



Debates

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Wednesday, 24 March 2010

MR SPEAKER (Mr Rattenbury) took the chair at 10 am and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Petition

The following petition was lodged for presentation, by Mr Rattenbury, from six residents:

Dickson wetland project—petition No 108

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 Hawdon Street Municipal Depot in Dickson will have a detrimental impact on the proposed new Dickson wetlands, has never been suited to its residential environment and should be relocated.

The ACT government is developing a large wetland project on open space immediately behind the Hawdon Street depot. Preliminary wetlands plans identify a nearby alternative site for the depot, away from residential streets and away from the wetlands.

Currently sited in a residential street, the depot houses heavy vehicles, including large tractors. Surrounded by cyclone wire, it stores multiple garbage bins and piles of general waste, which are in plain view of adjacent residents and passers by. In summer, the depot emits an unpleasant smell of grease. Diesel fumes affect areas close to it. The sight, smell and noise of the depot would all have a negative impact on people's experience of the wetlands.

The depot, as it stands, would create an unsightly physical barrier between a residential area and the wetlands. Removing the depot would greatly enhance the wetlands project by allowing the new wetlands to extend to and connect with the residential area.

The depot's many loud diesel-powered vehicles drive through Dickson's streets early in the mornings, disturbing and awakening residents. Despite many complaints by residents over the years, the depot continues to disturb their peaceful enjoyment of their suburb.

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly to:

Enhance the Dickson wetland project and respond to residents' longstanding concerns by relocating the Hawdon Street depot as proposed by the ACT Department of Environment, Climate Change, Energy & Water's Dickson Wetland Preliminary Sketch Plan (Project number 0969, 11/12/2009).

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

Emergencies (Bushfire Warnings) Amendment Bill 2010

Mr Smyth, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and its explanatory statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.03): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Mr Speaker, I have much pleasure in introducing the Emergencies (Bushfire Warnings) Amendment Bill 2010. Members will recall that I introduced a bushfire warnings bill in August 2009. The bill that I introduce today is almost identical to that bill. The only difference is that I have now ensured that the wording in table 85C is identical to the wording in the national bushfire warning framework.

Why am I introducing what is essentially the same bill again today? Members will be aware that the hearing has commenced in the ACT Supreme Court of the claims for compensation by a number of people who experienced damage and loss as a result of the 2003 bushfire disaster in the ACT. A most interesting—and potentially quite worrying—factor has emerged from the early evidence that has been presented to that hearing. The Canberra community is now aware that the ACT government has claimed that, apparently, it does not have a duty of care to issue warnings to people who might be in the path of a bushfire.

Mr Corbell: A point of order, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Stop the clocks, thank you.

Mr Corbell: Mr Speaker, standing orders prohibit members from being able to comment on matters that are currently before the court. Mr Smyth is directly referring to matters that are currently the subject of an action in the Supreme Court. It is not appropriate for members to use this place to comment on those matters that are currently before the court. That is exactly what Mr Smyth is doing and I would ask you to call him to order in that regard.

Mr Seselja: Mr Speaker, on the point of order, this has obviously come up on a number of occasions. If we look at *House of Representative Practice* as our guide, as we have seen in the last few days, there are a number of elements that need to be shown to actually shut down a member from speaking about an issue. Not only do there need to be proceedings; of course there needs to be a substantial risk of those proceedings being prejudiced. Indeed, even in those cases, there is always the ability of the Assembly to accept that it is in the public interest to actually debate these issues. These proceedings could potentially go on for years. The idea that we as a legislature should not in any way be able to talk about these issues for years would be a major gag on our ability to debate matters and it would not be in the public interest. I would ask you to rule against Mr Corbell on that basis.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you for the point of order, Mr Corbell. I think, though, that the point Mr Seselja makes about the necessity of having some public discourse, particularly in a matter that could take a number of years is a cogent one. Mr Smyth, I would ask you to take some care in not necessarily drawing conclusions or commenting on specific pieces of evidence. But I think the broad matter is one that warrants discussion in the Assembly.

MR SMYTH: I am very aware of that issue, Mr Speaker, and I thank you for your ruling, because this bill, of course, was in the public realm in August last year and it is substantially the same. But I thank you for your ruling.

The hearing was told by the lawyer representing the ACT government that there was no legal duty of care placed on the government of the day to control fuel loads.

Mr Corbell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, you have just advised Mr Smyth not to draw particular references from particular pieces of evidence that are currently—

MR SMYTH: No, he said “conclusions”.

Mr Corbell: Or conclusions from that evidence. Mr Smyth has said that this is worrying, that the government is making, in its representations in the court about its legal duty of care—

Mr Seselja: It’s in the public realm.

Mr Corbell: He was alluding directly to what is a critical issue in this court matter, which is whether or not there is a legal duty of care. That is the heart of this matter. Mr Smyth is referring to particular pieces of evidence currently being led in relation to that matter. You have just instructed Mr Smyth that he should not do so, and he is doing so. So can you call him to order. Alternatively, Mr Speaker, are you now ruling that it is quite okay for members to comment freely in this place on matters that are currently the subject of detailed legal hearings?

