



DEBATES

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

27 August 2002

Tuesday, 27 August 2002

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MR SPEAKER (Mr Berry) took the chair at 10.30 am and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Offensive or disorderly words

MR SPEAKER: Members, on Thursday last, Mr Smyth referred to certain comments made in the chamber by Mr Quinlan on 20 and 21 August. The comments were made in debate on a motion to suspend the standing orders and in answering a question without notice. They related to a function or event in which it was claimed the opposition were involved and where it was alleged that attendees were misinformed on certain matters and were asked to sign waivers. Mr Smyth, in a personal explanation, stated that he had never advised an organisation to use waivers, nor had he or his colleagues in the opposition given out misinformation on the use of waivers.

I have examined the proof transcript of the proceedings referred to by Mr Smyth, together with the relevant provisions of Assembly standing orders. Standing orders 54 and 55 state:

Offensive Words

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

Personal Reflections

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

Standing order 56 also provides that whenever the attention of the Speaker is drawn to words used the Speaker shall determine whether they are offensive or disorderly.

In reaching my decision on this matter, I noted the text of *House of Representatives Practice* at page 490, which quotes Senate Deputy President Wood, in interpreting a very similar provision, as explaining:

When a man is in political life it is not offensive that things are said about him politically. Offensive means offensive in some personal way. The same view applies to the meaning of "improper motives" and "personal reflections" as used in the standing orders. Here again, when a man is in public life, and a member of this Parliament, he takes upon himself the risk of being criticised in a political way.

Having considered the matter raised by Mr Smyth, I decline to rule that the words used were offensive or disorderly. In doing so, I must advise the Assembly that I am reluctant to get involved in nuances and emphases in what, on the facts available to me, appears to be essentially a political matter. Mr Smyth utilised the provisions of standing order 46 and explained that he personally had not given the advice referred to, and it is also open to him, should he see fit, to seek to move a substantive motion on the matter in the Assembly using the usual procedures.

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Petition

Abortion legislation

The following petition was lodged for presentation, by Mr Wood, from 322 residents:

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

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

- the Health Regulation (Maternal Health Information) Repeal Bill 2001 removes valuable statutory protection from women who are considering termination of pregnancy and those who have conscientious objection to participating in abortion procedures; and
- the Crimes (Abolition of Offence of Abortion) Bill 2001 removes all legal protection from the unborn child before birth.

Passage of these Bills will be contrary to:

- the fundamental role of government, which is to protect the lives and promote the well-being of all members of our community, particularly the most vulnerable; and
- Australia's international obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly to reject these Bills.

The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petition would be recorded in Hansard and a copy referred to the appropriate minister, the petition was received.

Legal Affairs—Standing Committee Scrutiny Report No 18 of 2002

MR STEFANIAK (10.34): I present the following report:

Legal Affairs—Standing Committee (incorporating the duties of a Scrutiny of Bills and Subordinate Legislation Committee)—Scrutiny Report No 18 of 2002, dated 27 August 2002, together with a copy of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to move a motion authorising publication of the report.

Leave granted.

MR STEFANIAK: I move:

That the report be authorised for publication.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

MR STEFANIAK: I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR STEFANIAK: Scrutiny Report No 18 contains the committee's comments on five bills, one interstate agreement and three government responses. The committee will report later on two bills—the Civil Law (Wrongs) Bill 2002 and the Injuries Compensation Framework Bill 2002—as well as some other subordinate legislation.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

Planning and Environment—Standing Committee Report No 8

MRS DUNNE (10.35): Mr Speaker, I present the following report:

Planning and Environment—Standing Committee—Report No 8—*Draft Variation No 190 to the Territory Plan—Hannah Park (part block 1 section 332 Fadden and blocks 16 & 17 section 226 Gowrie)*, dated August 2002.

I seek leave to move a motion authorising the publication of the report.

Leave granted.

MRS DUNNE: I move:

That the report be authorised for publication.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

MRS DUNNE: Mr Speaker, this is the Planning and Environment Committee at its very best. The draft variation was released for public comment in May 2002—

MR SPEAKER: Mrs Dunne, what are you speaking to?

MRS DUNNE: The motion that the report be noted.

MR SPEAKER: Would you like to move that?

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, I thought I had. I do apologise, Mr Speaker. I move:

That the report be noted.

This is the Planning and Environment Committee working at its very best. Draft variation 190 was released for public comment in May 2002 with a closing date for responses of 1 July 2002. The committee is presenting its report today, in August 2002, which I think is without a doubt the fastest draft variation known to man.

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This is a simple and straightforward proposal that puts into effect a decision made by Mr Wood when he was minister for planning in about 1994 to allocate some land in Fadden and Gowrie to a public park. I commend the report to the Assembly.

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

Estimates 2002-2003—Standing Committee Report—government response

MR QUINLAN (Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Business and Tourism, Minister for Sport, Racing and Gaming and Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Corrections) (10.38): Mr Speaker, for the information of members, I present the following paper:

Estimates 2002-2003—Select Committee—Report—*Budget 2002-03 (presented 20 August 2002)*—Government response.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

The government is quite proud of this year's budget. It has been set in an economic and financial climate that is tighter than that experienced by our predecessors over the past two years. It delivers an aggregate surplus over the life of the budget and forward estimates and an expected surplus for the 2002-03 financial year.

This budget also presents our vision for shaping Canberra's future. It outlines what we stand for and how we deliver on our priorities. And this budget delivers on the promises we made to the citizens of Canberra leading into the 2002 election.

Mr Speaker, the select committee's report discusses a wide range of issues. However, there do not appear to be any major issues that go to the fundamentals of the budget. Certainly it would have given the government greater satisfaction to have been able to address more areas of need in the community. However, financial constraints will always exist.

The government's response addresses the Estimates Committee's 65 recommendations on their merits. I will not take the Assembly's time by working through the 65 recommendations. They are discussed in the response document. I will nevertheless touch on a few.

Firstly, I observe that several recommendations reflect discussion in the estimates hearing that in turn centred on when and how the government was implementing several of its programs or projects. We appreciate that the Assembly members wish to be fully appraised of the government's actions, and we will do what we can to provide such information. However, sometimes it may not be possible or advisable to telegraph all of our actions or all of the options. As stated, we will do our best.

The committee recommended that it should be standard government practice to undertake a rigorous and independent cost/benefit analysis for significant projects. Arrangements for this are already under way. The Department of Treasury is already developing a standard process for preparing financial and economic analyses of major projects. A major project analysis section has been created in Treasury to work with agencies to improve the quality of financial and economic information provided to government.

The committee also recommended that the government advertise the existence of its insurance premium hotline until public awareness is of a satisfactory level. The response tabled today provides the Assembly with details of what is already in motion.

Let me first advise that I am aware of the limitations of the “public notice” style advertising as a sole means of communication. It may afford the opportunity to make claims of notifying the general public, but there is no certainty of widespread dissemination of the particular message.

We constructively set about targeting the most affected parties. We conducted a number of seminars and meetings with community organisations and umbrella community groups. At these the availability of the hotline was advised. Additionally the hotline has been widely advertised in the *Canberra Times* in July and August, in the *Valley Voice* and in the *Chronicle*.

There are 13 recommendations to which the government does not agree. I will not respond to these in detail in the tabling statement. They are outlined in the response. I would, however, like to take this opportunity to touch on one of the committee’s recommendations.

The committee recommended that workplace managers must seek full involvement of workplace employees in the first instance for negotiation of workplace general agreements and guarantee that while workers will have the option to appoint any union to represent their negotiations they are not bound to union representation if they desire to represent themselves.

The government recognises the importance of employees being involved in, and consulted about, the development of certified agreements. The agreement must be approved by a majority of employees before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission can certify the agreement. However, under the Workplace Relations Act, certified agreements in the ACT public sector may take the form of either an agreement with relevant unions (under section 170LJ) or an agreement with employees (under section 170LK).

The government’s preference is for agreements with unions, and it is with this model that we have started discussions with the unions.

Mr Speaker, in general the recommendations raised by the committee do not raise any serious issues in relation to the 2002-03 budget. In particular, no issue would prevent the passing of the Appropriation Bill.

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I appreciate the work of the Select Committee on Estimates and its support staff. I also appreciate the hearing given my officers and me at the estimates hearings.

I commend the government's response to the Assembly.

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

Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2002

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation Bill 2002-2003

Cognate paper:

Estimates 2002-2003—Standing Committee—report—government response]

Debate resumed from 25 June 2002, on motion by **Mr Quinlan**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR SPEAKER: It might be a cautious approach to deal with this bill now, and then we can deal with the report of the Select Committee on Estimates and the Appropriation Bill cognately. The options available to the chamber are to have a narrower debate in relation to this matter or to increase the range of the debate to include the Appropriation Bill and the Estimates Committee report. Is it the wish of the Assembly to debate this order of the day concurrently with the government's response to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates and Appropriation Bill 2002-2003? There being no objection, that course will be followed.

MR SMYTH (10.47): I would be delighted to make a contribution to this wide-ranging debate. This is the newly elected government's first budget. It is with some dismay that I read a press release put out by the Chief Minister on Sunday concerning the government setting its own priorities. It says:

"In our Budget considerations hundreds of funding bids failed to get up because there is just not enough to do everything.

"For instance, we had to knock back a bid for a long overdue \$5 million refurbishment of the paediatrics ward at Canberra Hospital.

"Mental health, disabilities, cancer services and elective surgery all need more money. Dozens of major education initiatives, which we support, could not be funded.

"Thirty thousand people in the ACT live in poverty.

Those comments from the Chief Minister on the Sunday before we debate his first budget tell me that the government suffers from an extreme lack of vision. This is a government that does not know what it is about. This is a government that, through the budget process, has not delivered for the people of Canberra the best outcomes for the money it will spend.

When we talk about a budget of more than \$2 billion, it is important that we get it right. It is also important that we make sure we get additional services for the money we spend and the services match the needs of the people of the ACT. This budget fails to do that.

Throughout the course of the day, as we discuss the budget line by line or part by part, we will come back in detail to look at the various aspects of the budget. But in a broad overview I think it is fair to say that this is a budget that lacks vision, a budget that lacks commitment and a budget that shows that the government is not capable of making hard decisions.

Part 1 is the Legislative Assembly Secretariat and the funding they receive for the job they do. With the amount of work that is done in committees and the support that the committees have to offer us in doing our jobs, I have always been concerned about whether we are funding them appropriately. Over the life of this Assembly we will watch to make sure that particularly the committee staff but also the other staff that support members in their activities are funded to do the job properly.

Part 2 is the ACT executive. There is a question about whether the amount of money appropriated provides for a fifth minister. One of my criticisms of the Chief Minister as part-time Health Minister is that we need to make sure there is an adequate number of ministers. When the ministry was put together, the indication was that a fifth minister would appear. Will that minister appear this year, and is there enough money in this budget to allow that to happen?

Part 3 looks at the Auditor-General. The Auditor-General's budget is prepared by the Auditor. It comes to the Public Accounts Committee. That committee looked at that budget and agreed that the request of the Auditor was fair and reasonable. Other members may have comments to offer on what the Auditor-General does and how he does it. Hopefully, this is enough funding for the Auditor to do his work adequately.

Part 4, the Chief Minister's Department, is an area which I believe clearly shows a lack of vision from this government, in particular in business. Businesses, particularly small businesses, are important as generators of revenue but particularly as generators of jobs.

We do not see any engagement by this government with the business community to continue the growth and the good work that have occurred over the last six or seven years. Growth in business is important to our future. Unless we are growing the private sector—unless the government is going to fund growth entirely through the public sector, which is unlikely—where will jobs come from in the future and will they be sustainable? It is that base that we need to get right. Through the Estimates Committee and this budget, I do not see an understanding of, or support for, the business community by this government.

Part 5 goes to ACT WorkCover. WorkCover appeared before the Estimates Committee. I believe there are probably adequate funds in this budget to allow WorkCover to do its important work, something which I know you are intensely interested in, Mr Speaker. There is yet to be a clarification of the role of ACT WorkCover and the commissioner as the guardian, the watchdog, the enforcer and the educator as well as the policy developer.

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Part 6 is the Department of Treasury. There were claims that Treasury is understaffed, is under-resourced and lacks technical expertise. If that is so, I hope it is addressed by this budget and through the coming year by the Treasurer's office. Treasury, at the heart of any budget, at the heart of any government, makes available the funds that allow us to get on with delivering the services the people of Canberra need.

Part 9, InTACT, is curious. Major upgrades have to be done. Can InTACT live within the budget that has been allocated to it? It is almost an immutable fact that major IT projects will blow out. I hope InTACT's budget gives it the capacity to deliver the electronic side of Canberra that is so essential, particularly access to government. InTACT gives the public service and us in this place a secure environment and an appropriate environment in which to conduct our business.

Part 10 is the Superannuation Unit. I saw something in the government's response to the Estimates Committee report about accepting the standard for the reporting of superannuation. That is important.

Part 11 is the Department of Health and Community Care. Under Health and Community Care are the fundamental services the government made such a noise about in the lead-up to the election, when they made the simplistic promise that a cash injection would fix everything. The performance of the part-time Health Minister in the Estimates Committee shows that he does not have a single idea on how to run the health portfolio.

We have made it quite clear we welcome the additional funding that has gone into health. That additional funding was available because we left the budget in surplus. The \$344 million operating loss that we were left made things incredibly difficult for us as a government in the first five years, and we did not have the luxury of large amounts of funds to dispense. But this government came into government with a budget in surplus.

Let me be quite clear. The additional funds that have gone into health are welcome. But those additional funds have seen reductions in service. One of the core commitments the Labor Party made was that they would get better value for our health dollar. I am happy to hear a different explanation, but better value means providing more with the same amount of money. We are not seeing that.

The fact that Calvary Hospital will close its public wards to elective surgery for 14 weeks is not more service or better value for money. The fact that the waiting list will blow out is not better value for money. Rationing of access to accident and emergency and the inability of the government to answer how they will deal with that are not better value for money. The fact that two aged respite day care services shut is not better value for money. And so it goes on. The 8 per cent cut in access to mental health services at Calvary Hospital is not better value for money.

There is a real cloud over the Health and Community Care budget. There is a real cloud over our part-time Health Minister and his ability to deliver just the current level of services, let alone new services and additional services, to the people of Canberra. Outpatient services will be reduced from something like 210,350 to 202,000.

Part 12 is the Department of Urban Services. I congratulate Minister Wood in his absence on at least getting the asset management money in the outyears into the budget. It was a decision our cabinet took in the lead-up to the election. It is good to see that the money was retained. Unless we protect the assets, the future will become bleaker and bleaker as the bills build up and become impossible to maintain.

However, there are two clouds over the Urban Services budget. One relates to pay parking. This was not flagged as a commitment or a promise in the lead-up to the election. The other relates to the future of Canberra Connect and the commitment of this government to providing online services to the people of Canberra.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, I do not want to stifle debate and I do not want to be accused of stifling debate, but you know that you are going to have the opportunity presented to you later on to go through these issues line by line.

MR SMYTH: I am aware of that. I am offering a broad overview of where the opposition sees some of the failings of the government. We will certainly be developing these themes in depth later on, Mr Speaker. I have only six or seven items to go.

The government did not alert people to the fact that they were going to bring in pay parking at Belconnen and Tuggeranong. This is a government that said it would be more honest, more open, more transparent. That went out the window with the first budget.

Canberra Connect is important. Everybody talks about delivering the e-city. From what I have been able to ascertain about what goes on around the world and from the interest that was shown in what we were doing here in Canberra, I believe Canberra Connect probably leads the world in giving its citizens the ability to contact their government electronically. I have some concerns over how that will progress in the future.

I would like to hear a commitment from the government to Canberra Connect and to its potential. It does not mean that you would take away the shopfronts or reduce face-to-face services. We know that they are important to many people. But I think there is a waning of support for Canberra Connect.

Part 13 concerns land. Mrs Dunne will no doubt follow this up quite closely. There is the whole issue of the cost/benefit analysis. One of the government responses to the Estimate Committee states that the government will be setting up a process on major projects to ensure that proper analysis is done. We certainly look forward to the cost/benefit analysis so that, unlike previous Labor governments which lost enormous amounts of taxpayers' money in land development, this government can do it differently. I am sure we will get clarification as to how they will do that. It has not been forthcoming yet, but it will be interesting.

Part 14 is ACT Forests. It is good to see that the work we did in setting forests up for a sustainable future will be continued. Forests are an important industry. A large number of jobs in the private sector depend on good management of forests by the public sector. I think that union in the future can provide sustainability and good outcomes for the people of the ACT.

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ACT Housing, part 15, is funded off line, but there will be commentary about the government's intentions with housing.

Part 16 looks at the Department of Justice and Community Safety. At last there is something in the government's response to the Estimates Committee about terms of reference. I question why they could not have been provided much earlier so the public could scrutinise what the government intends to do. They promised to be honest, open and more accountable. It seems they are dragged kicking and screaming to keep that promise.

Part 17 is the Department of Education and Community Services. The Chief Minister, in his press release, said:

Dozens of major education initiatives, which we support, could not be funded.

Seven million dollars is unallocated. I am sure Mr Pratt will take that up.

This does not seem to be a budget heading in any general direction. It does not seem to be a budget of vision. It certainly does not seem to be a budget that has a clear outline of where Canberra will be in three, six, nine or even 10, 20 or 30 years. It seems to be a budget that has been cobbled together and a budget without a clear theme. That might not be a good thing or a bad thing.

I notice the word "sustainability" scattered throughout the documents. It appears 12 times on one page, according to one source. Sustainability was questioned on several occasions in the Estimates Committee. It seems at some stages that the whole notion of an Office of Sustainability is being ignored by the government. When the question was: "Would the office be involved in such-and-such a proposal or such-and-such a project?" the answer was: "No, they would not."

If we are to have sustainability across government, across portfolios and across the ACT, we will be looking at how the Office of Sustainability will impact upon that commitment.

We believe that this budget does not address the concerns of the people of the ACT. It is quite clear that the government cannot meet their commitments in health. I believe a pall is cast over the education budget by the Chief Minister when he says, "We could not fund major initiatives."

How will they tie this together and make it work? On this side of the house, as we progress through the budget in detail in the next couple of days, we will explore exactly how all of this fits together, whether it fits together, whether it will deliver the things that were promised by the Labor Party in the lead-up to the election and whether the government is ready to go, even though they occupy the treasury bench.

The government needs direction and purpose. They need vision and commitment. Those opposite lack vision and have a very lazy approach to taking the government and the people of Canberra somewhere.

I will address matters in detail as we go through the budget part by part. This is a budget that lacks vision and a budget that proves that we have a lazy government.

MS TUCKER (11.03): I will speak to the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill now and speak later to the budget. This bill implements two revenue initiatives announced in the budget. The first relates to payroll tax and changes the definition of wages so that it includes lump sum payments for annual leave, unused long service leave and eligible termination payments. It also changes the value of fringe benefits associated with a wage.

I understand that these changes bring our payroll tax rules into line with other jurisdictions and will simplify payroll tax calculations for employers who have staff in different states. These changes will result in a 1.1 per cent increase in payroll tax liability for employers over the threshold, with total revenue for this initiative estimated to be \$2.3 million in 2002-03.

In principle, the Greens would prefer that payroll tax be reduced, as it is a tax on employment, and for taxes on resource consumption to be increased because of its environmental impact. However, this change is more in the nature of clarifying and making more comprehensive the definition of wages for the purposes of calculating payroll tax rather than a straight increase in the tax rate. Businesses with small payrolls will continue to be exempt from the tax.

The second revenue measure relates to land tax. The bill makes residential property owned by a company or trust liable for land tax from 1 October, even if not rented. Various exemptions are provided—for example, property held by a builder while residences are being constructed and property held in trust in relation to a deceased estate. This measure will bring in some half a million dollars this financial year.

I would regard this measure as closing a loophole in the act and making it more equitable. Companies and trusts which own residential property have not been subject to land tax in the past, whereas individual landlords have been. Yet they all own residential property from which they are deriving financial benefit.

I note, however, that the Treasurer said in his budget media statements that the government would consider deferment, exemptions or waivers for taxpayers with compelling circumstances that suffer any unintended or adverse impacts of the new revenue measures. I have already been approached by one constituent whose house is owned by a family trust that was set up as retirement income and who believes that he will be badly affected by the measure. I understand that this person has also contacted the Treasurer's office. I hope that Treasury will fully consider any cases like this that arise, to see whether or not assistance is warranted.

The bill also changes the land tax rates for non-residential property. The marginal land tax rate for non-residential properties valued above \$100,000 has been increased from 1.25 per cent to 1.4 per cent and for non-residential properties over \$200,000 from 1.5 per cent to 1.7 per cent. This measure is expected to bring in \$1.56 million this financial year.

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The Treasurer has said that this measure is designed to distribute the land tax burden more equitably between the business sector and households. I understand that these rates have not been changed since 1993, so it is probably time that they were reviewed. I do not have an objection to these changes, as they are in line with the Greens' view that land tax should be a progressive tax focused more on those landholders who can afford to pay.

Overall, I have no wish to deny the government the opportunity to raise additional revenue to fund the government services the community desires, provided the revenue is raised in an equitable and environmentally responsible manner. Generally, these measures fit these criteria, so I will be supporting this bill.

MR STEFANIAK (11.07): This is a nothing budget. It hardly stirred much interest in the community. I tend to agree with Mr Smyth, who called it a lazy budget that lacks vision.

I will deal with some good things to start with. It is a budget that is in surplus. Despite all the prophecies of doom and gloom and incorrect figures that have been bandied about by the government on where the opposition left the territory, it is a testimony to the hard work that was done over the last seven years and seven budgets to get the territory back in the black after the fairly difficult times it was in in the early and mid-1990s. The reason for the surplus squarely rests with the efforts of previous Liberal governments, which did a very good job in getting the territory back into the black and putting us in the very healthy situation we are in today—a situation this current government inherited and I hope does not stuff up.

There are a couple of worrying signs. There is a lack of delivering on promises in some areas. That is of concern. I will deal with a few of those in more detail when we come to the detail stage.

There are some worrying signs about increases in taxes. The increases in payroll tax and land tax amount to about \$10 million. I do not agree with a lot of what Ms Tucker says, but I think she was quite right in describing payroll tax as a tax on employment. I can remember sitting through cabinet meetings during our time when we constantly raised the threshold to enable businesses to employ more people. That is a good thing for business. It helps generate business. It creates more employment, and it helps those people who otherwise would not be able to get a job. That has a concertina effect on other businesses.

You need to be very careful with land tax. All states have it and we have it. There have been increases in land tax. I think Mr Humphries will be having more to say, but if you make too many imposts you turn investors off. The territory cannot afford to do that. Taxes and incentives influence whether people come here to set up businesses, which of course employ people. We have seen how sensibly targeted measures and restrictions on overtaxing, even in the difficult times in the late 1990s in getting the budget back into surplus, can generate employment and growth.

Overtaxing and dampening incentives for business to operate and employ more people—and land tax is just as important as payroll tax—are very real problems. They have been a problem over many decades with various Labor governments. Whilst since the 1980s

some have certainly improved their act and come to realise that business is not an enemy but creates jobs, there is still an inclination to overtax and effectively kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. That is something I do not want to see happen. There are some indications that there is a tendency in this budget to start down that track.

I would caution the government against that, especially in planning. We have a garden city. We love the nature of Canberra, but there has to be development. It has to be sensible, sure, but we need development. We need to continue to grow and to move on, not take steps that dampen investment in this town. When that happens the jobless rates rise, we go backwards and we have all sorts of problems.

A number of promises have not been kept. I can recall going around to various meetings last year when I was education minister. We made promises; the Labor Party made promises. Those most aggrieved at promises not being kept are the independent schools.

We have a diverse education system. About 37 or 38 per cent of schools are in the independent, non-government sector. We also have an excellent government sector. The needier schools raised some excellent points. Certainly the Catholic schools need extra assistance. I can vouch for that, having gone to virtually all our schools in both sectors during the time I was minister. It struck me that in information technology the Catholic sector was lagging behind the government sector. Quite often you would see in a Catholic primary school about a third of the number of computers in a government primary school with the same number of pupils. Promises were made by the government when it was in opposition, but that sector has received very little.

I recall reading in the *Catholic Voice* that comes to my office that there was only a 5 per cent increase to the Catholic system, which supplies about 28 per cent of students. They very aggrieved as a result of broken promises. The government has to be a government for all education, not just one group over the other. That is accepted throughout Australia. There are some worrying signs and some things the government might need to do next time round to fix that up.

I am not going to delve into my specific portfolio areas. I will leave that to the detail stage. I was concerned to see some slowdown and some changes in rejuvenation of local shopping centres. There are some issues in relation to the Jamieson shopping centre which some of the people working there have problems with.

I was very concerned to see money we put in the budget for construction of a skateboard park at Charnwood has been taken out. I asked one or two questions on that and was told by the Treasurer or the Chief Minister that it would have been nice but the government had other priorities. I think that is very much a priority.

Mr Corbell has made much of his \$556,000 scheme over four years, starting with \$151,000 this year, for a youth outreach service. I am pleased to see that service. It builds on work we started, emanating from Ginninderra District High School. Although it is laudable, it is not going to reach everyone, only some people.

There was money for the skateboard park. That would have benefited up to 6,000 young people. Another thing was changed. We had money for some tennis courts. It was just a matter of finding a place for them, which we did about the time of the election.

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They were to be at Charnwood also. They were to be open to the public free. That changed to a dollar-for-dollar arrangement under the new policy of the current sports minister.

Mr Corbell: Where was that in the last budget?

MR STEFANIAK: One of them was in the budget. That was the skateboard park, which would have benefited up to 6,000 young people. This government made a lot about extra facilities throughout Canberra and a lot about extra facilities in Belconnen. Yet when they get their hands on the purse strings they do not deliver. That is shameful. It is hypocritical.

Mr Corbell: Where was your tennis court money?

MR STEFANIAK: It is all very well for those opposite to try to interject or try to talk me down. One member trying to talk me down was very keen to see a dragway built. He was going to do that. There is no money for that. Has he really annoyed a lot of people about that. In opposition, Mr Corbell was one of the great proponents of a dragway. What did he do in cabinet? He said, "There is not enough money to go around." Promises were made. I have highlighted a few: one, a skateboard park; two, education; three, a dragway. A lot of people who had a lot of expectations from this government have been very disappointed. It is very much a budget that has failed to deliver and has failed to live up to the hopes a lot of people had for the government. That is a real worry.

I am not going to deal with some of the other issues. They can be done in the detail stage. The budget has holes in it. It is a lazy budget. There is not very much vision in this budget. There are some worrying signs in some of the directions it takes. There are some equally and possibly more worrying signs about the contempt in which the government has held certain sections of the community it promised to help but has not delivered for in this budget. People are going to be watching very carefully what this government does next time, because quite a few people are disappointed as a result of this budget.

MRS DUNNE (11.18): Mr Speaker, I will range over the whole of the budget in making some comments, especially in relation to the minister's response to the Select Committee on Estimates. My colleague the Deputy Leader of the Opposition talked about direction and purpose, vision and commitment and how they are lacking in this government.

And I would add to that "openness". We heard a lot—almost a mantra, almost a chanting—all through the pre-election period: "We will be open, honest, accountable, measured"—all of these words. But, when it comes to facts, this is a government that knows nothing about being open and honest with its electors. This is a government that knows a great deal about how to hedge its bets and qualify what it has to say. So it is true in many ways that, when you think that Mr Corbell for instance has said something emphatic, when you go back and actually read his words, they are full of weasel words, prevarication and qualification. So in fact he says nothing. This is a government that is incapable of being open.

I would just like to touch on some of the issues. Some have been touched on by Mr Smyth, but I would like to emphasise it. The committee system in this place is one of the most important aspects of what we do here, because it is in the committee system that

we get down to looking at the issues—stripping away the partisan approaches and looking at the issues fair and square without all the faldral; getting in touch with the people. But in this place there are insufficient resources to do this, and I am concerned at the level of budgeting for the Legislative Assembly Secretariat.

I will take the example of my own committee, the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment. It is strapped for resources and has its timetable loaded down, many times with doing the government's bidding. As you have seen in the last little while, this committee has brought down four reports on draft variations, and it has another four, off the top of my head, that have to be resolved. All of these are complex and we know that in the pipeline there are many more draft variations to come before our committee, and that is essentially doing the bidding of the government.

There is no opportunity, given the time and the resources of this place, to look at other issues. It is difficult for the committee to find the resources to look at the reference given to it by this place on sustainable energy or the review of the Planning and Land Bill. We have had no opportunity, and look unlikely to have any opportunity, to ever look at transport issues and sustainability because all we do is draft variations, which is the bidding of this government. This does not allow for an open discussion of issues that vitally affect the people of the ACT.

There is no scope for openness in this place. And when we're talking about openness and we look at the budget papers, which were a shambles in themselves—we had three versions, and when we finally got the last version the page numbering was all over the place—what do we see? The output measures are being slowly whittled away—well, actually they are not being slowly whittled away; they are actually being decimated by this government, so that there is a decreasing number of meaningful output measures.

What do we find in response to a straightforward and considered recommendation of the committee that we have meaningful performance measures that allow for comparison over time, which are consistent and take account of the triple bottom line? Well, we have nearly three-quarters of a page in response from the minister, from the government, to the Estimates Committee report that boils down to "No, we're not going to do it". And, of course, with everything with this government, they cannot be straightforward and say no; they have to hedge it about, for paragraph after paragraph, with weasel words that maybe give you the impression that they might be saying something, but when you analyse it, it amounts to a big, fat no.

Again, this is a government that is afraid to be open, afraid to address the electors, and afraid to address the people of Canberra and tell them what it is doing. The same can be said when we made a submission about cost/benefit analysis. What did it say? It said, "A major project analysis section has been created in Treasury to work with agencies to improve the quality of financial and economic information provided to the government." But what does that say? Well, it is probably saying no, but we can't really tell. And the question that I ask is: will the cost/benefit analysis that you were proposing to do through the major projects analysis section touch on Mr Corbell's ill-conceived plan to socialise land development in this town?

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Mr Corbell: Look at the response to the recommendation, Mrs Dunne—we are going to do an independent cost/benefit analysis. We've agreed with your recommendation, Mrs Dunne. So why don't you just go back and read the Estimates Committee response before you shoot your mouth off?

MRS DUNNE: Okay, why can't you just say "Agreed"? If you really mean that you're going to do it, just say "Agreed". Constantly in this place there are recommendations of substantial import from this Estimates Committee to which you have these weasel words "Well, we'd like to do it, but it's really very difficult".

I will go to recommendation 10, where the committee recommended, "Institute a code of conduct for ministers." This was done in the first three months of the previous government. And, with nine months and waiting, when we ask for it to be done by the first sitting day in 2003, we hear, "There are so many things that we have to do and there might be a few other problems that emerge along the way, and we'll try really hard, we really, really will," but in fact what it means is you won't do it.

This is a government that is not prepared to be honest. This is a government that is not prepared to be open. And how will it deal with conflicts of interest?

Mr Corbell: I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker.

MRS DUNNE: It will not be able to deal with conflicts of interest in an open way.

MR SPEAKER: There is a point of order. Mrs Dunne, resume your seat.

Mr Corbell: I think that to suggest the government is not prepared to be honest is unparliamentary, and I would ask Mrs Dunne to withdraw the comment.

MR SPEAKER: Well, it's drawing the line—there is a collective dishonesty—and I think that's getting pretty close to the line, Mrs Dunne.

Mrs Dunne: Well, if the members of the government are offended, I withdraw it.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs Dunne.

Mr Corbell: Graceful as always, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Perhaps I am learning from the Corbell school of withdrawing and apologising. While we are on this subject of openness, I would like to touch briefly on just a couple of issues—things that are close to my heart. In this place last week, we had a reference of the Planning and Land Bill to the Planning and Environment Committee. And something that flows from that is the Estimates Committee's recommendation 26 that talks about the associated consequential amendments that need to be completed so that the Planning and Land Bill can be considered, at length.

At the moment we have an off-the-shelf piece of legislation and the devil is in the detail. When we have asked for the consequential amendments to be made ready and available so they can be scrutinised, what we get is that they will be tabled prior to debate. There is a little mental reservation there that says that this minister doesn't actually want to see

the impact that the Planning and Land Bill will have on existing legislation and does not want it scrutinised by the committee.

And again, when we have asked for openness and accountability on the subject of Gungahlin Drive, what do we get? "It's all there. If you look hard enough you'll possibly find it." What we have is a minister who will not tell the people of Gungahlin what is happening with a road that is vital to their transportation links. A wit the other day, I think on Radio 2CN, likened this minister to Michelangelo and the people of Gungahlin to Sixtus II, about the Sistine Chapel. The minister doesn't paint as well as Michelangelo, but the question is: "When will you be finished, Minister? When will you be finished and when will you be open with the people of Gungahlin and tell them when their road will be finished?"

Again, on 2CN the other day I almost thought that he made a commitment. He did actually mention a date—1 July 2003—as a commencement date but, when you actually looked at what he said, basically what he said was: "It was possible, it was our aim that in the best of all possible worlds that's the time we'd really like to get started." Again, these are weasel words that amount to nothing. So when this minister says, "When did I actually make that commitment,?", it's a very good question because he actually never makes a commitment that you could ever tie him down to. This is the way this government goes. It says it wants to be honest and open and accountable, but there is no accountability in this place and I suspect the people of this territory will soon realise that there is very little honesty.

Mr Corbell: I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. Again Mrs Dunne is suggesting that the government is dishonest. It is unparliamentary and she should withdraw it.

MR SPEAKER: We've been across that ground, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Mr Speaker, I made the point that the people of Canberra might realise they are not being honest. I did not say that they were not being honest.

MR CORBELL (Minister for Education, Youth and Family Services, Minister for Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations) (11.29): Mr Speaker, I would like to respond most generally to the government's response to the Select Committee on Estimates. In particular, I would like to address some of the issues that Mrs Dunne raised in her speech, which was highly emotionally charged but seriously lacking in substance.

Mrs Dunne is quick to make allegations, accuse and point the finger at this government for being, in her words, not accountable, not open and not forward on issues. But when you actually listen to her speech, where is the evidence? Where is the substantive argument that points this out, reinforces or indeed supports in any way Mrs Dunne's argument? It simply isn't there.

