simply too high, and there is an abdication of responsibility for governments who are responsible for ensuring that the community is looked after, for making sure that people have a safe place to call home and for meeting the human right of housing. Truly affordable housing is one where rents are linked to income, and the most secure type of housing is public housing. Given this, I will share my disappointment that the government is not prepared to commit to a minimum proportion of public housing to be delivered on the site. It is important that we make commitments to public housing in numbers that will enable us to respond to the more than 3500 people that currently sit on the public housing waiting list.

We just really need to remember that it has not always been like this. When Canberra was first established, the government provided homes as an essential service for people moving here to contribute to the city. The government built houses, lots of people lived in public housing and a diverse range of backgrounds made Canberra a vibrant and affordable place to live. We can capture this spirit again. This redevelopment, this project and this motion are all part of that vision. It is about community, looking after our neighbour and making a house a home. It should not be about a luxury property development and trying to generate as much wealth as possible off the backs of working people. This is a vision that the community backs. When we have been out and about in the area chatting to people about this idea, the number one comment that people make when they hear about it is “When can I move in?” I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (3.51): I would like to speak in response to this motion in general and also touch on Mr Steel’s amendments. I am supportive of more housing in central Canberra being closer to schools, recreational and employment opportunities and critical services. Like Ms Vassarotti, I look forward to welcoming our new neighbours to this part of the ACT. In that respect, I want to thank Ms Clay for bringing forward this motion to talk about how it is that we make this a success.

Obviously Thoroughbred Park is an excellent location for more housing—close to light rail, to Civic and also to the Gungahlin town centre. I really appreciate that this motion asks the right question: how do we make this proposed precinct a success? This is something we need to be asking more and more as our city densifies. The obvious answer—or part of it—is community infrastructure. We need great playgrounds, bike paths, sporting facilities, local shops, schools and third spaces for people to come together, not just to support the new residents of these areas—obviously in this case it is new precincts, so everything will be new—but also existing residents.

I think Canberrans by and large support more housing density on the condition that urban densification is supported by proactive planning from the government for the infrastructure that is needed to make it work. I have been listening to Ms Carrick in that regard. For example, Molonglo Valley has a large and growing population, but no district playing fields. Government is planning this now, 13 years after the first residents started moving in. So let’s not make the same mistakes in this precinct. We need to actually plan for how we make a denser city a better city to live in. That means planning now for how we want our city to operate in the future, not just how it has operated in the past.

As the motion acknowledges, the government has committed to a Suburban Land Agency target to allocate at least 15 per cent of its annual land releases for public, community and affordable housing, which is encouraging, and multiple members have spoken to the importance of considering the breakdown. Obviously, often we speak about them all together—social and affordable housing—but they are very different things, and that is what this motion goes to and what Mr Steel’s amendment goes to as well.

I met with the Canberra Racing Club recently to discuss this proposal and a few other things as well, and I was encouraged that they are also committed. They indicated their commitment to the same target, 15 per cent social and affordable housing, but my

understanding is that a breakdown—this is still reflective of the public community and affordable housing components having not yet been agreed, which is what I think makes this motion well timed. Like Ms Clay, I am keen to see a firm commitment from the ACT government to a significant proportion of public housing in this new precinct.

If 10 per cent is not doable, as Ms Clay has proposed, the minister could have moved an amendment indicating what the government would commit to at a minimum, but unfortunately that has not occurred, which is why I will not be supporting the government's amendment today. As we know, affordable housing is generally considered to be 75 per cent of market rent, whereas public housing generally ends up being on average around a third of market rent, so that is a massive difference, both for a developer from a viability perspective, as we have heard a lot about in the debate today, and also, more importantly, from a social perspective for tenants. That gap is growing.

This is something that is often raised with me, and I am sure it is with other members: those who are able to qualify for public housing—as we know, qualifying for it is not quite enough; that will get you on the waitlist, but it might not get you into a home—and those who qualify for affordable housing or can afford affordable housing at 75 per cent of market rent. The gap between those two cohorts is growing as well. What we do know is that the approved applicants on the public housing waitlist of 3,652 households are people we know cannot afford the private market, but they cannot afford 75 per cent of the private market either. We all know we need more public housing and need to pursue opportunities like this to ensure that we are constructing sufficient public housing.

The provision of both a significant and a specific proportion of public housing at the Thoroughbred Park precinct should be a condition of the government's support for the precinct, and the minister could make that commitment on behalf of the ACT government today, and, like Ms Clay, I think he should. Members are right to speak about feasibility, and obviously that is crucial, and multiple members have pointed out that a project will not go ahead if it is not feasible, but that cannot just be financial feasibility. We need to talk about what is feasible from our perspective. As members of this Assembly representing our community, it is a precinct that has of that 15 per cent mix just one per cent of public housing that is feasible from our perspective, while 3,652 applicants wait on our public housing waitlist for years at a time. That is a decision that we are able to make as an Assembly, and that is what we are voting on with this motion.

So I applaud Ms Clay for putting forward a clear expectation about what she considers to be feasible, which is a minimum of 10 per cent public housing. If that is impossible, then, like I said earlier, eight per cent, nine per cent, seven per cent—what is the figure? But let's set a minimum to avoid a race to—I am not going to say a race to the bottom in the provision of public and affordable housing, but a race to make it mostly affordable housing, because that is viable from a developer's perspective, which is understandable perhaps, but not viable from our community's perspective.

I will be supporting the motion and supporting the amendment, which it sounds like will go down. Overall I am very pleased that Ms Clay has brought this forward today and that there is widespread support across the chamber for the considerations around

how to make this precinct a success for current and future residents alike.

MR PARTON (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (3.57): I am genuinely excited by the fact that we are, ever so slowly, edging closer to this amazing residential development at Thoroughbred Park. If it was in Tuggeranong, I would live there. It will be a really cool place to live, and that has been articulated by everyone who has spoken today. It has been a long time coming; so much work has been undertaken, so much consultation has occurred, and now, if you will, Mr Assistant Speaker, the horses are at the gates. I just want the starter to say “go” and get this underway. I think we all agree with that. I think we all share that anticipation and that excitement, and that is a really good thing.

When it comes to the Greens and Thoroughbred Park, we understand that the Greens are not on the same page with us when it comes to a lot of things—wood fires, Summernats, rump steak, the Australian flag, or anyone wearing a military uniform. We understand that. Also, with horseracing, we are not on the same page.

Mr Braddock: A point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Cain): Yes?

Mr Braddock: I have proudly worn the Australian uniform in the past, and I will stand by that. I disagree with the characterisation by the Leader of the Opposition of my view on the uniform.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I do not know whether that is a point of order, Mr Braddock. Mr Parton, continue.

MR PARTON: I am happy to withdraw any reference to military uniforms. I acknowledge the backing of Mr Braddock of everyone wearing a military uniform, but I understand that the Greens are not keen on anything associated with horseracing. Sometimes their fixation with Thoroughbred Park gets a little tiring. That being said, I would suggest that this motion is about as sensible as it gets, when it comes to the Greens and Thoroughbred Park. We have had this discussion; most of the suggestions in this motion are, broadly speaking, acceptable to pretty much everyone. That is good. We agree with Mr Steel that the original motion is just a little too prescriptive. Ms Clay is not ACTPLA, and it is not for the Greens to determine the exact percentage of any proponents’ deliverables. I share the concerns that were put forward by Ms Castley. I would hate us to get to a situation where we make something so prescriptive that it becomes unviable.

We are broadly in support of the motion from Ms Clay, and we think that it is made even better by the wonderful amendments from my good friend Mr Steel. We will be supporting the motion as amended.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (4.00): I rise to support Ms Clay’s motion. I support increasing housing, but housing alone does not create a community. Good communities require good planning, and that means identifying and protecting the land and infrastructure that people will need before development opportunities are lost.

If thousands of new homes are to be built at Thoroughbred Park, we must plan from the outset for the people who will live there. That includes public and community housing, as well as the parks, playgrounds, community facilities and shared spaces that help people to connect and belong.

These outcomes cannot simply be left to the private market. Government has a responsibility to plan for the long-term needs of the community and to ensure land is reserved for essential housing and facilities before it is developed for other purposes. The provision of 10 per cent of the housing as public and community housing is a reasonable request.

We have seen what happens when housing growth runs ahead of infrastructure. In Molonglo, rapid population growth has contributed to increasing congestion, and ongoing gaps in community facilities and local services. They still do not even have any tennis courts or a skate park. We should not repeat those mistakes at Thoroughbred Park. This is an opportunity to get the planning right from the beginning, and deliver more housing and more social housing, while creating a completely connected and livable community.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.02): In closing, I am sorry that some members felt unprepared for today's discussion. Thoroughbred Park have had their zoning plans out since partway through last term, for several years now. We took our vision for the precinct, which included 10 per cent public housing and 10 per cent community housing, to the last election, which was 2½ years ago. It was quite a long time ago, and we have had a longstanding policy of 10 per cent public housing in all of our developments.

I do not know any other way to prepare people better for these debates. We put out a discussion paper and held a roundtable at the start of this year about what inclusionary zoning is and what the feasibility settings are that the industry would need in order to make it work. I am super happy to invite any member along to talk about those plans, as they come across, but these things do not come suddenly, out of the blue. This has been four to six years in the making, and we now have a choice for the government: it is time to decide to commit; what do you want to commit to?

I am very much hoping—because I think Minister Steel's amendments will be passed—that government has another opportunity later, down the track, to make the same commitment, to a firm commitment to public housing and to a firm decision about whether there will be a school in this precinct, so that our children are not required to cross six lanes of Northbourne Avenue to try and get to schools somewhere else. It is about whether or not, when we are building a precinct for 16,000 people and injecting 20,000 new people into an area, we will plan properly for that. I am hoping that there will be further opportunities, but today was an opportunity.

There are a lot of ways to make this kind of plan work. I did not put those into the motion. That did seem to be too prescriptive. All of that has been out in the public domain and under active discussion for years. Government can use the settings with LVC, the lease variation charge, to make public housing and community housing more attractive. Government has already taken steps towards doing that. Government could perhaps give Housing ACT free land where government has this, or cheap land, in the

way that government does with universities. Right now, government will give universities cheap or free land—like it did with Arscott House—and let those universities develop it for profit, but it makes Housing ACT pay the full price for land.

Government could use many different ways and settings to factor this into the development at the start, or government could simply find the budget to pay for public housing. There are a lot of different pathways to get there. The thing is that 10 per cent public housing will not be feasible if government does not make those choices and have the settings to allow it. If government simply says, “We like the concept of public housing; developers, pitch us,” we will get the most profit-driven model possible, and we will not have those feasibility settings built in from the start.

I was a little disturbed that Minister Steel talked about the need for the horseracing industry to diversify its income. I trust that came from his sports portfolio rather than his planning portfolio. I trust that everybody in the Planning Authority and everybody in the directorate who is working on this is looking at the planning principles and the public interest. The planning principles and the public interest for this precinct are things like public and community housing, schools, community facilities, and what gives Canberra the best planning outcome.

It may well be that the horseracing industry and a bunch of other developers have certain views that they would also like to make a profit from this. That should not be part of this decision-making process.

The debate today is about whether the government want to commit, say what they will do, and make sure that the rest of the steps follow on from that. It is so much easier to do that at the start of the process rather than turn around in a year or two years, when a bunch of developers have done a bunch of work, and they suddenly say that it is no longer feasible. I am really worried that we will end up here, with government telling us, in a year or two, “We’re so sorry. It’s not feasible. The only way we can get homes there is if we don’t have any public housing,” or have three public housing properties in a development for 16,000 people.

If we make these decisions up-front, it is easier for industry to work out how to do it. If government is in conversation with them about what the clear expectations are, it makes life easier for everyone. If government is clear about our expectation that kids should be able to walk to school, and we need to make sure that an area this large has a school there, it makes life a lot easier for everyone.

The Greens will not be supporting Minister Steel’s amendments, but we very much thank him for his ongoing support for the concept of inclusionary zoning. We are very much hoping that that will deliver public and community housing for Canberra, not just affordable housing.