Mr Seselja: Mr Speaker, on the point of order, Mr Smyth is setting some context. He is not drawing conclusions. An argument has been put up, it is in the public domain and it is relevant to refer to that argument because it is relevant to the legislation that is being put forward. If Mr Corbell believes that we should be gagged in this place from speaking about things which are openly discussed in the public domain then we will have less freedom of speech in this chamber than exists in the broader community. That is not what a parliament is meant to be. You have ruled, and Mr Smyth is allowed to set some context. He is not going to litigate the case in this place, which is what the sub judice rule is about. He is setting some context for his legislation. You actually, Mr Speaker, allowed him to do that; he has not had the chance to get two more words out of his mouth before Mr Corbell is again objecting. I would ask you to allow Mr Smyth to go on. He has been asked to be careful, he is being careful and he should be allowed to proceed.

Mr Corbell: On the point of order, Mr Speaker, Mr Smyth is litigating the case. He is referring to specific pieces of evidence; he is arguing why that is flawed and why his

bill needs to be introduced. That is the subtext, Mr Speaker, of why he is referring to it. He does not need to refer to this evidence to explain why his bill is necessary. He does not need to do so; he is choosing to use this as an opportunity to litigate those matters in this place. It is, in my submission, completely inappropriate and I would ask you to rule accordingly.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, members. I think we are in somewhat of a grey zone here. Of course, as you know, the continuing resolution 10 on sub judice practice in this place does give the discretion to the chair. Mr Smyth, I am a little concerned that you are using that evidence, the suggestion from the government that they do not have a duty of care, to make the case for your legislation. I would ask you to perhaps refrain from that particular inclusion. I think that you are able to make the case for your legislation perhaps without coming to that point, given that it is a key question in the debate in the Supreme Court.

Mr Seselja: Just on your ruling, Mr Speaker, it does appear that that is slightly different from what you ruled a moment ago. Mr Smyth is not litigating the case but Mr Smyth, as I understood your ruling earlier, is entitled to reference what has been argued in the case because it is relevant to the legislation going forward. That is part of why we exist as a legislature. Sometimes we bring forward legislation which is relevant to what happens in court cases. He is not saying which way the court will rule on that, but clearly the government—

Mr Corbell: After the court has made a decision, Mr Seselja.

MR SESELJA: Hang on. Clearly, the government have a position on this. They have put forward their position. Mr Smyth is entitled to have a position as well. He should not be artificially constrained. I would also turn your attention, regarding your discretion on this matter, Mr Speaker, to *House of Representatives Practice* where it does give judges some credit and says that discussions in this place are unlikely—because this is about prejudice in cases. Surely, Mr Corbell is not arguing that because Mr Smyth references in passing in this place these proceedings, the judges of the Supreme Court of the ACT are going to be influenced in their decision and the case will therefore be prejudiced. That is the heart of sub judice, Mr Speaker, that is where your discretion lies and that is where I think there needs to be some latitude for Mr Smyth.

Mr Corbell: On the point of order—and thank you for your indulgence, Mr Speaker—the point is, and what is also important in relation to the sub judice rule, that it is about respecting where these matters are to be decided.

Mr Seselja: And that could go on forever.

Mr Corbell: And the Assembly should pay due regard to the fact that it is the court, the Supreme Court, the third arm of government, that is hearing this matter at the moment. It is not correct to argue that it is open slather here because these are matters of relevant public interest. The fact is the matter is being actively litigated now, in one of the most significant litigation cases in relation to claims about duty of care, of any matter for some time in the history of Australia. It is actively being litigated. The

matter is set down for eight or 12 weeks—not forever; for eight or 12 weeks. I do not see why Mr Smyth needs to go to the specifics of that hearing to present his bill. It is not simply a case of potentially jeopardising the court's hearing of the matter; it is also about respecting the fact that it is the court that is dealing with this matter, not the legislature.

Mr Seselja: Mr Speaker, if I could respond, Mr Corbell needs to make the case as to why a member should be shut down. And the key—

Mr Corbell: I am just asking him to respect the conventions.

Mr Seselja: Hang on; you have had your say. He has to make the case as to why a member should be shut down. Sub judice is about whether proceedings will be prejudiced. Mr Corbell cannot argue that, by mentioning in passing what is going on, somehow the judges of the Supreme Court will be influenced or therefore the case will be prejudiced. He has the onus to make that case. He clearly has not made it. You have a discretion, Mr Speaker, and I put it to you that your discretion and your earlier ruling should be to allow some latitude because, if you do not, on a whole range of issues, we will simply be unable to have debates in this place because there may be legal proceedings going on. We as a parliament have a duty to discuss these issues. It is nonsense to suggest that judges of the Supreme Court are going to be prejudiced because of a speech in this place which is reasoned and which makes mention of these proceedings. I would ask you to rule in Mr Smyth's favour.

MR SPEAKER: With regard to your original question at the start of this point of order discussion, Mr Seselja, the further observation I was trying to make to Mr Smyth was that I have given him some latitude. I was just concerned that we were starting to reach a point where Mr Smyth was using the current proceedings to justify his legislation. I think that we can draw a careful line there. I think your point about the *Companion* to this place speaks to three main components of the sub judice rule—namely, that proceedings in the courts are not prejudiced, that the legislature does not undermine public respect for the courts, and the principle of comity. I think at this stage Mr Smyth has not crossed any of those three principles. My observation was simply to ask Mr Smyth to exercise some care with regard to those three principles.

MR SMYTH: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I am endeavouring to do that. I thank you for your ruling. I could have got up and read the transcript; I could read the *Canberra Times* article which clearly restated what has been stated in the court, but I will not go there. People know of my longstanding interest in this matter. The fact that I had an almost identical bill in this place in August last year before the last fire season means it would not be unexpected that I would bring a bill back in the same way.