Mrs Dunne started her speech by saying that the Planning and Environment Committee in dealing with draft variations, was simply doing the bidding of the government. I don't know whether Mrs Dunne has actually looked at the legislation that gives the committee which she chairs the power to look at draft variations, but it's actually a statutory requirement of the land act that that committee looks at draft variations.

Of course, Mrs Dunne was a central player in the last government, which brought us the Bruce Stadium fiasco, Hall/Kinlyside, the V8 supercar race, the hospital implosion and so on. She was the key player in the Office of the Environment, with the planning minister, Deputy Chief Minister and Chief Minister. And you would have thought that, in all that time, when she was senior adviser to the planning minister, if she had serious concerns about the Planning and Environment Committee not having all its time wasted in dealing with draft variations, she might have done something about it. But did she? No, she didn't. Did she get her minister to deal with that? Did she seek to amend the legislation? Did she get her minister to raise the issue? Did she get her minister to provide extra resources for the previous planning committee? No, she did none of these things.

She now stands up and says, "Oh, I'm really annoyed and frustrated because I'm just doing the government's bidding." Well, first of all, if she wants to come into this place and seek to amend the land act to remove the requirement for the planning committee to look at a draft variations, I would be very interested in that debate.

Secondly, if Mrs Dunne is saying that she doesn't want Assembly committees to be involved with looking at draft variations, we will be very interested in hearing her arguments on that as well. This government actually believes that it is very appropriate that an Assembly committee oversight changes to the Territory Plan. These are the highest order changes that can be made in relation to planning policy and they require a high level of detail and scrutiny. Mrs Dunne comes in here and says, "Oh, we're so busy doing the bidding of the government." Well, you've got options, Mrs Dunne. But you didn't do anything about it the last seven years and I doubt you'll do anything in the next three years.

Mrs Dunne also said in her comments that she was concerned the government was not being open and accountable in relation to the Planning and Land Bill. If we are being so unwilling to be honest and open, why did we agree to refer it to her committee for inquiry? Why did we do that, Mrs Dunne?

Mrs Dunne: Because you had to.

MR CORBELL: Well, no, we could have voted against it, but we didn't. We could have made an argument about, but I actually stood up in this place and said the government supports the proposal. That doesn't sound like a government which afraid of scrutiny and of having its issues looked at in a reasonable way and in a reasonable time frame.

Mrs Dunne also says that the government is not prepared to have any scrutiny of these consequential amendments to the planning and land act. I invite Mrs Dunne to go back and look at this *Hansard* from the previous sitting week when we referred the Planning and Land Bill to the committee for inquiry and report. I stood up then—perhaps Mrs Dunne is a little hard of hearing—and I said very clearly that the government would be tabling the legislation in the September sittings, and that at that time I would be moving to refer the consequential amendments to the committee for inquiry and report. So where is Mrs Dunne's argument? Once again, she is up there, shrew like, pointing the finger and saying, "You're not honest, you're not accountable." But where is the evidence to back up her argument? It simply isn't there.

Mrs Dunne also made some comments about land development. She said that the government is not interested in having a detailed scrutiny and independent assessment of its proposal in relation to land development. Mrs Dunne, of course, pointed out that the government had agreed that there would be appropriate practices put in place for a detailed cost/benefit analysis. That has been outlined by the Treasurer in his response. I must say that that is far more outstanding than anything you lot ever did when you were in government. There was no independent cost/benefit analysis for the V8 supercar race, Bruce Stadium, Hall/Kinlyside fiasco—and the list goes on. But this government has done it—within the first year of its first term. What Mrs Dunne did not point out was the government's response to recommendation 29 of the Estimates Committee, which says:

The Committee recommends that the business plan and financial modelling underpinning the new land development agency proposed by the ACT Government be subject to independent assessment, the results of which are published.

What was the government's response? "Agreed".

Mrs Dunne: But when?

MR CORBELL: Mrs Dunne says, "But when?" The response continues:

The financial modelling, including any additional information that supports the proposed land development system, will be subject to independent assessment. This advice will be made available to members of the Assembly.

Mrs Dunne: When?

MR CORBELL: When it's completed, Mrs Dunne. So for Mrs Dunne to stand up in this place and say the government is not open, is not accountable and is not prepared to have its issues dealt with by pure Assembly scrutiny is simply false.

At every opportunity the government has provided briefings to members of the Assembly on its processes in relation to the planning and land reforms it has sought to put in place in this budget. I, as minister, sat through three separate recalls before the Estimates Committee, answering questions on a range of issues relating to my portfolio responsibilities. I was very happy to do that. I was very happy to provide information as responsibly as I could, and that is what I did. My office has provided very detailed briefings, in particular on the costs surrounding land development.

Indeed, the government has provided a very comprehensive range of information in relation to many other issues raised in the Estimates Committee report. And, when you look at this government's response to this Estimates Committee report, you see that it is one which has been dealt with seriously, and where the overwhelming majority of recommendations have been agreed to.

That is the sign of a government which is serious about Assembly scrutiny and which is prepared to respond wherever the Assembly committee has made a sensible and reasonable request. It is not the sign of a government such as the one Mrs Dunne and others on the other side of the house would like to portray. If they want to make that portrayal, they have to at least back it up with some substantive evidence, rather than just point the finger and leave the detail and substance sadly lacking.

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MR HUMPHRIES (Leader of the Opposition) (11.39): I would like to make some general comments about a number of aspects of the three matters which are being cognately debated today. First of all, I thank the government for having provided a fairly speedy response to the report of the Estimates Committee. Having been in that position myself before, I know it is not always easy to cobble together meaningful responses in such a short space of time, but the government has done its best to do that.

We confess to being surprised at the number of matters that it appears to have agreed to take up. That is a positive sign, and I hope that we will be able to progress those things in the course of the next 12 months as we work on an improved budget process. We had that debate last week about how we could improve the budget process and I hope that this is just the start of that.

I do express some concern about the number of responses in the committee report which appear not to be particularly helpful and where a shorter “Agreed” or “Not agreed” would have been a little more useful in working out what the government’s position is. For example, on recommendation 8, relating to future technical adjustments being itemised separately from savings, I am not really sure whether the government proposes to do that or it does not. Perhaps the Treasurer can enlighten us about that.

Similarly, with recommendation 18, which relates to treatment of superannuation investments in the territory’s accounts, the committee made a quite express recommendation about aligning practice with the Auditor-General’s recommendations and with prevailing accounting standards. I think the government is saying that it accepts that that is the way it has to go, but that is not particularly clear.

Mr Quinlan: Grudgingly.

MR HUMPHRIES: Grudgingly, okay. Well, that’s one that’s been cleared up. There are a few others that I think could do with a bit more precision in the answer, and I look forward to that being sorted out as we proceed with the debate about the rest of the legislation.

I will reserve my remarks about the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill until a bit later on today. I want to just make a general comment at this stage about the Appropriation Bill, as we are dealing with all three cognately as I understand it. There has been some speculation in the media about what the intention of the Liberal Party is with respect to the Appropriation Bill. I recall seeing a headline in the newspaper which suggested that the Chief Minister was saying that the Liberals intend to oppose the budget.

I think at this point a little bit of history is appropriate about the way in which budgets have been handled in this house. The pattern of previous years in this place has always been that the Liberal Party in opposition has taken the view that the government’s budget is the government’s own work—the opposition reserves the right to criticise, question, make suggestions about changes and point out deficiencies in that budget, but accepts at the end of the day that the traditional view about the budget as a whole is the appropriate view in a situation like this where governments operate almost invariably in a minority status. And that view is that to reject the government’s budget is to reject the government itself and to effectively move no confidence in that government.

My colleagues and I have had plenty to say in the last few months about the government's performance, and have had many criticisms to level. Any issues that we feel have been a dishonouring of the government's election promises I detailed in my budget response on 27 June. I detailed a large number of those, and many other things that I would say represent some failure of performance on the part of the government. But I don't believe that any of that amounts to mistakes egregious enough to warrant the government's removal.

It is the opposition's view that the government ought to be able to live with its budget. In fact, I look forward to a number of features of this budget being put into operation and the community as a whole and the opposition in particular being able to see just how well or how poorly these decisions actually operate on the ground.

The Liberal opposition will not be blocking the budget. It will be, if it's required to, supporting the budget on any division taken on that subject. Of course, by "the budget" I mean the Appropriation Bill. The Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill, I will say very broadly, the opposition does not support and will oppose. I will give more detail of the party's position on that shortly, but essentially we are concerned about three matters.

Firstly, the increases in payroll tax and land rent amount to a tax on employment and on investment in the territory. To increase the payroll tax take is to make it more difficult, however marginally, for employers to employ. This opposition has said consistently for the last nine to 12 months that government must take a more proactive approach towards the creation of jobs if we are to avoid the territory losing its primacy in the Australian community as a high employment jurisdiction; that is, much effort must be made on the part of government to ensure that new ways are found of developing employment options.

To increase the take on payroll tax, whatever pretext might be put forward, is to make it harder to employ. May I say, it comes as a particularly galling decision on the part of the government, after five or six years in which the payroll tax impact on employers in the territory was consistently reduced, either by a reduction in the rate of payroll tax or a raising of the threshold in payroll tax. The opposition would be mildly discomfited, but not hysterical, if the government were to merely freeze the take it makes on payroll tax.

But, as the budget papers clearly show, it is increasing its take on payroll tax to the tune of something like \$2.3 million. I think that is the most unfortunate, most regrettable decision in the context of a community which faces some uncertainty on the employment front in future years.

The second concern that the opposition has is that the government very clearly stated to the ACT community before the ACT election of last year that it would be able to afford its promises without increasing the tax take. Indeed, it said that it would be a low-taxing government. A decision to increase the tax take—not just in bald terms, or the number of dollars collected, but in real terms—in an area such as payroll tax, by virtue of conscious decisions made by the government to raise the level of taxation on individuals or corporations in those areas, is something that the community would regard, I think with justification, as a breach of promise. And the opposition in particular feels that the government should be held to account for promises of that kind.

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We are also concerned by the degree of retrospectivity which is applied in this particular bill to effect payroll tax arrangements made since 1 July this year. For something like the last two months, employers in the territory will be operating in an arrangement where they have to assume, but don't know for sure, that particular legislation will come into force and will change the basis on which they make arrangements to pay payroll tax. I think that is not appropriate, particularly in matters like this. Certainty for employers—certainty for business—is a critically important factor and should not be gainsaid.

I come back to the Appropriation Bill for a moment. It is true that the opposition will support the Appropriation Bill. And it is true that this year the opposition will support the Appropriation Bill unamended. But it is also, I think, necessary to put on the record that the opposition has debated long and hard whether in future the question of amendments to a budget should be ruled out entirely. Although it is not our intention to amend this year's budget, we do believe it is appropriate to put on the public record our view that the previous convention—however fragile, however mauled it might have been from time to time—that the budget of the day was either rejected or accepted but not amended has been eliminated by events of recent years.

Members will recall that, in 2000, the budget for 2000-01 as presented was indeed rejected by the Assembly, not on the part of a majority of members of this place as a way of changing the government—as far as I could tell that was not the intention in rejecting it. Rather, it was done, on the part of some members at least, as a way of being able to require the government to change the budget. And indeed the government did change the budget and the budget was subsequently accepted.

The following year—that is, last year's budget, 2001-02—members will recall that, although the budget was passed as presented, it was subject to a number of motions to amend it on the part of the Labor opposition, using the argument, as I recall, that the free school bus scheme was inappropriate and that money proposed to be spent there should be spent elsewhere within the budget. At the time the then government put on the record that to signal the willingness on the part of the opposition to move amendments of that kind, and to actually move those amendments, was a change in the landscape and that, for my part, I would not allow the Liberal Party to be put in the position where it would guarantee Labor budgets unamended but would face and have to wear from time to time Liberal budgets being amended because the same restraint was not exercised on the Labor side of the chamber.

However, at this time the opposition does not believe that the new government's budget is seriously deficient enough to warrant amendment, and it therefore does not propose to move any amendments or to support any amendments this year. But I do very clearly give notice of the fact that we reserve the right to move such amendments in future years.

The budget makes a number of important steps—and I briefly want to touch on this before sitting down—which I do not believe are sufficiently transparent, for the Assembly in particular but the community in general, to understand properly. In particular, the proposals for what we have called the socialisation of land development in the territory are proposals which the Estimates Committee spent a very large amount of time attempting to understand, with only limited success. This was partly because the

documentation was opaque and partly because the processes did not appear to be fully thought out or articulated from the government's point of view.

Although the members of this place would take a different view in principle about whether socialisation of land development is a good thing, there is absolutely no question about the fact that there needs to be extreme transparency about this process in order that the proper safeguards and the proper testing of propositions can be conducted by this Assembly. I do not believe—and I think it is fair to say that the Estimates Committee did not believe—that there was as much information on the table about this process as there ought to be at this stage.

There are other areas of the budget which we believe need further elucidation, but in part that is a product of the fact that the government is conducting a large number of reviews and answers apparently are not available at this stage. I think this is particularly so in the case of education and the expenditure of additional money there. I will come back to further comments later in the debate, but those are my general comments about those three matters before the house at the moment.

MR PRATT (11.54): Mr Speaker, I rise to echo the concerns expressed by my colleagues. Yes, this may be an adequate budget and therefore one that we have a duty to support. However, I have a number of concerns, because it is a budget which is lazy and visionless. I now wish to give an overview regarding my concerns. I will list those concerns, starting with the premature dropping of the V8 race.

There are, and there would have been, sufficient funds to allow this rather new concept of an event to continue. It has not been allowed the time necessary to prove itself. I believe the government has taken the lazy and easy way out by dropping it like a hot potato. I also observe the broken promises made by the government on the dragway.

Mr Quinlan: Articulate that promise, Mr Pratt!

MR PRATT: I will in good time, Mr Quinlan. I will show you how it can be done.

Mr Speaker, There was the dropping of the dragway, which left the motor sport community in uproar. I also point to the casual waving-away of the unimportant 2,000 car parking spaces at Canberra Stadium as part of the GDE plan.

Within the subject area of workplace relations, I point to the move to reduce the number of EBAs introduced as part of the previous government's initiatives, in the so-called name of efficiency. This lazily degrades fairness and will be a detriment to productivity. This is only because it is easier to succumb to union pressure rather than seek to build on initiatives taken by the previous government to improve the territory's productivity and perhaps broaden fairness in the way the government treats its employees.

I point to the terrible inequity we have seen in the new \$20 million funding allocation to schools, with only 5 per cent of that going to non-government schools. I will speak about that in more detail later. I refer to the expenditure of funds on laptop computers. This is an initiative on which I congratulate the government. However, it is an initiative which is unsupportable.

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Mr Speaker, I go on and point to the poor strategic decisions taken on the Gungahlin Drive extension western route, which Mrs Dunne talked about in some detail in this place earlier this morning. To that, I would add the concern the community will have about the dreadful impact of that decision on the future of the AIS. Through a lazy approach to determining electoral support matters, we have seen a decision taken which has placed the government on a collision course with federal authorities regarding the future of the AIS.

I also point to the lazy and badly-thought-through decision to introduce paid parking in the territory, especially in Tuggeranong, and the unjustified impacts this decision will have on Tuggeranong College. We have yet to see what the government intends to do about the parking which will be required there to adequately cover the parking requirements of students and instructors.

Mr Speaker, I also point to the wasteful expenditure in education of about \$450,000 on yet another raft of inquiries. That \$450,000 may have been better spent in some of the areas where education is under pressure.

I congratulate the government for increasing funding on children-at-risk programs. That is a welcome initiative. However, that increased funding has not been sufficient to get to the heart of the problems relative to the pressures facing schools and colleges. At a time when our schools and colleges are under increasing pressure, we do not see specific funding details.

Possibly, there will be details. I look forward to the minister responding later—perhaps on Thursday. I challenge him to give chapter and verse as to the initiatives he will undertake in respect of increased drugs education, more programs for children with disabilities and more comprehensive programs dealing with disruptive children and children at risk. In my view, this issue is the single point of greatest pressure on our schools.

I see few initiatives undertaken within the education department to reallocate expenditure from areas which could perhaps be run more efficiently, with the freeing-up of funding which might be better used in some of these harder hit areas. I do not see any of the tougher initiatives which a responsible government should take to free up resources. In my view, this reflects laziness—it reflects an avoidance of taking on the tough issues.

Mr Speaker, I look forward to dealing with these issues in more detail later.

MS DUNDAS (12.00): Mr Speaker, I am well aware that I am the first representative of the Australian Democrats in this chamber—since self-government. Therefore, every day is not only a first for me, but also a first for my party, as this is our first ACT budget.

The Australian Democrats began 25 years ago. The events leading to the sacking of Prime Minister Whitlam led to the establishment of our party. With that in mind, the Australian Democrats have never blocked a budget. There are many examples of the Democrats negotiating with executive governments to make budgets better, but we have never blocked supply. So, rest assured that the Democrats in the ACT will not work to block supply. Nevertheless, that does not mean we will not scrutinise the budget and the budget process. We will work, both in this place and with the community, to make all

budgets better. This may require the moving of amendments during in-detail debates of a future appropriation bill, or working with the government during the budget process.

My intention is to speak generally about the budget and the budget process. Then, during the debate of the schedule later, I will spend some time scrutinising and offering suggestions on how much better the budget could have been with a little more imagination and a little more investment in the people of Canberra.

As has been said, this is a budget of narrow vision, from a bland government. They have been unwilling to take any risks to invest in people, or make any large-scale changes to the budget brought down over 12 months ago by the previous government. In fact, the only noticeable difference unearthed during the estimates process was the creation of the new department, when all the figures were changed around. There were no real changes in the outlook.

This budget still contains record high spending on capital works projects which not even the minister expects to be built. The few revenue measures are small and on the fringe. As I have said before, each minister has funded his or her pet project. The government, in its attempt to break even and present a nice set of numbers, has done so at the expense of decent levels of community services and affordable housing.

What this government must realise is that, last October, the people of Canberra went to the polls and transformed the makeup of this Assembly. We had a change of government, an increase in female members and—just as importantly—Canberrans elected a socially progressive crossbench.

The effect of these changes was most recently seen last Wednesday, during the debate around reproductive rights and freedoms. This government must look to the future and ask itself what the legacy of this fifth Assembly will be. Will it be the first Assembly to make the alleviation of poverty its primary aim? Will we be the ones who make housing more affordable for all members of the Canberra community? Will we be the first to make crime prevention and diversionary programs a priority and perhaps a solution to the need for a prison?

Perhaps the Fifth Assembly under the Labor government will be remembered for its reviews, such as investigations into education, the Kippax library, a bill of rights, or the need for school counsellors. We have not been forced to make the hard decisions with this budget—we have merely deferred them.

There is little in this budget for the environment—that is, if you do not assume that the use of the term “sustainability” is doing something real for the environment. It should be noted that we are allocating \$2.4 million to dig a hole to put waste in and not spending any extra money on kerbside recycling or container deposit legislation.

However, the opposition should not be too harsh on this budget because, every time you call it a budget of no vision, I am reminded that this budget is one which implements many of the past government’s commitments and only a handful of Labor election promises. It is my belief that this could have been very different. The ALP has now been in government for almost a year. They had time to develop a better budget.

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This government should not expect praise for a budget which effectively maintains the status quo and perpetuates the mistakes of the past. This government will need to do more than just tinker at the edges if it is really serious about shaping Canberra's future and building a legacy of which we can all be proud.

As this is a cognate debate, I now turn to the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill. I have been informed that the proposed changes to payroll tax arrangements in this bill make it easier for businesses to calculate their payroll tax obligations, and that the changes are not expected to significantly increase the tax rate. The Democrats generally oppose payroll taxes, as they discourage businesses from engaging staff. We prefer progressive income taxes, and taxes on non-labour inputs to businesses. However, because payroll taxes in the ACT affect only the largest of businesses, and because the ACT is already so reliant upon this revenue, I am prepared to support the changes to the current payroll tax scheme.

The ACT has a broader land tax system than most, if not all, other states and territories. This, presumably, acts as a disincentive for potential property investors who are aware of the tax, and may also account for slightly increased rents in Canberra. However, overall it is fair to characterise the ACT land tax as a Robin Hood tax which targets those who are better off. I would be more comfortable with the land tax changes if we could see that the additional revenue was going to assist in the affordable housing area but, unfortunately at this point, we cannot. Nevertheless, I am generally supportive of the ACT government securing a revenue base that enables us to deliver adequate social services.

I am astonished that the government did not capture properties held by companies in trust when the land tax legislation was first introduced. This change closes a loophole which previously existed in the law regarding family trusts. I understand it is usually wealthy families who set up these trusts—generally with the aim of minimising tax. The Democrats have always supported a tax on family trusts. We were incredibly disappointed when, at a federal level, the Howard government reneged on its commitment to tax these trusts.

A few older people currently living in expensive homes which have been put into family trusts may now be forced to sell their houses because they cannot afford the land tax. I have sympathy for these people. However, many more people are forced to sell their homes each year under other laws, and it does not appear that the government intends to change these laws.

Even though we know gambling addictions are common in our community, we allow licensed venues to operate poker machines, and many people lose their family homes due to these machines. We collect a large amount of tax from these gambling addicts.

I also have sympathy for people who own high-value properties who need long-term nursing care and are forced to sell their properties to pay for this vital service.

The fact is that tax revenue must be raised. Taxes always impact directly on people's lives. We do not appear to be considering creating exemptions from all taxes on the grounds of hardship, although perhaps we should. In this light, the compassionate exemption provided by this Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill is broader than most.

In summary, I am willing to face up to the fact that, without increasing our revenue base, we will not be able to provide the social services we so desperately need. The ACT government has relatively few options for revenue raising, and this bill covers two of a handful of those options. Invariably, the people who are hit with the new taxes will be unhappy. However, I am satisfied that the people who are affected by this bill can afford to pay these taxes to support those who cannot. I therefore give the bill my support.

Mr Speaker, I now move on to the government's response to the estimates report. This response raises concerns about the government's stated commitment to Westminster principles, as well as its commitment to accountability and openness. It is unfortunate that this government feels it is okay to hide away information and not keep us—the Assembly and the community—informed as part of the decision-making processes. I suggest real consultation might result in a better outcome for all.

The prison and remand centre, and economic management, are two cases in point. I refer to recommendation 45 from the Estimates Committee. It says:

The Committee recommends that the Government table in the ACT Legislative Assembly, as soon as possible, the list of sites considered for the ACT Prison.

The government's response that it is yet to identify a preferred site for the correctional facility, and that a public announcement will be made when a preferred site is selected, misses the point. We did not ask for the press release or the final answer. We want to know what is being considered. What are the options on the table for this government and this community for remand and prison sites? It appears we will just have to wait until we see a press release. Again we are seeing policy through the media, with little real consideration for the community and this Assembly.

The government will no doubt respond to my speech this morning using such words as “executive government”, “commercial-in-confidence” and “good business practice”. To a certain extent, those terms may be warranted, but accountability and openness must be a priority for any government, if we are truly working towards governing with the best long-term interests of our community at heart.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Humphries, would you like to raise a point?

MR HUMPHRIES (Leader of the Opposition): We are debating three matters cognately and I wanted to make some further comments on the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill. I seek leave to do that, Mr Speaker.

Leave granted.

MR HUMPHRIES: I gather we are going to vote on this before we go on to debate the detail of the appropriation bill. If that is the way we are going to work on it, I will make a few comments, to adumbrate what I said before about the deficiencies the opposition identifies with this bill.

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Mr Speaker, on the face of it, the proposal to align what is included, for the purposes of definition, in the payroll of a company, or an employer, with the practices of other states is a good thing. That much of these measures the opposition would not oppose. It would certainly be of assistance to businesses operating across the border to have the convenience of using the same software packages in their operations to deal with payroll payments in both the ACT and, say, New South Wales.

The concern about this legislation is that these changes have been accompanied by a clear decision to increase the amount of payroll tax collected. The effect of that, as I have said, is to increase the impact on employers and, ultimately, to reduce their capacity to employ people. The payroll tax increase is \$2.2 million in this financial year, and it will rise to \$2.326 million in 2005-06. I am a little curious, because the increase from this financial year to 2005-06 is much less than the rate of inflation.

Mr Quinlan: It is because companies are managing their payroll taxes, Gary.

MR HUMPHRIES: Perhaps that is the point I want to make, Mr Quinlan.

Mr Quinlan: We have an easily managed system. We have a system within which it is easy to manage.

MR HUMPHRIES: That may be a good thing in one sense, but it may indicate that, if people are taking steps to avoid the tax, there is a need to consider whether high levels of taxation are a good thing.

Mr Quinlan: I will talk to you about that.

MR HUMPHRIES: You do that, but I would say, in the meantime, that measures which, under whatever guise, increase the total tax and payroll tax are bad, wrong and should not occur.

I would say to the Treasurer that if he brought these proposals forward to align our tax collection arrangements with other states at the same time as he either reduced the rate or increased the threshold, he would have full support from the opposition. But to take that step, with the effect of increasing the payroll tax take, is of concern. We again put on the record our view that payroll tax is a tax on employment. It is a tax designed to make it more difficult to employ people. I fear that, in the next few years, we will have reason to regret the fact that we did not take more steps to encourage employers to keep levels of employment high.

I have also made reference to the retrospective effect of the legislation. This change was announced on 25 June. We pointed out, at the time—

Mr Quinlan: You have said all this.

MR HUMPHRIES: I am going to make another point, if you would not mind, Mr Quinlan. I did ask if we were able to deal with this legislation after the appropriation bill, as your original program indicated.

Mr Quinlan: Just make your point, Gary. Everything you are saying now, you said in the previous speech. And yet you are speaking again, for whatever reason. I do not know why.

MR HUMPHRIES: That is not true, Mr Speaker.

The point I want to make about retrospectivity, Mr Speaker, is that the budget was brought down on 25 June, just five days before the end of the financial year. The changes made to payroll tax were made for the same pay period—or that same potential or up-coming pay period—in which they were announced. So the amount of notice given to companies to change their arrangements was very small.

Mr Quinlan: They did not know about it before? We did not discuss it in public for a couple of weeks, Gary?

MR HUMPHRIES: No. We asked the government to indicate clearly that it would retain the raising of the threshold which had been foreshadowed by the previous government. Incidentally, you had gone to the election effectively indicating that you did not propose to change—because none of your detailed financial statements made reference to changing the payroll tax threshold.

I think employers were entitled to assume that, because you could pay for all of your promises without having to increase taxes, you were therefore going to keep the same level of payroll tax take.

Mr Quinlan: It is the long bow in logic—so we will do nothing for a year.

MR HUMPHRIES: A foolish mistake! That was not the case. The government has, in fact, increased its take on payroll tax. The point I am making in this debate—and it is a new point—is that that change took place at almost the last possible minute before the beginning of the new financial year and the operation of the new arrangements.

Unfortunately, there would have to have been some hasty reorganisation of company accounting to cope with that. It is not a fair way of treating business. I do not think businesses will be encouraged to see this territory as a place where they can base themselves for future growth. Now, more than two months later, we are putting that in place again. I think it is an unfortunate signal.

As I understand it, the exemptions being provided for in the area of land tax are being widened. Indeed, they are being widened even beyond what was proposed when the government introduced the bill. For example, we raised in the Estimates Committee the issue of a disabled family member who is accommodated in a house owned by a trust or company which is not rented, but provided for that person. The minister indicated that that was going to be taken care of.

Mr Quinlan: It was always going to be taken care of.

MR HUMPHRIES: It was not mentioned in the original budget papers or in the presentation speech. That is the reason the issue was raised. I am pleased to hear that it was always going to be taken care of, but I am curious as to how that is going to happen.

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I do not see any amendments to this bill before us today, unless I have missed them. I assume you are going to deal with that administratively, in some way—by regulation of some sort, I assume. We will look at that regulation when it comes forward. We will take the Treasurer's word for the fact that the problem raised in the Estimates Committee will be fixed. With that expectation, I thank him for that.

Again I say that this is a tax on investment in the territory. I realise that raising the rate of taxation on residential properties is partly designed to increase the relative take on non-residential properties—to put a little more emphasis on non-residential than has been the case in the past few years.

I note that there is another way of doing that, so as to reduce the level of burden placed on the residential sector, but that was not in the government's contemplation. Mr Speaker, this must have an effect on the attractiveness of property investment in the ACT for income producing purposes.

Mr Quinlan: Effectively, we are talking about owner-occupied premises.

MR HUMPHRIES: Subject to land tax? That is not my understanding of land tax. It does not apply to people living in their own homes. Is there a secret provision in the bill I should be looking for?

Mr Quinlan: The change in relation to trusts and companies which own houses that are used by the principals of the companies is that—

MR SPEAKER: It might be better if we do not have a conversation across the chamber.

Mr Quinlan: They are residential premises.

MR SPEAKER: Order, Mr Quinlan! Mr Humphries, if you just stick to the issues you want to bring before the Assembly, Mr Quinlan will have adequate time to respond to them in due course.

MR HUMPHRIES: Yes. I think I know the point Mr Quinlan was trying to make across the chamber, Mr Speaker. I say to him that the effect of this will still be to increase the cost of operating an investment property in the ACT. The level of land tax they pay will rise. For argument's sake, let us say my family owns a property, although it does not own a property.

Mr Quinlan: Through your family trust?

MR HUMPHRIES: Through a family trust.

Mr Quinlan: All Liberals have family trusts, don't they?

MR HUMPHRIES: Unfortunately, this Liberal does not. Hypothetically speaking, I have a family trust and it owns a property. The overheads on that property rise because the rate of land tax rises. That is what you have said in the bill.

Mr Quinlan: If it is an investment property?

MR HUMPHRIES: If it is an investment property—that is right.

Mr Quinlan: That obtains now.

MR HUMPHRIES: I know it obtains now. But the rate at which you are paying is going up. That is what your bill says, Mr Quinlan. I will read the speech. It says:

Another provision of this bill increases the marginal land tax rates from 1 October 2002 for all non-residential properties with average unimproved values ...

You also provide for a widening of the take with regard to properties generally. That is the other provision relating to land tax. Residential properties owned by companies or trustees will become liable for land tax, even if they are not rented, Mr Speaker.

The message I am trying to get out here is that we should be sending a signal to people investing in property that the costs are not likely to rise significantly. I appreciate that that is not what the Treasurer was talking about with this structure, but the extent to which properties are rented out provides the market level for private accommodation in the territory. Ms Dundas has already had something to say about the number of properties and the amount of accommodation available in the territory.

We all know the rental market is tight. I make the point that the government has to be careful it does not so squeeze the private rental market, indirectly, that the result is fewer properties available for rent. That would have an impact on ACT Housing's capacity to meet market demand.

As I said, because of the retrospectivity, because of the breach of the government's promise to have these outlays in its budget delivered without an increase in the tax take, and because these taxes are essentially taxes on employment and investment, the opposition will be opposing this bill.

In case the Treasurer is interested in criticising this as a collateral way of opposing the budget, I remind him of the fact that, as I recall it, the federal Labor opposition has promised to do something very similar with the federal government's budget in opposing collateral legislation dealing with the question of disability payments and the pharmaceutical benefits scheme. We have not used this as a model. We are not copying the federal opposition, but we accept that to oppose a collateral bill in the budget is not the same as opposing the appropriation bill itself.

MR QUINLAN (Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Business and Tourism, Minister for Sport, Racing and Gaming and Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Corrections) (12.22), in reply: There are a few points I want to pick up on—Mrs Dunne talking about openness, et cetera. I will not take too much time.

I feel that what has come through from some of the members of this place is an emphasis on people saying, "Tell us when; tell us exactly why!" In this place, there have been a number of occasions when we have had to know precisely why—and that has become an issue. We all know that, when you are building a road, a stadium—or whatever you are implementing—exact precision is just not possible.

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I am reminded of a homily delivered by Dr Peter Wilenski, although I am not sure he was the original author. He said that anything you can quantify is, by definition, trivial in the matters of mankind. Given the focus by several of the members opposite on what can be quantified, their focus on minutia is an ineloquent commentary. They are trivial indeed in the way they are approaching the job. One of the things that disturb me is that there are very few issues coming out. We want to try to build some political issues around the finer points of how, when and why, as opposed to what you are doing. In estimates, that even got to the point where it boiled down to them asking, "What are you thinking?"

Mr Humphries: We needed to find out. That is why we had to ask the question.

MR QUINLAN: Yes. I think greater focus on the wider issues of the community would be more appropriate and more contributive to the government of the territory.

On the point of retrospectivity of payroll tax, this was a move put in place by the previous government. I do not think it was incumbent upon this government to implement that initiative—to keep moving payroll tax down. More important is the realisation that Mr Humphries left out of his delivery the fact that there was extensive public debate—public debate engendered, in large part, by his saying that we were not going to deliver on the commitment on payroll tax. Certainly the issue of payroll tax arose months ago. I came out and said, "We are not bound by commitments made by the government that was sacked in October." Regularly and consistently, I said, "No, we will not be committed by them."

Mr Humphries went on to say that anything which increases the take on payroll tax is bad, or wrong. One of the reasons why there will be an increase in payroll tax is the fact that we are going to bundle up in that some of the non-cash salary payments that people earn.

I will tell you what I believe is bad and wrong—people not paying the legitimate taxation of the time. What is bad and wrong is tax avoidance. Part of the take, and part of the change to payroll tax, is to eliminate tax avoidance.

It is the same with some of the changes we have made to land tax, where Mr Humphries became a little garbled. We are trying to make sure people do not abuse the system with companies or trusts owning properties, as tax avoidance devices.

Mr Humphries was focusing on investment properties. If a house is an investment property, then it will be subject to land tax. I believe that is fair—and that we should not have these devices for tax avoidance.

Mr Smyth focused a little on value for money, as if this were some new process to be applied, and applied by this government, under pressure.

Mr Corbell made telling comments in relation to the sad history in this place of business plans, and the lack of evaluation of the costs and benefits. There has been a lack of genuine evaluation of costs and benefits on a number of projects—and they have cost the ACT taxpayer dearly. For the opposition to come in here and start serving it up, saying,

“You must do this, as a matter of urgency!”—that has a slight ring of irony, Mr Speaker. There is just a slight ring of irony—that we must urgently implement some sane, sensible, financial management and set up some hurdles over which a project must negotiate itself before it is adopted.