Question put:

That the amendments be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 15

Noes 6

Andrew Barr
Chiaka Barry
Leanne Castley
Tara Cheyne
Ed Cocks
Jeremy Hanson
Elizabeth Lee
Deborah Morris

Suzanne Orr
Mark Parton
Marisa Paterson
Michael Pettersson
Chris Steel
Rachel Stephen-Smith
Caitlin Tough

Andrew Braddock
Fiona Carrick
Jo Clay
Thomas Emerson
Laura Nuttall
Rebecca Vassarotti

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendments agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Government procurement—Secure Local Jobs Code

MR PARTON (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (4.12): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) ACT Government procurement should deliver value for money, fair competition, local opportunity and integrity;
- (b) no union, employer organisation, industry body, political office or other external organisation should have privileged influence over, or access to, confidential procurement information, tenderer details or decision-makers during a live procurement;
- (c) workplace rights and employment standards should be protected through independent regulation, consistently applied laws and objective evidence; and
- (d) maintaining public confidence in procurement requires transparency about external representations intended to influence tender processes or outcomes;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) the ACT Integrity Commission investigation into the Campbell Primary School Modernisation Project, known as Operation Kingfisher, exposed serious failures in the Territory's procurement processes, including inappropriate communications and attempts to influence a live tender;
- (b) these failures damaged public confidence in the fairness, independence and integrity of ACT Government procurement; and
- (c) the Secure Local Jobs Code, the memorandum of understanding between the ACT Government and UnionsACT and the Government Procurement (Ethical Treatment of Workers Evaluation) Direction 2023 give unions an inappropriate and privileged role within ACT Government procurement processes; and

(3) calls on the Government to:

- (a) abolish the Secure Local Jobs Code and repeal or amend all associated legislative and administrative instruments necessary to give effect to its abolition;
- (b) immediately terminate the memorandum of understanding between the ACT Government and UnionsACT relating to procurement;
- (c) ensure that no union, employer organisation, political office or other external entity is given privileged access to confidential procurement information or information identifying tenderers during a live procurement;
- (d) establish a mandatory, publicly accessible disclosure register for external representations made to ministers, ministerial staff, public servants or procurement officials that seek to influence a government tender or procurement outcome, and require disclosures to identify, subject to appropriate protections for genuinely commercial-in-confidence information:
 - (i) the person or organisation making the representation;
 - (ii) the recipient of the representation;
 - (iii) the date and subject of the representation;
 - (iv) the procurement process concerned; and
 - (v) any action taken in response; and
- (e) report to the Assembly by the final sitting day of 2026 on the implementation of this motion.

This government has just been rocked by the single most explosive corruption finding in the history of self-government, and we cannot ignore it. We understand that the former Deputy Chief Minister has fallen on her sword, and that is a big thing. That is a massive thing, but we cannot just say, “It’s done now.” We cannot just walk away. Things have to change, to make sure that this situation does not arise again.

According to the Integrity Commissioner’s Operation Kingfisher report, we have some major problems to deal with. According to the Integrity Commissioner, as per his comments in the recent estimates hearings, the sorts of conversations that are detailed in the Operation Kingfisher report have likely been occurring quite regularly. Indeed, they were characterised by him as likely being business as usual.

The Secure Local Jobs Code is specifically mentioned 300 times in the Operation Kingfisher report—300 mentions in this report. Mr Deputy Speaker, why do you think that is the case? It is because the Secure Local Jobs Code, which has nothing to do with local jobs, is a mechanism for the CFMEU legally to participate in procurement processes in a way that would be illegal in just about every other jurisdiction.

Here in this place we sometimes get drawn into these ideological arguments about unions and union influence, but, at the end of the day, this motion focuses on the fact that we, as a territory, are spending much more on infrastructure than we should be; that, according to the fiscal sustainability committee’s report into our finances that was tabled today in this place, as a consequence of things like blowouts on infrastructure projects, we are on an unsustainable path, and we just cannot continue in the way that we are going. It would be remarkable if we did not respond as a parliament to the

Operation Kingfisher report by making some changes.

I love it that, according to reports in the *Canberra Times*, one of the things that has been considered by the Secure Local Jobs Code Advisory Committee about how to move forward with this contentious framework is simply to change the name of the code. One of the suggestions put to the advisory committee in a discussion paper was that “the title”—Secure Local Jobs Code—“was causing confusion about its purpose and operation”. The discussion paper asked whether the name of the so-called Secure Local Jobs Code should be amended to better reflect its purpose, scope and operation. I think that is a cracker of an idea; I think that is a great idea!

I understand that we are here to debate this motion, but I am a multitasker. I am thinking that, while we are all here and engaged by this, maybe we could brainstorm some new titles for the Secure Local Jobs Code. We could call it the “gravy train code”. We could call it—I am happy to hear suggestions—the “CFMEU membership booster code”. What else could we call it? The discussion paper suggested that the name “Secure Local Jobs Code” was a little confusing, and it should be amended to better reflect its purpose, scope and operation. What about the “skimming the cream off the top code”? Do members have any other ideas?

Mrs Morris: The “legalise corruption code”.

MR PARTON: The “legalise corruption code”. We could go with that. We are all friends in this place, so we could just cut to the chase and go with that. We could quote the Integrity Commissioner himself and call it the “business-as-usual code”, the “it’s not our money, anyway, code”.

The Secure Local Jobs Code, as evidenced by the discussion paper that went to the advisory council overseeing the code, has very little to do with secure local jobs, and it must go. Our procurement must deliver value for money, fair competition, local opportunity and integrity and, very clearly, it is not doing so at the moment.

Let us get serious about delivering for the community. No union, employer organisation, industry officer, political office—indeed, no other external organisation—should have privileged influence over or access to confidential procurement information just because one of the government ministers happens to be a card-carrying member of that organisation. It should not occur.

We stand with the government—with every member of this place—in that workplace rights and employment standards have to be protected, and they have to be protected through independent regulation. They have to be protected through consistently applied laws and objective evidence. Mr Deputy Speaker, after the public tabling of Operation Kingfisher, it is impossible to remove yourself from the conclusion that the Secure Local Jobs Code and the MOU between the government and UnionsACT have given unions an inappropriate level of influence. It is just a fact of life.

Today, we call upon the government to abolish the so-called Secure Local Jobs Code and repeal or amend all associated legislative and administrative instruments necessary to give effect to its abolition, to immediately terminate the memorandum of understanding between the ACT government and UnionsACT where it relates to

procurement, to ensure that no union, employer organisation, political office or other external entity is given privileged access to confidential procurement information, or information identifying tenderers during a live procurement, to establish a mandatory, publicly accessible disclosure register for external representations made to ministers, ministerial staff, public servants or procurement officials that seek to influence a government tender or procurement outcome, and require disclosures to identify certain things, subject to appropriate protections for genuinely commercial-in-confidence information.

It is one of the things that we need to do as an Assembly in response to what was a remarkable event, that being the tabling of the Operation Kingfisher report. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, there are three groups of proposed amendments. I propose, in order to make things run smoothly, that we will deal first with Ms Stephen-Smith's amendments to paragraphs (1) and (2); then my amendment to paragraph (3); then Ms Carrick's amendment to my proposed amendment.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education, Minister for Child Development and Wellbeing, Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, and Minister for Health Infrastructure) (4.19): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I was going to seek your guidance as soon as I stood up anyway. So I am very pleased to have that guidance in relation to how we manage these matters. I do thank Mr Parton for bringing this rather predictable motion to the Assembly today. Of course, as you have indicated Mr Deputy Speaker, I have amendments on behalf of the government, you have amendments on behalf of the Greens, which the Labor government will be supporting, and we will also be supporting Ms Carrick's amendment to Mr Parton's motion. Between all of those amendments, I think we seek some of the same objectives as Mr Parton is seeking but without the step of abolishing the Secure Local Jobs Code.

Fundamentally, that is because the Secure Local Jobs Code seeks to ensure that ACT government contracts are with employers who uphold workplace rights and safety and deliver secure jobs with fair pay and that these employers cannot be undercut by businesses and organisations that fail to do the right thing by their workers. This is about creating a level playing field for employers who do the right thing by their workers, uphold their ethical obligations and meet their legal requirements. The Integrity Commissioner himself has said: "This does seem to be sensible. The Secure Local Jobs Code does seem to be a reasonable approach to a difficult problem."

Mr Parton is right that the Operation Kingfisher report mentions the Secure Local Jobs Code hundreds of times. But, in that entire report, there are no negative findings about the Secure Local Jobs Code. There were lots of claims made by the players in this drama, detailed through the Operation Kingfisher report, who claimed that their actions were somehow related to the Secure Local Jobs Code. It is clear from the report that multiple people were seeking to shoehorn their own objectives or the objectives that they believe they were pursuing on behalf of others somehow into a relationship with the Secure Local Jobs Code. But the Integrity Commissioner clearly found that none of those relationships with the Secure Local Jobs Code could be substantiated, because the Secure Local Jobs Code did not support, and would never support, the actions that were

taken by the individuals who were found to have engaged in serious corrupt conduct.

Indeed, the Operation Kingfisher report found that the Secure Local Jobs Code “amongst other things, reduced the opportunity for unions to influence procurements”, compared to the previously existing memorandum of understanding, and “had the major consequence of excluding any consideration by a procuring directorate of attempts by a union to influence the outcome of a procurement process by giving advice as to industrial relations compliance”. So the Integrity Commissioner in fact found, in writing, the exact opposite of what Mr Parton was claiming throughout his speech as being the objective and outcome of the Secure Local Jobs Code.

The Secure Local Jobs Code was established by this parliament—and I say again—to ensure that when we are procuring employers, businesses and organisations to deliver services on behalf of ACT taxpayers, that ACT taxpayers’ money goes to employers who are meeting their ethical obligations, treating and paying workers fairly and upholding their work health and safety obligations. I cannot believe that there is a member in this place who would not think that this was a reasonable objective in the use of taxpayers’ money.

Mr Parton’s motion also comes at a rather odd time in the context of wider Assembly consideration. The Select Committee on Financial Management and Government Procurement Legislative Compliance, which was established as a result of an opposition motion, recommended that the ACT government commission an independent review of the Secure Local Jobs Code to assess whether the code is effectively achieving its stated outcome. The government has yet to formally respond to that recommendation but publicly indicated that it would undertake a review, as recommended by the select committee, and, as Mr Parton indicated, we have consulted the Secure Local Jobs Code Advisory Council to commence this process to help us to shape a terms of reference.

But, while we were doing that, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration, chaired by a Canberra Liberals member, announced on Tuesday 25 August that it would undertake its own inquiry into the effectiveness and operation of the code. I subsequently wrote to the committee and have since met with them to understand how their inquiry into the Secure Local Jobs Code would relate to the independent review of the Secure Local Jobs Code that a previous inquiry had already asked us to undertake, and we agreed—or at least I thought that we agreed—that they would progress with their inquiry, a fairly short, sharp inquiry, and we would continue to develop terms of reference, understanding that our review of the Secure Local Jobs Code would be undertaken in the broader context of the procurement framework, a procurement framework that has undergone significant reform since the events covered by Operation Kingfisher occurred in 2019 and 2020.

Throughout the last term of parliament there was substantial procurement reform. In 2022, the government introduced clearer accountability for senior executives, enhanced probity requirements, stronger compliance measures and mandatory procurement training for officials involved in procurement activities. Ministerial staff are also required to complete training on probity obligations and the territory’s Procurement Framework. In 2024, the government expanded the remit of the Government Procurement Board and introduced public reporting requirements on compliance with procurement legislation, increasing transparency and accountability. Also, the

establishment of Infrastructure Canberra in 2024 centralised responsibility for the procurement and delivery of major infrastructure projects, providing clearer oversight, accountability and expertise.

Mr Parton referred entirely to construction projects—infrastructure projects. But it is important to recognise that the Secure Local Jobs Code is not only about construction; it is also about other industries where we know that workers have been exploited in the past and where it is critical that good employers cannot be undercut by those who are doing the wrong thing by their workforce, often a vulnerable workforce, in areas like cleaning, traffic management and security. Other projects are now covered by the Secure Local Jobs Code where the majority of the funding is going towards staff and those projects that are primarily about labour.

I will just make one point about our consultation with the Secure Local Jobs Code Advisory Council in relation to establishing this review. Mr Parton said one of the questions is: is it the right name? I have met with the Master Builders Association and, from my conversations with them, it was absolutely clear that a number of the concerns that they expressed about the Secure Local Jobs Code were not in fact about the Secure Local Jobs Code at all; they were about the effectiveness of our local industry participation policy; they were about the number of different mechanisms we now have to ensure that we are getting value for money in our procurement and that we are procuring from ethical organisations; and they were about contracting processes, both the types of contracts that we enter into and contract management throughout the implementation of a contract.

So it is important that, in doing our review, we look at the Secure Local Jobs Code in that broader context of how we ensure that ACT taxpayers are getting value for money and procuring from ethical organisations while promoting the engagement of local industry and minority-owned businesses. Indeed, we passed legislation earlier this year to enable a more streamlined approach to procuring from local small and medium enterprises and from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers.

We take very seriously many of the things that Mr Parton has raised in terms of concerns relating to Operation Kingfisher. We have been taking them seriously for years and we have been responding to them for years. That is why the Integrity Commissioner did not make any adverse findings in terms of the Secure Local Jobs Code, its implementation or its place in the procurement system.