Things have been said that I will not go to. I will exercise care in dealing with these statements because the hearings are far from complete. I have some personal opinions on what is being led; I will not go to those either. It is most appropriate that we wait at least until the hearing currently before the Chief Justice has been completed.

But, despite the tenderness of the minister, and with respect to your ruling, it is important that the public understand what it is the government understand their duty

to be. That is what this place is about, and we do that in a number of ways. Sometimes it is in policy statements from ministers; sometimes it is in legislation from this place. That is why I bring this legislation to this place—that is, so it is quite clear to the community and quite clear to the ministers what we believe their duty to be.

Mr Speaker, when my previous bushfire warnings bill was debated on 16 September 2009, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mr Corbell, set out his government's opposition to my bill. But, interestingly, Mr Corbell said in the course of his comments:

Canberra citizens are entitled to effective warning systems.

He said that on 16 September 2009, and let me say it again:

Canberra citizens are entitled to effective warning systems.

I simply emphasise that statement in the context of the overall debate on this important matter. In my comments today, I do not propose to make any further response to this statement from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and I do anticipate a very rigorous debate about the claimed responsibility of the ACT government in the context of preparing for emergencies in this place. As a person who has a longstanding interest in this area of policy, I will continue to contribute to that debate.

I also think that it is important that we do actually work out when warnings are given, what warnings should be given, what information should be included and how the warnings should be made. Each of these is a critical question in the context of considering warnings for bushfires. Probably the key issue with respect to my bill, however, relates to when warnings shall be issued. There is no point in having a national warning system and there is no point in having the technology to put out warnings if they are not used effectively and efficiently to the benefit of the community.

My bill will mandate that when a certain point is reached, according to the forest fire danger index, a warning shall be issued—no ifs, no buts, a warning shall be issued. Proposed section 85C requires the minister to follow certain actions depending on the level of the index. If the forest fire danger index reaches 25, a warning shall be issued. Beyond an index of 25, my bill requires an appropriate warning to be issued according to the nature of the bushfire emergency—again, no ifs, no buts, a warning is issued automatically. If the forest fire danger index is at any point above 25, a warning will be prepared according to the conditions and then issued. The principal purpose of my bill, therefore, is to overcome a problem that has been identified time and time again—that is, the actual issuing and the timing of the warnings.

Since I introduced my first bushfire warnings bill last year, we have seen the adoption of a nationally consistent approach to the matter of bushfire warnings. This was largely achieved through the auspices of the Australian Emergency Management Committee. It was a most significant day for Australia when all Australian jurisdictions agreed on a national system for emergency warnings. We in the opposition welcomed it; we applauded it.

But what does this national system mean for my bill? It means that my approach in this bill is confirmed and reaffirmed. In the ACT, for example, we now see each day on the front page of our local newspaper, the *Canberra Times*, a diagram showing the fire rating for that day, and the website for the Emergency Services Agency also includes this diagram with some additional information about conditions. In part, that is what my bill intends should be the case. I say to the minister: “Now, that wasn’t very hard, was it?” It was not very complex either, Mr Speaker.

I should note that the adoption of the national system of warnings in 2009 by all jurisdictions in Australia has provided some progress in putting a common system in place for the preparation and promulgation of warnings. In my bill, however, I seek to deal with each of these matters to the extent that they remain unresolved in the national approach.

I should make some further comments on the speech made by Mr Corbell in response to my bill last year. Mr Corbell commended me for introducing my bill. Thank you, minister. He then proceeded to rubbish the bill, particularly with respect to what he described as the confusion that it would cause. A close reading of Mr Corbell’s comments show that they are simply concocted nonsense. In some places, the minister was confused, and that is often the case. In some places, it is hard to understand why the minister said what he said. Mr Corbell said the proposals in my bill were impractical, unworkable and contrary to the nationally agreed warning framework. I challenge Mr Corbell to substantiate each of those claims. Indeed, his suggestion that they are contrary to the national framework is ridiculous.

My proposals are based on the nationally agreed framework. They simply extend the framework to require that a bushfire warning be given if certain conditions are satisfied. Mr Corbell noted, for example, that the Bureau of Meteorology will issue a daily fire danger index. I assume there is a protocol in place with the bureau relating to the role of the bureau in this way. As far as that goes, that is fine. What Mr Corbell omitted to say, however, beyond that is that he made no reference to the issuing of warnings. Does the bureau, having determined that the index is at a particular level, then issue the warning? I do not think that is a responsibility within the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Meteorology. I think that it is, as it should be, within the responsibility of particular jurisdictions and the ministers.

Mr Corbell made reference to the matter of determining a fire danger index on days outside the formal bushfire season as contributing to all of this confusion. Is Mr Corbell seriously suggesting that just because there is a risk of a bushfire outside the official bushfire season no index should be determined and no warning should be issued? What nonsense. The only confusion about these matters is in the mind of the minister. Everyone else is quite clear about what is needed and what is required to deal with bushfire emergencies.

Indeed, you only need to look at the recent cyclone that has hit the coast of Queensland. It was a cyclone, but was it a three, was it a two, was it a one? Was it a rain depression? Did it deteriorate? Did it gain strength? We all know that the weather, being what it is, will change. That is why it is appropriate to have this system. It is

also interesting to note that the Queensland system of issuing warnings that relate to the change of the intensity of a cyclone does not cause confusion and does not cause panic.