Mr Pratt was talking about the V8 car race. I have challenged him once before in this place to tell me just how much he was willing to spend on the car race. I would like to see your cost/benefit financial analysis, Mr Pratt—seeing that the opposition is now embracing a more rigorous approach to financial decision-making. Let us see some of yours. I have done ours, and it does not stack up.

Mr Pratt: Come on, Ted—you have jumped the gun. There was revenue in place.

MR QUINLAN: You were slinging the word “lazy” around, Mr Pratt. I will tell you what lazy is. Lazy is going out, trying to garner popular appeal, when there is a protest on outside, saying, “I will bring back the V8 car race.” Back it up in this place with your assessment, and your statement, as to what the opposition would spend on the V8 car race. Either put up or shut up!

Mr Pratt: The government had in place funds whereby they could have allowed the V8 program to continue. You have not given it a chance to live. You have cut it off at the knees.

MR QUINLAN: You tell me. Tell me how much I should have spent. Tell the taxpayers of the ACT precisely how much of their money you were willing to put into it. That is all I ask.

Mr Pratt: You had funding in place to continue the program.

MR QUINLAN: How much of it do you want to sling at the car race? Just tell us that.

Mr Pratt: You could have continued with the same amount of funding.

MR QUINLAN: The same amount—\$6 million?

Mr Pratt: The amount that was already appropriated in the past three years.

MR QUINLAN: It burst the budget twice. It started at 2, went to 4½ and could not make it then. Which level is it—2, 4½, 5½ or 6?

I will close by saying I thank members for their participation. I thank the opposition for its commitment to at least vote for the Appropriation Bill.

There is a history, as Mr Humphries said. I well remember 2001. The Labor opposition of the time had voted against budgets. It had done that in the comfort that they would be passed anyway. It was like saying, “No, we will not.” Then, all of a sudden, the government was blackmailed by a couple of crossbench members to change. Promptly after that, we went back to the then government and said, “Okay, we will pass it. We do not want your budget to go down because of two people.”

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The government of the time said, “No, no! We don’t want that! We can’t hear you. We don’t want to know. We are now capitulating to two crossbench members, so don’t make life complicated for us. No, we don’t accept. We don’t want you to vote for the budget. We don’t want you to do that!” That was the case. The fact of the matter is that you were knocked over by a couple of crossbenchers whom you wanted to appease. I think Mr Stefaniak was talking to one of the crossbenchers about other measures of appeasement in relation to West Belconnen.

There is more to the history of that year than the government not getting its budget. The opposition happily voted against you. When it became clear that we might get crossbenchers who would not vote for the budget, as you have seen, this party has said, “No. We will accept that the government should get its budget. We do not have room for our protest vote. We would like to make our protest vote. We would like to say we do not support all the measures in that budget by voting against it. However, we cannot do that now, because we have created a situation where crossbenchers can hold governments to ransom.” The world has changed!

Mr Humphries: What about the next year?

MR QUINLAN: Yes. We also recommended a couple of changes, happy in the knowledge that they would never get up—so you would get your budget.

I appreciate the fact that we will get our appropriation bill. I believe there is majority support for the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill, which is part of the budget anyway. I appreciate that. It is part of the package.

I thank members for their support. As we have all said a few things, I hope this afternoon is not too turgid, Mr Speaker.

Question put:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes, 9

Noes, 6

Mr Berry
Mr Corbell
Ms Dundas
Ms Gallagher
Mr Hargreaves

Ms MacDonald
Mr Quinlan
Mr Stanhope
Ms Tucker

Mr Cornwell
Mrs Cross
Mrs Dunne
Mr Humphries
Mr Pratt

Mr Smyth

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 12.38 to 2.30 pm.

Ministerial arrangements

MR STANHOPE: Mr Speaker, for the information of members, I will be taking questions that would otherwise be directed to my colleague Bill Wood, who, members realise, is representing the territory elsewhere today. For the information of members, in Mr Wood's absence, Mr Corbell is Manager of Government Business.

Questions without notice

Remand facility

MR HUMPHRIES: My question is to the minister for corrections, Mr Quinlan. It concerns the remand centre at Symonston. On 9 April this year, you told the Assembly that there would be a protocol that would ensure that "low risk prisoners go there". The *Southside Chronicle* reported on 22 January:

Mr Quinlan said most of the prisoners sent to Symonston under his proposal would be women because they were considered less of a risk.

I do not recall seeing any correction to that article in the *Chronicle*. The capacity of the Symonston facility, Minister, is 30 prisoners. We have heard that in recent weeks. Is it not the case, Minister, that there would be, on average, only one or two fine defaulters in the corrections system at any one time and, on average, five or six women in the system at the same time? Will the balance of prisoners, therefore, held at the remand centre at Symonston be—again I quote you—"real-life criminals"?

MR QUINLAN: If people are on remand, I do not know that they are real-life criminals.

Mr Humphries: That is how you described them in the Estimates Committee.

MR QUINLAN: Yes. They are yet to be tried for the particular offence that they may be in for. There has been some misinformation in relation to the extension to the Belconnen Remand Centre. Let me repeat for the benefit of the Assembly that the use of the Periodic Detention Centre as an extended campus for the Belconnen Remand Centre was part of the announced ALP policy before the election. The ALP announced that it would not build a prison at Symonston. Mr Hargreaves, our corrections spokesman at the time, produced a policy document which included that statement, and at the same time he put out a press release to say that.

What we have tried to communicate—whether it be good, bad or indifferent—is that we would try to ensure that prisoners that went to the Symonston remand centre annexe were, by the judgment of those in corrections, prisoners who were of less risk. That is the message we are trying to get across.

It seems to me that the misinformation the opposition is trying to get across is that very dangerous people are being placed in Symonston. That is unfortunate. You choose your politics as you may, but we have said that we will try to put in place a protocol that ensures that prisoners considered less likely to try to escape and prisoners considered to

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be of a less dangerous nature, even if free, are the ones we send to the annexe. That is being done in good faith.

The Belconnen Remand Centre is inadequate. That is what we inherited. As I said, we stated in a policy before the election that we would do something about it, which is a lot more than the government at the time did. Make of it whatever politics you can, but the whole purpose of the extension of the Remand Centre and the construction of an annexe to the Remand Centre is for the safety of everybody—for the safety of the correctional staff, for the safety of the community, for the safety of the prisoners.

There are no votes, and we never considered there to be any votes, in us building that annexe. That is an initiative, as I said, described by Mr Hargreaves before the Assembly, born of responsibility in the corrections field. At least it ought to be given some moments in the sun being considered in that way.

MR HUMPHRIES: I ask a supplementary question, Mr Speaker. Minister, can you guarantee that only prisoners who are less likely to escape than others and low-risk prisoners go to Symonston, and do you wish to disassociate yourself from or correct the article in the *Chronicle* that I referred to, in which you are quoted as having said that most prisoners sent to Symonston would be women?

MR QUINLAN: I will deal with the second part first. I think it was probably ill advised to have said that, because the number of women is so low and occasionally overcrowding, when the number is up to around 90 plus, would give rise to male prisoners going there. So it is probable that there would be more male prisoners than female prisoners there.

But certainly if the overcrowding is a handful and there are a handful of women there, then that is the first process. It has to be remembered that often there are no remandees at the annexe in Symonston. It is an overflow facility and a temporary facility.

It is a little frustrating trying to answer the question “Do you guarantee that blah, blah, blah?” which seems to be part of the word processes you use to generate these questions. The answer to the first question applies if the intention is to ensure that there are lower risk prisoners.

As we have stated time and again, by definition all remandees are maximum security prisoners. Therefore, we cannot say we have a specific label for them and a specific official classification. There are commonsense reasons for all remandees, no matter who they are, being considered maximum security in how they are monitored and watched as well as controlled.

I think I stated in my original answer what the intent is. The intent is to have lower risk prisoners there. The broader intent is to ensure the safety of custodial staff, the safety of prisoners and the workability of the system. As I said in my first answer, I accept that there are no positive politics in this annexe. This is a case of the government exercising its responsibility, a responsibility that might have been exercised sooner by the former government.

Sustainable transport plan

MS MacDONALD: My question is to the Minister for Planning, Mr Corbell. Minister, ACT Labor went to the last election promising to develop a sustainable transport plan for the territory. Can you inform the Assembly of the progress of this initiative?

MR CORBELL: Yes, I am very pleased to answer Ms MacDonald's question, because this government is the first government since self-government to seek to develop a strategic transport plan for our city—a transport plan that looks not only at public transport activity but also at the whole range of transport modes across the territory and how we can shift to a more sustainable framework for transport policy and planning in our city.

The government is already developing a sustainable transport plan. This will be part of the broader spatial planning exercise the government has initiated, which will see a major forum on planning issues on 4 September this year. A subset of this work is the development of the public transport futures feasibility study. Members may recall that this Assembly passed a resolution earlier this year asking for comment on the terms of reference for the public transport futures feasibility study. A number of members were kind enough to contribute comments, and the government has taken them on board in developing the terms of reference for this very important piece of work.

I am pleased to advise members that the government has appointed the consultants to undertake the public transport futures feasibility study. Halliburton KBR Pty Ltd have been appointed by the government to do this work. Their work will include developing strategies to increase the use of public transport and to plan for future public transport needs for our city over the next 20 to 30 years. This is a very important subset of work which will inform the sustainable transport plan, which will inform the spatial plan for our city. I say that so members understand how this hierarchy works.

The strategy will look at a range of elements, including roads, public transport, parking, bicycles, pedestrians, travel demand management, transport regulation, land use planning and integrated investment assessment. Public transport options that will be investigated include bus-only lanes between Civic and Gungahlin and a light rail system to link all of Canberra's town centres.

This is a very important piece of work, and I am very pleased that the government has put transport planning back on the public agenda after a seven-year hiatus. For seven years the previous government paid no attention whatsoever to investment in public transport, let alone planning for the future of public transport in our city.

Mrs Cross: I wonder if that had something to do with the deficit we inherited.

MR CORBELL: We always get a rise from the Liberal Party whenever I make that point, but unfortunately it is the sad truth. It is the sad truth that the previous government ripped millions of dollars out of ACTION. It is the sad truth that the previous government canned the previous Labor government's investigation of light rail. It is the sad truth that they took no steps to develop integrated public transport planning for our city. That is their legacy, and it is the legacy this government is now determined to wipe away in improving public transport planning in our city.

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The new Office of Sustainability, another key Labor election commitment implemented, is developing a sustainability framework which will provide the broad guidance on sustainability objectives and indicators, which will certainly inform the work of this very important study.

Mr Speaker, the Halliburton KBR team includes specialists in project management, engineering, public transport, economics and property. It is a very extensive and specialised team. It was selected from a number of high-quality submissions for tender, and it will provide a comprehensive and professional approach to the study.

The study team has a good balance of both local expertise and expertise from interstate and experience of similar projects around bus lanes and light rail, which are the sorts of things we need to make the study worth while. They are expected to start work early next month, and I am pleased to advise members that the final report is due by mid next year and will involve a series of workshops that include key stakeholders.

Calvary Hospital—pathology services

MS DUNDAS: My question is for the Minister for Health. I understand that ACT Pathology recently took over the provision of pathology services for Calvary Private Hospital. How much did the ACT government have to pay out to the former provider to enable ACT Pathology to take over these services for Calvary Private?

MR STANHOPE: It is true that ACT Pathology has moved to provide a coordinated and integrated pathology service to the ACT. I do not have the precise figure. I am happy to get it and to table it, hopefully at the conclusion of question time.

Arrangements have been made for ACT Pathology to provide a system-wide pathology service, which is consistent, we believe, with the integrated, coordinated approach to health care delivery that was very much a feature of the Reid report. I am happy to provide the detail. To ensure that I get it absolutely correct, I would prefer to take the question on notice. I should be able to table an answer this afternoon.

MS DUNDAS: I note that the Chief Minister says that he will table the information, but will you be able to assure us that we are getting value for money from ACT Pathology and that ACT taxpayers' money is not subsidising private contracts undertaken by ACT Pathology?

MR STANHOPE: Most certainly, Ms Dundas. I quite happily and willingly guarantee that the arrangements that are being put in place in relation to the provision of pathology services across the board in the ACT will deliver real outcomes in enhanced health care delivery in the ACT. I have absolutely no doubt about that. If I felt otherwise, then we would not have gone down this path.

A range of other issues and pressures in relation to the provision and delivery of pathology services in the ACT were a part of the discussion and the eventual decision in relation to the model that has now been developed and will be provided. I will give those details and the exact arrangements, but certainly the steps that have been taken are entirely consistent with a coordinated and system-wide approach to health care delivery

to ensure that we can guarantee high-quality services, particularly vitally needed pathology services, to all Canberrans.

That is why we have gone down this path. That is why we have entered into the arrangements we have. I am happy to provide further details, hopefully this afternoon.

Remand facility

MR SMYTH: Mr Speaker, my question is to the minister for corrections, Mr Quinlan, and it concerns the government's plan to develop a new remand centre. Minister, during the Estimates Committee you were advised that Rengain were now doing the work on developing the new remand centre. In the work that Rengain did on the prison proposal last year for the previous government, they costed a stand-alone remand centre at \$61 million. It is currently costed at \$50 million. Why is there such a substantial difference in costing of this project?

MR QUINLAN: I think I have explained this. We have allowed \$50 million, which is up there around about or certainly on the way to what this remand centre would cost. I have not put in \$61 million. I think adequate allowance should be made, but I want to see financial discipline. It was touched on this morning, ironically, from the other side of the house. I think members will observe that this government is introducing financial responsibility and rigour progressively, and has done so since it came to government.

I judged and as a cabinet we judged that it was reasonable to allow \$50 million, which meant that whatever was done would have a financial pressure on it. There would be pressure to keep the costs to the minimum. More importantly, \$50 million is a whole lot closer to the mark than zero. What was contained in the budget we inherited was zero. Today we have another touch of irony. The mob that has rediscovered financial rigour has now discovered that you need to put everything in the budget and have it right up to the mark. Welcome back from Damascus, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: I ask a supplementary question. Where are the cost savings coming from which result in the reduction of \$11 million? Is the government proposing to cut security for the remand centre as part of its cost saving on the project?

MR QUINLAN: No, the government is not. The figure given, as I said, is a general estimated figure, and it is a figure set at a level that will impose the maximum discipline on the process. That is the intent.

Floriade fence

MRS CROSS: My question is to the minister for tourism,. Mr Quinlan, you announced as part of your 2002-03 budget that Floriade would remain free this year. I have since been informed that the fence will remain around Floriade this year. Mr Quinlan, I would like to run you through some comments made by your colleagues about that fence in past years. Mr Berry labelled it "the hated black fence", "the silly black fence" and "that rotten fence". He also said, "There was never a need for a fence" and "It strikes me as extraordinary that all of a sudden we need a fence when we haven't got a fee." Leader Jon Stanhope also bought into the argument, happy that the fee was axed by the Liberals in 2001, but the government of the time still does not get the point about the fence.

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Mr Quinlan, may I ask: with so many passionate views about that hated, silly, rotten black fence, why has your government not got the point and removed the fence?

MR SPEAKER: Be careful, Mr Quinlan.

MR QUINLAN: Under the Liberals the fence kept people out. It lined them up so they could pay the fee. But it did serve another purpose. It did provide security over the concessions—

Mr Humphries: But you denied that at the time.

MR QUINLAN: I am being careful. It is the best I can do. To cut to the chase, if it is possible to reduce the intrusion of the fence to the single purpose of protecting the concessions without inhibiting access to Floriade generally, then that will be done.

MRS CROSS: Mr Speaker, I bet you are glad you are sitting in that chair at the moment.

MR SPEAKER: I think I would rather you were asking me the question.

MRS CROSS: Mr Quinlan, since you have admitted that this fence is for security reasons, will your government now admit that the Liberals were right to include a fence due to increasing vandalism of the floral display? Will your government apologise to the former Liberal government for Labor's dishonest campaign about the true purpose for the fence?

MR QUINLAN: I think the answer to that one is: in your dreams. I think that was not a question. It was a statement. I can only repeat what I have said before. Unlike our predecessors, our intention will be to maximise free public access to Floriade by the people of Canberra.

Bus services

MS TUCKER: My question is to Mr Corbell as minister responsible for ACTION buses. Minister, it has come to my attention that no ACTION bus service goes past the National Zoo and Aquarium next to Scrivener Dam. This is quite surprising, given that the government is trying to promote tourism opportunities in Canberra and that the National Zoo and Aquarium is putting much effort into expanding its zoo facilities and increasing its visitor numbers. It is also surprising given that there are a number of stops that could be made along the western side of Lake Burley Griffin for visitors and locals seeking recreational activities, starting at the National Museum, then Black Mountain Peninsula, the new Aboriginal Cultural Centre at Yarramundi, the National Zoo and Aquarium and Scrivener Dam. This area might seem out of the way, given that it is surrounded by open space, but it is in the geographical heart of Canberra and on a major road corridor.

Minister, are you going to look at getting a bus service along Lady Denman Drive to service the western side of Lake Burley Griffin?

MR CORBELL: I am not aware of any proposal by ACTION in this regard, but I will certainly take the question on notice and make some inquiries for Ms Tucker.

MS TUCKER: Thank you, Minister, for saying you will look at it. Could you look at the potential for setting up at least some sort of trial service as soon as possible, particularly to coincide with Floriade, when many visitors can be expected to come to Canberra, and ensure that the service operates to meet the needs of recreational users rather than commuters, for example, by having adequate services on the weekend and in off-peak times?

MR CORBELL: The government is always keen to see ACTION seek to expand its service wherever there is demand. I will seek further information from ACTION on the proposal Ms Tucker has outlined and advise her of the response.

Aboriginal tent embassy

MS GALLAGHER: My question is to the Minister for Planning, Mr Corbell. Minister, conflicting comments have been reported in the media regarding the ACT's jurisdiction in relation to the Aboriginal tent embassy. Could the Minister please clarify the role of the ACT's electrical safety inspectors in the recent events at the embassy?

MR CORBELL: The Aboriginal tent embassy occupies national land in front of old parliament house. Under the arrangements that came into being at self-government, responsibility for the management of national land rests with the Commonwealth, in this case with the National Capital Authority. The Commonwealth has wide-ranging powers for the control of unwanted structures, occupancy and trespass under the National Land Ordinance 1989. That is the legal framework in which the Commonwealth is responsible for all structures on its land.

Recent remarks by the territories minister, Mr Tuckey, seem to suggest that the ACT government has responsibility for these structures. That is not the case. The ACT Electrical Safety Act 1971 and the ACT Water and Sewerage Act 2000 apply on national land as laws of the territory. This is by agreement with the Commonwealth. The ACT administers the provisions of these acts on Commonwealth premises, because the Commonwealth has no alternative infrastructure, expertise or inspection approval or compliance processes.

We are simply there enforcing the regulations the Commonwealth has chosen to place on itself in relation to our own legislation. A similar situation exists in relation to the ACT Fire Brigade, which provides services to Commonwealth-owned buildings.

On 13 August this year the National Capital Authority called Actew in relation to a fire in a tent occupied by members of the Aboriginal embassy. Actew has no authority in relation to safety and compliance matters, and the matter was referred to Planning and Land Management.

A PALM electrical inspector attended the fire. Fire Brigade officers were of the opinion that a wood fire within the tent started that fire. The PALM electrical inspector observed that flexible cables supplying various items of electrical equipment were extensively

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damaged by heat and fire. Further investigation revealed dangerous and illegal wiring throughout the tent and other tents on the site.

As the electrical installation was unsafe and did not comply with the required standards, it was disconnected and “danger” tagged. As the owner of the site, the Commonwealth has the responsibility, through the NCA, to ensure that all electrical wiring on national land is safe. The ACT government will provide the necessary support in giving advice to the Commonwealth in that regard.

The Commonwealth also has responsibility for reconnection of electricity to the site of the tent embassy if that is the decision they make. Similarly, it is the responsibility of the National Capital Authority, on behalf of the Commonwealth, to ensure that the recently installed solar panels, kindly donated by Greenpeace, are installed in a safe and proper manner. The NCA may request further attendance by PALM electrical safety inspectors.

I can advise that a PALM safety inspector inspected the solar panels late last week. They issue only 12 volts. They are not particularly powerful devices. They were approved as safe, and PALM has given the thumbs-up for the operation of those devices.

Remand facility

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the minister for corrections, Mr Quinlan. It concerns the proposed new remand centre. Minister, the comprehensive analysis performed by Rengain last year showed that a publicly owned, privately run prison was the best option for a comprehensive corrections facility, with a net present value of \$1 million better than the do-nothing option. Rengain rated the remand-only facility as the worst option, with a net present value of \$54 million worse than the do-nothing option. Why did the government decide to go ahead with the stand-alone remand centre, given that the Rengain report rated it as the worst option, and has the government performed subsequent financial analysis of the remand centre which justifies this decision?

MR QUINLAN: The decision to go ahead with the remand centre is not going to be taken just on the basis of economics. The remand centre we have now is entirely inadequate.

Mr Humphries: Build a new prison as well.

MR QUINLAN: That may happen, Mr Humphries. We have said that we have no choice but to build a remand centre. Does anyone want to argue with that? If they do, I think they should put up their hand and make their public position known. That needs to go ahead.

Quite probably, the economics of building a combined facility would benefit from that original conclusion that we now look at the cost of building a jail to accommodate a complement of prisoners not hugely greater than the capacity of the remand centre. That would become an exercise in marginal costing, inasmuch as there has to be a site and there have to be basic facilities. So the probabilities are that the economic justification for the jail is highly enhanced by the absolute need to build a remand centre. That is all we have said. You are shaking your head. That is all we have said.

Mrs Dunne: It is just daft.

MR QUINLAN: How do you make it simple? We have to build a remand centre. We do not necessarily have to build a prison. A remand centre is a decision of necessity. The prison is a decision that must justify itself economically. End of story.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, do you consider it appropriate that you spend at least \$50 million but, on the basis of Rengain's summation, possibly \$61 million on a new remand centre, when the only analysis that has been done shows it as the worst possible economic option?

MR QUINLAN: Quite clearly, logic does not work over there. If all Rengain said holds true under testing, then you might be hot on the trail of a possible decision by the government that in fact the jail is justified. But I insist that those numbers you are throwing about be tested. That is all.

Mrs Dunne: But you have not tested them.

MR QUINLAN: We are testing them.

Employment

MR HARGREAVES: My question is directed to the Treasurer. Treasurer, could you relay to members the recent changes in the level of employment in the territory?

MR QUINLAN: It is a timely question you ask, Mr Hargreaves, because we have not seen the Humphries' press release this month headed "All under threat" or "Labor's inaction starts to tell". Can I advise the Assembly that the latest unemployment figures for the ACT set the unemployment rate in the ACT at 3.5 per cent, down from 4.6 per cent, which was up from 4.2 per cent.

Mr Humphries: How do we know?

MR QUINLAN: ABS.

Mr Humphries: Is that the published figure or the figures that have gone to you privately? We have not seen it.

MR QUINLAN: Sorry, these are the ACT Department of Treasury finance and investment group figures. These figures indicate that the unemployment rate in the ACT is down to 3.5 per cent. More importantly, we have a participation rate that is increasing in percentages and increasing in absolute numbers.

Mrs Dunne: What methodology do they use?

MR QUINLAN: And when will they be out? I can also advise that the total employment rate for women and the participation rate for women have increased. The unemployment rate for youth and the participation rate for youth are both positive changes.

Mr Humphries: Can we see these figures?

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MR QUINLAN: Yes, you certainly can. I will get a clean copy and I will table them today.

MR HARGREAVES: My supplementary question is: can the minister advise whether these figures are accurate, or are these ABS figures something you could drive a Mack truck through?

Mr Cornwell: I take a point of order, Mr Speaker. It is against standing orders to seek an expression of opinion.

MR SPEAKER: I think that was a call for an expression of opinion.

MR HARGREAVES: I would like to rephrase the question.

MR SPEAKER: You can try.

MR HARGREAVES: Can the Minister confirm that these figures are accurate, or are they ABS figures you can drive a Mack truck through?

MR QUINLAN: Enough of this. They are ABS figures.

Mrs Dunne: You said they were Treasury figures.

MR QUINLAN: No, I said this was a summary of the ABS figures prepared by Treasury.

Mrs Dunne: You did not.

MR QUINLAN: I did not say “of the ABS figures”, no, but they are ABS figures. Let us put them out. What is important out of these figures is that the employment position in the ACT has improved, and has improved on all fronts. We did overhear Mrs Dunne last week make a comment about ABS figures—that you can drive a Mack—

Mrs Dunne: You did not overhear it. I said it directly.

MR QUINLAN: Sensitive little flower, aren't we? Dear oh me! At the risk of being corrected, we overheard Mrs Dunne say that she could drive a truck through ABS figures. In large part, I would agree with Mrs Dunne.

Mrs Dunne: A first.

MR QUINLAN: It is one of those ironies, Mrs Dunne, that you worked for years with Mr Humphries, who, when these figures came out from time to time, attributed all of the positive outcomes, whenever they occurred, to the work of the ACT government. Apparently, Mrs Dunne, you did not believe that. You believed that as these were ABS figures you could have driven a Mack truck through them. Nevertheless, you worked in an office that put out press releases that made direct claims for the credit for changes in employment and attributed all to the work of the ACT government.

I from time to time stood in this place and said that there might be influences other than the ACT government, and I still hold that to be true. We have already found that Mr Smyth has had a short trip from Damascus. This would confirm that Mrs Dunne similarly has had a trip from the same place.

There is even a warning in some of the figures that are put out, particularly those for youth unemployment. It says, "This series is highly volatile and should be taken with a grain of salt." I also think that is the case. As soon as the figures moved up a month or so ago by 0.4 per cent, it was gloom and doom from Mr Humphries. The major point I want to make here today is that there has been a little bit of looseness in the interpretation of figures by Mr Humphries in government and now out of government. He is now on the other side of the fence, but it still persists. I am glad to see, Mr Humphries, that your former staffer at least wants to be a little bit more—can I use "honest" without getting into trouble?

MR SPEAKER: No, you cannot.

MR QUINLAN: Can I call her honest?

MR SPEAKER: Yes, you can.

MR QUINLAN: Can I accuse her of being honest? She has been fairer in her interpretation.

Insurance legislation

MR STEFANIAK: My question is to the Attorney-General. You recently tabled the Civil Law (Wrongs) Bill. Part 11.2 of that bill contains general reporting requirements for insurers requiring them to report annually to the minister on premiums, the number of claims, the number of claims refused and anything else required under the regulations. There is a similar provision in Mr Smyth's private members legislation which he introduced last Wednesday. Unfortunately, your colleague Mr Quinlan in the Estimates Committee on 17 July said of data collected through such an approach that "it's highly likely to be redundant" and that "it's highly likely to be statistically unreliable". However, to the untrained eye these provisions in the two bills seem identical.

Can you explain why your deputy considers the collection of data unreliable but you regard it as essential? Why are you confident that data collected through this approach as opposed to Mr Smyth's approach will be statistically reliable and useful?

MR STANHOPE: We are talking about two pieces of legislation that were tabled last week. I do not know whether Mr Stefaniak would like to wait for a detailed debate in relation to these issues.

Mr Quinlan: He can't think of a question.

MR STANHOPE: That is right. Mr Stefaniak refers to comments that were allegedly made by my colleague Mr Quinlan in estimates. I have absolutely no idea of the context in which the questions were asked and the answers given. Nor does anybody else in this place.

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Mrs Dunne: No idea on how to make the answer.

MR STANHOPE: I am happy to take the question on notice, but I think you need to be fair about it, Mr Stefaniak. I need to have a look at the transcript. I need to have a look at the questions that were asked. I need to have a look at the answers that were given and the context. There is a significant need to have available to us information from the insurance industry.

Mr Humphries: That is not what he said last month.

MR STANHOPE: I cannot believe that in the context.

Mr Humphries: It is unreliable, he said.

MR STANHOPE: It depends on the context. But one of the great issues in relation to insurance and part of the problems we have—

MR SPEAKER: Order! We ought not to anticipate debate on this issue.

MR STANHOPE: That is what I mean. That is the point I was trying to make.

Mr Humphries: How convenient.

MR STANHOPE: We should not anticipate debate, and I am not going to.

Mr Humphries: He is just asking you for some information.

MR STANHOPE: He is not. He is asking me to explain a provision in a bill that was tabled last week. How can that not be anticipating debate on the bill?

It is vital that we look at the core causes of the so-called crisis in public liability insurance and medical indemnity insurance. There is an awful lot of misinformation within the community. Some of it is disseminated by politicians looking for headlines, providing knee-jerk legislative responses such as Mr Smyth's grandstanding on an issue that requires careful long-term strategic thinking. It goes to the heart, Mr Stefaniak, of the point you raised.

What has caused this phenomenal increase in premiums? To what extent have the insurance industry and insurance companies justified the increases in premiums they have imposed? To what extent has lack of regulation of the insurance industry, particularly by your federal Liberal colleagues—

Mr Smyth: Oh, it is all their fault.

MR STANHOPE: It is. There is no doubt about that. There is no doubt that the HIH/FAI farce was a response to a lack of regulation, a lack of oversight, a lack of a firm hand by the federal government on the industry. Regulation of the industry has been farcical. The regulator has never required the industry to provide significant and serious responses on premiums, claims and information that a properly regulated industry should

be providing. That is why this government's response, through the Civil Law (Wrongs) Bill which was tabled last week, is appropriate. It is a hard-headed—

MR SPEAKER: I think we are anticipating debate now.

MR STANHOPE: Okay.

MR STEFANIAK: I ask a supplementary question. Attorney, when did you decide to adopt such provisions as part of your legislation? Was it before or after 17 July this year? If it was after, are you trying to catch up with Mr Smyth's legislation?

MR STANHOPE: Mr Smyth's response to this issue is farcical.

Mr Smyth: Have you read the bill?

MR STANHOPE: I often think about majority government and the evils of minority government.

Mr Smyth: Have you read the bill?

MR STANHOPE: When I think about the absurdities of a minority government, I think of things like Mr Smyth's legislation—a puerile, shallow, knee-jerk, ad hoc, headline-hunting response to the insurance crisis.

Mr Smyth: You are embarrassed.

MR STANHOPE: The nation is struggling with a major issue. Two major national inquiries are in place—one pursuing medical indemnity insurance, one pursuing public liability insurance. Three ministerial councils are acting coherently, consistently and nationally to deal with the insurance crisis, and we get this juvenile response from Mr Smyth: "Let us ban advertising by lawyers. I can fix the insurance crisis. We will ban advertising by lawyers. That will fix it. We will stop lawyers from advertising. That will bring the premiums down. We will get a bit of better information here and there. That will fix it. And what else are we going to do?" Mr Smyth thinks this abject nonsense will resolve the insurance crisis.

Mr Smyth: Have you read the bill?

Mr Corbell: Mr Speaker, I take a point of order. Mr Smyth has been consistently interjecting on the Chief Minister. You should ask him to—

MR SPEAKER: Fair point. Members of the opposition will be quiet. The Chief Minister has concluded his response.

Remand facility

MR CORNWELL: My question is to the minister for corrections. That sounds rather sinister, doesn't it? Mr Quinlan, in July 1999 the Assembly Committee on Justice and Community Safety, of which your colleague Mr Hargreaves was a member, made the following recommendation:

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The committee has decided to recommend two sites to the Government ... Kinlyside was also rated suitable for a prison site. The main difficulty with this site concerns the Government's plans to develop it for rural/residential ... The committee recommends that the Government consider either Kinlyside or Symonston as a site for the new ACT prison complex.

You have ruled out Symonston as a site for the proposed remand centre. The government has no plans, as far as I am aware, to develop Kinlyside for rural residential. Therefore, is Kinlyside under active consideration by the government as a site for the proposed new remand centre?

MR QUINLAN: As I understand from my colleague Mr Corbell, Kinlyside is still zoned as residential.

Dragway

MR PRATT: My question to the Deputy Chief Minister, Mr Quinlan, concerns a new site for the Canberra international dragway. In response to a question from Mr Hargreaves, you stated that the government had made no firm commitments to the dragway and that one of Mr Stanhope's advisers had said in an email on 6 October:

The Labor Party remains supportive of dragway racing but will not make any suggestions about possible sites or funding.

Minister, you made the following statement in support of a supportive motion by Mr Corbell in this place on 30 June 1999:

If looking after the long-term interests of the airport is the Government's objective then why not set in place relocation arrangements for the dragway? Unless it is the Government's policy to have no dragstrip, there seems no reason for the Government not to do everything in its power to sort out the situation.

Alan Jones, well-known speaker, estimates that the ALP issued no fewer than seven media releases supporting the dragway. Who made the final decision on this issue—you, Minister, or Mr Stanhope's advisers? Do you wish to reconsider your answer to the Assembly last Thursday that you had made no commitments to the dragway people before the election?

MR QUINLAN: Who writes your stuff? Do I want to not say that we wrote to representatives of the dragway in October—

Mr Pratt: Do you know that I know that you know that I know that you know that I know?

MR SPEAKER: Order! If you treat question time seriously, at least we will get some coherent questions and coherent answers.

MR QUINLAN: In October 2001 Mr Stanhope's office communicated our position, not a staffer's position, that we were not prepared to make commitments in relation to land or funding in the lead-up to the election. Is that clear enough? Is that too hard?

Now we go back to the selective interpretation of why you blokes did not sort it out. Trust me. Despite your demagogic representation out there before the rally, the drag people think your lot are in the main responsible for this. They have got you down. You are in the frame for being the cause of them being in the position they are in. They have come to us, and they are asking us to try to undo it. Trust me. Those who represent the dragway believe that you are it.

They certainly want to bring pressure upon this government, as you would. You play the political game. They have sought the assistance of Alan Jones. I was in Melbourne and saw him on television on Friday morning. I saw that little bit. He was wrong in the claims he made. I am assuming, Mr Pratt, that you wish to associate yourself with the incorrect utterances of Alan Jones.

Immediately before the election, the ALP had communicated its position quite clearly. What more do you want?