But we do agree with Mr Parton that no union employer organisation, political office or other external entity should be given privileged access to confidential procurement information or information identifying tenderers during a live procurement. We, however, believe that this should also extend to members of the Legislative Assembly. In this term of parliament, seeking in-confidence information about who is participating in a procurement process, where a procurement process is up to, why we have undertaken the procurement process this way when it should have been done this way and it should have been given to this organisation rather than that organisation—that level of interest in information that is by nature confidential and interference with process—has most frequently occurred as a result of interventions by non-executive members of the Legislative Assembly. We have held firm and we have regularly said, “We cannot give you that information—

Mr Cocks: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: On a point of order?

Mr Cocks: I would ask that you consider the minister's comments just now, because what she has actually said, in her words, is that the information gathered by non-executive members is intended to influence procurement by the ACT government. That is utterly, utterly, unparliamentary, and the minister should withdraw.

MR SPEAKER: On the point of order; did you want to respond?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I disagree with Mr Cocks's assertion. It is plainly on the record that a number of members of this place have sought information about who is participating in tenders that are currently live or procurements that are currently live procurement processes. It occurred in a committee hearing just the other day. In this place, a motion has been passed that effectively directed me and my directorate to undertake a single extension of a procurement with a single provider in a way that at the time I expressed significant concern. So I am just saying what has been done on the public record and that we have expressed concern about it. I am not saying that it influenced a process.

MR SPEAKER: Thanks, Minister. I think it is a debating point, Mr Cocks. I do not think it is a point of order. Should you wish to respond to the minister, or one of your colleagues, then that is the appropriate format. Minister, continue.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. With all of that said, before I move my amendment, I also want to assure the Assembly—and I think it is acknowledged—that I was surprised that the MOU between the government and UnionsACT had not been terminated following the implementation of the Secure Local Jobs Code. Following which, I have changed portfolios, and that has now been done, as the Integrity Commissioner has also clearly stated the Secure Local Jobs Code superseded the MOU and it has not been in effect since 2019. But it has not been formally terminated through an exchange of letters. I table the following letter from myself to Ms Casey Tomkins, the Secretary of UnionsACT, and her response to me, officially terminating the MOU:

Procurement of Goods and Services—Memorandum of Understanding between the ACT Government and UnionsACT—Termination—Correspondence between the Minister for the Public Service and the UnionsACT Secretary, dated 19 August 2026 and 8 September 2026.

I seek leave to move the amendments circulated in my name together.

Leave granted.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I move the amendments circulated in my name:

1. Omit paragraphs (1)(b) and (1)(c), substitute:

“(b) no union, employer organisation, industry body, political office,

Member of the Legislative Assembly or other external person or organisation should have privileged influence over, or access to, confidential procurement information, tenderer details or decision-makers during a live procurement;

- (c) no union, employer organisation, industry body, political office, Member of the Legislative Assembly or other external person or organisation should seek to influence the Government or its officials to commence, undertake or cease a procurement in way that contravenes procurement rules or probity;”.

2. Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

“(2) further notes that:

- (a) the ACT Integrity Commission investigation into the Campbell Primary School Modernisation Project, known as Operation Kingfisher, exposed serious failures in the Territory's procurement processes in relation to this project, including inappropriate communications and attempts to influence a live tender;
- (b) these findings have damaged public confidence in the fairness, independence and integrity of ACT Government procurement;
- (c) the Secure Local Jobs Code (SLJC) seeks to ensure the ACT Government contracts with employers who uphold workplace rights and safety and deliver secure jobs with fair pay, and that these employers cannot be undercut by businesses and organisations that fail to do the right thing by their workers;
- (d) the SLJC replaced the 2015 Memorandum of Understanding with UnionsACT (MOU), which the report into Operation Kingfisher acknowledged has not had practical effect since 2019, and which was formally terminated by exchange of letters on 8 September 2026, in accordance with the process set out in the MOU;
- (e) the report into Operation Kingfisher states that the SLJC ‘amongst other things, reduced the opportunity for unions to influence procurements’ compared with the MOU and ‘had the major consequence of excluding any consideration by ... a procuring Directorate - of attempts by a union to influence the outcome of a procurement process by giving ‘advice’ as to industrial relations compliance’;
- (f) in evidence to the Select Committee on Estimates 2026-27’s Inquiry into the Appropriation Bill 2026-2027, the Integrity Commissioner, Mr Michael Adams KC, stated that ‘to me, [the SLJC] does seem to be sensible ... [the SLJC] does seem to be a reasonable approach to a difficult problem’;
- (g) the government will soon respond to the recent Select Committee Inquiry into Financial Management and Government Procurement Legislative Compliance, which recommended that ‘the ACT Government commission an independent review of the Secure Local Jobs Code to assess whether the Code is effectively achieving the stated outcome’;
- (h) the government has publicly indicated it will undertake a review, as recommended by the Select Committee, and has consulted the Secure Local Jobs Code Advisory Council to commence this process;
- (i) the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration

announced on Tuesday 25 August that it would undertake its own inquiry into the effectiveness and operation of the code;

- (j) the Scottish parliament has unanimously passed Community Wealth Building legislation which provides for an economic framework including secure local jobs;
- (k) the ACT Integrity Commission is currently conducting an inquiry into arrangements for lobbying and influence in government in the ACT, which is likely to provide relevant advice on future regulatory frameworks;”.

MR COCKS(Murrumbidgee) (4.35): The minister commenced her remarks today by saying that this motion was one of the most predictable motions that the opposition could have brought today. It should have been predictable, because the opposition has been arguing against the systemic approach to union influence that this government has brought for years—for a decade, even. It should be no surprise that the Canberra Liberals are standing up for a system that actually delivers value for money for the ACT.

There are a few comments that the minister has made here that I will address, but I think I might go first to some overall comments. Earlier today, the Treasurer asked all parties in the Assembly for ideas on how to make savings so they could balance their budget—because, clearly, the Treasurer is out of ideas. So here is one to get started: stop flushing money down the toilet through backdoor deals with special interests, because the special access regime this government has entrenched—

Ms Cheyne: Point of order.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Cocks, there is a point of order.

Ms Cheyne: Mr Speaker, a whole set of words came out of Mr Cocks’s mouth then that are unparliamentary.

MR SPEAKER: I was not sure if he was not quoting somebody or—

MR COCKS: It is an idea. Specifically, which words are unparliamentary?

Ms Cheyne: Everything that you just said.

MR SPEAKER: I will review the *Hansard*. What I would say to members is let’s just make sure the debate remains measured and that we are not loose with words. You can continue, Mr Cocks. I will review the *Hansard*.

MR COCKS: Thank you. The special access regime—and it is a special access regime—provides unions with a level of access that is not afforded to other individual or organisations in the same way as other organisations are able to access the system. That special regime, which this government has entrenched, costs Canberra at every turn. We have been discussing just one instance of serious corrupt conduct and union influence in one minister’s office, just one project, that had a demonstrable cost. We know that the cost of privileged access schemes goes deeper, because Queensland’s Productivity Commission found evidence that the union-backed BPIC—effectively, the

Queensland equivalent of the scheme that we are looking at here in the ACT—made major construction projects around 20 per cent more expensive on average and, just like that, cancelled system.

Labor's system of special access is broken, and it is costing Canberra. It is costing money; it is costing productivity; and it is costing integrity. The evidence is there for all to see in the Kingfisher report. You can see it in the community outrage of the betrayal of their trust and, frankly, you can see it in the rearranged deck chairs on the sinking ship on the other side of this table.

Government procurement should never be about who you know, who you donate to or who gets a special seat at the table. It should never be about anything except for who can do the job—who can do it safely; who can do it properly; and who can deliver the best value for the Canberra taxpayer. But that is not the system that Labor has built. Labor has built a system where unions are given a privileged role in government procurement. That is why we had a UnionsACT MOU that was secret in 2015, that was exposed and the government committed to eradicating but persisted through until recent weeks. This is a system where legitimate businesses bidding for government work are forced to navigate a regime that is rooted in union interests, where organisations with their own political industrial interests have been given access and influence that ordinary Canberra businesses simply do not have.

Operation Kingfisher has shown us exactly where that can lead. This is not 2015, when we were first ringing the warning bells, and it is not abstract. It is real, and it has been demonstrated. Operation Kingfisher examined the Campbell Primary School modernisation project procurement, and the Integrity Commission found that two public officials engaged in serious corrupt conduct—the education minister's chief of staff and the Head of the Education Directorate. It concluded—and this is important—that they “dishonestly created a back door through which the strategic interest of the CFMEU were given priority” over government policy, the public interest and the local tenderer's right to fair consideration and that the process was “improperly skewed”, manifestly unfair and substantially more costly. That is the outcome of the system that Labor have built.

The report also highlighted how the ACT's procurement framework created multiple avenues through which union interests could become entangled with government contracting. The Secure Local Jobs Code was intended to replace the much more obvious influence provided by the UnionsACT MOU, and the minister brought this up. The minister pointed out that the Integrity Commission found that the Secure Local Jobs Code, so-called, was characterised as being better than the previous UnionsACT MOU. Well, that would not be very hard. Being better than terrible is not the target that I think the government should be aiming for here in the ACT.

One of the most important discussions in the Integrity Commission's report, though, is how the CFMEU itself interpreted the code—and that matters a lot. It tells a really strong story about how some of the problems occurring within our procurement system occurred. The CFMEU position seemed to be that the SLJC gave them vast powers above and beyond federal workplace laws. Their understanding of this code would see essentially an open door to CFMEU using the code in industrial relations negotiations, seeking to use alleged code noncompliance leveraged against contractors with which it

was in dispute.

What is more, the Integrity Commission found that, in the Manteena case, the union sought to take its concern directly through procuring directorates to the chief of staff. The commission described this as weaponising the code. It is the Code that was the problem here. It is the code that was weaponised, and at the same time the old MOU had never been formally terminated. During estimates, the finance minister confirmed that that UnionsACT MOU remained in force despite a previous understanding that SLJC had replaced it. She also said that she was surprised that bidder information was still being provided to UnionsACT. But this is not a bug in the system. By design, union interests are intended to trump those of other players in the system.

The minister was saying that the intention of this code is to make sure everyone operates on a fair playing field to make sure that only those who have the highest ethical standards are eligible to receive government funding. But the question at the heart of many of the issues that the minister raised is: who gets to decide that? Unions have a direct say in that. Unions are consulted on that, not only through the SLJC process but also through the additional directions that have been implemented by this government since that time that influence how the government undertakes procurement. It is at the heart of the way this government undertakes procurement, and it is costing Canberra.

Canberra cannot afford to continue following down the path of a government that blindly follows what the unions would like to see. This is a government which has repeatedly, time and again, defended the CFMEU. It has defended the CFMEU while there were federal concerns about what was happening and it has continued to defend the CFMEU even while some of these allegations were known but before the findings were made. The Chief Minister, in particular, was particularly forceful and vocal in coming to the CFMEU's defence.

We cannot afford to continue like this. The ACT cannot afford to keep on throwing away money on a system which embeds not only influence but also higher compliance costs as well as the higher cost to make sure unions are happy to endorse you when you apply for a tender here in the ACT.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (4.45): I will speak to everything all at once, depending on how it all unfolds. I do want to thank Mr Parton for bringing forward this motion today. As Mr Cocks rightly indicated, it is unsurprising, for good reason, that this would come up in the Assembly after the long winter break.

Like most members, I think, when I first read this motion, I figured we might be set for a rewrite, and that looks like that is where we have ended up, with a lot of input from across the Assembly. It is clear, on the back of Operation Kingfisher, that the Secure Local Jobs Code does need a closer look, which is why there are two investigations underway into it—a government review, and an Assembly inquiry, both of which are welcome.

I am keen to let these reviews complete their work and establish findings before we, as an Assembly, decide to make major decisions around the future of the code. But I think it is right that we do consider this as an Assembly, given the context of the minority government, and I imagine this issue will continue to come up. But I do think it is

premature to call for it to be abolished before the government completes its review, and an Assembly inquiry hands down its findings.

We do need to ensure government procurement spend supports Secure Local Jobs. It seems like we are united in that; that workers are treated appropriately when working on projects funded with taxpayer funds; that local firms are benefiting from the use of our taxpayer funds, to deliver government projects; that broader community benefits are being delivered through the government procurement process; and that we are getting a fair return on our investment as taxpayers.

These are aims, hopefully, we all support; and they are the aims that the government says it supports. We absolutely do not want to see a race to the bottom in this area. But, of course, many Canberrans and members of this Assembly are rightly asking, in the wake of Operation Kingfisher and of a range of bungled procurements and project blowouts, whether government procurement processes—those that are in place—are in fact achieving the government's own aims.

Whilst changing the name of the code as Mr Parton touched on—removing the word "local" to acknowledge that, while the code might help with secure jobs, it does not help with local ones—might clarify things regarding the purpose of the code, but it will not fix the broader problems in this area.

This debate necessarily needs to reach beyond the code and that, I think, is reflected in the amendments that have come forward—and also, to be fair, in the original motion as well.