I think the question that Mr Corbell needs to answer, and which he did not answer on 16 September last year, is: what responsibility exists to require warnings to be issued? As far as I can tell, the matter is not dealt with in the national framework. To that extent, it remains unresolved. I want to suggest to the minister that he carefully consider the proposals in my bill and how these relate to any existing legislation in the ACT and how any other national framework and other protocols and agreements relate to my proposal. He is not the sole repository of wisdom on this important matter. I will look forward to the opportunity of collaborating and making sure that the ACT has the best possible approach to preparing and making bushfire warnings.

The critical matter that we face as a community in relation to bushfire warnings is to ensure that the warnings shall be issued when conditions require such warnings. In recent days, doubts have been raised about the proper role of the government in relation to the issuing of warnings and more generally in respect of the broader issue of governments' duty of care in situations of bushfire emergencies. If there is any doubt about the issuing of warnings in the case of emergencies, including bushfires, my bill will remove those doubts, at least as far as bushfires are concerned.

To the extent that a debate within our community is required over such matters as duty of care in the issuing of warnings, that will be a significant and probably vigorous debate. I welcome the opportunity to contribute to that debate. In the meantime, the imperative is to ensure that warnings are issued when they are required. We must legislate to mandate the preparation and the issuing of warnings of bushfire emergencies. I commend my bill to the parliament.

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

Infrastructure Canberra Bill 2010

Mr Seselja, pursuant to notice, presented the bill.

Title read by Clerk.

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.26): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Before the last election I identified the need for an infrastructure overhaul in the ACT and promised to develop the infrastructure Canberra plan to address this major flaw in the ACT's planning processes and infrastructure needs.

Last year I released an exposure draft of the Infrastructure Canberra Bill. This draft had already been through an extended development and consultation process to put the best possible package to industry stakeholders and the community. This year I am very pleased to introduce to this Assembly the Infrastructure Canberra Bill.

I did outline the content of this bill in some detail when I presented the exposure draft. However, it is appropriate that I summarise the core aspects of this bill. Most importantly, the bill calls for the development of an infrastructure plan for the territory. It appoints a commissioner to develop and report on that plan and establishes a board of expert advisers to ensure that all voices are heard before, during and after infrastructure projects are undertaken.

The bill calls for the plan to take a holistic approach considering elements such as whole-of-life-cycle costs, maintenance and decommissioning projects, technological innovations and building materials, environmental sustainability, labour supply and training, regulatory reform and certification, a robust open scrutiny of funding and economic impacts, and integration into the national capital and territory plans.

We do not believe that infrastructure is just roads and drains. Therefore, the bill calls for an integrated look at all our infrastructure needs now and into the future, including health and community services, education and training, transport, water supply and sustainability, energy usage, interstate connectivity, sports and cultural venues, communications including broadband, and waste and waste water management in public places including Civic and town centres. This is a vital, visionary plan that is missing from this government and it has been for the entire time they have been in office.

We have spoken on many occasions about the need for an infrastructure plan. We have spoken many times about the failings of this government in delivering infrastructure. We have spoken many times about the short-term opportunism that has strangled our city. It is possibly the single biggest impediment to this city genuinely taking its place amongst the best cities in the world. I do not intend to reiterate every failure of this government today. I will, however, share with this Assembly some of the positive feedback comments we have received from the very many sources from whom we have sought and received advice.

This feedback shows the hard work the Canberra Liberals have been engaging in with the business and development sectors. It shows a positive vision for the future and a positive attitude to cooperative legislative development. It shows a way forward.

Engineers Australia have been helpful in their input since the very earliest days of the development of this bill throughout last year. Their comment is:

Engineers Australia (Canberra Division) supports this bill as it fits in with our national recommendations of having an infrastructure advisory body that provides advice on policy, planning and delivery of infrastructure.

Denton Bocking, the president, also notes that sufficient funding should be provided for infrastructure as recommended in the infrastructure report card produced by the association in 2005. A new report card is due for release in June of this year and it will be interesting to see how this important stakeholder rates the ability of this government to deliver without having a plan such as the one contained in this bill.

Infrastructure Partnerships Australia are the nation's peak infrastructure body, comprising a national forum of public and private sector CEO members advocating the public policy interests of Australia's infrastructure industry. They produced an extensive submission. Their comments include that:

Australian Capital Territory's interest will be best served through the delivery of an effective framework for the planning, procurement and delivery of major projects.

Under the section "The need for a territory-wide infrastructure plan", it states:

Although the pressures for new infrastructure in the ACT are not as high as those in more highly populated states, the need for long term infrastructure is no less important.

They go on to state:

The reform of infrastructure planning and delivery within the Australian Capital Territory is an important priority for supporting growth in the national economy.

The report notes that the current government has been declaring that it will, one day, produce such a plan. But Infrastructure Partnerships Australia notes:

However, in the absence of any further indication as to when the plan will be released, IPA supports the intent of the exposure draft legislation as a means of advancing the process and development of the Plan.

Again, the IPA have given some specific and detailed feedback which will form part of the debate on the implementation of this scheme. But importantly, IPA state that, subject to their comments, they "commend its future incorporation into territory law".

The Housing Industry Association in their submission noted:

... that the main focus of your bill is to provide a more strategic approach to the provision and delivery of infrastructure in the ACT. This will include the appointment of an independent Commissioner to provide the necessary oversight and a Board that will enable critical input from a range of relevant stakeholders, including representatives from the residential construction industry.

On this basis, HIA provides its in principle support for the Bill ...