Mr Humphries: We want an answer to the question. That is all we want.

MR QUINLAN: You want a particular answer.

MR PRATT: Given all that, Mr Quinlan, can you understand why dragway supporters in the ACT think the Labor Party has acted in bad faith on this issue, a point which you have not been able to refute?

MR QUINLAN: That is probably the most important question that has been asked in question time today. Yes, I do believe there are people in this town who believe that the ALP made a commitment for land or funding for a dragway before the election. They have been misled.

Mr Smyth: How did they get that impression?

MR QUINLAN: For one, Mr Greg Cornwell went out before them and said, "I understand promises have been made."

Mr Cornwell: You have quoted me correctly.

MR QUINLAN: I have quoted him correctly. Of course the crowd would hear, "Promises were made." Your Mr Cornwell misled the crowd. Your Mr Cornwell misled people in the ACT a week ago.

Yes, Mr Pratt, I firmly believe there are people in the ACT who think we made a commitment to both land and money. I believe that in large part that is down to your lot misleading them.

Mr Stanhope: I ask that further questions be placed on the notice paper, Mr Speaker.

Executive contracts

Papers and statement by minister

MR STANHOPE (Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for Community Affairs and Minister for Women): Mr Speaker, for the information of members, I present the following papers:

Public Sector Management Act, pursuant to sections 31A and 79—Copies of executive contracts or instruments—

Long term contract:

John Clifford, dated 12 August 2002.

Temporary contract:

Brian Jacobs, dated 7 August 2002 –

I ask for leave to make a statement in relation to the contracts.

Leave granted.

MR STANHOPE: These documents are tabled in accordance with sections 31A and 79 of the Public Sector Management Act, which require the tabling of all executive contracts and contract variations. Contracts were previously tabled on 20 August 2002. Today I present one long-term contract and one short-term contract. The details of the contracts will be circulated to members.

Papers

Mr Corbell presented the following papers:

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements, unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Electoral Act—Electoral Amendment Regulations 2002 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2002-22 (LR, 9 August 2002).

Radiation Act—Radiation Council Appointment 2002 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2002—158 (LR, 22 August 2002).

Road Transport (General) Act—Road Transport (General)—Declaration that the road transport legislation does not apply to certain roads and road related areas 2002 (No 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2002-157 (LR, 16 August 2002).]

Petition—Out of order

Petition which does not conform with the standing orders—Campbell shopping centre—Installation of public toilet facilities—Mr Wood (706 citizens).

Leave of absence

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

That leave of absence from 24 August to 5 September 2002 inclusive be given to Mr Wood (Minister for Urban Services) during his absence overseas attending the World Summit on substantive development and leave of absence on 29 August 2002 to Ms MacDonald for family reasons.

Questions without notice

Employment

MR QUINLAN: In question time I mentioned a piece of paper from which I was reading data in relation to the jobs market. For the information of members, I table the document. It is prepared by the Australian Capital Territory Treasury but it does have included in it the source of the tables, which is ABS catalogue No 6203.0. If you want to see that catalogue, get your own. That is the reference contained within the document as tabled. I present the following paper:

“Labour force Australia—July 2002—Copy of unemployment statistics prepared by ABS.

Appropriation Bill 2002-2003

Debate resumed from 27 June 2002.

Detail stage

MR SPEAKER: I remind members that, in debating order of the day No 2, executive business, they may also address their remarks to relevant parts of the government’s response to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2002-2003.

Standing order 180 sets down the order in which this bill will be considered—that is, in the detail stage:

... any schedule expressing the services for which the appropriation is to be made shall be considered before the clauses and, unless the Assembly otherwise orders, the schedules shall be considered by proposed expenditures in the order in which they are shown.

With the concurrence of the Assembly, I propose that the Assembly consider schedule 1 by each part, consisting of net costs of outputs, capital injection and payments on behalf of the territory. If this is the wish of the Assembly, schedule 1 will be considered by each part consisting of net costs of outputs, capital injection and payments on behalf of the territory, then the clauses prior to schedule 2 and the title.

Schedule 1—Appropriations.

Proposed expenditure—part 1—Legislative Assembly Secretariat, \$4,297,000 (net cost of outputs), \$3,578,000 (payments on behalf of the territory), totalling \$7,875,000—agreed to.

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Proposed expenditure—part 2—ACT executive, \$3,187,000 (payments on behalf of the territory), totalling \$3,187,000.

MS DUNDAS (3.37): I want to make a short statement about the appropriation for the ACT executive. I understand that this appropriation will ensure that members and ministers receive a pay rise under the Remuneration Tribunal decision. It will also implement the recommendations of the review of Assembly members staffing arrangements, and this is an interesting lesson in the way the Labor government appears to be treating public servants in the territory.

The government appears to be continuing the Liberal practice of trading off conditions simply to enable wages to keep pace with inflation. The problem with trading conditions for pay is that at some stage there is nothing left to trade. The modern workplace is one where hours are long and varied and simply an increase in pay for less conditions is not an answer. Recognition of work done and the value of that work is what is required. A quick solution needs to be found, and moving to a certified agreement is perhaps the answer for this type of public servant.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—part 3—Auditor-General, \$943,000 (net cost of outputs), totalling \$943,000—agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—part 4—Chief Minister's, \$58,178,000 (net cost of outputs), \$8,748,000 (capital injection) and \$3,145,000 (payments on behalf of the territory), totalling \$70,071,000.

MR QUINLAN (Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Business and Tourism, Minister for Sport, Racing and Gaming and Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Corrections) (3.39): Mr Speaker, I move amendment No 1 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 2913*]. This amendment and the other amendments that I shall move—all nine of them—relate to the change in administrative arrangement orders arising out of the creation of a new department which, as members are aware, resulted from the review following the Gallop report and the government's intention to take some positive action in that respect. So all of the amendments are purely a rearrangement associated with the administrative arrangement orders.

MRS CROSS (3.40): Mr Speaker, in many ways the opposition should be flattered by this budget as almost all of it is simply maintaining former Liberal initiatives. There is very little that is new, and some of what is new is either rebadged or a bit difficult to understand.

Take the new ACT Office of Women as an example. This supposed new initiative is a slightly expanded version of an existing function within the department, with funding taken from elsewhere within the same community programs unit. While an additional focus on women's issues is always welcome, the Chief Minister and his officials at estimates refused to make clear which areas were now receiving less focus and less funding as a result. In fact, the Chief Minister came across as being rather muddled on this point.

Most people can understand that, within the same group of people and using the same bucket of money, to suddenly put more emphasis in one area would surely take away resources from another area. On this point however, the Chief Minister seems to be living in denial.

In many respects the budget is a major disappointment for women. Actually, it is worse than that—it is a pitiful effort. For me it is the sort of budget you would expect when the Minister for Women is a man. Despite a couple of new initiatives, the minister has not fought for the women of Canberra in this budget. There is next to nothing new here, nor is there provision for anything new in the future. In fact, over three-quarters of the claimed women's initiatives are actually non-gender specific health funding. I think they are ghosts.

Additional spending on respite care and a convalescent facility has been counted twice by the government in its media kit—once in the women's area and then again in health. Both of those initiatives are available to the whole Canberra population and are, rightly, health spending. When you weed out the double counting, actual new spending for women is less than one-tenth of the amount of the Liberals' initiatives in their last year of government—that is, \$5.5 million of new initiatives committed by the Liberals in 2001-02 compared to just \$370,000 by Labor this time around.

I find it disappointing to see the Chief Minister and his government place so little value on women in the territory. Obviously, there are no ideas coming from his office and no intention of funding them should any arrive in the future. Key priority areas of violence against women, childcare placements and women's counselling have largely been ignored.

A second aspect of the Chief Minister's portfolio that I wish to comment on is his broken election commitment to the information poor in our community. Under Labor, they will stay information poor—and this is a shameful thing to have to say. Labor went into the last election talking up a storm about what they would do about digital divide funding but it turns out it was only a storm in a teacup. Come the first budget, what do they do? Reduce the funding. Estimates was quite revealing on this point, and the Chief Minister at least came clean and admitted that he had cut the funding because of his own personal decisions. Unfortunately, he gave no proper explanation for having done so.

In last year's budget the former Liberal government allocated \$800,000 towards bridging the digital divide between the information rich and the information poor. Within a year of taking office, not only has the new Labor government revealed it underspent this allocation, it chopped it back by \$300,000 per year. Not only is this a pretty poor outcome for those low-income families who would have benefited from this funding but it makes a mockery of past criticism by Labor regarding digital divide funding.

Mr Speaker, I believe the government is yet to wake up and realise that we live in an information society. The key to ensuring that all members of our community benefit equally from this new age is access, not funding cuts for those who have little chance of accessing computers or the latest information technology.

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On a final point: the government's commitment to establishing a multicultural centre has been exposed as being rather shallow. Indeed, by its own admission, the government is still working out whether there is even a need for a multicultural centre and is yet to give a serious commitment to the project. The Chief Minister informed the Estimates Committee that his department is still in the process of surveying the community to assess the need for a centre. If they had listened to the community over the past couple of years they would already know the answer is yes and moved on to doing serious planning. Unlike Labor, the Liberals gave a firm commitment at the last election to building a multicultural centre in the city centre—a promise we would have fulfilled by October 2004.

There are many things that make Canberra a special place to live. One of those is our diverse ethnicity. I am disappointed that the government is dragging its feet on this issue and appears to place limited value on the contribution that our multicultural groups can make to our community. Canberra does need a multicultural centre. I am sure that our ethnic communities would make good use of a common resource centre, office space, meeting rooms and performance areas. If our multicultural groups are to fully contribute to community life it is essential they have the resources and facilities to do so. To date they have been poorly served by this government—a government that promised them so much during seven years of opposition and has yet to deliver anything of substance.

MS TUCKER (3.47): I would like to make a few overarching comments. I am not going to address every detail of the budget. A lot of the changes the Greens are looking for in how the ACT government sets priorities will happen over time and, given that it has some reviews, strategies and white papers under development at present, the real measure of this government will probably be next year's budget.

In terms of vision for a diverse and sustainable community that we are pursuing here in Canberra, the Greens do have concerns with the approach the government is taking, and I will touch on those concerns as we work through the budget.

As you would expect, the Chief Minister's Department is home to direction-setting projects such as the Office of Sustainability, the development of a social plan and the economic development white paper, while even the review of tourism support has, or might have, some visionary component.

The budget does not actually put any costs on running the Office of Sustainability and the only measure seems to be the "development of a sustainability framework" under strategic policy coordination and development. There is a considerable amount of work in this area going on around the world and the establishment of an expert panel to guide the office, whatever it is, should make a difference when it comes to "triple bottom line" accounting. I would like to suggest a performance indicator on this project, namely 2002-03 budget papers presented within a sustainability framework, with the social and environmental indicators explicitly built in.

It seems to me that while we have yet to deliver on the ecological sustainability front, we do have a fairly good grasp of what we are aiming for. Judging from what happened under the past government with its car races and football stadiums, economic sustainability is honoured more in the breach than in realisation. At least we have a fairly solid handle on the idea but social sustainability is a bit more up for grabs.

UNESCO has a series of management of social transformation, or MOST, programs in Europe that directly address this issue. They argue that cities are arenas of social transformation, and so a key feature of social sustainability lies in a participative role for all citizens. At the heart of this approach lies a commitment to democratic governance, to innovation and to community-based collaboration. In other words, it is a process that we are aiming for, not a steady state. And you don't get social sustainability if people are excluded, if those of us at the margins are not a part of the decisions that affect us, if government and community are not fundamentally committed to this project.

The Office of Sustainability then is going to have to have an impact across the whole of government. Given that, I would hope to see it represented by more than the idea of a framework in next year's budget papers. It has to infect the whole way of thinking. This government's plan to create a social plan is a case in point. The idea of addressing the social infrastructure, housing and access and equity needs of the community is clearly a good one. If it all gets pulled together it would set quite a lot of the priorities for community services and infrastructure.

The challenge, however, lies in sharing ownership of the plan right from the start, because without a respectful participatory process it will not be built on the right information. I will use the framing and establishment of the alcohol and other drugs taskforce as an example. In fact, this project, which is being run by the department of health, was put forward in response to the call for a community-based task force to look at the problematic use of substances. Government clearly saw this community interest as an opportunity to coordinate or refocus the delivery of a number of drug and alcohol services. And so the department has selected a number of key workers in the government and community sector and drawn them together to make a few decisions.

There was no negotiation with those members of the community sector who had argued for the task group in the first place on the terms of reference for this government committee; nor even on its membership. Government believed it knew best. You probably thought that your decision was appropriate. A paternalistic or bureaucratic approach to policy development, to community planning and to resource allocation is no way to devise a social plan that will be embraced by community and the wider population. Social sustainability needs a bit more trust than that.

The economic white paper is also some cause for concern—not that we don't need it, but that it may take two years to develop leads one to imagine it may be merely being created as a platform for the next election.

On the issue of sustainability and the economic white paper, the Estimates Committee report makes the interesting comment that when "sectors within the ACT's economy have the potential for development, the sustainability of those sectors would have been considered". I think we need to take a broader view. Surely we would want to develop industries which, for example, add to our social and ecological sustainability and, indeed, contribute to the sustainability of the wider world that we hope to trade with as well.

The ACTCOSS employment task group submission to the white paper is pertinent here. It argues that the ACT government has enthusiastically invested in high tech communication and IT-based business but that the people who work in that field, if not

employed in Canberra, can probably relocate to other cities fairly easily. The submission argued that people with lower level skills are more inclined to remain or be trapped unemployed in Canberra; that, in fact, despite our relatively low level of unemployed, we have an entrenched long-term unemployment problem; and that government industry investment in the community sector rather than its usual new industry targets would deliver better employment outcomes, better community development outcomes, better revenue and expenditure outcomes.

Similarly, the government's knowledge fund is a concern because there are no performance indicators for this in the budget. This is a substantial new initiative designed to provide quite "a strategic mix of grant and equity funding to enhance the creation, use and diffusion of knowledge in the ACT economy". Such a description could as easily have been written by the previous government. It appears to say everything and nothing.

Again, it would be nice to know how this knowledge fund will fit in with the visionary notion of a sustainable society that is yet to be properly developed. That it will be overseen by a board comprising representatives from universities, other research establishments, the business sector and venture capitalists is no reassurance.

Meanwhile, government is giving a \$10 million grant to the national ICT Centre of Excellence—although we have no idea of the process to determine which block of land will be given away. Similarly, the car race millions appear destined to stay with CTEC, despite the inadequacies of its management of that event and the concerns that many of us have with the fairly indiscriminate support of the tourism industry of past years.

One of the key criticisms that the ALP made of the previous government was the ad hoc nature of its business support. Now it is in government, I think it needs to ensure that the same processes do not continue.

MS DUNDAS (3.54): The appropriation for the Chief Minister's Department is a grab bag of programs—some are fine, others questionable, whilst others are nothing but missed opportunities. Budgets are about priorities. They enable executive governments to lay down their priorities, and the Chief Minister's Department is no exception.

The support shown for indigenous and multicultural communities is welcomed. A step in this direction, however small, is at least a step in the right direction. The support shown for these communities totalled \$330,000, or roughly \$40,000 less than the support shown for the establishment of two deputy chief executives in the Chief Minister's Department, and half of that being spent on the review of the management style of the department. Whilst not opposing the change in organisational structure of Chief Minister's, it is sobering to compare these figures. Two public servants against the total new projects to support our indigenous and multicultural communities. As I said before, budgets are about priorities.

The Office of Women within the Chief Minister's Department must have been out of the room when the Treasurer was handing out the goodies. As my colleagues have mentioned, there is nothing for women in this year's budget. There is no money to implement the recommendations from the Chief Minister's own inquiry into violence and women, nor is there any money set aside to look at the recommendations from this Assembly's inquiry into the status of women.

Other initiatives in this appropriation include the small business employment ready scheme, and this, in effect, involves the production of leaflets to try to encourage small businesses to employ staff. I am hopeful that this scheme will pay off, and we will continue to monitor the unemployment figures to see if it makes a difference. The figures released since this budget has been put down have shown that the rate of unemployment amongst women in the ACT increased by 26 per cent and the youth unemployment rate has remained stagnant. But this hides the fact the participation rate has dropped by 8 per cent since the budget was handed down. Young people are missing out on jobs, and you can't drive a Mack truck through that. I sincerely hope that the small business employment ready scheme will see increases in this area.

Finally, if ever a department was capable of triple bottom line reporting it is surely the Chief Minister's Department—the department established to provide whole-of-government responses. But what we see is one department producing an economic white paper, a social plan and a spatial plan. This is definitely an old-school approach to policy—economics in one report, social in another and environment in yet another. In fact, economic white papers are just a government hangover from the 19th century nation states. This is not innovation. However, just imagine the potential and the innovation required to combine the three plans into a definitive triple bottom line audit of the territory. We now realise that social, economic and environment do not exist in vacuums. Mr Speaker, as I said, this is a missed opportunity.

MR CORBELL (Minister for Education, Youth and Family Services, Minister for Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations) (3:57): Mr Speaker, I am inclined to respond to some of the points Ms Dundas made in relation to the strategic planning framework the government is establishing because, whilst Ms Dundas may see it as a fragmented and missed opportunity, it is in fact the first deliberate and concerted effort to establish a strategic planning framework for our city which incorporates environmental and social considerations. Each of these are major bodies of work. They are designed to come together in a single document, in a single framework, namely the Canberra Plan—a plan for our city which will guide decision-making, both now and into the future, over the next 25 to 30 years. This will occur in a way which seeks to get to the detail of each of the major substantive areas that we are seeking to address.

The spatial planning exercise is essentially about land use: about how we use land now and into the future; how we order priorities for the use of land to meet our objectives socially, environmentally and economically. That is why the spatial planning exercise is being conducted by Planning and Land Management.

Equally, the social planning exercises and the economic planning exercises are occurring in the central agency of government—respectively in the social planning area and in the economic planning area of the Chief Minister's Department. But, for the first time, these three documents are going to come together as a single framework for decision-making in the city. If there is one thing the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's report into the future of Canberra said when it was released, it was that we need a strategic planning framework to guide the future of our city; we need as a city to establish commonly agreed goals about where we go, how we get there, what our aspirations for the city are and how we achieve them. That is fundamentally what the

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OECD recommended that this city lacked and what it needed, and that is what this government has sought to respond to and has provided the leadership on to date.

These are big projects. They are complex tasks and they are complex issues. It would be unwise in the extreme simply to say they will all be in one single document. What you need to do is break the work down, focus on the key elements and then bring it together. And that is what this government is doing. This is about the spatial plan, the social plan and the economic process.

I think Ms Dundas is wrong when she suggests that this is a missed opportunity. Far from it: it is the first opportunity in the history of self-government to deliver a project which brings together the social, economic and environmental aspects that underpin how our city will grow, develop and change in the coming decades and, indeed, the next 30 years.

MR HUMPHRIES (Leader of the Opposition) (4.00): I want to come back to a few issues about the Chief Minister's Department which I think deserve some comment. I was struck by the comment Ms Tucker made in the course of the debate about this in many ways not being the budget which defines the agenda of the Labor government, that this document is only a partly formed expression of the government's intention because there is so much other work going on which will ultimately lead to other big decisions being made. I think there is some truth to that statement.

The economic white paper, which I think Ms Tucker referred to, must be a pretty significant stone—a cornerstone, you might even say—in that edifice, but it will not be available until sometime next year. It may be that we will not see the full shape of this government's agenda until the next budget. I have to say that, from my point of view, that is a curious development. This government had cooled its heels in opposition for nearly seven years and I would have expected to have a rather more fully-articulated vision of what was going to happen, what was going to be done, in this first Labor budget in eight years. I don't think we are seeing that.

In fact, in many areas the question of what the Labor Party will do is highly fractured. Education is perhaps the best example where pivotal decisions, key decisions, about the future direction in education hang on an inquiry, the results of which will not be acted upon until the government will have been in office for more than half of its term. That is, if a recommendation or report comes down in October/November, whatever, of this year, it will then, as we have heard from the minister for education, go over to the 2003-04 budget to be implemented. By the time that comes down and is passed by the Assembly we will be halfway through the life of this government before we see the detail of what the direction might be. I think that is a very strange reflection on a government which has had so long to shape its agenda.

My colleagues and I have used a number of terms to characterise this budget. Terms like "lazy", "secretive" and "lacking in vision" are particularly significant in indicating what I think are the main messages coming out of this document. I want to refer to a number of initiatives, a number of non-initiatives, in the Chief Minister's Department which I think illustrate that point very well.

A good example which covers both being lazy and being secretive is the fact that there are effectively no performance indicators for the new knowledge fund. This is a major new initiative supposedly designed to promote the ACT as a centre for technology and innovation. It is a way for the territory to be able to assert some continued supremacy in areas of research, and a research and development fund like this is in effect a key way of being able to deliver that promise. And, yet, curiously there are effectively no performance indicators in respect of this knowledge fund.

We do not know how well or how badly this scheme is supposed to operate because we do not know what it is to be tested against. We are told that the fund will be at least in part a fund that will make investments which are expected to be returned. The fund is to be replenished in some part and in some way by grants or contributions—or loans, I suppose—which are being made to individuals or companies based in the territory. But if the taxpayers of the territory cannot see how much of that is to occur because targets have not been set, how do we know whether it has been successful or not?

We can be certain that in the future the minister will rise in this place and talk about some particular instance of success because the odds are there will be at least a couple of those. They will have to fluke something. So something will succeed in this exercise. If you spray the money around, somewhere, somehow it is going to make a difference. So the minister will get up here and he will crow about that and say, “This is a great thing. Look at what we have done. Haven’t we achieved something wonderful?” But if 30 per cent, 50 per cent, 80 per cent, whatever, of this money is not achieving those purposes then we can legitimately ask, “Is this money actually being well spent?”

The absence of performance indicators in this crucial area suggests to me that the government is either too lazy to work out what sort of performance a fund of this kind should achieve or it doesn’t want to set itself targets because it knows this is a way of recording failure as well as recording success. If targets are set then the government will be chastised for those failures. Believe me, it is not nice to be chastised for your failures. You want to avoid that at all costs. But the cost that is being paid in this case to avoid doing that is the cost of accountability to this place. It is the cost of openness; it is the cost of transparency. If this is a new initiative, if it is designed to achieve important goals in the future of the territory’s wellbeing and standard of living, then it should be measurable, and it is not measurable under these arrangements.

The economic white paper and the Office of Sustainability are further illustrations of a propensity on the government’s part to be flaccid about the approach it takes to these important issues. The Office of Sustainability is supposedly an important measure in achieving the objectives of the government and not merely, as one might be tempted to suggest, a sop to Ms Tucker to get the government into office.

This is an important measure. It is designed to be able to overview the whole of government. But we don’t yet know what sustainability is, and we don’t yet know how it is meant to operate on a cross-government basis. There was confusion in the Estimates Committee about whether or not it would in fact educate the economic white paper. It turns out that it will because the Chief Minister’s Department is responsible for the economic white paper and one small part of the department is the Office of Sustainability, and therefore it will have a role to play in that exercise. But where is the

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rigour in this? Where exactly is the overarching sense that this is all being crafted together to make an homogenous whole? I am afraid I don't detect that.

In other areas the laziness of the approach is absolutely clear. Most strikingly we look at the government's promise that it would be able to identify, if it needed to, savings of \$2.3 million in ministerial advice. This government has had to make some fairly dire decisions, and they told us only in the last week of sittings how hard those decisions have been. "Yes," says the Chief Minister, "we would like to spend more money on hospital waiting lists but we haven't got the dough." If you haven't got the dough, Chief Minister, why haven't you implemented the policy that you took to the last election to save \$2.3 million in ministerial advice by cutting ministerial advising back by \$2.3 million? Wouldn't it be nice to transfer that money from the executive budget to the hospital budget and reduce waiting lists?

Mr Stanhope: That's not in the four-prong plan.

MR HUMPHRIES: You can talk about our proposals all you like, and I know you are going to do that quite a lot, but sooner or later accountability demands that Mr Stanhope and his colleagues begin to answer some questions.

Mr Stanhope: The only money involved in the four-prong plan is the forgone revenue.

MR HUMPHRIES: Mr Speaker, because of these interruptions I will probably have to ask for an extension of time.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Mr Humphries has the call.

MR HUMPHRIES: Mr Speaker, this is a pertinent question, it is a real question and it is a question that deserves to be answered. If you, as you told this house last week, Chief Minister, need money for hospital waiting lists, why didn't you cut the executive budget by the \$2.3 million which you said was available to be saved? You said the money was there. Why haven't you taken it out?

Mr Stanhope: When did I say that?

MR HUMPHRIES: Do you want me to quote you, Chief Minister? I can if you want me to.

Mr Stanhope: I think you can quote Mr Quinlan but you might have trouble quoting me.

MR HUMPHRIES: Actually you have caught me out 100 per cent. Yes it was—

MR SPEAKER: Order! The member's time has expired. Do you want a second period of 10 minutes?

MR HUMPHRIES: Yes, I would love one please.

MR SPEAKER: Far be it from me to advise members how they contribute to debate but if you keep firing rhetorical questions at Mr Stanhope you will provoke him into responding.

MR HUMPHRIES: Well, he keeps on interrupting me, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: And then you keep complaining about being interrupted. It is a circle of events.

MR HUMPHRIES: I am not in any hurry, Mr Speaker. I am happy to keep going. It is true, Mr Speaker—Mr Stanhope didn't actually make the statement; it was made by Mr Quinlan on his behalf. I think Mr Stanhope was present on 15 October to launch the document entitled *ACT Labor's Financial Statement*. That statement says, under the heading "Administrative Buffer":

A Stanhope Labor government—

there is that name again—

reserves the right to review the effectiveness of existing budget funding levels for Ministerial advice. Labor believes the Liberal Government has conducted an approach to Ministerial services which is contrary to Labor principles and the public interest. Under Labor's approach, it is estimated that cost savings in the order of \$2.3 million—

by the way, that is recurrent, not one-off—

could be achieved. These savings would be redeployed to achieve Labor's objectives in the ACT Public Service.

You said there you could make a saving of \$2.3 million. Why didn't it go into health? Why didn't it go into hospital waiting lists? You choose not to answer that question. There is no point asking you this question in question time because you won't answer it then either. But it is a real question. You made that promise. I am sorry to keep reminding you about the promises you made, but there is a question of accountability here. You said collectively that you would be an open and transparent government.

Mr Quinlan: We went for 2 per cent overall—what about that?

MR HUMPHRIES: You said you would be an open and transparent government. If you are open and transparent, why can't you answer that question? You said there was a saving of \$2.3 million. You actually quantified it. You quantified it for each of the four out years; you show how large that saving might be. You even said in the first year you can make a saving of \$2.3 million. Now you tell us that the hospital system needs money but you are not prepared to explain why you would not transfer money from the executive budget to the hospital budget. I ask members to ask themselves what sort of transparency that is and whether this really is the government that people saw in October 2001.

Mr Speaker, another small point that I should mention is the promise by the government to deliver electorate offices. The term "electorate offices" wasn't a term coined by the Liberal Party.

MR SPEAKER: Order, members! Mr Humphries has the call.

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Mr Stanhope: We are just trying to get at the truth of the matter.

MR HUMPHRIES: Listen and you will find out. Mr Speaker, we were promised electorate offices. That term wasn't coined by the Liberal Party—it came from a Labor Party statement. It was modified, of course, subsequently and it became a different term by the time the election arrived. But, nonetheless, it was promised.

The electorate offices—this was going to cost \$50,000, according to Labor—became access to public libraries but, I might hasten to add, not public libraries outside the electorate of the member concerned. Mr Wood, for example, as Minister for Urban Services, is not proposing to translate himself across town into a public library in Belconnen to answer questions from the constituents of Mrs Dunne, Ms Dundas and indeed you, Chief Minister, about what is happening to roads or municipal services in Belconnen. That is not going to be available under this scheme, which under your policy was headed “Public Access to MLAs”.

Mr Corbell: What nonsense.

MR HUMPHRIES: It is in your policy document. I can quote it again if you like.

Mr Corbell: Are you saying that the minister is never going to talk to anyone in Belconnen? What a nonsense.

MR HUMPHRIES: No, but if he doesn't go—

Mr Corbell: If that is your argument, it is an absurd notion.

MR HUMPHRIES: If you want to drag this out, that is fine. You said you were going to be accessible as ministers. The Liberal government used to arrange for ministers to go at a publicly announced time to a publicly advertised place so that any person who came through the door could speak to us. We did that for 6½ years. For 6½ years every minister in the government did that. No-one was ever plausibly able to say to the government of the day, “We can't get to see you. We can't get access to such and such a minister.” We put that pressure valve in place and ministers could not hide and avoid attending these meetings—they had to be there. Mr Speaker, this government has dramatically wound back that public access.

Members opposite trivialise and giggle about this issue. They scoff at and make light of the suggestions. They say, “We've got electorate offices.” But at the end of the day the most fundamental aspect of supposed open and accountable government is access to the members who make it up. People want to speak to the ministers in the government, not, with great respect, Mr Hargreaves, Ms Gallagher and Ms MacDonald, the backbenchers, or even you, Mr Speaker. If Mr Wood under this scheme is only available in a public library or a community centre, whatever it might be, in Tuggeranong, the government is not engineering the access to members of the government which the people deserve, and which I would go so far as to say was promised during the last election when you spoke about being an open and accountable government.

Mr Speaker, I make those points because they are relevant to the Chief Minister's portfolio and appropriation. We are spending almost \$70 million in this portfolio but the level of transparency is wanting and the level of delivery on promises is wanting. It is a lazy budget. It is a budget that does not demonstrate a clear vision—it is a vision which is, at best, fractured. It is a document which, above all, is secretive—secretive about performance indicators, secretive about exactly where you can find ministerial advice as a recorded item.

We were in trouble because we used to show where you could find ministerial advice in the budget papers. They are going to get into trouble because you can't see where that is anymore. It has been removed. The open and accountable government has hidden the figures. If I am wrong, point to where the cost of ministerial advice is recorded in these budget papers. Of course, it isn't. Mr Speaker, there are a lot of questions to be asked about this. Perhaps the second Labor budget will be more open and transparent than the first, but I have serious doubts that this will be the case.

MRS DUNNE (4.19): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to the appropriations for the Chief Minister's Department, I am scratching my head literally at what we have had offered to us, dished up, as the Office of Sustainability. As the Chief Minister was listing the way that we have characterised this government's budget, I can in all honesty say that I wrote down in preparation for speaking now that this budget and this government are lazy and secretive, especially when it comes to the Office of Sustainability.

The concept is a brilliant one. It is entirely laudable to have an overarching group of people of high qualification who know what they are talking about informing us on every aspect of what this government or any other government does, so that we have a full account of the social, economic and environmental consequences of the actions of the government. But what do we have from this government? We have window-dressing.

We have had some election commitments, but when you sit down and look at the amount the government is providing in that regard you find that it is paltry. A mere \$375,000 is being provided over the course of this budget to do all that, to have an overarching look at the economic, social and environmental impact of all the policies being developed across this place. The government has provided \$375,000 to do that, but it will not be able to do what it wants to do. Why? The government has recruited two or three highly qualified and well-intentioned people, but they have nothing to do because there is no definition of sustainability.

As I said in this place on 27 June after the Chief Minister launched the discussion paper, we have four ministers here who talk all the time about sustainability, but they have no definition of it. These are four ministers in search of sustainability. All I can say is that I hope that Mr Wood has found the magic formula by the time he comes back from Johannesburg. When Mr Wood comes back from Johannesburg, I hope that he knows something about sustainability, because at this stage, at this time of the election cycle, this government knows nothing about sustainability.

All we have is window-dressing, with a little bit of money and a couple of people being provided. But what will happen when we actually get down to the crux of the matter? We discovered that in the estimates process when Ms Dundas asked whether the Office of Sustainability would have a role in looking at the Gungahlin Drive extension. The

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answer to that was no. We are going to spend \$32 million in the first instance and probably \$80 million to \$100 million in the final instance and rip a trench 80 metres wide and seven metres deep through Belconnen, through a precinct, divide a suburb against itself. Will the Office of Sustainability be involved? No, not at all.

We are finding that all the time. As Ms Tucker has pointed out in this place today, the Office of Sustainability, like almost every other aspect of government, has no meaningful performance indicator. It has one quantitative performance indicator, which is to develop a sustainability framework. It is going to be very hard for it to do that as this government has no idea what it means by sustainability.

As we will find as we go through this budget and as the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, there are no meaningful performance indicators for most of the major new tasks. The knowledge fund has no performance indicators. Here we have no performance indicators. Of course, you are not setting yourself up for a fall if you do not have anything to measure. This government is hiding its failures even before it gets there, as it has done constantly, by having no statistics, no measures that we can compare. This is a matter of great shame and the government will soon become known across the community as a government that is lazy, secretive, will not deal honestly with the people and has no ideas.

MR STANHOPE (Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for Community Affairs and Minister for Women) (4.24): I will be brief, Mr Speaker. Initially, I had planned to rise to make the points that my colleague Mr Corbell has made about the significance and importance of the long-term strategic planning that we are doing. It is being coordinated to a large extent by the Chief Minister's Department, but all departments are playing a significant role and part in it.

It is the case, as has been mentioned by members on both this side and the other side, that there is an awful lot of work in train. Significant work is being done on the development of an economic white paper, something which was promised in the election campaign. Mr Quinlan included that in the major statement he made about our commitment to the development of an integrated industry strategy policy and the development of a sustainable economic future for the ACT. We are doing a range of work through the development of an economic white paper.

No, it is not something which you can snap your fingers or wave a wand and produce overnight. Yes, we are being measured and deliberate in the way that we have gone about its development and it will be ready next year. We are developing a social plan, something that has never been done, along with the development of an economic white paper. We have never had an integrated strategic industry policy or economic plan for the ACT. Yes, we have established an Office of Sustainability. Members opposite pour scorn on that. It is the first office of sustainability in Australia.

Mr Humphries: And it will be the last.

MR STANHOPE: Mr Humphries says that it will be the last. Time and history will prove him wrong in that. Indeed, we are blazing a trail with the creation of the Office of Sustainability. Yes, there has been a lot of initial make-up work that has to be done when

governments begin to develop a plan or a response as innovative and potentially as significant as the work that we are doing through the Office of Sustainability.