What is clear is that we actually need to do far more to back local businesses here in the territory; those responsible for creating the Secure Local Jobs, that the government's procurement processes are supposed to support.

Canberra is home to so many small and medium-sized enterprises that are doing impressive innovative work, and they want to step up and deliver on government projects. Many are recognised and routinely win government contracts interstate and internationally for their work but, when they attempt to bid for ACT government work, often cannot get a look in and are passed over for outsiders at the significant detriment to our local economy, our local capability, to outcomes for the government, and also of course for local jobs. And this is the case, both at the head contractor level and at the subcontractor level beneath those head contractors.

We all have heard the stories of a local industry participation plan being submitted by a big national or multi-national tenderer, but never properly acquitted against, with local contractors and workers missing out on the benefits promised in that plan—which is why we are pleased to support Ms Carrick's amendment, later in the debate.

To the government's credit, they have passed reforms this term to encourage more procurement from local SMEs, but a question on notice I lodged earlier this year revealed the government is not actually tracking how much spending goes to local SMEs. They do not know how many of their procurement dollars are spent on local businesses and how many of those dollars, through them, are going to local workers.

It would appear to be hard to know if the government's procurement policies are achieving their aims, if they are not even tracking that data. That was the question I asked during estimates: why is there not a centralised tracking of government spend? And Minister Stephen-Smith said, "An additional process to bring information from directorates into the centre requires more resources to deliver something that might be useful for you, Mr Emerson." I interrupted, perhaps rudely, to point out that I think it would not just be helpful for me, but for the government to know whether their procurement policies are actually working or not.

Along with that, we should know whether or not their Secure Local Jobs Code, as the opposition often quips in this place is, in fact, creating more secure jobs.

In estimates, I also asked the government if they have targets in place, similar to the federal government around local SME spend, and was told that they do not. Meanwhile, places like Scotland are finding new ways to increase and keep wealth within their communities, which is why I also support the Greens' amendments that bring those principles into the government, and reviews terms of reference.

Ms Stephen-Smith, in her remarks, rightly pointed out that there are a lot of issues surrounding the Secure Local Jobs Code that do not pertain directly to it. And I suppose this almost completely rewritten motion ultimately reflects that.

At its root, the problem is that it is unclear whether or not the government's procurement policies, practices and processes are actually delivering on their self-stated aims. If they are, we should see evidence of that. The government should be able to report on that and demonstrate to the Assembly and to our community that that is the case. If they are not, then we need to fix them, not scrap them. That is why I will be supporting all the amendments that have been circulated today. I want to thank members from across the chamber for their work on this motion. Again, although I am not supporting it in its original form, I thank Mr Parton for bringing it forward.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (4.51): I want to start by saying that I actually do not oppose unions in principle. When it comes to any kind of workplace dispute, most people, most employees feel like they are in an unequal position. This is especially true in situations where the employee might be in an emotional state, when something unfair or untoward has occurred, or when they might feel insecure in their employment. In those situations, it is entirely reasonable for employees to want support from people who understand employment and workplace disputes, who know the law and who are independent of the business. I support unions, legal centres and others who do provide this support and assistance.

My problem with unions is when they take things too far; when they stop seeing their role as supporting workers when they are at a disadvantage; and they start acting as if their role is to support themselves. Unfortunately, I think this is a widespread problem here in the ACT and around the country. It is why so many people have left their unions and why many others hold a low opinion of the union movement. It is an attitude that is reinforced when people hear stories of misconduct by union officials, of union corruption and of union involvement with organised crime. We all hear these stories, whether they are major media stories or everyday stories about a friend or a neighbour who was verbally or physically abused by union members because they refused to join.

These are almost always stories of entitlement; of people who feel entitled to do things because of their position or as a union or as an official, not because they are supporting workers, not because they are delivering value for their members, but entitlement because of position and influence. We have seen many shocking instances of this lately, both locally and nationally, but there are other examples which are less shocking because they are cloaked in mundane bureaucratic language like the Secure Local Jobs Code.

The code is essentially a tool by which ACT government procurement, which is worth some \$3 billion a year, is biased towards those firms which have good relationships with the union movement. If you want ACT government work, you need to demonstrate a commitment towards collective bargaining and union workplace delegates. The code even allows a branch of the government, when considering a procurement, to contact relevant unions to discuss whether a particular tenderer should be considered for a contract.

This gives unions enormous leverage over those businesses who are dependent on ACT government contracts. Even if the business's workforce has great conditions and no desire for union involvement, the threat of losing those contracts means a business might have to put pressure on its workforce into collective bargaining and union delegates. This is not right; it is not about supporting and empowering workers, it is about empowering the union itself and maintaining its position when union membership is lower than it has ever been.

If it is not there to support workers or businesses, but purely to prop up the unions, then I do not think there is a legitimate reason for us to have the code. That may also be why other jurisdictions, even jurisdictions with Labor governments, have not followed suit and adopted the code elsewhere. They see costs to the community, but they do not see benefits. And if that is the case—if there are not benefits to offset the costs that the code imposes—we really should abolish it here in the ACT.

My view of this motion is that we should not simply call on the government to abolish the code, but actually direct them to do so. Given that, my intention was to move an amendment to the motion which would have changed the language of part (3) accordingly, but now I understand and have seen the government and the Greens have reached an agreement on their own amendments which diffuse this motion. I find that unfortunate. It is not surprising. But, as the amendments mean the code will continue, I will not be supporting them. Thank you.

MRS MORRIS (Brindabella) (4.55): As we debate this motion, we need to come back to the evidence before us and contrast that with the government's rhetoric. The Secure Local Jobs Code sounds like a good thing. Who would oppose secure local jobs for Canberrans? The government's procurement direction on the ethical treatment of workers—it sounds like a good thing. Who would oppose the ethical treatment of workers? Who would oppose the ethical treatment of anyone? But this Labor government's procurement system has nothing to do with ethics or job security, or access for local businesses to government contracting, or getting the best results for the public.

When George Orwell wrote about doublethink and newspeak in *Nineteen Eight-Four*, he was not writing a procurement manual for the ACT government. He was writing a warning to all of us of the tendency of politics to degenerate into deception and corruption: saying one thing and meaning something quite different; claiming to serve the people while undermining the principles of a good society.

So it is that all the fine-sounding elements of the procurement system have degenerated into a system that has given us the corruption revealed in Operation Kingfisher—corruption that went all the way to the Deputy Chief Minister’s office. The Canberra building company Manteena had the best bid for the project. They were acknowledged to be a reliable company by the Education Directorate. But the CFMEU had a different agenda, and they made it known. They made it known to the chief of staff of the Deputy Chief Minister that Manteena was not their preferred tenderer. They preferred another company, not because it would be better value for the people of Canberra but because, in some way, it would be better for the CFMEU. So Manteena did not get that contract, and from the Kingfisher report, we know the government paid more for a different contract and got less. This is the complete opposite of value for money—from a corrupt process.

At the heart of this corruption is the relationship between the Labor Party and the CFMEU. The CFMEU is an organisation which has been found around the country to have engaged in illegal activities and has been shown to have connections with organised crime, including outlaw motorcycle gangs. Is that why the Labor Party is so opposed to anti-consorting laws? I do not know.

In last month’s media we read about the CFMEU’s criminality in the construction sector in Victoria, and the Victorian police executing warrants to tackle allegations of fraud, drug trafficking, financial kickbacks and firearm offences. The CFMEU’s administrator noted that criminals and bad actors in construction remain a threat to workers, and I would add that they remain a threat to businesses and the public interest. They are a threat to good government. And yet, the CFMEU enjoyed a seat at the table in the ACT government’s procurement, and that is the sort of company and culture Labor is inviting into our procurement system. That is the standard that this Labor government has aspired to. The costs of this are not just financial; they are moral. Yes, this system leads to paying more and getting less in government procurement, but, moreover, it undermines the most basic principles of good government and a good society and, importantly, the people’s trust in their government.

The government’s response to revelations of corruption in our procurement system has included discussing whether the word “local” should be dropped from the scheme’s name. The opposition leader is spot-on: if these Labor government politicians were being honest, and if they were being up-front with the community, this code would more accurately be titled “Legalised Corruption Code”, or maybe the “Labor CFMEU Kickback Code”.

The Deputy Chief Minister is right in the sense that this debate is somewhat predictable, because we have actually been here before and discussed these issues before. Kingfisher’s corruption findings should not come as a surprise. In fact, it was exactly this sort of outcome that the Canberra Liberals warned of when the secure local jobs bill was being debated in the Ninth Assembly. Let’s just pull out some quotes here.

Back in the Ninth Assembly, the shadow minister for industrial relations said:

... this bill has nothing to do with keeping workers safe but lots to do with union influence and union membership in this town ...

They—

The Labor Party—

also need the influence of trade unions. They rely on it to pursue and further their political careers ... this bill ultimately legislates for trade union involvement in all government procurement. It legislates Labor's dirty little secret—the MOU—into law.

And, Mr Speaker, if I may, you also contributed to that debate. You said:

Let us not support a law that actually entrenches the power—indeed, the power of veto—of those who have been found by the Federal Court to be recidivist law-breakers.

The new Deputy Chief Minister—who, I should remind the Assembly is only now the Deputy Chief Minister because of this major corruption scandal—said, and this is a quote from her:

The commentary from Andrew Wall and the Canberra Liberals so far has simply reflected their unhealthy obsession with unions ...

Now, I think if anyone has an unhealthy obsession with unions, it is very clearly these Labor politicians who rely on union power and influence to fund and support their own political campaigns and careers. In fact, I think it was the industrial relations minister who thanked CFMEU figures in his maiden speech for helping him get elected and said that he would never forget what they had done in helping him get elected. Mr Speaker, I will let you make your own judgement on what he might have meant by that: that he would never forget what they had done in helping him to get elected.

This Labor government's unhealthy and corrupt obsession with unions is costing taxpayers when cost of living is hitting them hardest. So there is no doubt that having "local" in the title is misleading. And you know what? I am starting to wonder if, maybe, that was even by design. The code clearly has nothing to do with improving conditions for local businesses, or local workers, or local ratepayers—hardworking Canberra families.

But clearly the answer to corruption and inefficiency is more than a name change. The answer to Kingfisher is not to tinker with the system but to abolish it and start again with a new set of rules and guidelines that promote ethical and efficient government procurement: a new set of rules which ethical and efficient businesses, and workers and the ACT community, can actually trust.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (5.04): I want to speak to one aspect of this, and that is the community wealth-building aspect that Mr Braddock has put in his amendment. Operation Kingfisher found that, as a result of serious corrupt conduct, the ACT

government awarded a multimillion-dollar construction contract to a large multinational company instead of to the local ACT company that offered a superior design at a lower cost. The Secure Local Jobs Code was misused by officials to do this. It is too early to tell if Operation Kingfisher identified the only instance of corrupt interference in government procurement or if that is part of a pattern. I am extremely concerned by some of the procurement decisions that I see in other areas, and, for instance, one of those decisions—the catchment group funding—was extensively discussed at estimates.

A new term has entered the lexicon here in Canberra and we have seen it in the media: “green-shedded”. That has been defined as: “Where a local provider misses out on a contract to a bigger, out-of-town company.” It is clear that many government procurement decisions are not delivering the results that our community expects and they are not awarding secure work to local operators who have proven that they can deliver. Since 2021, ACT government local procurement has dropped from over half to just a third of all procurements. It is clear that the Secure Local Jobs Code is not good enough and needs review. I would like to see the principles of community wealth-building included in that review.

Community wealth-building is not a replacement for the Secure Local Jobs Code. Community wealth-building is a progressive approach to economic development that shifts the model from one that extracts wealth from people to one that generates, retains and recirculates wealth within our local community. Instead of big multinational corporations and out-of-towners pulling wealth and asset ownership out of the local community, wealth is used to benefit the workers and communities who create it through community ownership and control of assets.

An improved Secure Local Jobs Code that actually secures local jobs would be just one of the five pillars, including fair employment and a just labour market. The other pillars are about progressive procurement, socially productive use of our land and assets, making financial power work for local places, and plural ownership of the economy. I have just published a paper, which I will table at the end of this speech, which outlines how community wealth-building could work in Canberra. It is not a radical idea; it has been around for several decades internationally.

A few months ago, Scotland became the first country in the world to legislate for community wealth-building. They made it a central pillar of their economic development. This is how you do it on a principled basis. The legislation passed unanimously with support from across the political spectrum, bringing together the Greens, Labor, the Scottish National Party, the Liberal Democrats, the Conservatives, independent members and even Reform. All local authorities are developing tailored action plans aligned with the five pillars. That legislation now requires ministers to demonstrate how they are using policy levers like procurement, land and investment to support local economies.