The Master Builders are also supportive. They say:

... the provision of infrastructure to support the economic and social well-being of communities is one of the highest order responsibilities of government as well as being of significant importance to the private sector in helping to meet policy objectives.

On this basis, the concept of an Infrastructure Commission that engages with stakeholders at all levels (government, community and business) is a worthwhile

concept for consideration to ensure a shared vision for providing infrastructure is achieved. Prioritising and delivering key infrastructure should not be seen to rest solely with government.

The Master Builders also had some suggestions, specifically on the number of board members appointed, which have been taken on board and are reflected in the new draft of the legislation. The Canberra Business Council has had input. They state:

The Council is very supportive of the development of a detailed, strategic and long term infrastructure plan for the ACT. As far back as March 2009, the Council wrote to the Chief Minister suggesting there was an urgent need for the development of a detailed infrastructure plan for the ACT.

This position is strongly supported by the Council's kindred organisations.

In relation to the bill, it stated:

Canberra Business Council also supports the idea of an Infrastructure Commission.

And it went on to say:

It is adamant that the views of industry experts outside of government must be sought in determining future infrastructure needs and priorities for Canberra and the surrounding region.

The council also note that they have been pushing the government for a solution such as that contained in this bill, to little effect. In relation to the proposed solution from the government, it is stated:

... the Council's concern is that, under the Government's current model, industry will only be given an opportunity to comment on the Government's infrastructure plan after it has been developed by the bureaucracy.

That is an important point, Mr Speaker. This plan seeks outside, expert contributions in the development of the plan right at the outset, something which business experts have commonly regarded as essential, yet the government views as anathema. I do sympathise with the council's other points that there is a danger in too much bureaucracy. As Liberals, we have no issue with agreeing that government interference can cause as many problems as it solves.

I have two points to make on this topic. The first is that infrastructure planning and delivery is such a vital, fundamental aspect of governance that it must be driven correctly and competently from the top to be successful. A failure to plan is a plan to fail, as they say, and we can see those failures around our city every day. The second point is the glaring lack of any alternative. In light of this, we must progress with the tools we have to effect positive, constructive change.

The ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry "support this bill and its aims". Again, there were specific comments; again, those were taken into consideration when preparing this draft, including ensuring that the board contain expertise in commercial and business skills.

Mr Speaker, this is a bill on which we have worked diligently, with a surety of purpose that our proposal was both considered and correct. We have listened and we have consulted; we have drafted and amended. Of course, there are other factors that may yet influence the development of the bill, not least the approach from the commonwealth. However, the commonwealth's approach is far closer to ours than that of the government for the past decade. It was the Prime Minister himself that stated that a legislative approach was essential to:

... develop a strategic blueprint for Australia's infrastructure needs and ensure future projects are determined by economic, social, and environmental needs—not short-term political interests.

If passed, this bill would provide significant and substantial reform to the way in which we plan, procure and deliver infrastructure projects in the territory. The need for this reform is clear. The time for the reform is now.

I commend the Infrastructure Canberra Bill 2009 to the Assembly.

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

Workplace Surveillance Bill 2010—exposure draft

MS BRESNAN (Brindabella) (10.36), by leave: I present the following paper:

Workplace Surveillance Bill 2010—Exposure draft.

I seek leave to make a statement in relation to the paper.

Leave granted.

MS BRESNAN: I am proud to present to the Assembly an exposure draft of the Workplace Surveillance Bill 2010.

The ACT Greens have had a longstanding dedication to improving workplaces for employers and employees, and the central premise of this bill is to strike a balance between an employer's right to protect their business and employees' reasonable right to privacy in the workplace.

It should be noted that this area is currently unregulated under ACT law. I will go on to discuss the impacts that a lack of regulation of surveillance and privacy can have.

We believe that the workplace is a place which needs to foster trust between employers and employees. We recognise the need for employers to protect their workplaces and monitor their employees through surveillance; however, we do not recognise the need to mislead and conceal the means of doing so in the everyday running of a business.

We believe in full disclosure, in honest conversation between employers and employees. We believe that the vast majority of businesses are capable of doing this,

and we believe that, by and large, this bill will have little impact on those businesses that engage in honest and open dialogue with their employees about surveillance and monitoring.

However, this bill will impact upon those few employers who act dishonestly regarding methods of watching their employees in the workplace. In this and other jurisdictions, employees have found themselves surveilled by their employers dishonestly and with intent. Employees have discovered hidden cameras concealed within their workplaces months after they have been installed, they have had their emails read without their knowledge or permission and their movements have been tracked without their knowledge both whilst at work and afterwards.

In some of the worst cases in Australia, workers have been filmed at work without their permission, only to discover embarrassing footage of themselves uploaded to YouTube or, in one case, shown, to their dismay, at the office Christmas party. Workers have had private emails between their work email addresses and their loved ones distributed by their employers. It is this type of surveillance that we seek to restrict.

We must emphasise, before we go into the detail, that this bill in no way restricts an employer from legitimate overt monitoring of work areas for security or employee monitoring purposes. The only obligation on these employers is to disclose to their employees that they will be monitored and for what purpose.

This bill is partially based upon the Workplace Surveillance Act as it operates in New South Wales. We have made several improvements to the bill, in some cases based upon the national privacy principles that regulate privacy interactions between businesses and consumers, in others based upon feedback provided on the operation of the Workplace Surveillance Act in New South Wales by groups such as the Australian Privacy Foundation.