Mrs Dunne has just railed against the information that was available in relation to the Office of Sustainability, saying that it was lacking. It would be a very interesting exercise to go back to the estimates process on that. Mr Humphries and Mrs Dunne have just charged this government with being lazy, secretive and a range of other things. It would be interesting to go back through the estimates transcript and find out how many questions Mr Humphries and Mrs Dunne asked in estimates of the head of the Office of Sustainability. I will do it before tomorrow.

We have just had a diatribe from Mrs Dunne that there has been no information, that nobody stood to explain, that there was nobody who could actually explain what we are doing with the Office of Sustainability, that there was nobody ready to answer the questions, that there was no idea of what it was about, what we were seeking to achieve, what the vision was or why we were doing what we were doing.

Let us go back and look at how many questions Mr Humphries asked of the head of the Office of Sustainability. Let us look at how many questions Mrs Dunne asked. Let us look at how many questions members of the Liberal Party asked. Let us look at that and see how much humbug there is in this attack that there was nobody prepared to stand up and talk about the Office of Sustainability. How many questions was I asked in estimates about the Office of Sustainability? How many questions was Rob Tonkin asked in estimates about the Office of Sustainability? How many questions was Peter Ottesen asked about the Office of Sustainability?

You stand here and criticise us, saying that there was nobody prepared to provide you with any information about the Office of Sustainability, but you did not ask about it. You did not ask about it, so it was absolute humbug, absolute hypocrisy, and at the end of the day lazy of you. In fact, Ms Dundas asked more questions than Mr Humphries and Mrs Dunne together. We all know that. It was the laziest performance, the worst performance, ever by an opposition in estimates; there is no doubt about that. It was a travesty. You were a disgrace.

I guess it is a problem when your mind is on the Senate, when your mind is up the hill, and your deputy is posturing. Does he wait for his leader to jump or does he gently nudge him? Does he roll up to his leader's office with Mrs Dunne, does he line up at the leader's office with Mrs Dunne, and say, "Listen, Gary, you can't have it both ways. You can't lead us when you are telling the whole community you don't actually want to be here. You don't even want to be in this parliament, you want to be in another parliament, and your energy levels show that. You are not doing the job. You are not doing the work. You didn't do any work in estimates. You want the job in the Senate—go. You owe it to your party and you owe it to the people of Canberra to jump."

Mr Humphries: You would like that, wouldn't you?

MR STANHOPE: In a way I would, Mr Humphries. I am not sure who has got the numbers.

Mr Humphries: Would that be because I was more popular than you at the last election?

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MR STANHOPE: No, you weren't.

Mr Humphries: Actually, we were. You and I personally, the last opinion poll.

MR STANHOPE: The last opinion poll, the one that counts, was the ballot.

MR SPEAKER: Order, members! Could you focus on relevance?

Mr Humphries: And I got more votes than you.

MR STANHOPE: You did not get a higher percentage vote than I got. You had more electors.

Mr Humphries: Oh, the percentage!

MR STANHOPE: There are 30,000 more electors in Molonglo. You got more votes than I did and you are therefore more popular! Take a look at the percentages, Mr Humphries.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Chief Minister, can we just focus on having a relevant debate?

Mr Smyth: He is embarrassed.

MR STANHOPE: I am not embarrassed about the shenanigans in your party room and whether Mrs Cross or you will get to Mr Humphries first.

Mr Humphries: Is that relevant, Mr Speaker?

MR SPEAKER: Nobody seems to be paying much attention to relevance.

MR STANHOPE: I think that Mr Stefaniak is the dark horse in the field. Mr Stefaniak has a couple of numbers there. The loyal Mr Cornwell is sitting behind him. Mr Pratt is a waiverer. We know about Mrs Cross. We wait with great interest. An enormous amount of work has been done—

MR SPEAKER: I am waiting for somebody to come back to the amendment before us.

MR STANHOPE: I just have. An enormous amount of work has been done within the Chief Minister's Department and I would like to take the opportunity to publicly acknowledge the work that the Chief Minister's Department and all of its officers have done in the first nine to 10 months of the new government. The amount of work that has been done by officers has been simply staggering, has been of enormous quality and has been done with great diligence and professionalism. I think that this is an appropriate time to thank all officers in the ACT public service for the enormous amount of work that they have done in the development of the social plan and the economic white paper.

Mr Humphries: A legacy of the Liberal government.

MR STANHOPE: What, the public servants? We know of your view of public servants. Also, the establishment of the Office of Sustainability, the spatial plan work that has been done and, of course, all the work that has been done in the multicultural and community affairs field, the new office for the ageing, the Office for Women, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unit. Enormous work is being done in all of those groups. We have established for the first time a council for the ageing. We have a revitalised and very active Ministerial Advisory Council on Women and we are about to appoint a ministerial advisory council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island affairs.

I was concerned also with some of the comments about there being a lack of focus on programs that affect women. There are two or three responses I would make to that. In the first instance, we have a select committee of this Assembly looking at issues—in effect, doing an audit of issues—that might directly impact on the lives of women in the ACT. It is only appropriate that we await the outcomes of that inquiry before we respond or make decisions in relation to it. It is simply absurd to suggest that we should pre-empt the outcomes of a report that is yet to be written.

Similarly, an enormous amount of work is being coordinated through the Office for Women in relation to issues concerning violence against women. To suggest that this is not an issue that is being taken seriously by the government is really insulting—insulting to those officers within the department and across departments in terms of the work that has been done to coordinate responses to three separate reports in relation to violence against women.

I take the opportunity again to congratulate all officers of, in this instance, the Chief Minister's Department on the absolutely outstanding work, the level of productivity, the devotion to duty in a simple and very sincere acknowledgment of the groundbreaking work that has been done in relation to the development of a social plan, the development of an economic white paper, and the creation of an Office of Sustainability and the development of a framework around that and on all of the new and far-sighted work that is being done in relation to multicultural and community affairs in the ACT. It is a credit to them and I am so pleased that the far-sighted plan that this government, the Labor government, has for Canberra is being so effectively implemented.

MR SMYTH (4.36): Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to address the appropriations for the Chief Minister's portfolio. In October 2000, the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr Stanhope, made the comment that the opposition was ready for government, that it was ready to take the reins and run with it if the then Chief Minister should fall. It is curious that he made that statement because we have yet to see anything that proves that they were ready for government then or now.

As the election results were being tallied and we waited for the changeover in government, he promised that there would not be a hiatus of two to three months after the incoming government hit the treasury bench. He was certainly right on that. There has not been a hiatus of two to three months; there has been a hiatus of eight to nine months, and the hiatus is set to continue.

I want to concentrate on one thing that the Chief Minister said. He said that it is all about the significance of the long term, that we have to have a long-term view, but there has been no mention of the now. What has happened for the ACT and the citizens of the

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ACT between when they came to government last year and now and what will happen between now and, say, July next year when the white paper is finished? There has been no mention of what they are seeking to do now.

It is extraordinary that a new government, a government that had been in opposition for 6½ years, should think that it is acceptable that it will take 20 months—and that is how long it will take—for the government to come up with its framework, 20 months during which very little will happen, except I predict that the ACT will slide. That would be unfortunate because it took six years to make up for the time in which this crowd were last in government.

Mr Stanhope said that you just cannot snap your fingers and do these things. Clearly, they cannot do anything over there to come up with a decent answer as to what it is that they are really doing to make sure that the ACT is sustainable. We have already heard from others about how there are no meaningful performance indicators in the Chief Minister's portfolio. I think that flies in the face of the government's comment that it would be honest, open and accountable.

We heard from senior public servants during the Estimates Committee process that they are not even sure whether the white paper will have any effect and that that will have to be judged when the white paper is tabled. Surely you have some idea of what the white paper will achieve, or are you really flying blind?

In the lead-up to the budget there was one thing that the business community was saying clearly that it saw as very important to continue the growth of small businesses in particular, but also medium and large businesses, in the ACT, that is, the lifting of the payroll tax threshold, as the previous government had promised. I think that their hopes were dashed when they read the documents and they found out not only that there was not to be a lifting of the payroll tax threshold, but also that there was very little in the entire document in terms of addressing the needs of small, medium and large businesses into the future.

I think that that is a shame. Yes, we have had a transition. We will argue about where the money will come from to fund the transition that has seen 60 per cent of Canberrans now employed in private enterprise, but they are there and we need to make sure that we, as an Assembly, are doing what we can to bolster that. But the government, most importantly, must ensure continuation of the growth that had started, and there is nothing in this budget for small business.

There is very little in this budget for tourism. I am pleased with one response to the comprehensive Estimates Committee report—the most thorough report issued in the last seven years; it is certainly better than the reports that were dished up by those in opposition previously. One of the recommendations was that the V8 money stay with CTEC. The only ray of light for the tourism industry has been the Treasurer's statement that he would like the money to stay with CTEC, but that will depend on future need. Apart from that, we can see nothing else for tourism, for instance, in this budget. There is to be continuation of the visitation program to Canberra, money that we had started funding. Given the success of the program, it is appropriate for it to continue. But it is hard to call that new money.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, how is that relevant to the Chief Minister's Department?

MR SMYTH: It covers tourism, Mr Speaker, unless you want to tell me that it does not.

MR SPEAKER: I assume that it does. I assume that you are right. The papers in front of me do not explain it in that way.

MR SMYTH: If you would like to tell me where I should more appropriately talk about tourism, I am happy to do it at another time, but business is certainly within the Chief Minister's Department, as is tourism. Mr Speaker, the whole point is that, again, this is a do-nothing budget for tourism. The government is going to consider the future of the National Convention Centre. It is going to consider how to implement the tourism plan. But, having said no to the V8 race, what will the government do to plug that gap in the June long weekend? The tourism minister did have some ideas before but chose to discard them. I think it is a shame that he does it so glibly and so lightly.

Mr Speaker, what can business expect from this government? Not a great deal. What can the tourism industry expect from this government? Not a great deal. Therefore, what can Canberrans expect in terms of employment in one of the largest industries that we have in this place? Very little, I would put to you. Mr Quinlan has tabled figures showing unemployment is at 3.5 per cent.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, I draw your attention to the administrative arrangements for 2002. They show the Minister for Economic Development, Business and Tourism as being responsible for economic development, employment matters, business development and tourism policy and services.

MR SMYTH: Under which unit would you prefer that this be discussed, Mr Speaker?

MR SPEAKER: It still comes under Chief Minister's; you are right.

MR SMYTH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. There is nothing in this budget for small, medium or large businesses and there is nothing in this budget for tourism. Mr Humphries has already discussed the knowledge fund and how there are no indicators on what the knowledge fund will do. Indeed, even in the discussion during the estimates, the officers were wary about saying that the knowledge fund was bound for success because there was such a large amount of risk involved. They were unable to tell us when there might be a return to the knowledge fund so that more knowledge could be dispensed around the city with the moneys circulating through the fund.

We were not told how that might happen, what sort of success they expected and the sort of time frame in which they expected that success to occur. It gets back to there being no meaningful performance indicators. The reason they cannot tell us is that they just do not know. As we have seen in a number of portfolios under this government, what seems like a good idea at the time is much harder to deliver when you are in government, so we will have to sit and wait and watch what they do.

Mr Speaker, the minister has responded to the one recommendation that deserves particular attention. I refer to recommendation 11, which goes to setting a deadline for the economic white paper. The committee recommended that the minister set a deadline

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for the development of the economic white paper and said that in any case it should be prepared as soon as possible. The government's response was that it was not in agreement on the setting of a deadline and did not agree that it should be prepared as soon as possible, saying that the government had not set a deadline for the completion of the white paper as there were a number of complex issues that needed to be considered and, given the significance of the paper, it was preferable that the paper not be hurried and that sufficient time be taken to achieve a quality output.

Mr Speaker, what is a quality output? We have nothing to adjudge it against. We have no meaningful performance indicator. We have no idea of what the quality output may be. We do not know when it will arrive, although it appears that it will be about July of next year, and we are not sure of what effect it will have at that time. It is all great and well to stand up and say that you have to have a vision for the long term, you have to put forward a plan for the future and you have got to do the work, but what is the work going to achieve? We have been given absolutely no idea by the government. It was a good idea at the time to have an economic white paper, but they have absolutely no idea how to make it happen, when it should happen, and where, how and why it will achieve what it will achieve. That is why, based on the estimates given to the Estimates Committee, it will be available in about July of next year. It will take 20 months for the government to achieve what could possibly be nothing.

I think that summarises their approach to business in this city. They seem to be uninterested in business and they seem to be uninterested in tourism. We had the revelation today in question time that there will be a fence around Floriade for security reasons. That just points up the rhetoric which the Labor Party put forward in the lead-up to the election and which is not being carried on or carried out now that they are in government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the other thing that is somewhat galling about their lazy approach to this budget is the delay factor. We are seeing delays in many projects that they seem unable to decide upon. A question in point is the National Convention Centre.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Your time has expired, Mr Smyth. Would you like to take your second 10 minutes.

MR SMYTH: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker. The National Convention Centre is something that is very important to the future of the city and is something that needs to be acted upon, but what are we having? We are having another review. I think that the epitaph of this government will be: "We didn't do a whole lot, but at least we had another review."

MR QUINLAN (Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Business and Tourism, Minister for Sport, Racing and Gaming and Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Corrections) (4.45): I wish to say a few words in closing the debate on my amendment. We know that the opposition is riven with division and we know that if it could actually get three or four of its members together in one place it might straighten itself out. It has nearly as many factions as the federal Democrats. But it was refreshing to hear agreement in the criticism of the budget, agreement only insofar as everybody said the same thing—nothing. There has not been any significant criticism of the budget registered today.

Mr Humphries has been on his feet three times already, with extensions, and Mr Smyth has been up a couple of times. What we have seen today, I think, is a plan to replace substance with quantity, with noise. If anybody in this place is lazy and unimaginative, it is the opposition, which has descended effectively to the schoolyard chant mentality that if you say something often enough it might offend. Where is the substance for this lot? There is none and there has been no effective criticism.

Mr Smyth asked, "What is happening now?" It has been our unfortunate duty in the months that we have been in government to clean up lots of messes. That does take some effort. I can talk about a quarry that you were involved in—a disaster. I can talk about the car race. Not only did it go over budget, but the over-budget expenditure flowed into the next year, into the year of the election, the year beyond. I can talk about problems in the racing industry that should have been addressed early and have not, but are being now.

We talked earlier about a remand centre which is in a parlous state and for which nothing was being done in the mid-term; you just took the risk. We could talk about sorting out the nurses dispute. We could talk about the horrendous workload that has flowed on to the Minister for Health in relation to the disability inquiry and the state of disability services in this place. Mr Smyth touched upon tourism. Let me say that it has been quite necessary to build some bridges within the tourism industry and I think that we have come a long way in recent months in terms of effective communication, effective consultation and effective cooperation across the industry. It is like taking over a house from the previous occupants and needing to refurbish it because, God knows, it needed refurbishing and you have to do some very basic work before you go ahead and brighten it up.

Mr Smyth asked what we are doing for business. This government has set up the knowledge fund, which will encourage new business. This government budgeted and provided funds for the ICT centre of excellence, which will generate considerable business. This government has set aside half a million dollars over two years for a small business employment ready program, which, I have to say, has been welcomed by small business. This government included in its budget money for a medical school, the construction of which will assist the construction industry and the construction of which was not included in the previous budget.

In fact, I think that any objective assessment would have to say that this government has been very active in getting on with the job of governing this territory. We did not start in a very pretty place, but each minister has addressed the problems in his portfolio as well as put in place the new paths that are necessary. I am very proud of what has been achieved so far.

I have to confess that there are within the direct purview of this government some very untidy matters which we inherited and still need to clean up. But we will clean them up, we will put the territory in far better shape and we will, as we have done this time around, budget for all of the things that are necessary. I find it ironic that occasionally we get the barb from the other side of the house that we were left with a surplus. You can always provide a surplus if you do not count everything in the budget. Effectively, that was the case and that was what we interpreted.

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Members will be pleased to know that I do not intend to speak on every line item. I certainly hope that we will not grind on into the night with the same speech. I think we have heard in this place, without much original material, the same speech about 10 or 11 times now. I will be here, but I just make a plea to the opposition not to be turgid and to put a little originality, a little humour, a little wit or something else into speeches, instead of the appalling repetition and schoolyard chant that we have had so far. Really, there has been no criticism so far.

Amendment agreed to.

Proposed expenditure, as amended, agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—part 5—ACT WorkCover, \$4,695,000 (net cost of outputs), totalling \$4,695,000.

MS DUNDAS (4.53): ACT WorkCover was well looked after in this year's budget. That would not come as a surprise to many. The ALP allegedly has been the champion of the worker and workers rights. Certainly, the links between the union movement and the Labor Party have been longstanding.

One of my concerns with ACT WorkCover is the amount being spent on fighting legal battles, a great expense to the ACT taxpayer, because there appear to be certain gaps in the system when it comes to worker safety. I was shocked to hear ACT WorkCover report during estimates that three people had died due to workplace injuries as no deaths were recorded the year before. My first concern, obviously, was with the increase in the number of deaths from zero to three. But what dismayed me further was that the chief of ACT WorkCover admitted that there may have been other workplace deaths that had gone unreported and she would not know about them.

The death of a pizza delivery driver came to the attention of ACT WorkCover only as a result of the family of the driver contacting them. It is alarming that we do not even know when and how people are dying due to workplace injuries. That is right, ACT WorkCover, a \$6 million body, has no way of knowing how many people die through workplace injuries.

The second point of dismay came in estimates when I asked the minister how many breaches of workplace safety laws were detected through workplace inspections and learned that the total number of breaches was not recorded. He could only report on the number of breaches resulting in a formal notice of improvement. I got the impression that for every formal notice of improvement, there could be tens or even hundreds of workplace breaches not actually recorded, not acted on and not showing up in any figures. Without good information on the number and nature of safety breaches in particular workplaces or particular industries, how can WorkCover or the executive make sound decisions about which areas require more attention or even new approaches?

When I looked at the penalty regime, I found that last year only one fine, of \$1,000, was imposed. ACT WorkCover acknowledges that they rarely issue formal notices of improvement, but cannot actually show us how many breaches there have been. Only one fine was issued in the last 12 months and the data collection of industrial deaths is little more than family reporting. Compare this with what we get for the \$400,000 we

spend on monitoring the Dangerous Goods Act. Out of that money, we got 34 prosecutions, which led to one case being successful and 23 cases being withdrawn. Of the remaining 10, WorkCover lost in all cases and was ordered to pay costs, costing the territory \$100,000 in 12 months. Claims were over \$200,000 last year and who knows what it will cost the territory this financial year.

I have raised a number of times serious concerns about this body. It appears that worker safety is not the highest priority for ACT WorkCover in this budget.

MS TUCKER (4.57): I will be brief in my comments. There does seem to have been some increase in budgeted employee expenses. It may reflect management of the collapse of HIH, the cost of the WorkCover at work program or simply increased capacity. I recall that last year when we were all talking about increasing workers compensation premiums all the union, insurance and legal representatives who spoke to us about the issue agreed that increased workplace monitoring and inspections was desirable.

I believe that the same thing was said by the various political and public service staff when we were negotiating the passage of the new workers compensation scheme around this time last year. Given the fact that the new workers compensation scheme has just come into force, that it has a quite different focus on rehabilitation and that the scheme will be sustainable only if this return to work focus really does bring down the cost of the lower level incidents, it seems fairly clear that some increased capacity would be of real benefit. I am concerned about whether WorkCover will be able to improve its performance in this area in the way that we have been promised.

I am also interested in whether the government has taken into account additional activity that could result from improved operation of the Dangerous Goods Act, particularly to do with fireworks and any changes that government could introduce as a result of the inquiry that looked into that issue. Generally, WorkCover has a very important function to perform in our society. It has been subjected to quite an amount of criticism over fireworks in particular. The government will have to make some policy decision about them, obviously, and the Assembly will be involved in that, I imagine. There may well be resource implications from that. I am interested in knowing whether that has been taken into account in this regard.

I repeat that I am concerned that we do not necessarily have enough understanding of the resource implications of getting the workers compensation scheme working in a way that will actually get people back to work. I am also concerned and will support the comments of Ms Dundas about the capacity of WorkCover to ensure that workplaces are safe. This issue has come up in this Assembly at one point or another every year since I have been here. I remember having this discussion when Tony De Domenico was here, so it has been going on for a few years. We are not seeing enough information being kept and we are not seeing confidence increasing in worker safety and the capacity of the regulator to ensure that workplaces are safe.

MR PRATT (4.59): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make some comments about workplace relations matters in respect of the budget.

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At 5.00 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.

MR PRATT: I refer to recommendation 47 of the Select Committee on Estimates report which says:

The Committee recommends that workplace managers must seek full involvement of workplace employees in the first instance for the negotiation of workplace general agreements, and guarantee that while workers will have the option to appoint any union to represent their negotiations, they are not bound to union representation if they desire to represent themselves.

This was a recommendation which I thought went to the heart of democratic and fair process with regard to employer/employee relationships within the government. Mr Deputy Speaker, it enshrines the rights of employees to appoint union representation if the employees at a work site so desire. Importantly, the committee recommendation sought to encourage the government to enshrine, as the first action, the full involvement of employees without union interference.

It is disturbing to see the government reject this recommendation and their rather limp reply—perhaps limp in keeping with their visionless way of doing business:

The government recognizes the importance of employees being involved ... in the development of certified agreements.

As its preferred option, the government continues to press for the involvement of unions. This is code for political pressure to allow the unions the whip hand in all workplace relations matters. I hope the government will not turn back the clock on workplace relations matters.

The previous government introduced legislation which put in place provisions and initiatives which were much fairer than those which had previously existed. Had these workplace relations initiatives been allowed to develop further—at least through the life of this government—there would have been far-reaching benefits for, firstly, the ACT community with more productive and enterprising government services and, secondly, for the individual workers in terms of justice and fairness.

Mr Deputy Speaker, another issue of major concern is the government's stated intention to phase out Australian Workplace Agreements in the public service. During the estimates hearings, when I questioned the government on what benefit this might accrue in both budgetary and management terms, the only response I received from both the minister and his department was that this would bring efficiencies.

Mr Corbell: You did not ask that, at all.

MR PRATT: I did.

Mr Corbell: You did not.

MR PRATT: I did so. Shall we bring out the *Hansard*? I presume they meant bringing administrative efficiencies in time spent and documentation prepared during workplace negotiations. Efficiencies there may be, but this is some sort of ground zero efficiency—one which would otherwise relate to lazy management.

Mr Deputy Speaker, management should manage its people as individuals, with dignity and, where justified, prepare individual awards which meet the needs and aspirations of both the organisation and the individual. If the workers desire to have a union represent them, that is fine—and beautiful. Instead, we are now going to have the unions standing over everyone's shoulders. My concern about the government's flagged intention to reduce the existing range of EBAs and phase out all AWAs is that they are exercising administrative laziness—they continue to avoid the tough decisions, with respect, to keep the unions in their correct professional place. They are causing a detrimental effect on productivity. They are turning back the industrial relations clock and, most importantly, they are removing fairness from their employee administration.

MR CORBELL (Minister for Education, Youth and Family Services, Minister for Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations) (5.05): Mr Deputy Speaker, in reply, I will put the government's position on a number of issues raised by members in this debate.

First of all, in relation to the comments made by both Ms Tucker and Ms Dundas regarding ACT WorkCover: yes, the government has substantially increased funding for ACT WorkCover. That has been driven primarily by the changes to the Workers Compensation Act and, in addition, the implementation of the infringement notice scheme following amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Both of these are core pieces of legislation, when it comes to workplace safety and protecting the rights and entitlements of workers injured in the workplace. The need for this funding is highlighted by the substantive changes which have occurred to both the Workers Compensation Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act in the past couple of years. They are important measures, if we are to give any effect at all to the legislation which has been endorsed by this Assembly.

Ms Dundas raised the issue of employees injured when travelling to and from work, and that WorkCover could not necessarily identify this. Ms Dundas, this issue is not unique to the ACT. It is commonplace for injuries sustained in journeys to and from work—or even in the course of the person's work—to not always be regarded as workplace injuries, if the person is involved in an accident and is either injured as a result of that car accident or, regrettably, killed.

That is an issue which requires a greater level of awareness, on the part of both employees and employers—to properly identify whether or not an accident, or a death arising from a motor vehicle accident, is a workplace injury.

ACT WorkCover has been one of the best regulatory agencies in the country, in advancing and providing information to employers on their responsibilities in relation to workers compensation, occupational health and safety, and a range of other issues.

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The government's WorkCover at work scheme gets WorkCover officers out of their headquarters, as they are already, giving them a very visible presence through the WorkCover at work van, which visits shopping centres and areas of employment such as Fyshwick and Mitchell, as well as the more central business areas—right around the city—to get the message out about the responsibilities of employers. That is a very important measure.

I commend WorkCover for the work they are doing on education. Education now is the central aim—not solely an issue of enforcement and compliance. Education is central to preventing death and injury, and preventing the issues dealt with in a more reactive way in other parts of the ACT's legislation.

In relation to the Dangerous Goods Act, the Dangerous Goods Act is certainly an increasingly outmoded piece of legislation which contains serious deficiencies. However, ACT WorkCover and the government have an obligation to ensure that where, as a government, we are aware of breaches of the Dangerous Goods Act, such as improper or dangerous storage of fireworks or the sale of fireworks without an appropriate licence, the matter is brought before the courts for resolution.

That is an appropriate measure. These decisions are taken by the commissioner. The commissioner is a statutory officer, responsible for the enforcement of these regulations, and she must do so without fear or favour. If costs accrue as a result of those activities, it is incumbent on the government to meet those costs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move now to the issues raised by Mr Pratt. Mr Pratt has outlined the general, broadly ideological, view the Liberals bring to this discussion. Let me dispel some of the issues and myths he sought to perpetuate in the debate tonight.

First of all, Mr Pratt claims that the unions are closing out employees in relation to EBA negotiations in the public service. What Mr Pratt failed to acknowledge, in his ideological rantings, was that every EBA must be approved by a vote of all public servants in the relevant agency, whether they are members of the union or not. That is how an EBA is approved. No other way is satisfactory. For Mr Pratt to claim that unions are going to have the whip hand and are driving these agreements is false. It is the public servants who drive the agreements. They vote on whether or not the EBA is acceptable to them.

The logic following therefrom is that a union seeking to represent its members is not going to represent and advocate an EBA arrangement which will not win the endorsement of the majority of members in the workplace. It is that simple. That shows the fatal flaw in Mr Pratt's argument, in that regard.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the other issue I want to address is AWAs, which are, fundamentally, unfair and secretive workplace arrangements. They are used to divide and conquer employees in the ACT government workplace, as they do not deliver equity and fairness. The government has moved to replace AWAs with a transparent and fair process which still recognises that, in certain circumstances, you have to offer special conditions to attract qualified people.

Mr Pratt: This will be the only jurisdiction that believes that rubbish.

MR CORBELL: No, Mr Pratt. There are seven other jurisdictions, right around Australia, which share that view. In fact, the Commonwealth is the only jurisdiction which does not share the view that AWAs are fundamentally a divisive measure. Mr Deputy Speaker, all Labor states and territories share the same philosophical viewpoints on that. That is not surprising, Mr Pratt. The AWAs are fundamentally unfair and divisive.

Mr Pratt: They are not unfair.

MR CORBELL: I heard you in silence, Mr Pratt. I ask you to allow me the same courtesy. Mr Deputy Speaker, the government is moving to replace AWAs with a clear management standard which allows flexibility where agencies need to recruit individuals who cannot otherwise be attracted under the normal pay range and salary awards and conditions—as an interim measure. When the new certified agreements and enterprise bargaining arrangements are in place, those will provide the appropriate mechanisms to attract necessarily qualified people into the ACT government service.

The government has taken steps to remove the divisive and secretive measures. Let us not forget how the previous government sought to use AWAs. They would advertise that there was a position available in an ACT government agency and say, “By the way, if you want to accept it, you will have to take an AWA.” Where is the choice in that, Mr Pratt? Where is the freedom of discretion for the employee in that? There is none. Indeed, it just shows how wedded they were to getting AWAs into the workplace because of their ideological obsession. Mr Deputy Speaker, we want equitable and transparent arrangements, and that is what we are putting in place.

MR HUMPHRIES (Leader of the Opposition) (5.14): After listening to the comments of the minister, I wanted to make a brief contribution. He points out that there is a preference on the part of Labor governments for arrangements which include unions. He says they prefer not to have AWAs because they tend to be arrangements which exclude unions. He is quite right about that. These arrangements should have enough flexibility to be able to suit the needs of particular individuals and workplaces. They are not governed by one-size-fits-all kinds of rules.

The minister puts forward this proposition, which will now dominate the industrial landscape in the ACT public service. He is entitled to do that, as he is the Minister for Industrial Relations in the ACT. To further and elevate the interests of peak union bodies in the course of this debate, his emphasis will be on providing that kind of arrangement.

That is fair enough, except when you overlay that with the reality—the statistical fact—that in the ACT, as elsewhere in Australia, union membership has been falling steadily for the past decade. Today, according to the latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, not much more than one in every five workers across the ACT is a member of a trade union.

Although the ACT public service might have a different profile from the average across the territory, the chances are it is not so different. While it has that kind of profile, the task of imposing a union-centric industrial system over a system where a large

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proportion of the population—if not the majority—is non-unionised, is going to be a very difficult one indeed.

Measures need to be democratic in that framework, to be able to respect the fact that some people—perhaps to the chagrin of Mr Corbell—will choose not to negotiate in union-overarching, or union-dominated, frameworks; they prefer individual negotiations.

As we discovered in the course of the Estimates Committee, there is no reason for those arrangements, if the government so chooses, not to have a high degree of transparency. Transparency is not an issue. There is no reason why you cannot have complete transparency in those arrangements, if you want it. Mr Deputy Speaker, transparency is not the issue here. The issue is flexibility. If the government wants to move away from flexibility in the workplace in favour of simplicity, that is fine, but let us not pretend that simplicity is the only goal to be sought in this exercise.

MR CORBELL (Minister for Education, Youth and Family Services, Minister for Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations) (5.17): Mr Humphries simply does not understand the point. The point is that you have failed to demonstrate how our arrangements are less flexible, while still being more transparent. The level of union membership in the ACT is not in issue, whether it is within or outside the ACT government service. The fundamental issue is how do we best ensure that employees have the best opportunity to negotiate on a level playing field?

The reality is that, frequently, if you are not protected by a union, which is able to marshal the resources to advocate in your interests, you are not on a level playing field for negotiating the working conditions of your employment. It is quite clear how that can be the case. You would advertise the position, saying, “You can have this position if you win at an interview, as long as you accept an AWA.”

That is a fundamentally uneven playing field. That is the point. You do not get that point, because you are not interested in the notion of ensuring there is a level playing field between employee and employer, but we are. As a party, we are. That is why we have taken the steps we have taken.

MR PRATT (5.19): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to respond to Mr Corbell’s comments. It is extremely relevant when we point out that, with a reduction in the membership of unions in the ACT public service, there is now no place in this working environment, for—as Mr Humphries put it—a union-centric system. While the minister fails to understand that, I think it is beyond me and the community in general. That is a very relevant point to make.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—part 6—Treasury, \$37,980,000 (net cost of outputs), \$14,928,000 (capital injection) and \$42,962,000 (payments on behalf of the territory), totalling \$95,870,000.

MR HUMPHRIES (Leader of the Opposition) (5.21): Mr Quinlan earlier enjoined us all to inject some humour into the debate. I must say I have not found much to laugh about in the budget so far. In fact, some parts almost bring me to tears. However, there is one

bit which I thought was close to humour, if not an outright belly-aching laughing matter. I see that there was a quite intense debate in the Estimates Committee about the matter of insurance. Members will recall this.

The committee was pressing the government to explain what it was doing to assist small businesses and community organisations which were facing steep increases in premiums, resulting in a serious question, or doubt, about their future viability, or capacity to deliver services to their area of the community. The government insisted that its measures had made a huge difference so far. The government pointed to the insurance hotline it had set up. The government also had to admit, under questioning, that it had not received very many calls, if any, to the hotline because the existence of the hotline had not been advertised.

In responding to the Estimates Committee recommendation that it should advertise the hotline, the government says that it has advertised the hotline very widely in the press. It then quotes the *Canberra Times* of 27 and 31 July, the *Valley Voice* of 2 August and the *Canberra Chronicle* of 13 August. That is four advertisements. That is, I suppose, pretty wide.

Mr Deputy Speaker, what is noticeable about this is that all of those advertisements appeared after the issue of the existence of the hotline was raised—and nobody knowing it was there. It was raised in the Estimates Committee in late July. Until that occurred, there was no advertising of the hotline.

It took that prompting—that pressure from the Estimates Committee—for the government to get off its backside and advertise the hotline it had set up. If you set up a hotline and do not bother to advertise it, then you really do have to wear the title “lazy” with some lack of comeback. How else do you explain the fact that the thing was set up and no-one knew it was there? The humour I am referring to is the response to the recommendation that the government should consider using part of its windfall gain from stamp duty on rising premiums, to establish some kind of scheme to assist those in the community who are experiencing problems.

The government, first of all, says there is no evidence to support the claim of a stamp duty windfall flowing from the increased costs of public liability insurance policies. The committee pointed to the fact that the amount of money collected in the 2001-02 financial year was larger than expected, on the budget estimates made before the beginning of that financial year.

The government response concedes that duty on general insurance revenue was \$23.237 million last financial year, when the original forecast was for only \$20.62 million. The increase in revenue was of the order of 12.7 per cent. That is a very significant increase. The government goes on to say that you cannot take that money as meaning anything significant, because some of that money is attributable to the sale of buildings formerly owned by the Commonwealth. It is not about public liability insurance premiums—it is really to do, somehow, with stamp duty premiums.

I am not quite sure how that works out. I am not sure how there is an insurance windfall because of the sale of a Commonwealth building. I will leave it to the Treasurer to try to explain how that works out. I think what he is saying—he might correct me if I am

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wrong—is that a large, unexpected amount of money fell into the system that year, which might not be repeated the year after, even though I said that the budget base for 2002-03 has been adjusted to \$24.137 million—even more than that collected in 2001-02. Therefore, something is happening to lift the base for revenue from insurance premiums.