When it is implemented in a coordinated way, community wealth-building can help retain wealth locally, support progressive economic development, and strengthen long-term resilience. This is why I would like to see the review of the Secure Local Jobs Code include looking at a community wealth-building framework. We have an opportunity right now to improve the Secure Local Jobs Code to make sure that it is

creating opportunities for local businesses and community and environment groups, and to make sure it is doing that in a principled way.

We have all identified the symptoms of the problem. This is one part of the solution. It is no good sitting there and saying that identification of the symptoms is not acceptable. We have identified the symptoms and here is a principled approach to deal with those symptoms. Please help us out. There is a significant opportunity to actively shape our labour market and our local economy and a clear need to review ACT government procurement practices.

I seek leave to table the discussion paper.

Leave granted.

MS CLAY: I table:

Community Wealth Building—How to reshape Canberra’s economy and community spaces for the benefit of the 99%—The Greens, undated.

Question put:

That **Ms Stephen-Smith’s** amendments be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 14

Noes 7

Andrew Barr
Andrew Braddock
Fiona Carrick
Tara Cheyne
Jo Clay
Thomas Emerson
Laura Nuttall
Suzanne Orr

Marisa Paterson
Michael Pettersson
Chris Steel
Rachel Stephen-Smith
Caitlin Tough
Rebecca Vassarotti

Chiaka Barry
Leanne Castley
Ed Cocks
Jeremy Hanson
Elizabeth Lee
Deborah Morris
Mark Parton

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Ms Stephen-Smith’s amendments agreed to.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.14): I move the following amendment to the motion, as amended:

Omit paragraph (3), substitute:

“(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) confirm its intention to commission an independent review of the Secure Local Jobs Code in the context of the wider procurement framework in early 2027, taking account of any evidence and findings from the inquiry by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration into the Secure Local Jobs Code;

- (b) publish, and circulate to members of the Assembly; draft Terms of Reference for the Government's review of the Secure Local Jobs Code at least one week before they are finalised to allow the community and Members to comment on them;
- (c) ensure the terms of reference incorporate :
 - (i) consideration of the application and effectiveness of the Government Procurement (Charter of Procurement Values) Direction 2020;
 - (ii) consideration of the principles of community wealth building, as outlined in the Community Wealth Building Act 2026 (Scotland);
- (d) on or before the first sitting day in October 2026, provide the Assembly with:
 - (i) an update on the progress of an independent review of past procurements with elevated risk of corruption similar to those identified in Operation Kingfisher, including providing information on the methodology being applied in that review; and
 - (ii) documentary evidence of the status of the 2015 Memorandum of Understanding with Unions ACT, including showing when it was terminated;
- (e) on or before the first sitting day in February 2027, provide the Assembly with an update on the Government's review of the Secure Local Jobs Code; and
- (f) fully comply with all aspects of the current procurement framework, including the full intent of all provisions designed to keep political and improper external influence at arm's length of decision-making; and
- (4) requests that the Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders, subsequent to receiving the anticipated report on Lobbying from the ACT Integrity Commission, inquire into and provide recommendations on reforms to the ACT's lobbying framework, including with respect to the management of transparency registers;"

The ACT Integrity Commission's report on Operation Kingfisher has been a very, very, very long time coming. There are a lot of reflections that could be made and many that likely will be made, including in public sector training modules for the next few decades, so I will limit my remarks on the report itself to a few things that are probably the most pertinent.

Accountability matters. Let there be no doubt about it. It really matters. Public sector workers have been reminded that they advise the minister, not the minister's staff. They have been reminded that their actions and any advice they give need to be compatible with the legislative framework they are operating in. They have been reminded that, if something feels off, they need to check themselves and be prepared to change course.

Meanwhile, executive government have been reminded of the Westminster convention of individual ministerial responsibility. Ministers are responsible for making sure that their directorate leadership and, in particular, their own direct reports understand this principle. The parliament holds the minister responsible. If you want the power and the privilege to steer this city, then you have a responsibility to meet the expectations of those you will, in turn, serve. This parliament represents the people. The Greens are not

in the business of propping up a government that cannot meet these expectations. To that end, the Greens called for and welcomed Ms Berry's essential resignation from the cabinet. We have also welcomed the government's commitment to a number of reviews and investigations on matters relevant to the findings.

With that, let's talk about the Secure Local Jobs Code, which has been the subject of quite a bit of conversation already here in the chamber. What it is and why it exists are not obvious from the label on the tin and are not fully consistent with what a lot of people might think it should be. Let's hit those in order. It is a framework for ensuring that businesses that receive government contracts are compliant with their industrial relations obligations. The code exists because of the perception that the commonwealth's industrial relations regulations—as created by the Australian Labor Party, no less—are wholly inadequate for the purpose of public sector procurement, and to try to account for that gap in a manner that operates at arm's length from political interference.

This was not how it played out in the case of the Campbell Primary School procurement, and that itself is the very substance of the Kingfisher report. Those findings of serious corrupt conduct do not change what the code was and is; they are, in fact, only capable of being made because the code exists. Various actors tried to go around the procurement process because they thought the code was not strong enough on the things they cared about. That was a key point of the findings.

Another key inference from the findings is that there was a gap between what the code is and what a lot of people think it should be. We are increasingly hearing reports that the Secure Local Jobs Code is not too crash hot about the "local" part. My colleague Ms Clay has already spoken in quite a lot of detail about community wealth-building. Suffice to say for my purposes here, there is broad acknowledgement that something needs to be done. The Canberra Liberals want to abolish the code. The Greens disagree. We actually welcome the idea of this code and accept the argument that federal Labor's regulatory approach to compliance through the Fair Work Commission is inadequate. We particularly like the design that places it at arm's length from political influence and interference. What we really want to see are reforms that put "local" back in.

My amendment to this motion acknowledges that there are two bodies already looking at the code: our own Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration and the ACT government itself. We have seen the terms of reference for the inquiry by the standing committee published, but not by the ACT government. My amendment calls for transparency from the government on their plans for that review, and also for them to properly consider the principles of community wealth-building.

My amendment also requests documentary evidence that the 2015 memorandum of understanding with UnionsACT has been cancelled so that that matter can be put to bed. I am calling on the government to provide us with an update on an independent review of past procurements with an elevated risk of corruption similar to those identified in Operation Kingfisher—which I understand is being planned or may have already commenced—and to provide transparency on the methodology being applied for that review. This will help build confidence that such an independent review is not superficial but evidence based.

Lastly, I go to lobbying. Mr Parton, in (3)(d) of his motion, is in effect calling for an expansion of the lobbying registers. This is not a terrible idea, but he is getting ahead of his own party's previous calls on this matter. In February 2025, under the leadership of his predecessor, Ms Castley, the Canberra Liberals called for the ACT Integrity Commission to be resourced to run an inquiry into lobbying in the ACT. Those calls were themselves a reaction to public commentary about Operation Kingfisher. While there may have been some amendments to the motion from last year, the central call of the Canberra Liberals was supported by the ACT Greens. Subsequently, the lobbying inquiry was funded in last year's budget and is now underway.

From where I stand and judging by the inquiry's discussion paper, the ACT Integrity Commission is likely to make some very substantive recommendations about transparency in lobbying activities. We get ahead of those recommendations at our peril. I also note the Integrity Commissioner's scheduled timeframe for release of his report is by the end of 2026. We would risk making reforms in a half-baked way and then having to change them should the Integrity Commissioner's recommendations go in a different direction. We need to commit to taking the commissioner's lobbying inquiry just as seriously as the motion from the Canberra Liberals that called for it to happen in the first place. For this reason, I am of the view that this parliament should request the Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders to do precisely that once the Integrity Commissioner has produced his report.

I would also like to say that I appreciate that the Leader of the Opposition did not welcome the scope and breadth of amendments being made to his motion. This is an argument not without some validity, and I do apologise, but I note that the motion hits on a number of points that required substantial responses. Whilst we have just seen the passage of Labor government amendments to the notes, I feel it is important to see that a member of this place, who is not a member of the government, moves the calls on the government as part of transparency, in terms of what is required by the government in order to meet the challenges that are created by Operation Kingfisher report.

Finally, I would like to say that the Greens support having secure local jobs, but there needs to be significant and substantive review and reform. The code needs to do what it says on the tin: "secure local jobs". This is what my amendment is grounded in.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (5.21): It is not surprising really that the Greens would defend the SLJC today. They defended the secret UnionsACT MOU all the way back in 2016, and they backed the government to reject an inquiry at that stage in that same year that was called for by the Canberra Liberals. They have a track record of backing this procurement system, and it is worth remembering that, indeed, the Greens were in government for a long time. They were operating in government with a procurement system that is, as it is now, largely based in enhancing the union's arguments.

I think it is important at this stage to realise that actually a review is not necessary before abolishing the SLJC. It is not necessary for two reasons. Number one is the Operation Kingfisher report. That report revealed a system rooted in influence, and it did create the opportunity for those who were found to have engaged in serious corrupt conduct to create a backdoor into the procurement system. It is not necessary to engage in some review of the SLJC because the SLJC itself is not necessary—it is utterly unnecessary. I think this is important, and it has not been really touched on in this discussion so far.

The government says that the code that we are discussing today is about workplace safety and about compliance with legislative requirements, and yet at the same time there is absolutely no interaction. We confirmed this during the estimates. It is about workplace safety, but there is no interaction with the government's own workplace safety regulator. There is no formal role for WorkSafe ACT or engagement with WorkSafe ACT within the code. If this was serious, if it was actually about workplace safety, wouldn't you expect the regulator to have some sort of role? If this was about workplace safety, wouldn't there at least be some level of engagement?

Mr Braddock has actually advanced a different perception of what this is about. Mr Braddock has suggested that the SLJC is not about secure local jobs, actually it is about industrial relations. This is an interesting one because what he has advanced, from what I am hearing, is essentially the view that the CFMEU put that is contained within the Operation Kingfisher report: essentially the federal industrial relations laws are inadequate, they do not go far enough and therefore something more is needed.

When the CFMEU advanced that argument, the argument that the code provides additional scope, the integrity commissioner's view was that that could not be the case. The reason that that could not be the case is because then the laws would actually be unconstitutional because they would then come into conflict with those federal workplace relations laws.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes—which was a subject of significant debate.

MR COCKS: It certainly was the subject of significant debate. If this was indeed going beyond what the federal workplace relations laws provided for, then the SLJC would run into serious constitutional issues. So it cannot be what Mr Braddock has argued; it cannot be about making up for the inadequacies of federal workplace relations laws. So what is this about?

When you look at this you have to ask: what has been the result? The result has been in the instance of Operation Kingfisher that a backdoor was opened for union influence, but that is not the only result that we have seen. Indeed since the Operation Kingfisher report was dropped, we saw the CFMEU again using the Secure Local Jobs Code. The CFMEU used the Secure Local Jobs Code to have the light rail project shut down for a period of time and for work on the light rail project to stop because of paper-based noncompliance with the SLJC, as they argued, but also because of their concerns around potential underpayments. Importantly, that is not a demonstration that the SLJC is working. On the one side you have simply paper-based compliance that fell over and you have a major project ceasing and halting work because of a process that probably should have been picked up by the ACT government before it hit that stage, but on the other side you have underpayment concerns, where the appropriate remedy was going through Fair Work Australia. It was never the appropriate mechanism to rely on the Secure Local Jobs Code to try and influence or drive an industrial relations grievance, and that is what it looks like here. That is what it looks like the CFMEU is engaging in. There is a code there, and it is being weaponised.

These are the concerns that we hear from local businesses all the time. They jump through all of the hoops—all of those productivity-crushing hoops—to be able to

compete for ACT government tenders, and all it does, it seems like, is open them up to more union pressure. It does not guarantee them that they are going to be able to win a contract. Indeed many of the contracts under the so-called Secure Local Jobs Code are going to interstate firms; they are going to interstate organisations, not even to local workers, but interstate workers because those are the organisations that the unions prefer and those are the organisations that the unions would prefer to see win those tenders. That is not how you build a procurement system.

The purpose of a procurement system, as outlined, is to deliver the best value for money for the ACT taxpayer, and that is not what the current system is doing. That is why we could not possibly support the Greens amendment, because we must end this system so that Canberra companies and Canberra businesses have a fair shot without having to go through a completely unnecessary scheme that delivers completely unreasonable outcomes.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education, Minister for Child Development and Wellbeing, Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, and Minister for Health Infrastructure) (5.30): I rise in support of Mr Braddock's amendment. I will just speak briefly to respond to a few of the comments that Mr Parton and particularly Mr Cocks, in his subsequent contributions, have made and to comment very briefly in relation to the community wealth building element.