This bill makes a distinction between three types of surveillance—*notified, covert and prohibited*—and identifies three primary categories of surveillance, being *optical, computer and tracking*.

I turn to *notified surveillance*. This section of the legislation will cover the vast majority of surveillance conducted within a workplace. This legislation will place upon employers a requirement to fully disclose where and when they will be surveilled at work. We have listed offences for failing to comply with these basic notification requirements. There are further specific requirements for *optical, data and tracking surveillance*.

For *optical surveillance*, the camera, camera housing or other equipment indicating the presence and location of a camera must be clearly visible in the workplace. Furthermore, each entrance to the workplace must have a sign clearly indicating that workers may be under surveillance in the workplace. The employer is not required to provide notification to a worker for a workplace that is not their usual place of work.

In the case of *data or computer surveillance*, the employer is required to develop a policy on the usage of data surveillance devices and notify the worker prior to

commencing the surveillance. In practical terms, the employer needs to tell an employee if they are going to read emails or block access to particular websites or classes of website through any monitoring or network protection system. Again, this does not place undue restrictions on employers doing so; it just places a requirement upon them to do so in an honest, equitable and transparent manner.

Sections 19 and 20 of the bill outline specific requirements and offences relating to employer interception and blocking of electronic communications. These sections stipulate that blocking access to websites or stopping delivery must be either in accordance with policy or for a range of specific reasons, including reasonable suspicion that the communication may be spam or damage a computer or network. Furthermore, an employer may not block a website or communication purely on the basis that it relates to industrial matters, although such websites and communications may be blocked where it is consistent with usage policy, for example where an employer provides a whitelist of approved websites.

In the case of tracking surveillance, the object or vehicle which is being tracked must be marked with a notice informing the user that the object or vehicle is being tracked.

Section 21 of the legislation outlines an offence for improper use or disclosure of surveillance records. This provision prevents improper violations of a worker's privacy by having surveillance data disclosed for a malicious or inappropriate purpose. Section 22 provides a worker with access to surveillance records, and mirrors the requirements of the national privacy principles as they relate to customer data. Sections 21 and 22 have been included in this bill to correct the anomaly whereby consumer data collected by companies is protected, but data collected by companies on their employees is not.

The Greens believe that the majority of employees operate in good faith and within the bounds of the law whilst at work. However, we recognise that some employees do not, and may engage in illegal activity to the detriment of their employer. We recognise that, in limited circumstances, employees may do so in such a fashion that evades overt surveillance. It is in recognition of this fact that we have provided provisions for limited, authorised and supervised covert surveillance under part 4 of this bill.

The employer, if they wish to conduct covert surveillance, will be required to apply before the Magistrates Court for an authority to do so. This application will place a burden upon the employer to provide the grounds on which they suspect a worker or workers of unlawful activity in the workplace. The employer will be required to specify what surveillance will take place, when it will take place and the manner in which it will take place. Furthermore, an employer will be required to nominate an individual, being a fit and proper person, to act as a surveillance supervisor. This supervisor will be required to conduct and monitor the surveillance in accordance with the legislation.

Section 27 outlines the considerations the court must make prior to issuing a covert surveillance authority. These include considerations of intrusion of privacy of the worker or others, the ability of the employer to gather information on suspected

unlawful activity using other means, and consideration of whether the suspected unlawful activity would be better investigated by the police.

However, it needs to be recognised that the employer is often better suited to investigate crimes such as petty theft, fraud and vandalism that occur within the workplace. The court must also consider whether the person nominated to supervise the surveillance is a fit and proper person for the job.

The surveillance supervisor, who is not the employer, must not give another person access to a covert surveillance record, except to the employer where it relates to unlawful activity in a workplace. Furthermore, the surveillance supervisor is required to erase or destroy all covert surveillance records gathered under the authority except those required for investigative or evidentiary purposes. In the event that an employer relies upon part of a surveillance record disclosed to them by the surveillance supervisor to take detrimental action against a worker, the employer must give a worker access to that surveillance record upon written request of the worker.

Employers are required to provide a report on the operation of a covert surveillance authority to the court within 30 days of the end of the covert surveillance authority.

This part of the bill also outlines offences for conducting covert surveillance without proper authority and improper use or disclosure of covert surveillance records. Furthermore, the bill considers the admissibility of evidence gathered under improperly conducted covert surveillance, and whilst the employer may have committed an offence due to improper conduct of the surveillance, this will not affect the admissibility of evidence for criminal proceedings or detrimental action taken against an employee.

We believe that, based upon the operation of similar measures in place in New South Wales and the improvements that have been made on their legislation as it exists in New South Wales, the issuance and operation of covert surveillance authorities will strike the right balance between maintaining an employer's ability to investigate unlawful activity in the workplace and protecting the privacy of the workers.

With regard to prohibited surveillance, the three sections of part 5 of this bill outline commonsense measures to prevent surveillance of employees by employers that is inappropriate at any time, that is, surveillance of toilets, change rooms and other specified non-work areas which have an understandably heightened expectation of privacy.

This part of the bill also prohibits surveillance of workers when not at work. The Greens believe that the trend of longer work hours at work and taking work home is a sad one, and the increase in hours that Canberrans put into their job do not reflect a healthy balance between work life and home life. We seek to ensure that when someone is not at work their activities are not monitored, in order to ensure that the hours Canberrans do get at home are theirs to do with what they will. We have recognised, however, that computers provided by an employer and tracking devices that cannot be deactivated are exceptions to this requirement, and are subject to specific exemptions.