If there is a windfall—and, pretty clearly on these figures, there is—I take the point the Treasurer appears to be making: that the windfall may not be permanent, and that perhaps the sale of Commonwealth buildings in the territory will end. As I say, I am not sure what that has to do with insurance premiums, but let us say it ends. It may be the case that we do not need to have, on an ongoing basis, an insurance advisory scheme of the kind the committee recommends. That is, if the windfall from insurance does not continue beyond a couple of years, in my view it is quite conceivable, and reasonable, for the government to argue that the sort of scheme we have talked about in our recommendation should not continue beyond that point either.

I sincerely hope that, within a couple of years, the activity this and other governments—and even some oppositions—across Australia are considering to deal with insurance will have substantially contained the problem and we will not need to have specialist responses like this three, four or five years from now. However, unless we try it, we will not know.

The government response goes on to suggest that there might have been an illusory windfall in the past financial year because the collapse of HIH may have caused some property holders to take up new policies.

I am not sure how that works—the minister might explain it to me. If someone has had to cancel an earlier policy, because the company concerned has collapsed, and they have taken up a new policy, surely that is a second lot of insurance that has been purchased and stamp duty will have been paid on it. However, as I understand it, if you cancel an existing policy, you are entitled to a refund of the stamp duty, unless the duty is more expensive. This is our point—the cost of stamp duty is going up. The fact that a policy of insurance has had to be cancelled and a new one taken out should not mean that there is extra money in the government's coffers because, as I have said, you get a refund of stamp duty. That is my understanding of the state of affairs but, again, the minister can correct me if I am wrong.

The government points out that it is taking a number of valorous steps to address the insurance crisis. It refers, primarily, to the stamp duty relief for not-for-profit organisations. However, it does not mention in its response that the extent of the relief is about \$200,000 and that the extent of its extra revenue from insurance premiums is \$2.7 million which, I would have thought, is a fairly significant difference. The big joke, right at the end of this part of the government's response, is that, having heard the recommendation that there be consideration given to the establishment of an advisory service for people to minimise risk, we find that that is exactly what the government proposes to do.

It is worth reading the last paragraph of this response:

The government is developing an internet based risk advisory service to assist community organisations, sporting groups and small business. The service will primarily focus on improved risk management. The site will be developed in consultation with key community groups and linked to community organisation websites. The estimated cost of the project is \$300,000 to be met within the Department of Treasury budget.

Firstly, is that not exactly what we recommended in our inquiry? We said that such a scheme might, for example, establish an advisory service on reducing actuarial risk. That is what you have done. That is what we recommended. We said you should use the windfall from stamp duty to pay for it. You say it is coming from within the Department of Treasury budget. However, with great respect, extra spending of \$600,000 was needed to acquire additional advice. You said the budget was so tight that you could not afford to provide that additional economic advice without getting extra dollars into the Treasury budget, yet you can find \$300,000 in petty cash to pay for this scheme. To me, it seems more likely that the government is using the money obtained from insurance premiums to pay for that scheme.

I observe, in passing, that \$300,000 for an internet-based scheme seems very expensive. A person has to log on to get the advice.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would you like to take your second 10 minutes.

MR HUMPHRIES: I would seek an extension of time, Mr Deputy Speaker. (*Extension of time granted.*) It seems to me that, if you are just logging on, \$300,000 is a lot of money—unless you have live operators at the other end. In that case, why can't it be a telephone service as well? The internet is wonderful, but there are limitations as to its effectiveness in answering people's questions within a short space of time.

I am sorry if that exasperates you, Mr Treasurer, but we are trying to find what is best for the citizens of the territory. I suggest it might not be a bad idea to look at some other model of scheme. The government, with respect, has taken up the suggestion of the Estimates Committee but not given the committee credit for so doing.

Mr Quinlan: That is because it was in place before you thought of it!

MR HUMPHRIES: It was not in place.

Mr Quinlan: It was being put in place.

MR HUMPHRIES: If it was in place, why did you not tell us that that was the case, when you went before the Estimates Committee? Take out that interjection, Mr Deputy Speaker! You were before the Estimates Committee, and we were pressing you on this question.

Mr Quinlan: I don't think so.

MR HUMPHRIES: Yes, we were. It was virtually the initial thing I raised on the first day you were there. Go back and check the *Hansard*. I asked you, "Why, when you have a windfall from stamp duty, don't you spend it on those sorts of things?" That was your chance to tell us you were setting up an internet-based advisory service.

Mr Quinlan: I thought you were talking about an advisory service. Are you shifting ground?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, please! Let us not have interjections.

MR HUMPHRIES: Unless I am sorely mistaken, I do not think you did. Show me the *Hansard* where you said it. I do not recall you saying that there was going to be a new scheme set up. You might have been thinking about it, yet not mentioned it to the Estimates Committee. We had a few instances where things were being talked about that were not divulged to the committee, although they were announced very soon afterwards. The fact is that we did ask the question and we did put the issue on the table. Even if you were thinking about it beforehand, it might be nice to acknowledge that, yes, the committee has made a reasonable suggestion and we will—partly, at least—take up its idea, rather than say, “We do not agree with you but, by the way, we are doing the same thing anyway, in the background.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a couple of other points. There was some debate in the Estimates Committee about money put aside for pay rises for public servants. The Treasurer had earlier been very vocal in suggesting that insufficient money had been put aside. However, when it came to an examination before the committee, the Treasurer was reluctant to reveal how much was put aside, and how much had previously been put aside, thus allowing a comparison to be made on the very point he had raised in the public arena.

I repeat, in this place, the assertion I have espoused in the public arena. There was a large amount of money put aside to meet public service pay rises. I maintain that it is, or was, sufficient to meet reasonable pay rises which might be anticipated in the public service. If the Treasurer says I am wrong, he can show me how I am wrong, and not say to me, “You may take my word for it that the money is not there.” To return to an earlier theme in this debate, that is not about open and transparent government.

I will not mention in detail the comments in the report on the treatment of superannuation. I simply say to the government that it is pretty clearly the view of the Estimates Committee that we should retain the model endorsed by the Auditor-General. I think the government agrees with that, but I am not sure.

Finally, I congratulate the Treasurer on being able to effectively avoid the across-the-board cuts which affected other areas of government. We saw that the amount taken out of the Treasury budget to account for the half percent across-the-board public service cut—which it worked out to be at the end of the day—was matched, almost exactly, by the additional amount put aside to provide for additional quality economic advice.

I do not think Treasury should be cut. I say that not just because I am a former Treasurer, but because the area is already hard pressed. The quality of advice is very dependent upon employing high-quality people who are paid at a level which reflects what they would be receiving in other public services, or in the private sector. In my view, it is wise not to cut that area. Effectively, I think that, with a little bit of peas and thimbles work, the Treasurer has been able to achieve that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as I say, there is a need for a bit more transparency in some of these areas. I urge that that be the case in future budgets.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Quinlan, would you formally move your amendment?

MR QUINLAN: Yes, I was going to, Mr Deputy Speaker. I move amendment No 2 circulated in my name. [*see schedule 1 at page 2913*].

MS TUCKER (5.36): I want to talk generally to the issue of Treasury. As members are aware, the Public Accounts Committee is inquiring into the general issue of revenue. That committee process will look at questions of regressivity and so on. I hope that is going to be a substantial help to the government, as well as the office of sustainability, when framing its next budget.

From the 2002-03 highlights, we welcome the fact that strategic issues to be pursued include reviewing corporate governance, and performance of government business enterprises. This review is badly needed, after the past government's extraordinary achievements. Among other matters, the stadium mismanagement and the ongoing car race blow-out spring immediately to mind. Then there was the Auditor-General's fairly damning analysis of some of these agencies, through recent reports, including the operation of the Public Access to Government Contracts Act and governance arrangements of selected statutory authorities and frameworks for internal auditing in territory agencies.

It appears, however, that the only measure of quality for this review is that the Treasurer and chief executive are 95 per cent satisfied—as assessed by a six-monthly survey. However, lessons of the past might indicate that this is not necessarily reassuring. Perhaps the Treasurer could build in some form of external assessment of the process as well.

Whilst I am talking about measures of quality, I will comment on the Estimates Committee recommendation that the government undertake a review of performance measures across the budget, so that measures are meaningful and take into account the need for triple bottom line reporting. I fully endorse this recommendation. I go further and ask the government to review the whole presentation of the output statements in the budget, as they are inadequate. It is pointless trying to fit all government activity into a standard format if the results are meaningless or even farcical.

I found it interesting to hear Mrs Dunne speaking, with such outrage, about the question of performance indicators, because it is the performance measures and indicators that the Liberals set up which I think have been fairly useless. I will give just a couple of examples in the current budget. Under the Chief Minister's Department, in Output Class 2, Economic Development, Sport and Recreation, we have a measure of quantity—"Administer the Stadiums Authority Act"—with a target of six. Six what? Six stadiums, six staff, or six meetings?

Underneath this is the measure, "Drug testing of selected athletes undertaken in accordance with obligations set down in the Drugs in Sport Act"—with a target of one. Does this mean we will be testing only one athlete?

The budget paper is littered with these sorts of meaningless targets. The attempt in the budget to reduce all government activity to outputs has created much confusion between those activities which involve ongoing procedural work and those aimed at specific objectives.

The measures of quality and timeliness are also poorly defined in percentage terms. Sometimes the measure has a satisfaction level of 95 per cent. In other cases, however, it is 90 per cent, 75 per cent, 80 per cent, 85 per cent, 99 per cent or 100 per cent. I have yet to see how qualitative indicators can be assessed so precisely and objectively in these various percentage terms. Before it presents its next budget, the government needs to review the legacy left from the previous government of reducing everything in the budget to outputs.

Getting back to Treasury matters, in line with the government's commitment to sustainability, I hope the government will pursue options for ethical investment of its cash and super funds. Seeking the best return on investment is inherently risky. We have seen much variation in the government's budget position over time, due to changes in our investment returns. On the contrary, ethical investment can produce a reasonable and steady rate of return, as well as providing active support to worthwhile industries.

In fact, one of the major ethical investment trusts in Australia is based in Canberra. That is Australian Ethical Investment Limited, which has about 40 employees. I am not suggesting that the government favour this fund. I am just pointing out that there are economic opportunities for the ACT in encouraging a local ethical investment industry.

MR CORNWELL (5.42): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak briefly about a couple of the territory-owned corporations, and I would also like speak about one that is not a TOC but nevertheless is, I understand, under the Treasury responsibility.

The first one I would like to mention is Actew. I note that TransACT appears to be running up some considerable debts. I have to say that there have been some comments about the difficulty of reading some of these documents. It is not clear to me whether in fact the two amounts of \$10 million and \$26 million, which would lead you to conclude that the total amount is \$36 million, are in fact two amounts or whether one of them is part of the total.

I simply flag the question of TransACT because I think we are going to have to keep an eye on the matter and hopefully we won't find that the territory is increasing its investment in that business venture. I am becoming increasingly concerned about governments getting involved in private sector ventures and committing considerable amounts of money.

The real point I want to address, though, so far as Actew is concerned is the matter of full retail contestability. I note that the Estimates Committee was concerned about aspects of this. The majority of the committee noted that while businesses may pay less, domestic consumers may pay more for electricity under retail contestability. The committee went on to note that there may be overall benefits to full retail contestability. It noted that the government is going to implement the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission's recommendations by 1 January 2003. The committee then

went on to recommend that the government undertake an extensive and timely publicity campaign to acquaint ACT consumers of the consequences of any decision to apply full retail contestability in the territory.

I hope that the government will do that. I would ask that also by 1 January 2003 you might like to look very carefully at where this full retail contestability is going. The draft report of the ICRC of May 2002 estimated an increase of \$2 per month for domestic users of electricity. When the final report was issued in June—that is, two months later—the estimate of increased costs to domestic users had gone up to \$6 a month. That is a 300 per cent increase in just two months. I would like some assurances, Mr Treasurer, that by the time we reach 1 January 2003 the cost will not have climbed every two months to become more than was originally suggested.

Mr Treasurer, I don't know if you have any control over this but I would like your comments relating to what appears to me to be a rather inadequate way of assessing this type of cost. I think domestic consumers need to realise what is happening. Two dollars a month may not sound much but it has now gone up to \$6 a month. If we are going to work on a 300 per cent increase over the following six months it is going to get rather expensive.

The other matter I would like to talk about is Totalcare. You are faced with total confusion when you look at the budget papers that relate to Totalcare. I am unable to find in the papers where the \$1.113 million cost of the corporate fleet division transfer from Fyshwick to Mitchell is listed. You may elaborate on that for me, Mr Treasurer. Also, where are the 2002-03 budget costs for the relocation scheduled for this financial year of the Totalcare roads and facilities management business to the Mitchell site? I also note that we are showing losses in the linen area.

The Estimates Committee stated:

The Committee recommends the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission review whether Totalcare's operations are consistent with National Competition Policy guidelines.

The government does not agree with this recommendation. I think it would probably be a good idea if they did have a look at this because I, too, am concerned that we have a government-funded organisation—\$5 million last year—competing out there with the private sector. Is this a fair go? Is this government in fact committed to encouraging the private sector or are you prepared to compete against them? I would suggest that, with that sort of injection of funds, the government has probably an unfair advantage. I would like the Treasurer's comments on that.

Finally, Mr Treasurer, where is the fourth report for the Australian International Hotel School? On 8 March this year you advised me that the fourth and final report for that body had not yet been presented. We are almost at the end of August and there is still no sign of it. However, I note that one of the 2002-03 budget highlights—I don't know that I would use that expression—is "making recommendations arising from the strategic review of the Australian International Hotel School to be considered by government and address issues relating to the future operations of the AIHS".

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Mr Quinlan: We should do something urgently about that.

MR CORNWELL: I agree, Mr Treasurer, and that is why I am asking you the question. But it appears to me, if my reading of that so-called highlight is accurate, that a strategic review of the school is to be considered. Mr Treasurer, you might like to confirm whether you have received the fourth and final report. It was due in February 2002—it is now August. I would simply remind you that the findings of the Auditor-General's report No 11 of 2001, which is only last year, stated:

The AIHS is not likely to be profitable in the short or medium term. There can be little expectancy of longer term profitability.

Secondly, the Auditor-General said:

The ability of the AIHS to continue as a going concern depends solely on government support.

I think something like \$50 million of ACT funds has been put into this school already. I think it is time that this Assembly, at least, bit the bullet on the matter and let us see if we can sort something out to overcome this drain upon the territory budget. I look forward to your response in due course.

MS DUNDAS (5.52): At the tabling of the Estimates Committee report I mentioned my concerns regarding Totalcare and the possible use of taxpayer money by Totalcare to prop up private industry and New South Wales private hospital ventures. I also made clear my opposition to full retail contestability of electricity as I believe this will lead to high utilities bills for families and individuals while providing cheaper bills for businesses and the high-end users of electricity. It appears that Mr Cornwell has taken up my theme on those issues.

Let me turn to insurance. This department has taken in all the extra money in stamp duty due to increased insurance and increased real estate prices. We should look to see what has been done to address the insurance crisis and the high price of real estate. The evidence is overwhelming that the cause of the insurance crisis lies with the insurance industry rather than the legal system. Within the insurance industry the drive for greater shareholder profit has overridden any social responsibility to the community.

Every charitable organisation or small business owner that I have spoken to says that they have never made a claim against public liability and yet the insurance premium continues to rise to astronomical levels. I have advocated that structural reforms, such as insurance pools, are the best long-term solution for bringing down premium prices. This is recognised by both the Victorian government and the Australian Local Government Association as the best form of insurance reform to deliver immediate savings. Instead, the ACT government has endorsed group buying arrangements. But given the small number of insurers left in the market, and their reluctance to negotiate bulk discounts, any saving would be short lived as insurance companies strive for even greater profits.

So far the reforms of exempting some sporting teams from duty and starting up an insurance hotline to find out whether businesses or organisations are exempt have amounted to nothing and play into the hands of big insurance companies as even fewer

claims will be made, and there is no guarantee that premium prices will actually fall. I still maintain that the establishment of government-backed insurance pooling for community organisations is the way to drop premium prices.

The other thing that Treasurer Quinlan has in this appropriation for Treasury is the Expenditure Review Committee, a thinly disguised razor gang which has the job of finding cuts in all departments. During estimates we were unable to find out their brief, who was going to be involved beyond the ministry and any details about what the Treasurer wants from the review committee. So I have a number of concerns about this department that have not been abated by estimates.

As we move from debating to implementing the budget, I will continue to monitor and fight to keep the government accountable in the areas covered by this appropriation.

MR QUINLAN (Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Business and Tourism, Minister for Sport, Racing and Gaming and Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Corrections) (5.55): In closing the debate I might address in reverse order the remarks that have been made. Ms Dundas made some observations in relation to insurance companies. If you met with the various Treasurers or finance ministers who have wrestled with this problem you would probably find that you have just stated the bleeding obvious. The only trouble is that it is an international market and we are trying to wrestle with some very pressing practical issues. But rest assured that we are aware that the insurance industry has a lot to answer for.

I am surprised on a couple of counts by what Mr Cornwell said. I am surprised that he threw TransACT into the mix because I think TransACT is doing reasonably well. One of the anomalies along the way for it to arrive at its current capital structure was in fact the previous government investing some \$30 million in it because there had been some difficulties with changeover of equipment from Nortel to Marconi—and there have been some difficulties in run out. Effectively, it was said that there had been losses.

But you, your party, the government you were part of, didn't set about revaluing the company before lending new money but actually piled the new money on top of some of the bad old money. In fact, I think the territory has been done down in that regard. It is now in a position where it is marginally less than a 25 per cent shareholder, and that is a very significant fraction. There are some 75 per cent rules in relation to what can be done by TransACT, what can be decided by TransACT. We effectively had a lot of money involved and been parlayed out of the game to a large extent.

TransACT is borrowing and it is borrowing because we as shareholders have said we are not investing any more money in it. We have agreed to allow Actew to underwrite some of that borrowing but only on the condition that we have absolute first call over the assets of TransACT should there be any failure. That is part of the process of rigorous financial management that we were talking about.

Full retail contestability is still under consideration within the government. We have the ICRC report. I think members really should take time to have a little look at the position we are in in the ACT. Because of the creation of a national grid a market is operating and within that market Actew has purchased very well.

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Using the current contracts we are something like 20 per cent better off than a lot of other jurisdictions in terms of the rate we pay for electricity. That 20 per cent will be a function of the contract price and also the economies of scale inasmuch as there is a lot of electricity per capita used in the ACT. That economy of scale should remain. But when the contract at Actew has expired there is highly likely to be a significant increase in the price of electricity to the consumer. At that point in time it may well be that some members in this place might think, "Why aren't we in open competition in the open market so that our consumers can get the best price available? Why have we made them a captive of Actew, that no longer has an advantage?" That is the point that the government and probably the Assembly need to wrestle with.

The ICRC would permit ActewAGL two years or maybe three years to recover the costs of setting up for competition, and this is around about the same time frame in which we can enjoy lower prices before the market comes to meet us head on. So we are still wrestling with this reasonably complex problem.

We have said no to a review of Totalcare. After all the criticism we have had of reviews, I think it is ironic that you are calling for us to have a review. Totalcare has been subject to review after review after review.

Mr Cornwell: Maybe that says something.

MR QUINLAN: Exactly. It is not a simple problem to fix but, Mr Cornwell, rest assured I will be doing my best and this government will be doing its best to fix this problem, which is one of many that I enumerated before in debate. We will be doing the best we can to sort that out, without just tossing out on the street a whole lot of people who work in government. These are people who have effectively, one suspects, been transferred from the government service into Totalcare with a view to allowing them to wither on the vine rather than the government taking on the difficult task, I presume, of just throwing the day-labour force out on the street. So we have inherited quite a complex and difficult problem, and it is going to take a lot of working through. We are working through it.

Let me go to Mr Humphries' queries. I will take the simple one first. Why does stamp duty increase because—

Mr Cornwell: You have left one out that I mentioned.

MR QUINLAN: What was that?

Mr Cornwell: How about the hotel school?

MR QUINLAN: I haven't got the report yet. I was asking for it today, of all things, so where the hell is it?

The reason why stamp duty goes up when you sell Commonwealth buildings, and there have been a lot sold, is that the Commonwealth is a self-insurer, and as a self-insurer it doesn't take out policies and therefore it doesn't pay stamp duty. If it sells to a private owner, the owner does take insurance—he would be mad if he didn't—and he does pay stamp duty. So as private ownership replaces federal government ownership the amount

of insurance policies in the territory increases, as does stamp duty. I hope that is not too hard for Mr Humphries to digest.

I want to address with Mr Humphries the virtual accusation that we in reply to the Estimates Committee report have stolen the idea of advisory service, that we came up with the idea on our own even though it was discussed and suggested by the Estimates Committee. Well, it wasn't. I have the *Hansard* in front of me. The first mention of an advisory service is in my reply to a question about how we should spend the additional stamp duty. I said that we have assisted organisations that need help—that have got to the desperate point of saying, “We've got to close down if we can't get insurance.” I said that we have put them in touch with the right people and got them insured. And here is the quote of what I said:

We are actually setting up a process whereby we can advise on risk management and the risk component.

As best as I can see, this is first time it was discussed. This element of the debate is just so typical of the Humphries style in this place. I don't know whether we need to revisit standing orders but when debate in this place descends to this creation of straw men that Mr Humphries persists in on such a regular basis, we do have a problem. I fully compliment Mr Humphries on his glibness, on his capacity to put across an argument, but I have nothing but disrespect for the way he goes about verballing people and creating straw men that he can later destroy with gusto. It is about time this place matured beyond that point.

Amendment agreed to.

Proposed expenditure, as amended, agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—part 7—Central Financing Unit, \$13,136,000 (payments on behalf of the territory), totalling \$13,136,000—agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—part 8—Home Loan Portfolio, nil expenditure—agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—part 9—InTACT, \$9,232,000 (net cost of outputs) and \$9,170,000 (capital injection), totalling \$18,402,000.

MS DUNDAS (6.08): One thing that I raised in estimates and that I believe I need to raise again today in relation to InTACT is a \$2 million dollar budget line. I refer to page 125 of Budget Paper No 4, revised edition, which details a once only write-off of \$2 million for invoices issued prior to 1 July 2001. When I asked what led to this \$2 million write-off the answer was as startling as it was large. Basically, it appears that InTACT's clients—that is, ACT government agencies and departments—had been issued with false or incorrect invoices over previous years and, hence, the money was not able to be collected; that is, InTACT was able to get \$2 million worth of bad debts although it has to deal with basically only one client: the ACT government. So this \$2 million was variously placed on balance sheets throughout the territory and now we have just written it off.

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When I asked what led to this, I guess, error in invoicing, the information was that some invoices were incorrectly raised; in other cases that the amount raised was actually in dispute—that is, in dispute between the ACT government and InTACT and other ACT corporations and authorities. Can you imagine any other service provider, or non-government service provider, being able to write off \$2 million in one year?

This is a debacle. At estimates the Treasurer saw no real problem with this administrative error. We are still at a loss as to the ramifications in regard to this \$2 million write-off.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Proposed expenditure—part 10—Superannuation Unit, \$68,800,000 (capital injection) and \$39,169,000 (payments on behalf of the territory), totalling \$107,969,000.

MR HUMPHRIES (Leader of the Opposition) (6.10): I won't detain the Assembly for long, Mr Speaker. It is impossible to pass this proposed expenditure without making some comment on the interesting exchanges between, on the one hand, the committee and the Treasurer and, on the other hand, the committee and the Auditor-General, about the question of how to deal with superannuation assets in the territory's accounts.

As members have heard, the committee has recommended that there should be a continuation of the treatment of superannuation as an integral part of the general government sector accounts; that they should not be excised or separated, as the Treasurer has been suggested. I accept that this is a debate to excite accountants and economists, and it is a fair enough debate to have at some stage. The committee has had such a debate and has determined one particular point of view, and no doubt there will be some further toing-and-froing about that. But the interesting part about our deliberations was the contrast between what the Treasurer said was the view of the Auditor-General about this and what the Auditor-General said was the Auditor-General's view about this.

The Treasurer, when asked about the difference between himself and the Auditor-General, was quite adamant that, first of all, the Auditor was wrong and, secondly, that there was likely to be a change in the Auditor's view. In fact, he said to the committee:

... I can already tell you that I think the thinking of the Auditor-General has changed to some extent in relation to the superannuation.

And the Under-Treasurer added to that:

We've had extensive discussions with the Auditor-General, who, as the Treasurer indicated, is, as we speak, probably in the process of changing his mind as to how some aspects of this might be accounted for.

It came as something of a shock, I would suggest, to the Auditor-General to discover that his mind was changing. He had it put to him quite directly, and again I quote:

... that there had been a dialogue with your office about that subject, and that he—

that is, the Treasurer—

was saying to the committee that there was some movement in view on that matter on your part or on your officers' part.

Mr Parkinson responded, "No, there's been no movement at all," and retained the view that the proper and full picture of the territory's financial position demanded that both superannuation and other territory accounts be in the one bundle.

Mr Speaker, I think that is a significant exchange. As I have said earlier, the government response to recommendation 18 doesn't greatly illuminate me and perhaps others as to what the government intends to do about the future treatment of superannuation. I am not sure whether the Treasurer has given up the ghost on the changes he has been talking about or whether he intends to lick his wounds and go back into battle again. Perhaps he can tell us. But, either way, I think it is important that we understand where we are heading on this, that we will be able to be sure that the accounts are transparent and that we have a full picture in front of us. My view and the committee's view was that that is best achieved by way of keeping the present system but I will be happy to see what the Treasurer has in mind for how to advance this debate.

MR QUINLAN (Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Business and Tourism, Minister for Sport, Racing and Gaming and Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Corrections) (6.14): Mr Humphries, I am sorry to tell you that there are a number of issues in the treatment of superannuation. One of those issues is the treatment of investment earnings, where the Auditor-General believes that they should be bundled up with the operating result of the territory and be declared as part of the year's operation. He and I disagree on that.

Mr Humphries: We've noticed.

MR QUINLAN: Yes, I am just making a point. He and I disagree on that and I have tried to explain why in this place. If you understand anything about a sinking fund you will know that the amount of contribution that we are making, and that the previous government made in part, to the superannuation investment account is an amount of capital which is designed to be invested to earn income to meet a payment at a later date. The amount that we are contributing is discounted in the anticipation of those earnings. So it is a sinking fund. You throw the money in there and you are going to get nothing back. Even though it will earn money, you are going to get nothing back because you are going to have to pay the employees. In my mind, if you are going to get nothing back you shouldn't actually be counting that interest. This is a point of difference I have with the Auditor.

But what is more important—and maybe a little knowledge is a dangerous thing; I'm not sure—is that the issue to which we were referring in relation to the Auditor having a difference is a separate process. From time to time the gross liability of the territory is reviewed by the actuaries so that we can find out, given changing circumstances and new information, what is a revaluation of our superannuation liability.

Mr Humphries: I don't think so. It wasn't the issue the committee was talking about.

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MR QUINLAN: Well, we may have been talking at cross purposes. Initially the Carnell government undertook a very substantial amount of review and said, “Darn, we’re not putting that in in one year. We’ll spread that over 12. We will adopt an American standard.” Does any of this ring a bell? Several years ago the Carnell government adopted an American standard, in the absence of an Australian standard, that superannuation adjustment would be written off over 12 years. A very substantial adjustment, which I think I was able to identify somewhere in amongst the Actew debate—the “we want to sell all of Actew”—was then transferred, effectively set aside, and written off over 12 years. So an amount—and I have discussed this before in this place—of \$20-something million was added to the bottom line in each of those 12 years even though it was just an adjustment to a figure on a balance sheet.

I understand, and I am advised by my officers, that the Auditor-General thinks that those sorts of adjustments should be brought to book immediately. I can’t recall the exchanges between ourselves and the Auditor-General, but that is the area that it is highly likely both I and the Under-Treasurer of the time would have been alluding to in the Estimates Committee. You might not want to accept what I say but I am sure you would want to accept what the former Under-Treasurer advised the Estimates Committee.

Mr Humphries: About what, though?

MR QUINLAN: About the difference we have and the advice that I have received that the Auditor-General is in the process of changing, or is likely to change, his opinion on the treatment of review adjustments arising out of periodic actuarial reassessment of the superannuation liability.

Let me say this, and I will be brief: there is, as far as I am aware, an issue within the superannuation accounting process where the Auditor may be changing his opinion.

Mr Humphries: I’ll take your word for that.

MR QUINLAN: And he may be changing his opinion to agree with something I have been saying for a number of years. So we might get him on the other one. But it is important for you and members of at least the Estimates Committee to understand the concept of the sinking fund. You are saying that even though interest earned—the accruing interest from time to time on that fund—is committed by virtue of the commitment to employees at a later date and will not come back into your coffers, you want to count it on the bottom line. That is what the Auditor wants and that is the interpretation that I have been given as to current accounting standards, and I disagree with current accounting standards but for logical reason.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 6.22 to 8.00 pm.

Proposed expenditure—part 11—Health and Community Care, \$428,400,000 (net cost of outputs), \$13,493,000 (capital injection) and \$5,624,000 (payments on behalf of the territory), totalling \$447,517,000.

MR QUINLAN (Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Business and Tourism, Minister for Sport, Racing and Gaming and Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Corrections) (8.02): Mr Speaker, I move amendment No 3 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 2913*].

MR SMYTH (8.02): Mr Speaker, it is important to put on the record that much was promised and, against that promise, not everything was delivered. There is, of course, extra money in this year's budget for health, and that is welcome. But in the lead-up to the election last year, in a document entitled "Priorities—Health care—Fact sheet 3", the ACT Labor Party said about its plans to rebuild ACT health:

ACT Labor believes we can do better. And Labor believes we can get better value for our health care dollar.

The document went on to say that waiting lists for elective surgery were unacceptably long and that Labor was also concerned about waiting times at the emergency departments of our public hospitals, going on to say that it would therefore establish at least two after-hours clinics and that Labor would address health needs in the areas of mental health.

In a document entitled "ACT Labor's plan for rebuilding the ACT health service", under "Addressing community concern and the crisis in ACT health", the Labor Party said:

The losers in this battle are those who work in the health system, and patients, and the ACT taxpayer.

Labor believes we can do better.

... Labor will immediately inject \$6 million to turn around the decline under the ACT Liberal Government of The Canberra Hospital.

It also said on page 3 of that document, referring to the Estimates Committee hearings of the previous year:

In addition, in Estimates Committee hearings it became clear that the Government had not factored into its Hospital Budget the increased activity achieved last year, that is, an increase of 7 per cent over the previous year.

The document went on to say:

A crisis injection by Labor of \$6 million to The Canberra Hospital will ensure its viability and operation at improved standards. With this additional \$6 million, the Hospital would be able to employ more nurses and, for example, admit another 1300 in-patients and handle another 2500 patients in Emergency.

It is a shame that the rhetoric is not matched by the activity. It does need to go on the record that there is more money in the health budget. The reason that this government has been able to inject money into the health budget is, of course, that the previous Liberal government left it with a surplus, something we were not left. It took us more than six years to make up for the failings of previous Labor governments and be in a position where we could inject significant funds into the health system.

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We have to look at what it is about the health system that Labor is getting so wrong. It is fairly depressing to catalogue the failings since Jon Stanhope has become our part-time Health Minister. We have the admission of Calvary Hospital that it will be shutting wards to public patients for elective surgery for 14 weeks, almost a quarter of the year. We have seen accident and emergency closures on several occasions.

We have seen outpatient services cut from an estimated 210,350, as published in the budget documents tabled in June in this place. Under quizzing in estimates on 30 July this year, we had a revelation that the correct figure was going to more like 202,000, a dramatic drop. We heard then that two aged care respite programs, one at Narrabundah and one at Dickson, were to be cut. In a litany of cuts that Mr Cusack revealed to the committee, we found that something like 8 per cent of the mental health services at Calvary Hospital were also to be taken away from the people of Canberra.

It beggars belief that we can have such a promise being made at the start—"We believe we can do better. We will get better value out of our health care dollar."—only to find that the part-time health care minister has taken his eye off the ball to such a degree that, for all the extra dollars that this government has injected into health, the people of Canberra are getting fewer services, which is what it is about, Mr Speaker. It is about looking after the people of Canberra and it is about making sure that we are not just throwing money at problems but are actually coming up with solutions.

Much has been made of the Reid report and how reform will be carried out. Let's look at the Reid report. The Reid report says that we should scrap the purchaser/provider model because people do not like it. Where is the analysis? What do we see with the scrapping of the firm controls that purchaser/provider brought to the health system? We see blow-outs in waiting lists and reductions in services and we will actually see a poorer return in value for the dollars that the government will put into health this year. You have to ask: is that in keeping with the government's promise or its commitment? Labor said that it believed that we could get better value for our health care dollar, but that has not been the reality.

Things will get worse unless something happens dramatically in the future because, as we heard in estimates, this was not in terms of hospital growth; it was the same as what the previous government had put into the budget. In other words, all they were doing was maintaining the levels we had established without factoring in growth for the coming years. If you look at the 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06 estimates, you will see that there is provision for growth of only 0.5 per cent, 1.7 per cent and 2 per cent.

The Chief Minister, in his commitments in the lead-up to the election, says, "I have found that we need 7 per cent every year just to cope." The irony of that is that in one of his press releases he said that Calvary Hospital would grow by 7 per cent that year, saying, "Calvary Public Hospital experienced a 7.5 per cent growth in demand for emergency services in the last financial year and we anticipate the trend will continue this year." That was from a press release by the government entitled "Helping public hospitals meet demand". But we have not seen a 7.5 per cent growth in the funding. We were told by Mr Lee Koo at estimates that it was 5.6 per cent. But the reality is that in the outyears it will decline.

There is the issue of the slush fund, the money kept aside for growth, money wisely put aside by the previous government and for which we were soundly bagged out by the then opposition for not allocating funds. We allocated those funds for 2001-02, but we cannot see here a further allocation of funds. We have a contradiction that only the part-time Health Minister can answer. How can he criticise us for factoring in growth and not allocating for that growth and then do exactly the same himself? It defies belief, Mr Speaker.