Firstly, I would suggest that both Mr Parton and Mr Cocks would be well served by actually reading the Operation Kingfisher report. I know it is long, and if one were uncharitable, one could say it is potentially a bit boring, but that is part of this job. If you want to be an MLA, it is not just about generating social media content; sometimes you have to do things that are a bit boring—reading reports, listening to people in hearings and actually hearing what they say in the hearing and then reporting on that to this place accurately—

Mr Cocks: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: I seek your guidance on this, but I believe that the minister is straying into the world of personal reflections, implying that we have not done our jobs. Indeed I have spent many hours reading those reports, and it is fascinating reading.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think I have got your argument. Minister, if you could restrain your comments to the topic at hand.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Sorry—I forgot momentarily that the only members in this place who are allowed to make personal comments are those opposite about government members, particularly ministers, in relation to how we do our jobs. So I will refrain from further commenting on how those opposite do their jobs or indeed how they feel about their jobs.

In relation to community wealth building, I have to say I am absolutely thrilled that Scotland has provided the Greens with another three-word slogan. It is fantastic to see that you have been able to pick something up from the other side of the world. I congratulate Scotland—indeed one of my lands of heritage—for being the first to legislate the structure that they describe as community wealth building.

It is important to note a couple of things as we have this debate. I have read Ms Clay's discussion paper, I have to confess, so I can say—and I have had another look at it—community wealth building is not just about procurement. We are very, very happy for our review to consider the principles of community wealth building, but community wealth building is broader. It covers things like the generation of entrepreneurship and innovation in the community and in the wider economy— something that the Chief Minister has championed for the ACT over many, many years, including through the establishment of the Canberra Innovation Network— and it looks at the establishment of social enterprise as well, which is something else that is being championed, including through the establishment of the Mill House social entrepreneurs accelerator and support framework, which is something that I have been a strong supporter of alongside the Chief Minister as well. There are a number of other elements of community wealth building that do not specifically relate to procurement.

In relation to procurement, of course, the ACT government in 2020 established the Charter of Procurement Values, which actually identifies many of the same pillars that are identified by Ms Clay in her discussion paper around community wealth building. We do include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's economic participation as a fundamental pillar of our procurement values. Business development and innovation—we recognise the value in growing the economy in the Canberra region. Government procurement can provide additional support to complement the range of existing economic development policies, programs and activities that encourage local businesses to grow, develop their capabilities, generate more local jobs and thrive. The Chief Minister, as a longstanding Minister for Economic Development, has been an enthusiastic backer, as I say, of this.

The third value outlined in our charter is diversity, equality and inclusion. We value diversity, equality and inclusion so that all territory residents can contribute and participate equally in what the territory has to offer. We are interested in not only delivering services for all but ensuring that the employers and the services that we procure are engaging a diverse workforce and procuring from suppliers who demonstrate inclusive practice in employment decisions, career development, business operations and engagement with customers and clients.

The fourth value is environmental responsibility. Ms Clay I am sure is pleased to know that we support a transition to a circular economy that values resources by keeping products and materials in use for as long as possible as part of that value. Of course, fair and safe conditions for workers are another value given effect through in part the Secure Local Jobs Code and the Ethical Treatment of Workers Evaluation.

Transparent and ethical engagement is the final value that is identified, and this includes that territory entities must not knowingly engage with suppliers that demonstrate business practices that are objectionable, dishonest, unethical or unsafe, and this includes being alert to modern-day slavery and leveraging national and interjurisdictional initiatives to abate such practices.

We already have a strong ethical framework underpinning our procurement processes. The officials that undertake procurement draw on all of these elements of our procurement framework, and that is why it is so important that the review that we

undertake—the independent review that will follow the committee inquiry that Mr Milligan is chairing—is in the context of the broader procurement framework, because the Secure Local Jobs Code is just one element of that broader framework seeking to achieve the kinds of objectives that Ms Clay was talking about.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker and your office, for their collaboration on this motion. I have not yet mentioned Ms Carrick, who I know will move a further amendment. We are, as I said, supporting Ms Carrick’s amendment. I thank Ms Carrick and her office and the other offices that have engaged with us, including Mr Parton’s. Thank you for bringing this to the chamber. Maybe we did not collaborate very much, but we appreciated you providing a starting point for us and your collaboration, I understand, with the Greens through this process. I commend your amendment, Mr Deputy Speaker, to the chamber.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (5.38): I move the following amendment to Mr Braddock’s proposed amendment:

After paragraph (3)(c)(ii), insert:

“(iii) an assessment of the effectiveness of Local Industry Participation Plans in increasing opportunities for ACT-based businesses, subcontractors, apprentices and local supply chains, and whether the current framework delivers demonstrable value for money and local economic benefits.”.

I support the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration’s inquiry into the Secure Local Jobs Code and the government’s review of the code. This inquiry and the review will inform any recommendations to change the code. I welcome measures that improve transparency and public confidence in government procurement. Canberrans rightly expect procurement decisions to be fair, accountable and free from undue influence. My amendment seeks to add value to the government’s review of the code by including an assessment of the effectiveness of local industry participation plans. These plans are intended to increase opportunities for ACT businesses, subcontractors, apprentices and local supply chains, and they form an important part of the territory’s procurement framework.

The key question is whether the local industry participation plans are working. Are they delivering more opportunities for local businesses? Are they helping small to medium enterprises compete for government work? Are they supporting apprenticeships and strengthening local supply chains? And, importantly, are they delivering measurable economic benefits and value for money for taxpayers? If we are reviewing the Secure Local Jobs Code, it makes sense to also examine the operation and effectiveness of local industry participation plans. Together, these policies are intended to support local employment and local industry participation. We should have confidence that they are achieving those objectives, and, where they are not, identify opportunities for improvement.

My amendment does not prejudge the outcome; it simply ensures that the review takes a comprehensive look at whether our procurement settings are delivering the local economic outcomes for local industry that this Assembly expects.

MR PARTON (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (5.40): To the amendments

and in closing—and because I think we are all keen to get out of here—I will briefly respond to comments from the minister. I just cannot believe, despite the weight of evidence from so many stakeholders suggesting that the SLJC was a conduit to corruption and the fact that there is no specific finding of corruption in the Operation Kingfisher report specifically pinned to the SLJC, that there is nothing to see here—there is nothing to see here and we are just going to keep on rolling. I think most people in this space know that there is plenty to see here.

With regard to Ms Carrick’s amendments: I love your work. We have no drama there. That is fine. I have to say that I find the Greens’ amendments quite disrespectful to me and disrespectful to this motion.

Ms Stephen-Smith interjecting—

MR PARTON: It is wonderful for Ms Stephen-Smith to laugh at that, and she pointed out that she is really pleased that there is another three-word slogan from the Greens in “community wealth-building”, but I would note that Ms Stephen-Smith actually has in her amendments that “the Scottish parliament has unanimously passed Community Wealth Building legislation which provides for an economic framework including secure local jobs”, and, of course, we have the circulation of this document from the Greens. If you want to have a debate in this place about community wealth-building, my suggestion to the Greens would be to take up a slot and run a substantive motion about it, because this motion is about us responding to an Integrity Commission report about corruption. It is about us responding to it and making damn sure that it does not happen again.

Again, I find it disrespectful to have this motion amended. I have never seen a glossy document circulated as a part of amendments to a motion, particularly given most of the things in this document have nothing to do with procurement. I wonder about the discussions that have been going on between Labor and the Greens in the last couple of weeks. I just wonder. I can understand Ms Stephen-Smith looking at the two options: “Do I go with community wealth-building or do I go with abolishing the Secure Local Jobs Code? I’m going to have to roll with the Scottish parliament.” It is a bit like the 9th and 10th Assemblies all over again, isn’t it? It is like we are just going to say, “Well, if we have to get it done, we’re going to have to do some of this Greens’ stuff; otherwise, we’re going to have too much skin removed from us.” As a consequence, we will not be supporting the Greens’ amendment.

Ms Carrick’s amendment to Mr Braddock’s proposed amendment agreed to.

Question put:

That **Mr Braddock’s** amendment, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 14

Noes 7

Andrew Barr
Andrew Braddock
Fiona Carrick

Marisa Paterson
Michael Pettersson
Chris Steel

Chiaka Barry
Peter Cain
Leanne Castley

Tara Cheyne
Jo Clay
Thomas Emerson
Laura Nuttall
Suzanne Orr

Rachel Stephen-Smith
Caitlin Tough
Rebecca Vassarotti

Ed Cocks
Jeremy Hanson
Deborah Morris
Mark Parton

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Braddock's amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Standing orders—suspension

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

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent committee business scheduled for today being called on and dealt with on Wednesday 16 September 2026.

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 the presentation of papers in the routine of business today be noted.

Libraries ACT—opening hours—Assembly resolution 12 June 2026—government response

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for City and Government Services, and Minister for Transport) (5.50): Today I have tabled the government's response to the motion passed by this Assembly on 12 June, concerning changes to Libraries ACT opening hours. Tomorrow, a petition signed by—I believe, according to you—more than 3,000 Canberrans will also be tabled. Those Canberrans care about libraries, and so do I.

I know there has been some suggestion that the decision is bloody-mindedness; that perhaps I do not get the strength of feeling; that I am not listening; that my electorate, in particular, needs to send me a message. But, Mr Speaker, I did not make the decision on opening hours lightly. I am honestly boggled by any suggestion that I did not care about Kippax or Belconnen, and that I did not realise that there would be a strong response across the community.

But it is important to note that, as minister, I am responsible for nine libraries, for the people who run them, and for a service the whole city should be able to rely on. And, previously, libraries' advertised hours were not reliable. In the three financial years before these changes, Libraries ACT closed a branch without warning 195 times; families arriving for a program to find the doors shut; students arriving to find the lights off; people relying on a warm, free public space finding a sign on a closed door.

If reliability for those hours could have been achieved just by hiring more staff, I would have done it. And in fact, Mr Speaker, we did. We supplemented the workforce with casual staff. In one year, \$674,000 was spent on casuals and labour hire supporting the old rostering model and opening hours. And yet, branches still closed.

The independent working group's diagnosis was not simply that Libraries ACT needed more people. Over time, fixed patterns, preferred shifts and individual exceptions—each of them understandable in isolation—had accumulated into a roster that was increasingly difficult to operate; fragile when someone was unexpectedly unavailable, with a single absence taking the branch below minimum staffing while an available employee elsewhere could not necessarily be moved to cover it. Putting more people into the same inflexible roster would not, by itself, have solved the problem. The operating hours and the roster, therefore, had to be redesigned together.

I knew it would be tough, and I could have made exceptions. Politically, that would have been much easier. I did not, because this is a system-wide reform. I did not, because exceptions added on top of one another is what creates an unworkable system. I made the decisions for Kippax and Belconnen that I was asking other communities to accept. So, I certainly do not dismiss the strength of feeling about the decision. I have read the feedback. I have personally responded to those who have written to me, fronted up to radio, social media, estimates, this chamber.

All nine libraries remain open, including Civic and Erindale which the working group had contemplated closing. We have added staff. Frontline and permanent staffing have increased. Two new senior librarians commenced in August. The new operating hours with the new roster have commenced. There was no concealed intention about this. There was no surprise after the event. This is in line with what I openly told members what I could do, what I could not do and what I would try to do, during the debate on the motion to which this responds.

I was clear that I could not pause these operational changes. Members voted with that information in front of them. And the government not opposing a motion is not an undertaking that a paragraph the responsible minister—me—has expressly said cannot be delivered has somehow become deliverable. Candour about an operational constraint before a vote does not become bad faith afterwards simply because the disagreement remains.

The government response does make clear, Mr Speaker, that I do not regard the current model as the end of the conversation about library hours, nor about library access. But that conversation simply cannot be had without a stable foundation and without a reliable operating model. And that is what these new hours and the new roster support. Mr Speaker, I have not confused the easiest decision with the right one, and I implore members to take the same approach.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.55): I thank the minister, both for her comments just then, and the report on the library operating hours. I have been a little bit busy this afternoon on some other matters, so I have not had time to prepare a speech in the context of this particular motion. I will be commenting on that later.

What I can comment on are some of the other papers which have been published in advance. For example, the government's response to the caretaker conventions inquiry.

Now, I will state that the public service is a crucial asset to our democracy and I will always defend it. The evidence obtained through FOI documents show there was a direct threat to the apolitical and unbiased nature of the public service, and that is why I brought these issues to light; because I believe it is vital that there are appropriate protections and mechanisms to ensure our public servants can remain apolitical at all times, especially during caretaker.

The select committee to examine the caretaking conventions in the Assembly clearly specified the expectations of the ACT public service in its recommendations, and how it interacts with the political parties in a non-partisan fashion. If it achieves what I hope it will, it will bring into the Assembly's control some high-level rules as to how the ACT public service should behave in the lead-up to and during election campaigns, including when and how it must engage with non-government parties.