Part 6 of this bill requires an employer to take reasonable steps to protect surveillance records and destroy or de-identify surveillance records no longer required for any purpose under the bill. Furthermore, the minister must give a report to the appropriate Legislative Assembly committee on the operation of the bill, specifically, information on the number of covert authorities issued and the types of surveillance devices to be used.

The Greens look forward to working with other parties here in this place, and with employer groups, workers, privacy groups and the community, in the effort to deliver an effective solution to protecting both workplaces and the privacy of employees. We recognise that this bill has the potential to bring substantial change to the operation of some workplaces. We hope that it is one that fosters trust and openness between employers and workers. However, it is in recognition that the working environment has changed so much in the internet age that we have introduced this bill.

The people of Canberra expect members in this place to work together, to bring forward a forward-thinking agenda and to hold honest, informed and mature discussions about how best to implement positive change. We have brought forward this bill as an exposure draft in order to best facilitate an exchange of ideas, to ensure that the impacts can be considered before implementation, and to better encourage transparent and accountable measures here in the Assembly. We invite other members in this place to discuss with us, and each other, and our constituents, the best way forward to implement these reforms. I commend this exposure draft to the Assembly as a much-needed reform to protect and balance the rights of employers and employees in the workplace.

Building (Energy Efficient Hot Water Systems) Legislation Amendment Bill 2009

Debate resumed from 1 April 2009, on motion by **Ms Le Couteur**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Motion (by **Ms Le Couteur**) agreed to:

That order of the day No 1, Private Members' business, be discharged from the *Notice Paper*.

Education Amendment Bill 2008

Debate resumed from 10 December 2008, on motion by **Ms Hunter**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Planning, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation and Minister for Gaming and Racing) (10.49): In rising today in this debate, I would like to put a number of issues on the record. Firstly, I want to indicate that the government is willing to enter into

some further negotiations with the Greens party in relation to this bill. However, we have a number of issues with what was contained within the original bill and also within the series of amendments that have been circulated, some as late as last night and again earlier this morning. So the government is not in a position to support this bill today, even at the in-principle stage. However, we do indicate a desire to work with the Greens to try and find a workable solution.

As I indicated yesterday in question time, there are no school closures other than those that were announced as part of the Towards 2020 process back in 2006 that are scheduled at all for this term of the Assembly, so there is no urgency with which to deal with this matter today. It is the government's view that a workable solution can be found. However, there are a number of elements of the Greens' bill as it stands and the Greens' bill as proposed to be amended by the series of amendments that have been circulating in the last 12 to 24 hours that the government simply cannot agree with at this stage.

It is our proposal today to adjourn the debate. We will come back and consider this at a later point, recognising that there is no urgency with which to deal with this matter today. There will be no school closures other than those already slated as part of the Towards 2020 process. Certainly, it is the government's view that this issue can be resolved and we can reach consensus with other parties on this matter, but the time to do that is not today. It is not the time to do it in a rushed process with amendments circulating as recently as two or three hours ago. That is not the best way to legislate in this area.

It is the government's view that this debate should be adjourned for today and that we should come back with a more considered view on these matters and have that debate more fully in the months ahead. Mr Corbell will move shortly that we adjourn.

Motion (by **Mr Corbell**) proposed:

That debate be adjourned.

MS HUNTER (Ginninderra—Parliamentary Convenor, ACT Greens) (10.52): I seek leave to speak on the proposed adjournment.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Hunter is seeking leave to speak again in this debate and not to close it.

Leave granted.

MS HUNTER: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank my colleagues. I just wanted to say that the Greens will not be voting against an adjournment today. I have had some discussions with Minister Barr and I believe that there is goodwill to continue a discussion to look at some ways forward on this particular issue. I do have to note, though, that I am a little disappointed. This has been on the table since December 2008. Although there have been a series of amendments that have been out there only in the last couple of weeks, my office has been engaging very actively with the offices of both Mr Barr and Mr Doszpot in that time.

While I am disappointed that we are not ready to go today and to move on this, I do not believe that, after 18 months, working very closely with a number of school communities in the last 12 months, it would be the proper and right thing to do to not adjourn and allow another month or so of negotiations to occur so that we can get a good outcome here, because that is what it is about.

I find it very unfortunate that the Liberals have once again dealt themselves out of this debate by deciding that they will not vote for any improvement or enhancement of consultation in the future if there is a proposed amalgamation or closure. I guess that is an issue that they will need to grapple with, with the very strange position that they have put themselves in around this issue.

The Greens will not be voting against this adjournment today. We look forward to having some fruitful discussions with the government on this matter.

Question put:

That debate be adjourned.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 4

Mr Barr	Ms Le Couteur	Mr Coe
Ms Bresnan	Ms Porter	Mr Doszpot
Mr Corbell	Mr Rattenbury	Mrs Dunne
Ms Gallagher	Mr Stanhope	Mr Seselja
Ms Hunter		

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Debate adjourned to the next sitting.