The average figure for the last three years under the Liberal government was 20 per cent growth, or an average of 6.67 per cent. For Labor over this year and the next two years it will be 9.2 per cent or an average growth of 3 per cent, half of what we put into the health budget for the hospital. And then we have this curious thing called a clawback which the Labor government is applying to all of its departments and which is particularly relevant in the health budget. They gave with one hand and they took back with the other, with savings, productivity and the rationalisation of services growing in the outyears. The amount is \$1.6 million this year and \$2.4 million in the following three years. Yes, they did give some additional money this year, \$8.7 million, in the second appropriation bill, and then they started taking it back.

If you are looking at how to achieve a sustainable health budget into the future, you will not find it in this budget. What you will find in this budget is an inability to manage a system by a minister who has no idea and who in the lead-up to an election made the glib statement: "We will give you \$6 million and it will fix everything." It fixed it all right; it fixed it so that you get to wait longer to get on the operating table for elective surgery, it fixed it so that access to accident and emergency has had to be rationed, it fixed it so that you have to wait longer to get outpatient services, which have been reduced by \$8,000 this year, and so the list goes on. Mr Speaker, you cannot throw money around and have decreases in services and then say that you have managed well; it is not logical. What we will see with the removal of controls by this government is a blow-out in the health budget and a blow-out in the hospital budget.

The Labor Party made the following statement in the lead-up to the election:

The effective performance of existing operating theatres (mainly through changes in work practices) can provide increased throughput within existing resources.

Labor believes that there are efficiencies to be gained within the system, and that we can do better within existing resources.

That is absolutely true. The question for our part-time Health Minister is: when might that happen? We heard at the Estimates Committee from staff at both the Calvary Hospital and the Canberra Hospital—

MR SPEAKER: Order! The member's time has expired. Would you like to use your second 10 minutes, Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: I would love to use my second 10 minutes, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: It is not compulsory.

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MR SMYTH: I realise that it is not compulsory, but I know that this is an important issue and it would be negligent of me not to do so. I will go back to the document. I refer to the section “Waiting list management” on page 9 of the document entitled “ACT Labor’s plan for rebuilding the ACT health service”. It reads:

The effective performance of existing operating theatres (mainly through changes in work practices) can provide increased throughput within existing resources.

Labor believes that there are efficiencies to be gained within the system, and that we can do better within existing resources.

The question is: when will that happen? The answer is: not in the lifetime of this government, because it was explained to the Estimates Committee that that involved changing nurses rosters. There are inefficiencies in the system and there are benefits to be gained, but that would involve a cooperative approach between management and the nursing staff so that all of the theatres could be used far more effectively.

When grilled or asked about that by the Estimates Committee, staff from the hospital admitted that they could not achieve this promise without changing the nurses rosters. That is curious, Mr Speaker, because the opportunity to change the nurses rosters and gain these efficiencies was there just after the election. What did we do with it? Nothing. We did not take that opportunity.

The government betrayed us on this promise because it was not willing to negotiate with the nurses. The nurses got a pay rise, which we think was a wonderful thing, but what did the public get? Did it get some extra efficiency? Did it get to Labor keeping its promise that it would get the extra efficiencies? The answer is no. What we have is a system whereby you have removed the controls, you have stopped seeking to gain efficiencies and you have not funded places such as Calvary Hospital enough to ensure that they could maintain the 7.5 per cent throughput that you expected, you knew was coming. When quizzed by the Estimates Committee, the part-time Health Minister said, “We knew that there would be some pain, but people have got to cop that.”

Further down, on pages 10 of 12 of the document about rebuilding the health system, we can see surely one of the most mean-spirited decisions in health budget records. The document refers to the Howard government, but the “you’ll have to cop the pain” comment from the part-time Health Minister may well go down as one of the most mean-spirited decisions in health budget records.

Mr Speaker, we have to get back in control of the hospital. Part of that solution may be to have a fifth minister because, clearly, the current Health Minister is just not up to the job. When these allegations are raised against the current Health Minister and he is confronted with the truth of what he has done, he says in his defence, “But we have put more money into mental health and we have put more money into disability services than you have.”

Mr Speaker, I have a little challenge for the part-time Health Minister. Over the last four years we had a 42 per cent growth in health funding. I wonder whether we will see a 42 per cent growth in funding in the next four years for disability services. I suspect the answer will be no, but the challenge is there. We will see whether the minister rises to it. The minister makes much of the \$1.25 million—maybe it is \$1.35 million—extra this

year in the budget for mental health. There was something like \$1.6 million worth of mental health initiatives in the last Liberal budget, \$300,000-odd more than the much vaunted increase that we have had from our part-time Health Minister.

Mr Speaker, what we have in this government is a lazy approach to health. What we have is an approach that says, "Money will fix it. I don't have to pay attention to it. I have made some promises, but if we don't keep them it will not matter." We also have a secretive approach to health. The government hides behind the banner that it has put in all this extra money and therefore it must be okay, but it is not okay. It is not okay when people have to wait longer for elective surgery.

On elective surgery they say, "How will we cope with it? Labor will, through better staffing practices and more efficient management, increase the throughput of acute care and surgery patients." Through more efficient management, having removed the controls, and better staffing practices, but it did not ask for any, it will increase the throughput of acute care and surgery patients. There is no extra elective surgery. The number of other operations, at first blush, look like they could go from 56,000 to 61,000 this year, but when you add the DVAs, the compensables and the ineligible, you have just over 1,000 extra operations.

They say that they will ensure better and more open management of waiting lists. I have seen from their draft health plan that they are not going to manage them better; they are just going to make them more accessible. When you are suffering and in pain at 4 o'clock in the morning you will be able to log onto a website and find out where you are on the list. That would be cold comfort to somebody who was waiting.

There was a promise to maintain dental health funding. I do not think that it has been kept at the level promised. And so the list goes on.

Mr Speaker, this budget is a disaster for the health of Canberrans. This budget is the result of a lazy approach in that, instead of keeping tight control and focusing on where to put the money and setting priorities, setting an agenda, on how to deal with health, the government is saying, "We have given you extra money. There is no more. You can't whinge. Don't come back to see us."

The problem that will emerge for the government come September or October will be its response to the Gallop report. For instance, I suspect that the disability sector will come back expecting a large amount of money. Already we have heard from Mr Wood that there is no more money and we have heard from the part-time Health Minister that there is no more money. The question is: what will they do then? I look forward to getting the answer.

Mr Speaker, this lazy health budget shows that, for all the glib lines in the lead-up to the election, we have a Health Minister who cannot, who will not and who does not control the health system, who is unable to do so because I do not think he pays enough attention to it. The best thing Jon Stanhope could do for the health system of the ACT would be to hand it over to another minister.

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MS DUNDAS (8.19): I will be brief in rising to speak about the Department of Health and Community Care as I believe that health is an area in which the government is doing its best in terms of meeting community needs. However, I think that the government should be focusing more on preventive health, particularly the prevention of diseases related to smoking and sexually transmitted diseases.

I am also doubtful about the government claims that sufficient drug detoxification beds are being provided to meet the demand. We must remember that drug use is best viewed as a health issue and not as a criminal one, and hence the drug issue needs to be largely addressed within this appropriation for the Department of Health and Community Care.

MRS DUNNE (8.20): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak on behalf of the people of Belconnen and Gungahlin who have been left entirely bereft by this Health Minister, who just throws up his hands and says, "It is all too difficult. Yes, I will condone the closing of elective surgery for 12 to 14 weeks and I will do nothing about it."

As my colleague has said, his only response was that we will have to bear the pain. I say to him: ask the grandmothers of Holt or Nicholls who need to have their hips replaced whether they are prepared to bear the pain. You will be finding that you will have almost a doubling of the number of people seeking elective surgery at Calvary Hospital, with a great preponderance of the people being in orthopaedics and areas such as that where the need is great and the pain is great. They will just have to bear the pain, put up with it, because this Health Minister, this Chief Minister, has been so recalcitrant as to have done nothing about the crisis that he has created and he has overseen at Calvary.

What has this government done to address the throughput at Calvary? It says, "In the last one we put some money in, but that has all come to an end." What will happen at Calvary? My experience from talking to doctors is that for months before this happened there was a gradual closing down of the theatres. Theatres were running at half-pace. The hospital was running one or two theatres when it should have been running five or six. That has been adding to the elective surgery waiting list. Now we will have no elective surgery for 12 weeks out of 52. We have had an admission from the Calvary staff that that will result in an increase of close to 100 per cent in the elective surgery waiting list, which will then kick on into the Canberra Hospital and it will have to take up the slack.

What has this government done to address the throughput? Nothing. What does this government do to get the patients who have private health insurance out of the public elective surgery waiting list and on to the private waiting lists? Nothing. We were told at estimates that they have a strategy. Every time they were asked a question about what was happening in the hospitals they said that they had a strategy. It was often a cunning strategy or an innovative strategy. But what we are seeing is an extension of the waiting lists. The people of Canberra do not need cunning and they do not need innovation; they need their hips replaced when they have to be replaced. They do not need to have to wait extra time because this minister stands in this place or sits at estimates and says, "The people of Canberra will just have to bear the pain."

That is an abrogation of responsibility and of everything that a Labor minister for health purports to stand for. This is a man who purports to stand for social justice, but when it comes down to the basics, such as getting a hip replaced, what do we get from this man? We get absolutely nothing. This man is a disaster for the people of Belconnen and the

people of Gungahlin. There are needs at Calvary Hospital that are not being addressed. We saw the other day obstetricians begging for more midwife services so that people who live in Gungahlin would not have to go to Canberra Hospital to have their babies if they wanted to opt for a midwife service. Can we get that here? No, not at all, because it is just too difficult.

Mr Stanhope: What did you do? Tell us what you did. Absolutely nothing.

MRS DUNNE: I was not the Minister for Health.

Mr Stanhope: You were up there advising. You were the power behind the throne.

MRS DUNNE: I love this. This is their theory for the day: Vicki Dunne is the svengali of everything that happened over the last seven years.

Mr Quinlan: You are just not recognising where you are coming from, that's all.

MRS DUNNE: I recognise exactly where I am coming from and I am standing up for the people of Belconnen who have been neglected by their own member, who purports to stand for them, but what does he do? He says, "Look, just put up with the pain, granny."

Mr Stefaniak: You don't think you would get 24.5 per cent again, mate.

Mr Stanhope: Bill, watch it, mate. I have nominated you for the leadership. Just look after your friends, you and Greg.

MR SPEAKER: Order, members! Mrs Dunne has the call.

Mr Stefaniak: In the Labor Party?

Mr Stanhope: No, when Gary jumps, or when you push him. How much longer do you think he will last, Bill?

MR SPEAKER: Order! Mrs Dunne has the call.

Mr Stanhope: How much longer do you think he will last, Bill?

MRS DUNNE: Have you finished, petal? Just settle.

Mr Stanhope: How much longer do you think he will last, Bill?

MR SPEAKER: Order, Chief Minister! Mrs Dunne has the call.

MRS DUNNE: Ms Dundas is right: early intervention is a very important aspect of all that is necessary in the health portfolio. We should have concentration on preventive health in all areas. Of course, if we had 100 per cent preventive health, we would not have to worry about the fact that the Chief Minister is blowing out the elective surgery waiting list. In the meantime, we should be working for that. It is sad that many of the early intervention programs that were in the previous budget, some under the social

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capital budget, and elsewhere in the previous government have been discontinued in this place by this Chief Minister.

Mr Stanhope: Tell us about mental health. Tell us about disabilities.

MRS DUNNE: Chief Minister, you can talk people down all you like, but it does not take away from the fact that you have abandoned the people of Belconnen, you have abandoned the people of Gungahlin, and you will not do anything about the fact that elective surgery waiting lists will be blowing out because you have closed the hospital for 12 weeks.

MR CORNWELL (8.26): I have a few comments to make in relation to this health budget. May I begin by expressing concern about the information relating to dental services which shows that in 2001-02 the target was 23,300 services and the estimated outcome was 20,000 services and that, for some peculiar reason, in 2002-03 the target is 20,300 services. I really do not know how you can lose 3,000 over 12 months from your targets, unless the government knows more than I do about toothache, people losing their dentures and such like. I would sincerely hope that the government will look at this matter carefully, as I shall do.

The other matter I want to talk about is care of the aged. I welcome, Chief Minister, the funding that has been provided towards a permanent convalescent facility and a respite facility, small though the amount is, but one should not quibble because I notice that in succeeding years that amount will rise. The problem I have, however, is whether we can keep pace, because I do not believe that it is possible for any government to estimate the need for respite care and the need for accommodation for the aged in this territory with its ageing population. In fact, it would seem to me that we are to some extent flying blind on that matter, and that is certainly not the government's fault.

I do welcome the advice—and I thank you, Chief Minister, for giving me a briefing on the ageing—that, for the next two years, instead of having 100 beds per thousand we will have 108 beds per thousand. The usual number of beds is about 110 for nursing home accommodation. I welcome that, although I am aware that that is not necessarily thanks to the ACT government, because the question of nursing home accommodation and the number of beds available, as we know, is tied up very much with Commonwealth funding.

One of the problems with aged care, if I may say so, is that it is bedevilled by Commonwealth, state and territory funding. I am giving thought to whether it would be better if total responsibility were assumed by one or the other. If it were assumed by one, it would probably have to revert to the territory. At least we would have control over what we were doing with our aged people.

In recommendation 63 of its report, the Estimates Committee raised the provision of additional beds. Indeed, at paragraph 15.28 the Estimates Committee stated:

Officials admitted that additional beds are needed across the system.

I would hope therefore that the government will continue to keep a very close eye on this matter because, I repeat, it is possible for these things suddenly to get out of hand. I am pleased that we are holding the line at the moment. On behalf of the people who need those facilities, I would hope that the government will continue to keep a close eye on this situation, as I certainly intend to do.

It is difficult, however, to estimate the future demand. It may increase. We suffer from not only the people who age in the territory but also those who retire to the coast and subsequently come back to Canberra when they get older because they need better medical facilities. But there is a third factor here. That, of course, is the people who move here from elsewhere to be close to their children, perhaps more particularly their grandchildren. I am pleased to say that this is a matter that I did raise with the briefing group, Chief Minister, and I was very pleased to hear that they are aware of this problem and that they do recognise that there are pockets or areas of Australia where the demand for nursing homes is greater than elsewhere. Nevertheless, I would hope that we will keep a very close eye on that.

The funding for psychogeriatric care is also welcome. I would hope that we will continue to watch the need carefully because, as I said earlier, it could blow out at any stage.

MS TUCKER (8.32): I have a few comments to make in this area. I have already made some comments generally about process and I will just say that I think that they apply in this area as well in terms of actually enabling community input to policy development. There have been some good initiatives from the government in this area and some processes have started.

I want to make a quick comment about maternity services. In estimates, the discussion seemed to get stuck on the number of women who would be able to be observed by student obstetricians. The point that has to be made in any discussion about maternity services and the midwifery program is that it is about women having a choice in terms of where they give birth, how they give birth and whether they want midwife-led care.

Obviously, there has been a lot of discussion about how that can be facilitated. If you have midwife-led care for birthing mothers, the birthing process has to be supported by midwives who have experience or training in midwife-led care, because there is a different philosophical approach from that taken in hospitals. We know that there are a couple of midwives in Canberra who are accredited as independent midwives. It is extremely important that the skills of those midwives be utilised in the support, training and work of any midwives who choose to support home births particularly and midwife-led care generally.

It would be a great pity if that expertise were not recognised and used. In my view, we would have a serious situation because, if we did not have the independent midwives with experience and accreditation in this area to ensure quality, there would be a real danger of a system failure occurring which would not be in anybody's interest. Obviously, it would not be in the interest of the particular women, but also it would not be in the interest of the industry, if you like. It would not be in the interest of women in the ACT if, at this critical period, midwives were not supported properly by trained, independent midwives helping them to learn how to work in midwife-led care in women's birthing options. That is an important issue in terms of enabling women to have

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a choice as to how and where they deliver their babies. It is also a really good way of reducing adverse events, basically, in birthing. I think that the evidence has been there for quite some time that midwife-led care has very good results in terms of there being very few adverse events.

Another area in which there is significant work to draw on and to which our health services are moving in some situations is adverse events. It is an area in which the medical indemnity issue crosses over with better health outcomes. Research has pointed to the importance of having full disclosure by health professionals when things do go wrong. People really appreciate getting a frank explanation of what occurred, a genuine apology where appropriate, and reassurance that causes will be addressed to ensure as much as possible that such incidents do not recur.

I am aware that there is work going on in this area. The open disclosure project is progressing at a national level. I hope that this government will ensure that the ACT will be quick to pick up the recommendations. Similarly, the ACT consumer feedback standards project is working at the grassroots level to ensure that feedback from health care consumers informs service standards. It will run for another 12 months, with draft standards being trialed in Calvary, the Canberra Hospital and Community Care, which is a positive move.

At the health summit and previously in many other forums we heard about the importance of genuinely putting consumers—that is, people, citizens, patients—at the core of health service, but this activity can be and has been undermined by activity at another level. The government's response to recent media reports on the death of Mental Health Services clients demonstrates how we still have quite a way to go there. For senior officers to say, in effect, that there was really nothing wrong in ACT Mental Health Services, that anything that needed to be fixed had been, that the fact is that people die and that is to be expected was not a good or respectful response.

There has been no shortage of people contacting my office with the view that Mental Health Services were not taking sufficient care of their clients, did not seriously address the concerns of families and friends, were not committed to addressing problems of process and procedure, were not committed to reassuring vulnerable families and patients that such problems were being addressed, and were not convinced in any way that their views and experiences were valued.

For government not only to ignore or dismiss these concerns, but also to deny that there were any problems for people facing inquests of two years, that the problems that conceivably contributed to the death of a loved one might remain unaddressed for two years and their distress and vulnerability would remain unresolved for two years, and that the hospital was less than forthcoming when relevant information at every stage of the process was exaggerated and attenuated certainly undermined any sense of partnership with some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

These concerns also point clearly to how consumer interests and feedback should be at the heart of designing programs and individuals' health care. This is not only about setting up consumer boards, but also about having clear ways to hear feedback and a system which really does welcome the feedback, including criticism, takes it seriously and addresses the problems.

The lack of access to bulk-billing general practitioners of people who are not on a high income—vulnerable people, people with psychiatric and drug problems, single parents, homeless people and families with several children—and who are unable to afford the up-front fee when going to a doctor is an issue that government has failed to address. It is of fundamental concern. If such basic primary health care is not available to people.

I understand that funding for GPs rests with the Commonwealth and we all wish that it would be more realistic about the level of the Medicare rebate. However, the issue for Canberra is what happens to the people who make up our community. If the government is committed to discovering what social sustainability might be, surely it must ensure that access to basic health care, supported accommodation, food services, information, the opportunity to participate and so on exist for everyone. To argue that there is nothing you can do about bulk-billing is a bit too much like washing your hands of the most basic level of support that the health department ought to deliver.

Participants in the first health summit learned that in 1996 the people who were in the 20 per cent of the population most disadvantaged economically carried 32 per cent more of the disease burden than the 20 per cent most advantaged. This means that the people least likely to be able to afford to pay up front for doctors are the people who will need the doctors more. The key question that this government cannot answer with the budget, but which we look for in its actions, is how well it works with those people most in need.

MR STANHOPE (Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for Community Affairs and Minister for Women) (8.41): Mr Speaker, I would like to make a small contribution to the debate and to respond to some of the issues that have been raised. The health budget we are currently debating is the largest commitment of funds to health by a government in the history of self-government. It is a very significant increase in funding. It is a greater increase in funding than has ever been experienced before in the ACT.

In this budget the Department of Health and Community Care is budgeted to earn \$395.5 million in GPO in 2002-03. This is an increase of \$56 million above the 2001-02 budgeted GPO figure, which after taking account of the merging of operating and injection funding into GPO and the transfer out of housing and disability service functions was \$339.9 million.

It is interesting to compare this with the increase of \$36 million which the New South Wales government is currently boasting it is proposing to inject into New South Wales metropolitan hospitals. We here in the ACT injected more into health and community care than New South Wales is doing as part of its election lead-up. It is a 16.3 per cent increase overall. It is an increase of \$23 million which flowed from the second appropriation—on-passing of increased Commonwealth specific purpose payments, \$8.7 million; an additional \$4.5 million for new initiatives; \$6.3 million for insurance payments; \$7.3 million for salary and non-salary costs; \$7.5 million in growth funding, and so it goes on.

If you look at the changes by individual outputs between the 2001-02 budgeted GPO and the 2002-03 budgeted GPO, after taking account of the merging of operating and injection funding and the transfer out of housing and disability functions, for output 1.1,

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acute services, there is an increase of 18 per cent, from \$216 million to \$255 million. That is an absolutely staggering increase in funding provided in this budget.

For mental health services there is a 14.3 per cent increase in funding, from \$24.9 million to \$28.5 million. This increase will try to make up some of the lag that we have suffered. As reported in the *Canberra Times*, our funding for mental health services in the ACT is 17½ per cent worse than the next worst jurisdiction in Australia. We are striving to make up the difference.

There is an increase of \$16.7 million, from \$79.2 million to \$92.4 million, for community health services. That is another outstanding increase in funding. That does not account for the significant increase in funding for disability services, which we will discuss later under another line item, an increase of \$2.5 million.

Mr Smyth, in his naivety, threw out the challenge: “The Gallop response is going to be delivered in September, and what is the government going to do about it?” What we did about it was to appropriate \$10 million over the next four years in anticipation of the government’s response to the Gallop report. There is \$10 million there, \$2.5 million in this year and \$2.5 million in each of the outyears, as additional funding for disability services. This is the most major increase in funding for disability services ever—\$10 million over the next four years. That is what we are doing in answer to the rhetorical question that Mr Smyth has asked. We are providing more money than you ever thought to provide to disability services. Ten million dollars over the next four years is an amazing increase in funding to people with disabilities.

It is interesting to reflect on some of the things we did achieve. The Liberals poured scorn on the second appropriation bill. They said that we threw money and got no response; that there was no return for the money we provided to the Canberra Hospital in the second appropriation.

As a result of that second appropriation, the Canberra Hospital has employed an additional 49.9 full-time equivalent nurses. The Liberals pour scorn on that. The suggestion is that that was all wasted; that it meant nothing; that there were not better health outcomes or better care as a result of that; that there was not a more highly skilled work force; that there was not better continuity of care for patients; that we do not have more staff in speciality areas. Nurses are having the leave they are entitled to. They do not have to forgo their leave.

We have heard raised today the vexed question of waiting lists. What is not admitted by the Liberals as they focus on that is that, as a result of the additional funding we have provided the Canberra and the Calvary hospitals since coming to government, 1,350 people who would not have been attended to or cared for under the Liberals’ funding were cared for; 1,350 people who would not have been cared for under your budget allocation received treatment.

In addition, in the last year, for nine months of which we were in government, there were an additional 9,000 outpatient occasions of service at the Canberra and Calvary hospitals. That is the achievement. That is what you pour scorn on. That is what you say is nothing. We have put in place a whole range of strategies to deal with the need to better

coordinate elective surgery between the hospitals. We have done some absolutely fantastic work there.

The emergency departments have experienced a 2.1 per cent growth in presentations. There has been a 3.6 per cent growth in weighted presentations for emergency. You pour scorn on the quality of our hospitals and belittle the staff, those people who are working extremely hard. Both our public hospitals, routinely meet targets of less than 1 per cent for unplanned readmissions. We have less than 4 per cent unplanned readmissions. Only 0.8 per cent of our public hospital patients have hospital acquired infections, almost the lowest rate in Australia. We have the lowest rate of caesarean births in Australia. These are some of the achievements you pour scorn on. These are the staff you deride—people who are working particularly hard.

I have already touched on mental health. A range of new programs are now in place—programs that were not there before—because of the additional funding we have provided. Mental Illness Education ACT will deliver 130 mental health sessions for secondary schools, colleges and community-based youth agencies. The CAMHS proposal will assist 12 to 18-year-olds who require intensive mental health intervention. That is an operational service, something that is on the ground. It is operating because we fund it.

The health and education departments have organised key partnerships in suicide prevention. I digress to respond to the comments Ms Tucker made. She accused me of being uncaring and insensitive in my responses to the deaths of some clients under the care at some time of the mental health service. There is a reverse to the position Ms Tucker put in relation to these issues. Ms Tucker criticised me quite roundly. It is a criticism that needs to be responded to. The extent to which I defended the mental health service, according to Ms Tucker, is insensitive and lacks respect. I reject that absolutely. We have a fine mental health service here and I, as minister, am prepared to defend it. I am prepared to defend those incredibly hard working public officers who work within the mental health service. They do sterling work. They do fine work. For them to be branded as a whole, holus-bolus, as not worthy of my support as their minister shows enormous disrespect by Ms Tucker for public servants in this town doing good work and doing it in difficult circumstances.

Certainly sad and tragic circumstances arise. Certainly it is tragic that people self-harm and take their own lives. There is no doubt about that. There is no getting away from that. But none of my comments in any way showed a lack of respect for those people or for their families or their carers. My comments were directed at the need for us to have some balance in this debate, to acknowledge the amazing work that some of our mental health workers do and not scapegoat them as in some way responsible as a result of neglect or lack of attention or disinterest. That was never my intention.

Ms Tucker made a point about the length of some coronial inquiries. I take the point. It must be extremely distressing for the people concerned. But there is another side to that position as well.

MR SPEAKER: The Chief Minister's time has expired. Would you like to use your second 10 minutes?

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MR STANHOPE: I will. I am gravely concerned by the suggestion that just because a coronial inquiry takes a long time there are not other aspects of the coronial process that need to be taken account of.

There are people who are perhaps represented before coronial inquiries. I have to speak hypothetically here. I cannot speak about these matters. It needs to be understood that a coronial inquiry is a judicial process. Coroners often recommend that certain action be taken as a result of their inquiries. Is it to be suggested that a person who is involved with a coronial inquiry—a public official—should not take whatever steps they or their legal advisers deem it appropriate for them to take in order to perhaps protect their position?

I think there needs to be some respect for those public officials that get caught up in coronial processes. They have rights. They have a right to defend themselves against incrimination. They have a right to protect themselves against possible criminal proceedings or actions.

It is not a simple matter of saying, “There is a grieving family involved here. To hell with the rights of the public servants that might be caught up in this process. To hell with the rights of those it might be suggested might some day face some criminal process.” You have to think about these things. You have to think about the rights of all parties involved. It is a matter of grave concern to me that we so quickly abandon the rights of public officials and public servants as we thrash around looking for somebody to blame.

There are always two sides, and everybody has a right to put their case and to be defended and to defend themselves and their interests. If I were facing a coronial inquiry and if at the end of that inquiry there was a suggestion from the coroner that I be charged with manslaughter, I would be a little bit careful about how I proceeded. I would take legal advice. I would be careful about the statements I made. This is unfortunately a prospect that many of our hard working, dedicated, diligent, committed, overworked mental health workers and disability health workers face. We know that from the last few years. We know of careers destroyed. We know of the crushing weight that some of our officials have had to carry. I will defend them. I think we need to respect our officials and the work they do.

MR HARGREAVES (8.54): I want to address something Mr Smyth said. He—and *Hansard* will prove me right—perpetuated a furphy he has been perpetuating for some time, trying to scare the living daylights out of some of our clients in the older persons services at Dickson and Narrabundah. He said that this government is going to close those services; it is going to shut them down. That is a furphy which has been debunked over and over again, and it needs refuting yet again tonight.

There is huge difference between that and looking at services to determine priorities and whether you want the attention-addressing social isolation which has been the focus of those services in the past or whether we should be focusing our resources on active rehabilitation for older people. To accept that we can do things the way they have always been done is irresponsible in the extreme.

I have a personal view on this. As a director of rehabilitation and aged care in my past, I had a lot to do with the day care centres at Dickson, Narrabundah, Tuggeranong and Belconnen. I had a lot to do with the transfer of the day centre from Woden Valley

Hospital, as it was then, to the new Tuggeranong health centre, with a view to putting those services into the community where they belonged and not having the people attending the day centre in a sickness-type environment. I wanted them to be in vibrant environment and to slow down the social isolation they felt. One of the best ways of doing that is to attack it with an active rehabilitation program.

The government ought to be congratulated for saying, “Hang on a second. We will just have a look at this.” We have changing demographics. We had people coming to the Woden day centre from Melba, Spence, Gordon, Narrabundah and the inner south. They were coming because the services provided there were not available at other centres. There was a day centre in Belconnen, one in Narrabundah and later one in Tuggeranong.

Let us put to death the suggestion that this government is going to close down the services to these people and let us stop frightening them. Any change of program for these people will involve getting their views on what they feel they need. The best thing Mr Smyth can do is to back off and keep his gob shut on that one. He is making a bigger fool of himself every time he says something, and he is frightening people unnecessarily. He ought to be very careful about the press releases he puts out.

Nothing much has been said in this debate about some of the positive moves this government has made. Where there are negatives, they certainly should be brought forward. I have no difficulty with that, so long as they can be sustained. Where things are pretty much the same, we have no problem about somebody saying that. But where things are changing for the better, the public record ought to acknowledge that.

A couple of areas that came up in the estimates hearings are worthy of mention. One was a step-down facility or slow-stream rehabilitation. Essentially it is a slower service of for older people to get better. The biggest client base for this service, Mr Speaker—and you will remember, because it was in the time of your ministry that we first started talking about a convalescent facility—are older people, 75 plus, with a broken femur neck. A young footballer who breaks his femur neck needs about six weeks of hospitalisation, or not even that these days. A bit of physio and off he goes. He is probably playing footy a couple of months later.

But if you are 75, you are looking at a number of months. The body, given enough time after surgical intervention, probably fixes itself. With a reasonably slow but effective physiotherapy program, reasonably full recovery occurs. With diet to combat osteoporosis and some physiotherapy, hopefully these older people can go back into their home reasonably well mended. They do not require the same cost per day as they would in a hospital.

In the early 1990s a hospital bed cost something like \$600 a day and a convalescent bed \$126. We are not talking about sticking somebody on the veranda with a blanket over their lap and saying, “Let nature take its course.” We are talking about assistance. Rehabilitation is all about helping people to do things themselves, not about intervention.

I was chuffed to see funding for this in the budget. I think it is absolutely vital. We keep talking about people who want to get into hospital but cannot because there is not a bed. If we can free up beds, all the better.

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In estimates I also explored a concern I had about mental health services for young people, adolescents. I was concerned to hear that CAMHS was moving out of Tuggeranong into Callam Offices at Woden. I was assured in the estimates process that their outreach services were still intact and were good and well directed.

The people in the community care area put some officers into the Lanyon youth and community centre, known as the Murra centre, to provide services in that centre to stop people getting to the stage where they are crisis. One of the aims of that centre was that it be a solution for the problems and that it would grow. It was put there as a preventative measure. The introduction of CAMHS there was an extraordinarily good move. I have had some feedback from the managers of the centre and some of the people who use it. They think it is doing exactly what the intention was.

When I was listening in the estimates, I was also heartened to hear about the activities the government is undertaking in partnership with the Commonwealth and of their own volition in trying to get medical services for the Lanyon Valley. The Lanyon Valley has a one-doctor surgery that has closed books. Alternative medical services are being proposed and being examined. It is a high priority with the government to provide those services.

We talk about what is wrong in the hospital, what is wrong with disability services, what is wrong with mental health. We can postulate about that for days and years. But one of the issues is the culture of confidence. If people's heads are down and they are not feeling too good about themselves, they are not going to provide a good service. They are not going to be in a position to be able to assist other people.

It is incumbent upon this Assembly—opposition, crossbench and indeed the government—to make sure these people feel good about what they do and feel valued. We should be supporting them to provide the services rather than using them as pawns in a chess game to score political points. A lot of the officers providing services in the health system have been beaten senseless, and their self-esteem is at an all-time low. Perhaps we ought to be trying to address how we are going to fix that instead of worrying about scoring points.

MS TUCKER (9.05): I would like to respond to a couple of points Mr Stanhope and Mr Hargreaves made. Mr Stanhope either did not hear what I said or has misrepresented what I said. I did not say that everyone working in the public service in mental health did not care. I know what I said. It is in writing. I said:

There has been no shortage of people contacting my office with the view that ...

I have been contacted by members of the community who feel that Mental Health Services have failed them. Mr Hargreaves, now in government, apparently does not think it is our responsibility to raise this issue; that now it is inappropriate politicisation. I do not recall him taking that line when he was in opposition. I believe we do have a responsibility in this place is to raise concerns if services are not meeting the needs of the people in the community. These are vulnerable people.

Mr Hargreaves mentioned the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Yesterday I was with the Health Committee talking to a group of teachers and young people in colleges and high schools in Canberra who said that the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service was absolutely unable to meet the need, unable even to respond to calls for help.

If I do not have a responsibility to raise this in this place, then I think we have a very different understanding of our responsibilities here. This is about a service that needs more attention. I am hoping that the government will take notice of these concerns. It is absolutely unnecessary to make a highly defensive response, as if I were condemning every public servant in the ACT that works in mental health as failing in their responsibilities.

I understand that it is a stressful area to work in. I have been raising these issues ever since I was elected, when Kate Carnell was in this place, when we had the gentleman breaking the windows of the Legislative Assembly. The sad reality is that I am still raising these concerns. That is the difficulty for the people working in the area. It is difficult for the public servants. I am not denying that. I acknowledge that. It is an extremely stressful place to work, because it is not properly resourced. So my sympathy goes to the public servants, but my sympathy is also with the people who need attention but cannot get it. That is why I have raised those issues.

Mr Stanhope took an extreme position in his justification for delays in coronial processes. It is not the case that every single person who was not able to speak to police was liable to be charged with manslaughter. I am asking for a reasonable look at how slow the process is because public servants have been encouraged to be defensive, no matter how far from the edge of issue or how much on the periphery they are. That was a comment from the judiciary as well. There is a legitimate position, as Mr Stanhope outlined, if someone feels they may be charged with manslaughter or something, but as I understand it magistrates are saying that this is going too far. We do not need to be so defensive.

They are the points I raised in my presentation. I want to make it quite clear that I sympathise with public servants working in an under-resourced area, and I understand the stresses they are working under.