Also amongst the papers was a response to the campaign advertising inquiry. I would like to thank the government for its response, and it forecasting that it will support the bill with amendments. I intend to bring forward this bill for debate in the October sitting and look forward to working with the government on those amendments, as I believe it is important to maintain the integrity of the expenditure of taxpayers' money to ensure it cannot be perceived to have been utilised for any political advantage, whether that be perceived or actual. Thank you.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Estimates 2026-2027—Select Committee Report

MS BARRY (Ginninderra) (5.57), by leave: I present the following report:

Estimates 2026-2027—Select Committee—Report—Inquiry into the Appropriation Bill 2026-2027 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2026-2027, dated 26 August 2026, including additional comments, together with a schedule of unanswered questions, answers to Questions on Notice Nos 168 and 169 and the relevant minutes of proceedings.

The report was circulated to members on 28 August 2026 pursuant to standing order 254C.

I move:

That the report be noted.

This is the first and final report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2026-2027. The Assembly established the committee on 24 February 2026 and referred the appropriations bill on 10 June 2026. The committee held a day of hearings with committee and industry groups and 11 days of hearings with ministers, officials, statutory authorities and statutory officials. In addition to the hearing the committee

received four submissions. Witnesses took 301 questions on notice, and 324 questions on notice were issued. The report made seven findings and 62 recommendations.

On behalf of the committee I would like to thank the experts, advisors, Pegasus Economics as well as all witnesses and submitters for their significant contributions to this inquiry. The committee looks forward to debating the financial and community issues raised in the report. I would also like to thank my colleagues on the committee Mr Emerson, Mr Braddock and Taimus Werner-Gibbingss. I commend the report to the Assembly, and I would like to make a brief statement in my capacity as a member of this Assembly.

This year's estimates report hearings took place under very special circumstance. and, I would say, unprecedented circumstances. It started with the release of the long-awaited Operation Kingfisher report by the integrity commissioner—a report which had been five years in the making. I think I recall the day the report dropped, and I was like, “Oh my goodness, I must have done something terrible to somebody to be presiding over this report.” I said, “It would have been great to wait maybe a few days later before the report is released.”

On a serious note, the findings were significant, and it is now official that various senior officials within the ACT Labor government had engaged in serious corrupt conduct—issues that we ventilated through the motion that we just heard from Mr Parton. Many others who are mentioned in the report are still employed by the government and are being paid handsome salaries by taxpayers. The report was a considerable revelation. It is no surprise that it generated much attention at estimates hearings. It is a report that fundamentally goes to the heart of how and where the government spends taxpayers money and the procurement process it uses to do so. The committee rightfully questioned the government on the findings of serious corrupt conduct to interrogate the extent to which it has impacted the way the territory's budget is managed. Operation Kingfisher ultimately reiterated what we already know about this ACT Labor government: they are the government for the unions, by the unions. This comes at a cost to the financial sustainability of the territory and to ordinary Canberrans. We cannot hide from the reality here. It must be called out, and it must be called out strongly and firmly.

It is therefore no surprise that the trends of skyrocketing debts are continuing. We have a deficit that is \$243.7 million worse than projected. Perhaps most alarmingly, we have a government that is expecting more from ratepayers, with annual increases that are borderline inhumane. The estimates process revealed that general rates are rising on average by eight per cent per year, which is more than double the wage price index. Canberrans are paying astronomically more and getting, I would say, not even less than less. As per usual, the government's policy is to increase tariffs on Canberrans to pay off their debts. The problem with that *modus operandi* is that our rates money is merely breaking even with the territory's interest bill and our debt continues to rise. This is a textbook example of financial incompetence and mismanagement, and sadly it is not going to get any better.

Over two weeks of estimates hearings the government confirmed a lot that we already knew about the ACT's terrible financial position. It confirmed that the territory's financial position is deteriorating mainly because of poor policy decisions. It confirmed

that in many cases the government has increased spending and funded capital initiatives through debts. All of this has been reported at length by Saul Eslake in his report into the ACT's fiscal sustainability.

Perhaps one of the issues that became most clear—and surprising—during the hearing was that the government had absolutely no youth strategy whatsoever. There is no coordinated approach to improving education outcomes, health outcomes and rehabilitation outcomes for youth involved in crime. This reality reflects a complete disregard for young Canberrans. The government policies are setting young people up to fail. This will have a catastrophic impact on young Canberrans. It is clear that the future generations will be paying for the debt accumulated by this government for years to come. This is a point that my colleague Mr Cocks pointed out in his budget estimates speech last year.

It seems that the direction has not changed in any meaningful way; it has only gotten worse. The government demonstrated in estimates hearings that they have no strategy to address these significant gaps. Outcomes in education and health are also declining, while frontline services are overrun, overworked and under-resourced. The lack of equilibrium between the basic principle of supply and demand of public goods generally is alarming, and this is having detrimental impacts on the future prosperity of Canberrans. We should be rightly concerned.

Judicial appointment processes have been needlessly tampered with in what ultimately added to delays in the administration of justice. The government is doing nothing to address vocational deficiencies within the AMC, which continues to weaken the foundational objective of incarceration as a means of rehabilitation. Legal aid funding is completely inadequate, falling approximately \$4 million short of what is required to continue providing current services despite disproportionate funding increases to the DPP.

Ambulance staffing is also inadequate and in desperate need of stabilisation through additional investment.

Government has no plan or understanding of what multicultural affairs means. They seem to think that hosting a festival once a year is all that it takes to tick the symbolic multiculturalism box.

The government has done no groundwork to prepare for the implementation of their human right to housing. The public housing waitlist continues to grow at a rate that far outpaces any production targets, and the government was in no hurry to assist elderly public housing residents who were freezing through winter.

Rates of domestic, family and sexual violence continue to increase, while ongoing funding uncertainty and suboptimal information-sharing arrangements leave service providers with an impossible task.

Once again, in a shameful debacle that feels like groundhog day, Canberra's taxpayers are footing a massive bill to cover the salaries of two CEOs of the Canberra Institute of Technology after the resignation of embattled CEO Margot McNeill.

These are just some examples of the areas in dire need of improvement, which I am sure will be debated ad nauseam over the next couple of weeks. Ultimately this year's hearings were defined by an uninspiring budget that offered little aspiration for Canberrans when we need it most.

I found the entire experience quite depressing, trying to balance the need of policy redirection and savings measures with the core role of the estimates committee, which is to review the budget as presented and make recommendations on that basis. However, despite this I am confident that the report offers an important review of key issues arising in this year's budget. It details several areas that need to be addressed, and I trust that the government will find some value in it.

On that note, I thank you for your indulgence, and once again I thank my fellow committee members and the secretariat, who did very good work for a very long time. I also thank the community organisations that appeared earlier in the process, the ministers that appeared for many hours, their staff and the public service, who I recognise have dedicated countless hours preparing for estimates hearings. I acknowledge that this process is robust and it can be heated, but it should never, ever be personal. This is a precept that I hope is reflected in the report, and I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Privileges—Select Committee Report

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (6.08), by leave: I present the following report:

Privileges 2026—Select Committee—Report—*Inquiry into possible contempt of an Assembly committee*, dated 5 August 2026, together with the minutes of proceedings—

I move:

That the report be noted.

I rise to speak on the report of the Select Committee on Privileges 2026 into possible contempt of an Assembly committee. This inquiry was established to determine whether the former CEO of CIT, Margot McNeill, had committed a contempt of the Assembly in relation to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration inquiry into the CIT CEO recruitment process, by giving false and misleading evidence to that committee, failing to produce documents, and any other related matters.

At the outset, Mr Speaker, I emphasise a key point. The privileges committee was not able to determine with confidence whether Dr McNeill was in contempt of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration. However, that outcome should not be mistaken for an endorsement of Dr McNeill's conduct. Quite the opposite.

The reason the privileges committee was unable to reach a definitive conclusion was,

in large part, because of the way in which Dr McNeill chose to engage with the inquiry process itself. Indeed, the committee's first formal finding was that, as a result of Dr McNeill's continued refusal to engage with Assembly committees in a cooperative manner, we were unable to confidently determine whether contempt had occurred.

Parliamentary committees rely on witnesses engaging openly, honestly and constructively. Committees are not courts. They are not adversarial forums. They are mechanisms established by the Assembly to enable elected representatives to scrutinise decisions, test evidence, and hold public officials accountable on behalf of the people of the ACT. Unfortunately, throughout this inquiry the committee encountered persistent resistance that frustrated our ability to carry out that task.

The committee found that Dr McNeill adopted what is described as an "overly litigious and combative approach to parliamentary scrutiny". Rather than assisting the committee in understanding the facts, correspondence was repeatedly characterised by legal arguments, procedural objections and attempts to frame parliamentary inquiries as though they were private legal disputes.

The involvement of legal representatives, of course, is a right available to witnesses. But that right should assist a witness to cooperate with parliamentary processes, not to frustrate them.

The committee was clear in its assessment. It observed that Dr McNeill's heavy reliance on legal representation resulted in the very kind of overly legalistic approach that had previously been identified as a concern. In fact, the report records the committee's concern at what it described as "Tiresome and unwarranted attempts to instruct and threaten this Committee about its powers and scope of inquiry". Those actions were, as the committee stated, "neither helpful nor welcome".

Mr Speaker, committees of this Assembly derive their authority from the Assembly itself. Attempts to lecture committees about their powers, or seek to narrow their scope through aggressive legal correspondence, do not simply inconvenience members; they undermine the ability of Assembly committees to perform the functions entrusted on them by this place.

The report also detailed the committee's concerns regarding claims of legal professional privilege. Dr McNeill's representatives repeatedly made claims of privilege in relation to material the committee believed was necessary to properly assess the evidence before it. Yet, when compelled to present those documents, as the report notes, privilege was asserted over documents which later appeared not to exist in the first place. The committee described that position as "confusing at best, and deliberately obstructive at worst". The committee went even further, finding that the assertion of privilege over apparently non-existent documents "could be perceived as an attempt to mislead, distract and obstruct the Committee's attempts to seek further information and documents to assist with its inquiry."

Mr Speaker, these are serious findings. When a witness adopts an approach that delays and deflects parliamentary scrutiny, it undermines the entire process altogether. Throughout this inquiry, the committee sought cooperation from Dr McNeill but what we received instead were arguments about process rather than assistance in establishing

the facts. As chair, I consider that deeply disappointing.

The committee ultimately concluded that Dr McNeill's conduct raised concerns about whether it is inconsistent with public sector values and whether it undermines the integrity and reputation of the public service.

Perhaps most concerningly, Mr Speaker, the committee observed that these events have undermined committee members' confidence in Dr McNeill's future engagement with the Assembly. For these reasons, the committee recommended that the Public Sector Standards Commissioner, by referral from the CIT board if necessary, investigate whether Dr McNeill's conduct is inconsistent with the Public Sector Management Act 1994 and the Public Sector Code of Conduct.

Of course, since the committee tabled its report, Dr McNeill has resigned her position and, disappointingly, received a reported payout of approximately \$445,000 of taxpayer money. This development will be difficult for many Canberrans to understand or to accept. After months of parliamentary inquiries, extensive legal correspondence, significant public resources devoted to scrutiny processes, and serious concerns raised about Dr McNeill's conduct and cooperation with the Assembly, the outcome appears to be that the taxpayer is left footing yet another substantive bill.

Parliamentary committees can only function when witnesses approach them in a spirit of cooperation and respect. This report serves as a reminder that attempts to frustrate, delay or obstruct parliamentary scrutiny do not merely affect a single inquiry. They undermine the work of committees, diminish the authority of the Assembly, and weaken public confidence in our democratic institutions.

I also take this opportunity to put on the record my thanks to my fellow committee members, Mr Braddock and Mr Werner-Gibbings. We also happen to make up the Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders. And I dare say—let there be any contrary contributions—I think we worked very well together, and I do thank them for their contributions and the cooperative way in which they engaged with this inquiry. I also thank Hamish Finlay, the Clerk—who actually acted as the secretary for the privileges committee—for his hard work, and the committee office for their support in this important inquiry. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Legislative Assembly—Standing Committees Membership

MR SPEAKER: Pursuant to standing order 223, the government whip wrote to me on 29 July 2026 advising of proposed changes to the membership of a number of committees. Mr Werner-Gibbings proposed that due to Ms Tough's move to the Ministry:

Ms Tough be discharged from the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure and Mr Werner Gibbings be appointed in her place;

Ms Tough be discharged from the Standing Committee on Environment and

Planning and Ms Berry be appointed in her place;

Ms Tough be discharged from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration and Ms Berry be appointed in her place;

Mr Werner-Gibbings be discharged from the Standing Committee on Transport and City Services and Ms Berry be appointed in his place; and

Ms Tough be discharged from the Select Committee on the Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT and Mr Werner-Gibbings be appointed in her place.

I agreed to the changes on 29 July 2026 and table the relevant correspondence:

Standing Committees—Change to membership—Correspondence between the Government Whip and the Speaker, dated 29 July 2026.

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

That the changes to the membership of standing committees as proposed to and agreed by the Speaker, pursuant to standing order 223 be adopted.

Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) (Validation) Amendment Bill 2026

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

Title read by Clerk.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for City and Government Services, and Minister for Transport) (6.18): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

This is a technical bill that amends the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act 1999 to maintain the integrity of the legislative framework underpinning the ACT's traffic camera enforcement scheme for seatbelt offences. Ensuring that seatbelts are worn correctly is one of the simplest and most effective actions people can take to protect themselves on our roads. Drivers are responsible for ensuring that they and all passengers lawfully wear a seatbelt or other approved restraint.

Research consistently shows that correctly wearing a seatbelt significantly reduces the risk of death or serious injury in a crash. While the vast majority of Canberrans do the right thing, road trauma data continues to demonstrate that noncompliance remains a contributing factor in serious injuries and fatalities. Accordingly, seatbelt offences are not new. They have existed in the ACT and throughout Australia for decades. However, until recently, seatbelt offences could only be detected by ACT Policing.

Members will be aware that the ACT's road safety camera program uses proven technology to improve compliance with road rules and encourage safer behaviour. With these camera assets, beginning first with mobile device detection, the ACT has significantly improved its ability to detect and deter unsafe behaviour that places drivers, passengers and other road users at risk. In 2025, this Assembly passed legislation to establish the framework necessary to support expanding the use of the camera

enforcement network to detect seatbelt offences. The establishment of this framework reflected the Assembly's shared commitment to improving road safety and strengthening compliance with seatbelt laws.

In particular, the amendments to the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act 1999 established the term "seatbelt detection system" to support the expanded use of existing camera technology; amended the traffic offence detection device framework to allow images depicting drivers, passengers or both to be used for seatbelt enforcement; expanded existing exemptions for workers maintaining these systems; and made associated technical amendments to support implementation.

In practice, this meant expanding the functionality of the existing Acusensus Heads-Up JR-DD1 camera asset network so that, in addition to detecting mobile device use, this network could detect seatbelt noncompliance. Following these changes, amendments were also made to the road rules to ensure seatbelt offences could be enforced through the existing Acusensus camera network. The Road Transport Authority was required to make a consequential update to a disallowable instrument under section 13(1) of the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Regulation 2017 to explicitly recognise their operation as a seatbelt detection system.

In this case, the required update was not made. The government acknowledges that this approval should have been updated when seatbelt camera enforcement commenced, and I apologise to the community for confusion that may have resulted. The City and Environment Directorate is reviewing how the oversight occurred and what improvements are required to its legislative project management and assurance processes so that an error of this kind is not repeated. This is, of course, a regrettable situation, and I would have preferred that the instrument had been appropriately updated.

However, the government's policy intent was clear, the Assembly's intent was clear, and all other elements of the legislative and operational framework were put in place. The devices complied with the applicable inspection, testing, maintenance and certification requirements. The community was informed of the change, and the cameras were deployed and operated on the understanding that they were authorised to detect seatbelt offences. The administrative oversight was in the formal approval of the system, not in the underlying seatbelt laws and not in the capability of the technology, so the most important thing that we can do is remove any doubt or ambiguity and provide certainty and clarity to the community.

This bill addresses that administrative oversight. It is a validating law—a legislative mechanism recognised by the Legislation Act 2001, which allows a technical or administrative defect to be corrected where it would otherwise prevent legislation from operating as intended. It is confined to the period in which the defect existed, beginning on 3 November 2025, when operational seatbelt camera enforcement commenced, and ending on 7 September 2026, before the corrected approval arrangements took effect.

It is important to be precise about what the bill does and what it does not do. The bill provides that the Acusensus Heads-Up JR-DD1 system is taken to have been properly approved, notified and presented to the Assembly as a seatbelt detection system during the relevant period. It also validates things done or omitted during that period that would

have been valid had the approval been properly made. The bill therefore has retrospective validating effect. However, the bill does not retrospectively create an offence, increase a penalty or make previously lawful conduct unlawful. The relevant seatbelt offences already existed and the Assembly had already established the framework for camera images to be used in enforcing those offences.

In presenting the bill today, I wish to be clear that the government considered all options available to it. In our view, validation is the most consistent response because it preserves the policy previously approved by the Assembly, it establishes one legal position for affected matters, and it avoids undermining an enforcement framework directed at serious road safety risks.

Throughout the relevant period, the obligation to wear a seatbelt remained unchanged. The administrative oversight did not alter the underlying legal obligation. The community had also been informed that the existing camera network would be used to detect seatbelt offences. Treating the entire enforcement period as a warning period, for example, would create an inequitable outcome for the overwhelming majority of Canberrans who complied with the law and took their road safety responsibilities seriously. It would also undermine the behavioural change objectives of the camera enforcement program, which are to improve compliance with life-saving road rules, reduce road trauma and save lives.

The bill, ultimately, is about addressing the legal defect concerning approval of the system. It does not ask the Assembly to determine the facts of every individual infringement matter and it does not displace the ordinary processes applying to individual cases. Each infringement is reviewed by an authorised officer before it is issued. Anyone who believes a notice is incorrectly issued should use the applicable existing statutory pathways. These available pathways include seeking withdrawal or review of an infringement, or electing to have the matter dealt with by a court, in accordance with the road transport legislation.

The government has also considered the bill's compatibility with the Human Rights Act. The bill does not retrospectively create an offence or alter the conduct prohibited by law. It validates approval of the device used to obtain evidence of offences that already existed. Accordingly, the explanatory statement concludes that the right against retrospective criminal laws is not engaged.

Every serious crash on our roads has profound impacts on individuals, families, friends, first responders and the broader community. Seatbelts save lives. This bill corrects an administrative oversight while preserving the operation of a road safety scheme that was intended by the Assembly, implemented by government and understood by the community. It maintains the integrity of the road safety camera enforcement scheme and provides legal certainty. It preserves the original intent of the law, supports community confidence in road safety enforcement, and avoids an outcome that would undermine both fairness and the behavioural change objectives of the territory's road safety program. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Standing orders—suspension

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for City and Government Services, and Minister for Transport) (6.25): I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) (Validation) Amendment Bill 2026 being called on and debated this sitting period.

MR PARTON (Brindabella—Leader of the Opposition) (6.26): We cannot support the motion for the suspension of standing orders in order to allow this bill to be rushed through without sufficient scrutiny, given it is a bill that retrospectively makes something legal that would not be legal if we did not pass it. The Canberra Liberals have a problem with retrospective legislation, particularly retrospective legislation without proper scrutiny, and we feel that this sets a precedent. It allows the government to go back and make changes to pretty much anything it pleases without proper scrutiny. As such, we are not of a mind to allow the standing orders to be suspended for this purpose.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (6.26): The Greens will be supporting the motion for the suspension of standing orders. We wish there was not a requirement for the validation bill, but since we are in this situation, we need to resolve this legal question of uncertainty, and this is the best way to do that. I understand that the Canberra Liberals have concerns about the operation of the scheme. That is separate from what is being debated in this bill.

MS BARRY (Ginninderra) (6.27): I am astounded and baffled that we are even debating whether or not to suspend the standing orders to allow for this bill to go through the scrutiny process. I cannot believe that we are not all agreeing for this bill to go through the scrutiny process. It is astounding, and there is complete and utter hypocrisy on display here today.

I ask members in this place: what is the price of eroding a fundamental democratic principle and the principle of legality? Whenever retrospective laws are being contemplated, one of the most profound expectations is that they will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny and oversight. In a small Assembly like this, where members of the government and members of the opposition are part of committees, it is really important that we have that independent oversight, and that is what scrutiny provides. This is a longstanding principle to ensure that adequate checks and balances are in place to justify the displacement of the presumption against retrospectivity. It is a principle that goes to the heart of the rule of law.

Mr Speaker, we are not debating here whether seatbelts are illegal or legal. That is not the debate at all. The debate is about whether or not the government had the right to issue seatbelt fines when it did, and that is what we would be seeking the scrutiny process to determine.

I would have thought that every member in this place would see the benefit of having this bill referred to the scrutiny committee for a comprehensive, transparent and expert review of the legality of what is proposed. Instead, we are being asked to rush this bill through the Assembly and give retrospective approval to the government's illegal fining

spree. I have serious concerns about the process and how it negatively interacts with longstanding, established legal principles concerning the retrospective application of laws, particularly in the context in which this bill has been drafted, which fundamentally is designed to approve of the government's wrongdoing. Let us be clear about what has happened here. The government have not crossed their t's; nor have they dotted their i's.

At 6.30 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the debate was interrupted. The motion for the adjournment of the Assembly having been put and negatived, the debate was resumed.

MS BARRY: The government had no approval for the detection cameras to issue seatbelts infringement. This is a simple issue that we could sort out by way of the scrutiny process. We are not debating whether people should be fined for not wearing a seatbelt. That is not the question. I would absolutely want people to obey the law and to abide by the rules. We are not debating the intent of the Assembly. That is not what is in question. What is in question is whether or not the government had the right to issue seatbelt fines.

The fact is that the government, here and now, are deliberately evading democratic legislative practices that have long been established for a reason. In this case, where a bill purports to give retrospective effect to something and it is not properly scrutinised, it is even more important. I will not be complicit in this process. As a matter of legal principle, I will not be complicit. As a matter of legislative integrity, I will not be complicit. That is why I am seeking that we do not suspend the standing orders.

The government have essentially taken millions of dollars from thousands of Canberrans when they may not have had the legal right to do so. They are now asking us to enable them to shirk responsibility so that they cannot be asked potentially to return the money. That is legislated theft. At a time when \$574 is a large sum of money, I would like to think that members of this place would be more careful about rubberstamping this breach of our social contract.

The entire scheme lacks integrity and bears a resemblance to Robodebt. It was essentially an automated system which illegally and falsely indebted people. It is a hideous precedent to set, and it warrants referral to a scrutiny body.

I understand that it is already illegal not to wear seatbelts. I think we all agree that that is a crucially important safety measure. The key issue is not whether this retrospectively criminalises an action or omission. It is an issue of retrospectively validating an embarrassing government oversight that should never have been missed in the first place. Mr Speaker, you can call it a technical omission or an innocent blunder that needs a quick validating law. Regardless, it raises serious questions around where else this is happening in the system, how much it is costing taxpayers, and why legislative instruments are not being referred for proper scrutiny beforehand, to detect these potential omissions.

This matter goes to several important issues, including trust in government, transparency, integrity and accountability, and we will not support it.

(Time expired.)

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (6.32): I will be supporting the motion for the suspension of standing orders so that we can deal with this matter quickly. Reflecting on Mr Braddock's remarks, it is unfortunate that we have to, but we do have to. We have already all voted in support of the outcome, which is the administration of these fines. It just so happens that this instrument was not issued. I have made a bit of a song and dance about the ACT government spending a lot on legal costs and damages in areas where it might be best spent resolving the issue upstream. I am very aware of the risk that, if this is not resolved quickly, such expenditure could result. I do not see the argument that that would be to the benefit of the territory or our community. As unfortunate as it is to require this bill to be introduced and dealt with quickly, I think it is in the public interest for that to occur.

Question put:

That Ms Cheyne's motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 14

Noes 9

Andrew Barr	Marisa Paterson	Chiaka Barry	Mark Parton
Andrew Braddock	Michael Pettersson	Peter Cain	
Leanne Castley	Chris Steel	Fiona Carrick	
Tara Cheyne	Rachel Stephen-Smith	Ed Cocks	
Jo Clay	Caitlin Tough	Jeremy Hanson	
Thomas Emerson	Rebecca Vassarotti	Elizabeth Lee	
Laura Nuttall		James Milligan	
Suzanne Orr		Deborah Morris	

Question resolved in the affirmative, with the concurrence of an absolute majority.

Legislative Assembly—unparliamentary language

Speaker's ruling

MR SPEAKER: Members, during the debate today on the motion moved by Mr Parton on procurement and the Secure Local Jobs Code, Mr Cocks said quite a bit. At one stage he said, "Stop flushing money down the toilet through backdoor deals with special interests, because the special access regime this government has entrenched." Ms Cheyne raised a point of order regarding unparliamentary language. When asked by Mr Cocks to specify which words were unparliamentary, Ms Cheyne suggested, "Everything that you just said."

I undertook to review the proceedings, together with the relevant provisions of the Assembly standing orders, and come back to the Assembly. I also sought a bit of advice from the Clerk. Standing order 54 is headed "Offensive words", and it states:

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

Standing order 55 states:

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

Standing order 56 states:

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

In the context of robust parliamentary debate, I have no issue with most of the words used. The specific allegation, however, of “backdoor deals” does suggest improper secrecy or deception and, in the context of the debate, could be considered an imputation of an improper motive. Indeed, Speaker Berry ruled the use of “backdoor” as unparliamentary way back in 1998, in a similar context. I therefore ask Mr Cocks to withdraw the language.

Mr Cocks: I withdraw.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.40 pm.