Amendment agreed to.

Proposed expenditure, as amended, agreed to.

Debate interrupted.

Offensive and disorderly words

MR SPEAKER: Members, earlier in today's proceedings a point of order was raised by Mr Corbell in relation to some comments made by Mrs Dunne. Mrs Dunne responded by saying:

I made the point that the people of Canberra might realise they are not being honest.

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She was referring to the government. She went on to say:

I did not say that they were not being honest.

I felt obliged to review this. I have the *Hansard* in front of me. Earlier on Mrs Dunne said:

This is the way this government goes. It says it wants to be honest and open and accountable, but there is no accountability in this place and I suspect the people of this territory will soon realise that there is very little honesty.

I think that imputes that there is lots of dishonesty, and I think it is unparliamentary. Mr Speaker in 1996 drew on some comments by the Speaker of the federal House of Representatives in 1981:

I think that if an accusation is made against members of the House which, if made against any one of them, would be unparliamentary and offensive, it is in the interests of the comity of this House that it should not be made against all as it could not be made against one. Otherwise, it may become necessary for every member of the group against whom the words are alleged to stand up and personally withdraw himself or herself from the accusation.

I intend to persist with that standard, and I would ask you to withdraw the imputation.

Mrs Dunne: If that is your ruling, Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

Appropriation Bill 2002-2003

Detail stage

Debate resumed.

Proposed expenditure—part 12—Urban Services, \$274,144,000 (net cost of outputs), \$88,492,000 (capital injection) and \$15,194,000 (payments on behalf of the territory), totalling \$377,830,000.

MR QUINLAN (Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Business and Tourism, Minister for Sport, Racing and Gaming and Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Corrections) (9.12): Mr Speaker, I move amendment No 4 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 2913*].

MRS DUNNE (9.12): When we come to the budget for the Department of Urban Services, as in many other areas of this budget, we see a government that is bereft of imagination, bereft of energy and in many ways a tad irresponsible. It is in the budget and it is reflective of those opposite us. When we look at the budget for urban services and planning and environment, where is the vision? There is no vision from the people opposite. This lack of vision will see the demise of this territory.

Without growth, this territory is in trouble. Without growth, there will be no jobs. Without growth, we will see poverty. We saw in the Chief Minister's press release of Sunday that there are 30,000 people in the ACT who live in poverty. But what is there in the urban services budget that helps to address poverty, that provides the growth which

will expand our revenue and maintain basic services. We need growth to provide the jobs that will alleviate the poverty. There is no greater antidote to poverty than a job. All the plans for a shining future for Canberra amount to nothing without growth.

This budget only pays lip-service to the idea of growth. It pays lip-service to the idea of sustainability. In no better place do we see it than when we get to Mr Corbell's plans for planning, distributing land and running the building and construction industry in this town. Everything we see about Mr Corbell is antithetical to growth.

Mr Corbell has created a cloud of uncertainty that has descended upon one of the real engines of growth in this territory, the building industry. His planning regime has put the brakes on the building industry. Land releases have not happened. His planning hiatus has brought about arbitrary limits on development and a protracted neighbourhood planning process that has put projects on hold—projects the building industry conservatively estimates at \$40 million. And \$40 million creates a lot of jobs for subcontractors, a lot of jobs for mums and dads and a lot of jobs generally that kick on throughout the community.

Mr Corbell always maintains that he has good intentions to bring about a renaissance in planning in the ACT. Good intentions should be applauded, but they need to be realistic. In the plans Mr Corbell has for planning and land development in the ACT we see a revisitation of what we saw in the Whitlam government, a government so beloved of those opposite, a government that tried to build a new Jerusalem and sent the country to the dogs. It brought massive losses of jobs and rampant inflation and stifled investment. Why was this? There was their economic ignorance but there was also their irresponsibility.

We saw in those days an economic irresponsibility from people like the head of the ACTU, one R.J.L. Hawke, who when he was extolling the great benefits of an 18 per cent wage rise was told that this would bring about rampant inflation but said that he did not care. We see the same thing happening here, except this time we are bringing about stultification. We are bringing an end to growth.

The Whitlam government liked to think of itself as socialist, but it was worse than that. It was a naive utopianist government. But that is probably too kind as well. It was a government of wishful thinking. You see the same wishful thinking in this government today. In the Whitlam era we saw DURD. Remember DURD? It was going to bring about a new utopia by planning for everything. Everything was going to be beautiful under Kep Enderby and DURD. It all came to nothing.

What we see here is Mr Corbell's new DURD. Mr Corbell's land servicing agency, which is the whelp of Landcom, will bring about a new Whitlamesque utopia. Why will he do this? Because he distrusts the private sector. He thinks the government can always do better. If he can, he will demonstrate that. I refer generally to his plans for land development. His intentions are admirable, but the minister relies on some magic pudding. There is no magic pudding in this town, as there was no magic pudding for DURD.

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The real world is at the mercy of Newtonian physics, such as the laws of gravity. It also turns on human nature, which the very best legislation in the world is unable to change. But Mr Corbell has an ill-defined and confused philosophy that will somehow overcome human nature. I quote from something the minister said in estimates. This underpins his approach to the planning system:

To put it crudely, a private land developer is going to pretty much work strictly to the letter of the law in delivering the estate. They're going to look at what they can and can't do, and they're going to pretty much push the envelope and make sure everything they're doing is within the strict letter of the law of subdivision design controls.

That is fair enough. This is what the magical government department will do:

A government land development agency will be required to work in a strong and robust manner in relation to its financial management and delivery of projects, but it will also have regard to other broader policy settings which the government may require of it in effective delivery of integrated open space, effective streetscapes and so on. It's that added extra which a government land development agency can deliver because it's conscious not only of the strict financial outcomes it's trying to achieve but also the broader social imperatives—

DURD revisited—

of the government that add an extra level of capacity in delivering quality on the ground.

This is Simon Corbell's new magic pudding. There is a certain magic element here which no-one, including the minister, has yet been able to define. What is the magic element that enables a government agency observing the same fiscal structures to achieve a qualitatively superior outcome? What is the mysterious added extra, Minister? Do you think you might be able to tell us before we vote on this budget and then finally on your bills to implement this?

It is akin to that certain amorphous something that they also like to talk about: sustainability. We always talk about sustainability. Everyone in this place talks about sustainability, but very few people do very much about it. The sustainable future of this city depends upon quite significantly consolidating development and encouraging urban infill. Everyone in this place talks about how important it is. Ms Tucker talks about it all the time, but when you come to a proposal that proposal is comprehensively knocked on the head every time.

I would like members of this place to tell me and to tell the people of Canberra how they can have their cake and eat it too, how they can have sustainability, how they can have urban consolidation. Every time someone suggests it, it is not quite right. There is a certain magic something missing.

The planning policies Mr Corbell has espoused so far work against consolidation. Yet he dares to bask in an aura of a sustainable utopia that is just around the corner. This government is very fond of verbiage and it masters buzz words all the time. Like the Whitlam government before them, they will bankrupt this town if they are allowed to

continue. They have nothing to offer. This Chief Minister and this Minister for Planning have nothing to offer. The people of Canberra will see through them. They already know that we know that they do not know, and it is just a matter of time before the laziness of their thinking gets out to the people of Canberra.

MS TUCKER (9.22): The most controversial issues in the Urban Services part of the budget are the introduction of pay parking in the town centres and the government's road spending and in particular the Gungahlin Drive extension and the government's changes to the planning system and the resumption of land development. There are also some parts of the Urban Services budget that have particular importance to the Greens, such as spending on the environment and waste management programs.

The introduction of pay parking in the town centres has been Greens policy for some time. It is part of our broader desire to make motorists more aware of the real cost of providing transport infrastructure and to shift the transport balance towards public transport. There is also, of course, the straight equity issue that it is unfair that people who drive from the city to Woden have to pay for their parking, whereas people going to Belconnen or Tuggeranong town centres do not. There needs to be consistency in the application of pay parking across Canberra.

I can recall that the Greens were criticised by Belconnen voters and some other parties' candidates in the 1998 election for daring to suggest that pay parking should be introduced in Belconnen. However, I want to make the points—as I made then—that it was misrepresented by political combatants, that the introduction of pay parking in Belconnen and Tuggeranong needs to be well managed to ensure that there is not a disproportionate impact on low income earners and, in particular, that the different needs and policy objectives relating to long-stay commuter parking and short-stay parking for shoppers need to be addressed. Also, there is a need to coordinate with the private providers of parking—for example, the shopping malls.

Unfortunately the government's spending on other transport measures is quite inconsistent. The extra funding for ACTION and the abolition of the zonal fare system and the funding of cycle path and on-road cycling upgrades are very welcome, but these are far outweighed by the government's blind adherence to the previous government's road-building program.

The planning minister has recently been caught out in his failed attempt to meet the previous government's cost and timing estimates for the Gungahlin Drive extension. If only the minister had spent more time questioning the whole rationale for this road rather than trying to defend his party's ill-considered election promise to build the western route at Gungahlin Drive to the same cost and time as the eastern route.

There is still the issue of what will be the final cost of this road. I recently found out from the minister that the cost of building replacement car parks at the AIS has not been incorporated into the road budget. I note this issue was also raised in the Estimates Committee. There have also been media reports that there may be a need for extra connections to Ginninderra Drive, with a \$1 million price tag.

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The design and duplication of Caswell Drive is also up in the air due to the legitimate concerns of Aranda residents and could lead to more costly engineering solutions to reduce noise impacts. Similarly, moving Caswell Drive to the east is not my desired option because of the significant impact this would have on the Black Mountain Reserve, consistent with what I have said in the past about the impact of this road on Bruce and O'Connor ridges.

The Black Mountain Reserve is not just a piece of vacant land that can be built on when it suits. It has inherent ecological value, as well as a range of values for the Canberra community, that must be respected and preserved. Mr Humphries made some comments earlier in this debate about what it means to support or oppose a budget and whether it should be possible to amend a budget.

The Greens have always assessed each budget on its merits and have been prepared to vote against the Liberal budgets as an expression, you could say, of our lack of confidence in the Liberal government's ability to govern this territory in a sustainable and responsible manner. Our stance was vindicated when the Liberal Party's mismanagement under Kate Carnell was finally exposed and the Liberals were thrown out of government.

We are now presented with the first Labor budget. It is the nature of budgets, as the bringing together of all government initiatives and programs for a particular year, that there are some parts that we think are good and some that we do not agree with. We are therefore forced to weigh up the pros and cons of a budget to come up with an overall assessment.

We also have to consider whether the opposition could have done a better job. We have assessed this budget and concluded that overall it is worthy of support, but I want to make the point here that this does not imply that we support the government's road building plan. I will continue to oppose the Gungahlin Drive extension when the issue arises in our business in the Assembly.

Turning to the funding of Environment ACT, the key initiative here is an additional \$1.5 million over three years for nature conservation. This is really small bickies when it is realised that the budget for Environment ACT is \$24.6 million yet it manages 53 per cent of the ACT. The overall environment budget only went up by 2.5 per cent from last year, so it is really just keeping up with inflation.

It is interesting that the initiatives listed for Environment ACT in the budget total some \$1.3 million, yet its increase is only \$0.6 million. I wonder what programs have been cut to free up the necessary funds. I note that the Estimates Committee expressed disappointment at the lack of detail on how those budget initiatives would be implemented.

The \$1.5 million is meant to go a long way: it is supposed to fund increased field staff capacity, better natural resource information management systems, strategic planning and support for volunteer activities. Already this money seems to be stretched. For example, extra rangers are not being employed out of this money, but more administrative staff are being appointed—presumably, to allow the existing rangers to work even harder than they already do.

It has also been an ongoing concern of mine that there has been a lack of enforcement of the existing environment protection laws. For example, I understand that there has been no follow-up of licensed firewood sellers to see whether they have been complying with the code of practice that was a condition of their licences. Perhaps the increase in environment funding should have been \$1.5 million each year rather than over three years.

Another area that needs picking up is the ACT greenhouse strategy. I am aware that a number of programs have been funded, but a significant amount of money was not spent last year, so the overall funding has been cut back. Perhaps there is a need for greater publicity of the benefits available to people, such as the subsidies for solar hot water heaters and cavity wall insulation. There also needs to be an overall review of strategy, including an update of the ACT greenhouse inventory so that we can see what progress has been made towards the target.

A major project of Environment ACT is the implementation of the tree protection legislation. I have received a number of complaints about this implementation from both directions: people wanting to cut down trees but not being able to get approval and others who think that approvals are too easy to obtain. This points to some inconsistency in how tree removal applications are being assessed. I am aware that implementation of the legislation is taking up significant resources within Environment ACT, so I am looking forward to the promised review of the interim legislation so that we can ensure that the legislation is effective and properly targeted.

This year will be a critical time in the implementation of the No Waste by 2010 strategy; it is targeted to renew the household waste collection contracts, and I understand that a major project this year will be a review of the next steps to achieve the target. A critical area that needs more attention is commercial waste, and I will be interested to see the outcome of this review.

MR STEFANIAK (9.30): I first want to make a few comments in relation to Gungahlin Drive, an ongoing issue. A lot has been said about that already, but there are a number of factors at work, including what the federal government ultimately does or does not do—and the National Capital Development Authority.

I remind the government of places such as the AIS, Bruce Stadium, Bruce CIT—and Calvary Hospital, which could also be affected by the government-preferred option of the western route. I am not exactly certain where it would be out there, because the minister seems almost to have considered that that might not be the only route, depending on what happens.

This side of the house has always made known that we have supported the eastern route, and I still think that is very much the best option. I hope to see that actually come to pass. The people of Gungahlin are incredibly keen to see a road develop, and we have made much of when that is likely to occur. We still do not have a definite date, but it is very important that a road be built.

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I hope the government paid attention to the recent meeting of Aranda residents. I, Mrs Dunne, Mr Corbell, Mr Stanhope, Ms Dundas and Ms Tucker attended that meeting. There were at least 350 people there; I think one of the papers reported it as 400. I counted 20 rows of chairs and 16 chairs in each row, plus a lot of people around the wall. It was one of the biggest community meetings I have seen since the Assembly has been going.

Those people wanted the road to be 200 metres to the east of Caswell Drive. There were probably 20 people there who had different views, most of whom probably did not want any road at all and supported the position Ms Tucker has been consistently putting in this Assembly of not building any Gungahlin Drive extension. But, apart from one or two who had other ideas, the vast majority wanted to see that road 200 metres to the east. As I said at that meeting, I have always been supportive of that. It makes a lot of sense to put a road behind a ridge line on the reverse slope to Aranda.

We got some comment about the environmental impact there; obviously, there would be some. I think the government makes far too much of the potential environmental impact there rather than the amenity for the community. I do not think there is a huge amount of impact there or that it is going to adversely affect the excellent Black Mountain Reserve. I would urge the government to take note of what the community says and change their minds in terms of their preferred route.

I was heartened to hear some conciliatory talk by both the Chief Minister and the minister at that meeting, indicating that it is still in the consultation process and that no final decision has been made. I hope to see the residents' wishes adhered to. I think the route suggested by them is the best option, just as I think the eastern route is the best option. I hope that will ultimately come to pass.

It would be very nice if we did not have a road at all, and I have some sympathy for Ms Tucker's position. But at the end of the day that is unrealistic. The people of Gungahlin need a road; I do not think anything is going to change in our urban make-up that would make a road not necessary. I sincerely hope the government changes its mind, does the eastern route and adheres to what the Aranda residents want after we pass Belconnen Way.

I read the government's response this morning, and noted that the sport and rec area is among Urban Services' fields of control. There is some merit there. I can recall that in the first Assembly ovals were the responsibility of Urban Services. That changed during the Follett government—I am not sure whether under your good self, Mr Speaker, or under Mr Lamont when he was minister—when ovals became part of the larger Bureau of Sport, Recreation and Racing.

I had a bit of a chuckle about the government response that is it was strange having sport and rec under the department of education. That is an unfair comment. Having sport and recreation under education was seen as a reasonably popular move by a lot of people in the sporting area because of the important link between school sport and junior sport and the synergies that can occur. So that was not an illogical move.

In terms of the logic of where ovals should be, there has been logic to it being in Urban Services. It could be part of a general greenfield maintenance of other open spaces that Urban Services do. That was the case prior to 1994 at least. It might have been earlier if it occurred under you, Mr Speaker, but under Mr Lamont the ovals were certainly part and parcel of sport and rec. They are now back there, and I do not think that is illogical.

Some benefits can be had from that. Local councils look after ovals; they do the work Urban Services does a lot of in Canberra. That may be a reasonable move, and maybe it does not make too much difference. But that was a reasonable comment in the government response, and I want to be fair and acknowledge that. As a former sports minister, I certainly do not have a huge problem with that.

I hope this government, when it looks at saving money—as it haphazardly seems to have done in a couple of areas of this budget—does not do anything as silly as it did when it cut the sports budget by 2 per cent and did that by making 27 ovals low maintenance. I am delighted to have had a significant hand in bringing probably half of those back. A couple more need to be brought back to full maintenance. My colleague Mr Pratt, the shadow sports minister, has made comment on that in recent times.

I would commend to the Urban Services Minister, who looks after that now, to look at bringing several more of those low maintenance ovals back so that people can participate in good, healthy activity. It is not just organised sport; it is also people enjoying the open amenity of those suburban ovals and ovals around schools. That is especially important for our kids. I do not want to foreshadow a motion that is coming on tomorrow, but I know of the concerns of one of the government members about unhealthy kids. The more encouragement we can give to kids to get out in the open air—and in their local area—and be healthy, the better. And ovals help there.

I am looking at the time and am not going to go over my initial 10 minutes, but I reserve the right to say something more on a couple areas, and I still need to give a bit of an economics lesson to Mr Quinlan on one point.

I was a little concerned to see pay parking in the budget. It is something the bureaucrats always bring up. I can remember that in the first budget the Carnell government had back in 1995: “Let’s bung in pay parking at Belconnen and Tuggeranong.” We resisted that. There are many low income earners in those areas who will be adversely affected by pay parking, and I note as well that the anticipated revenue is not huge.

There is a lot of pay parking already in Canberra, and this could well turn out to be an unreasonable slug to many residents of Tuggeranong and Belconnen, many of whom are struggling and just do not need that additional impost. It is unfortunate that this government in its first budget has succumbed to this measure. It is something that cropped up several times when we were in government and is something we rejected on the basis of equity and of not overburdening the ACT taxpayer, especially in areas where the average income is not as high as others. That caused me some concern.

I am pleased to see some areas where the former Liberal government’s plans have been continued. I am pleased to see the William Hovell Drive extension being dealt with. I do not think the government put that back a year; I hope they did not. Perhaps someone on the other side can tell me. It is something that is very much needed and something that

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we put in the forward works. I am pleased to see that something is actually going to occur that is absolutely essential.

There are a few things in Belconnen—I am not going to talk about skateboard parks now; I will leave that for later—which we had in our budget and which are not in there. That is a bit of a concern. But at least—and I will come to that later, too—William Hovell Drive is there. I will close at this point and note a couple of other things later.

MS DUNDAS (9.40): In this area of infrastructure spending the government is sadly much like the previous government. Just like the previous government, this government is still endlessly deferring a real commitment to a permanent, purpose-built Kippax library.

At the estimates hearings on 22 July, the Minister for Urban Services said that there was no capital funding for Kippax library in this budget but that there was money to, I quote, “keep the thing on the go”. Well, there has been precious little “go” and a lot of “maybe one day”.

After witnessing the numerous sod-turnings on Belconnen pool, the Belconnen community of Kippax do not feel optimistic about getting their library within their lifetimes—when the government has not even got past the endless reviews and needs analyses.

Minister Wood said that \$100,000 was allocated in last year’s budget for a library scoping study and that \$30,000 of that had been spent so far. The remaining \$70,000 is apparently to be spent on a study looking at the relationship between the Belconnen and Kippax libraries and the library needs of Belconnen residents.

The initial Kippax report is to be completed in September, but the minister could not give a completion date for the study examining the relationship between the Belconnen and Kippax libraries. This is incredibly unsatisfactory for the people of West Belconnen. As the estimates report has noted, we hope that a copy of those two reports will be tabled in the Assembly as soon as they are completed.

In the area of transport, this government has adopted the skewed priorities of the previous government by spending 16 times as much on infrastructure for private vehicles as on infrastructure for all other modes of transport put together. Let me say it again: this is a budget about priorities. The government has announced pay parking for Tuggeranong and Belconnen to get people out of their cars but has failed to commit to redirecting the increased revenue to additional bus services to make public transport more attractive to commuters.

The government has made much of its additional commitments to public transport, and I do welcome their move to the single-zone fare system. But this year we will not see an increase in the number of services provided, so I have trouble believing that patronage levels will rise. And Belconnen interchange is still not getting a much needed facelift to make it a safe and a pleasant place to wait for buses.

While the government is not providing adequate night and weekend services people will be unable to assume that public transport will get them where they need to go when they need to be there. People who otherwise could do without a car will still need one for travelling during the off-peak periods.

I hope I am wrong, but I am not yet convinced the government is sending a strong enough signal to the community that public transport is a flexible and reliable transport option. While this budget contains some positive new cycling infrastructure, the government has actually decreased maintenance spending on the existing cycling infrastructure.

Within the Department of Urban Services we also see the sustainable transport and integrated transport strategy for Canberra project being developed—funded twice: half in the territory planning section and the other half in public transport. I hope this division of the money will result in the coming together of the two areas, so that we do really end up with an integrated transport strategy for Canberra.

The government has not formally abandoned the No Waste by 2010 strategy, but its actions belie their words. This year \$2.4 million will be spent on a new landfill trench—on a hole. And more will have to be spent on a trench liner next year, possibly another \$2 million. Yet the government has committed nothing—nothing—to kerbside recycling of the largest single type of waste going to landfill: putrescible waste. What kind of legacy is this? A hole for waste as opposed to any move towards long-term solutions.

The government has stated that \$1.5 million has been allocated over three years to:

- an increase in on-ground parks management by Environment ACT
- a reliable, scientifically based, natural resource information management system
- a strategic review of conservation policies and management policies
and
- support of community partnerships concerning the environment.

As Ms Tucker said earlier, I have difficulty believing that these ambitious can be achieved from such a modest financial allocation, and I was not reassured about this through the estimates process.

I also agree that the government could do a lot better on greenhouse abatement. Spending on implementation of the ACT greenhouse strategy was \$0.85 million in 2000-01; in 2001-02 it was only \$0.7 million. There is planned spending for 2002-03 of a mere \$0.8 million. Since Labor took over, greenhouse abatement spending is on the decline. The government still cannot say when they will actually implement the performance measures that track the very thing they are meant to be reducing—that is, greenhouse gas emissions.

While there has been much talk about water management being the biggest issue in Australia in the new millennium, water barely rates a mention in this ACT budget. Water policy and management remain ignored, and this seems very irresponsible.

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Nor is the government's commitment to an independent environmental watchdog entirely convincing. The Office of the Commissioner for the Environment is clearly underresourced. The office has been allocated additional funding for some years to prepare state of environment reports, but the overall capacity of the office has not been increased when it is so clearly required.

But the Department of Urban Services is not just about rows of rubbish in the environment. Bill Wood, the self-styled Lord Mayor of Canberra, also has responsibility for the arts. As noted in the estimates report, \$0.35 million is allocated to arts "other initiatives", with additional funding in the out years. How this money will be spent is still unclear. We have heard that the Centenary of Federation monument, due to be completed by June 2003, when we all know that the Centenary of Federation was 2001, has yet to be commissioned and is being held up with delays due to planning.

Overall, the government's spending in the area of urban services shows a lack of imagination and long-term vision. We need to reorder our priorities and spending on transport and environmental management if we are to create the sustainable future that the Chief Minister talks about.

MR CORBELL (Minister for Education, Youth and Family Services, Minister for Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.47): Mr Speaker, after that speech, I sincerely hope that Ms Dundas is going to be voting against the budget. I would be very surprised if she were prepared to endorse a document she has so roundly criticised. Conversely, if she is voting for the budget tonight, I would like to see what we would have to do to get a no vote out of her. Based on her assessment, this budget fails. Of course, the truth could not be further from what Ms Dundas has put forward.

The government is putting forward a comprehensive strategy for planning for our future and is doing so in a way that addresses the social, economic and environmental issues that will challenge our city for the next 30 years. I have already spoken a little on this in the in-principle debate, so I will not revisit it except to say that Ms Dundas' suggestion that the government is not looking at transport, land use planning or the related issues of building a more sustainable city is badly misplaced.

This is the first government in the history of self-government to seek to develop a strategic plan for our city. No such strategy has been in place since the release of the metropolitan plan by the National Capital Development Commission in the early 1980s. That is the magnitude and the importance of the work this government has embarked upon, and I would have thought it would be welcomed by members of the crossbench in particular, who have fought so long for this sort of exercise.

The government has put in place the development of an integrated transport plan for the city. That will be part of the spatial planning exercise the government will be undertaking over the next 18 months. The government is focusing in particular on improving public transport provision in the city, whether through infrastructure moves, such as dedicated busways, through alternative transport modes, such as light rail, or through a range of other measures designed to improve the attractiveness of public transport.

I do not think it is in any way reasonable for Ms Dundas to claim that the government is not investing sufficiently in public transport—we are. This government is spending \$47½ million on ACTION over the next four years. That is how much money we are putting into the public transport provider in the next four years. That includes additional money we put into it last financial year. That is the extent of the government's investment.

It includes a major fleet replacement program to provide wheelchair accessibility in a significant proportion of the fleet in order to meet disability access standards. It includes the abolition of the Liberal Party's unfair zonal bus scheme, a scheme that made it more expensive to catch a bus than it did to drive from Gungahlin to Civic and pay for parking. We have invested in addressing that.

We have put in place new safety measures for our buses—the bus door safety program—to make sure they are safe, particularly for schoolchildren. We have invested in new transport communications for the fleet, again investing in both driver safety and passenger safety if buses break down or there is an incident on the bus. These are the investments the government is making in public transport, and I dismiss Ms Dundas' criticism that we are not prepared to invest in public transport in our city.

But buses also need something to travel on: you need to invest in an effective arterial road network for our city; you need to invest in the development of the Gungahlin Drive extension; you need to invest in the upgrade of major arterial roads, such as William Hovell Drive. I would be interested to hear Ms Dundas say, for example, that we should not be duplicating William Hovell Drive, a key arterial road that services her electorate. Is she saying the road should not be duplicated? I am sure lots of people in West and North Belconnen would like to hear her views on that.

The government is establishing an integrated transport strategy for the city, and it is designed first and foremost to address the issue of mode of transport—to look at ways to shift people away from relying heavily on private motor vehicles and towards taking at least some of their journeys using alternative modes, whether that is public transport, walking, cycling or, indeed, journey sharing.

This strategy is going to be developed by this government over the next six to eight months, and it is the first time any government since self-government has sought to do it. I would have thought that would win some recognition from Ms Dundas. At least we are putting it to work; at least we are making it happen.

Ms Tucker raised the Gungahlin Drive extension, and I understand her position on it. She has, as Mr Stefaniak said, persistently advocated her position. I respect her for that, but I do not agree with her. This is not a debate about whether or not the road should be built. The Assembly has had that debate, and the community has had that debate. It is time to build the road and, contrary to Mr Stefaniak's assertion, the government has outlined its timetable—June 2005 is the scheduled completion date in the capital works budget. Go and have a look at it, Mr Stefaniak. The government has outlined its timetable very clearly.

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Mrs Dunne has raised a number of concerns about the government's proposed changes. Once again, Mrs Dunne resorts to rhetoric and to allusions to previous federal government administrations to somehow undermine the credibility of the government's performance in planning and land management. Mrs Dunne, if you want to refer to this government as Whitlamesque, go right ahead. I will wear it as a badge of pride.

This government has embarked on a very serious planning reform agenda, and the opposition has failed comprehensively to highlight any substantive issue in relation to the finances surrounding land development. Despite close to four separate days of hearings on this matter, despite endless amounts of information about the financial model provided by me and officers, they have failed dismally to punch even one hole in the model. Maybe they do not understand it, but that is their loss. They have failed to demonstrate that there is a problem with the financial model.

The government is confident about the model. That is why we have agreed to the recommendation that it be independently assessed. We welcome that recommendation. I told the Estimates Committee that we welcomed that recommendation and that the government is even now in the process of commissioning the independent assessment of the financial model. That will be provided to members. That is the confidence the government has in its financial model.

If Mrs Dunne does not believe that this is an appropriate way to go in relation to land development, I would like her to tell me how she would find the extra \$17 million per year of revenue that the government estimates will be achieved once the full government land development activity is under way. It is an extra \$17 million per year that the government anticipates receiving from government land development activity. That is a very significant improved return on the asset our community owns.

It is interesting that Mr Smyth wants some of it, or at least he wants some of the foregone revenue to pay for his four-pronged health plan. The government anticipates a better return on our land asset as well as better outcomes on the ground, and Mrs Dunne has failed comprehensively to demonstrate either problems with that model or, indeed, what she would do to address the revenue imbalance she would create if she had her way. That is the position of the government on land development.

In relation to planning policy more generally, the establishment of an independent planning and land authority is a key reform for the government. It is one we talked about consistently in opposition, it is one we went to the election on and it is one we now seek to implement.

MR SPEAKER: The member's time has expired.

MR CORBELL: I wish to make use of my second ten minutes. I know Mrs Dunne does not like it and does not agree with it, but she has to understand that this is about rebuilding the institutions of planning and the public administration of planning in our city.

Planning policy is desperately needed, not only in this city but right around the country. It is well recognised that the undermining of the public policy role of planning has contributed to poor outcomes on the ground, for not only this city but cities right around

the country. Cities right around the country and state and territory governments are even now moving to address this issue, and this government is leading in terms of its proposed reforms.

The planning and land authority will deliver greater accountability and transparency and, more importantly, greater advocacy for better planning outcomes for our city and greater information not only to government but to the Assembly on the planning issues this city faces.

On top of that, the government's strategic planning process is something the previous government failed dismally to achieve in their last seven years. We have gone further in the last nine months than they did in their last seven years in strategic planning outcomes for our city. We need a framework that informs not only us, as decision makers now, but also future decision makers for the next 25 to 30 years.

We need a framework that will inform us about the decisions we face in terms of the growth and development of our city. Should we continue to allow greenfield development? How are we going to manage the issues of fringe development that we see every day around our borders—Tralee, the proposal around Googong? How are we going to manage the water implications of those? How are we going to manage increased development consolidation if we choose not to go down the greenfield path? How are we going to manage issues of this magnitude? We need a comprehensive framework that informs our decision-making.

We do not have one and, as a result, the response of the previous government has been ad hoc and reactive. We need to be proactive, and we need to have a structure that informs our decision-making—socially, environmentally and economically. That is what this government is delivering.

This is a strong budget for planning, it is a strong budget for public transport and it is a strong budget for developing the strategic framework our city needs to guide ourselves into the future.

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

Adjournment

Motion (by **Mr Corbell**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

West Belconnen Warriors

MR STEFANIAK (10.01): Last week I wished all the best to the Belconnen Magpies Aussie rules side in their quest for their first premiership after a good home and away season. This week I want to congratulate a team that has had considerable success in premierships. Indeed, one of our former members, Mr Osborne, was one of its star players after his illustrious career with the Canberra Raiders. I refer to the Belconnen Warriors, the Belconnen rugby league side that has had a brilliant season: minor premiers in first grade and undefeated minor premiers in reserve grade. Their club has

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had a spectacular season, and I want to place on record my very best wishes for them, as they come up to the final series, for their games next week and, I hope, subsequently, as they approach another first grade or reserve grade premiership.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 10.02 pm.

Schedule of amendments

Schedule 1

Appropriation Bill 2002-2003

Amendments circulated by the Treasurer

1 **Schedule 1, part 4** **Page 5—**

omit part 4, substitute

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|--|
| Part 4 | | | | | | |
| Chief Minister's Department | Chief Minister's | 58 078 000 | 8 748 000 | 3 145 000 | 69 971 000 | |

2 **Schedule 1, part 6** **Page 5—**

omit part 6, substitute

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--|
| Part 6 | | | | | | |
| Department of Treasury | Treasury | 37 980 000 | 14 928 000 | 42 962 000 | 95 870 000 | |

3 **Schedule 1, part 11** **Page 5—**

omit part 11, substitute

| | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|-------------|------------|-----------|-------------|--|
| Part 11 | | | | | | |
| Department of Health and Community Care | Health and Community Care | 388 817 000 | 13 493 000 | 5 624 000 | 407 934 000 | |

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4
Schedule 1, part 12
Page 6—

omit part 12, substitute

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|--|
| Part 12 | | | | | | |
| Department of Urban Services | | 236 315 000 | 88 492 000 | 15 194 000 | 340 001 000 | |
| Urban Services | | | | | | |

5
Schedule 1, new part 14A
Page 6—

after part 14, insert

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|------------|-----------|------------|-------------|--|
| Part 14A | | | | | | |
| Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services | of Disability, Housing and Community Services | 97 652 000 | 1 953 000 | 20 897 000 | 120 502 000 | |

6
Schedule 1, part 17
Page 6—

omit part 17, substitute

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|--|
| Part 17 | | | | | | |
| Department of Education, Youth and Family Services | of Education, Youth and Family Services | 399 132 000 | 27 604 000 | 117 862 000 | 544 598 000 | |

7
Schedule 2
Page 7—

omit

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Urban Services | 1 Municipal services |
| | 2 Transport |
| | 3 Environment and heritage |
| | 4 Planning and land management |
| | 5 Fee for service activities |
| | 6 Housing assistance |
| | 7 Arts and cultural services |

substitute

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Urban Services | 1 Municipal services |
| | 2 Transport |
| | 3 Environment and heritage |
| | 4 Planning and land management |
| | 5 Fee for service activities |
| | 6 Arts and cultural services |

8
Schedule 2
Page 7—

after

| | |
|-------------|---------------------|
| ACT Forests | 1 Forestry services |
|-------------|---------------------|

insert

| | |
|--|--|
| Disability, Housing and Community Services | 1 Disability, housing and community services |
|--|--|

9
Schedule 2, column 1
Page 8—

omit

Education and Community Services

substitute

Education, Youth and Family Services