Calvary Public Hospital

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (10.59): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes the Stanhope-Gallagher government:

(a) has been attempting to acquire Calvary Public Hospital (Calvary) since secret negotiations commenced in August 2008;

(b) has failed to:

(i) effectively negotiate the purchase of Calvary to date;

(ii) demonstrate any health benefits of the proposed purchase; and

- (iii) demonstrate any economic benefits of the proposed purchase;
 - (c) has caused significant community disquiet as a result of a flawed process in its attempt to purchase Calvary;
 - (d) has continued to conduct secretive negotiations surrounding the purchase of Calvary;
 - (e) has failed to provide the Assembly or the community with the details of their renewed attempt to purchase Calvary; and
 - (f) has again proposed only a single option for consideration; and
- (2) calls on the Stanhope-Gallagher government to fully disclose:
- (a) the analysis, including any business case, developed to support their renewed attempt to purchase Calvary;
 - (b) the details of their proposal including:
 - (i) proposed price of purchasing Calvary;
 - (ii) duration of any sub-lease to the Little Company of Mary; and
 - (iii) governance and management arrangements;
 - (c) correspondence with stakeholders relating to their renewed attempt to purchase Calvary;
 - (d) any evidence of:
 - (i) benefits to hospital services arising from a transfer of ownership; and
 - (ii) economic benefits arising from a transfer of ownership;
 - (e) the opportunity cost to the community of purchasing Calvary; and
 - (f) any analysis conducted of alternative courses of action that may have been considered.

There is a bit of *deja vu* here; we are talking about Calvary hospital again. Many of us thought that it was over, but it has risen like a phoenix from the ashes. Mr Speaker, members opposite are all deep in conversation. I am distracted and I am disappointed that they are not hanging off my every word.

Mr Stanhope: What a hypocrite.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Order, members!

MR HANSON: I want to say up front that the Liberal opposition—

Mr Stanhope interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Stanhope, please.

Mr Stanhope: I just do need to make a point about—

MR HANSON: Will you stop the clocks, please.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, continue with your speech, thank you.

MR HANSON: The Liberal opposition are going to scrutinise this latest proposal. Once we get the detail we will go through it vigorously. We will engage with stakeholders. Although we will be putting some words in the *Hansard* today raising a significant number of concerns about the process and what has been presented to us, or the lack of what has been presented to us, it is very important to state from the outset, as we did last time, that we will look at this in good faith. We will examine the proposal that is put before us when we have the detail and then we will make a decision. But we certainly will not be rushed into making that decision until we have all the information and we have spoken to the relevant stakeholders and those who are engaged. What we will not be doing is accepting any rhetoric from the government. Last time Katy Gallagher said:

... I think, from Mr Hanson's point of view, that he is out here to spoil ... he is trying to create fear and misconceptions ...

I am simply trying to find out the truth, because the only way we get the truth out of this minister about what is going on behind closed doors is by demanding answers either in this place or in the media. I will go through the motion and what we are calling for. The first point that I make is that this government has been attempting to purchase Calvary hospital since it started its secret negotiations in August 2008. So this is not new; it began over 18 months ago. We know that the government was trying to do this, in secret, before the last election. It was trying to get a heads of agreement signed in August last year. We know that, whilst the minister was trying, behind closed doors, to get deals signed, she was saying to the electorate, "We have all of our deals on the table; all of our plans are on the table." That simply was not true. That was a misleading statement. There is no other way to interpret it.

People wonder why the opposition constantly inquire of Katy Gallagher what the truth is, why we probe her so hard in question time and why we demand answers of her. She has form, Madam Deputy Speaker. We know that trusting Katy Gallagher simply on face value is a very dangerous thing to do. If you trust what she says, the smile, the grin—the "Oh trust me, everything will be okay"—then that is a very dangerous thing to do. Behind closed doors, behind the grin and behind the soft face of the Labor Party that they try to put out is the hard, cold reality that they do something very differently when it comes to actions with comparison to the rhetoric that they put out. We saw that very clearly in this place. We saw it with school closures. That was just referred

to in debate. We have seen Katy Gallagher say, with a smile, “Trust me,” being very reassuring. She is very good at that. She is very good at presenting a face of reassurance to the community that everything is okay and that there is nothing to worry about. Our job is to find out the truth that lies behind that.

It is quite clear that she would have got this proposal through had she not had to bring it forward as an appropriation bill. She would have done the first deal, which has failed. She sought advice from Treasury and that was that she had to bring in an appropriation bill. Thankfully, the only reason we are still debating this and trying to find out what the truth is is that she was forced to do that, otherwise she would have simply pushed it through.

The sad fact is that Katy Gallagher must take responsibility for where we find ourselves today, 18 months on, and the absolute disruption this has caused ACT Health, the Assembly and the community. She needs to take responsibility for where this process has led us to, rather than continually trying to blame others, particularly the Catholic Church, and spreading fear and distrust within the community. She failed to get a mandate for this proposal from the electorate and she is now paying the consequences of that. Today we are attempting to make sure that we do not go through a similar process that just takes us further along and then, 18 months later, we find ourselves in a similar situation.

The point is that if you do your plans in secret, behind closed doors, whilst you are telling people that there is nothing occurring then you will pay the consequences of that. That is what has happened here. Any pretence at consultation that the government conducted is simply pretence. Everybody that participated in the 11th hour of consultation on the Calvary proposal late last year saw it as an exercise in advocacy rather than consultation. Indeed, Ms Gallagher said that herself. She admitted in a public forum that no amount of opposition to the proposal would prevent the government from pursuing its agenda.

The Canberra Liberals tried to instigate a proper process of consultation in the Assembly in June 2009. We tried to establish a process of consultation and that was rejected by the Greens and Labor. In October last year, we tried to refer the matter to the Auditor-General. Again, that was rejected by the Greens and Labor. Would it not have been a good thing to have had a proper process of consultation and to have had the Auditor-General look at this in detail?

The government, and Ms Gallagher in particular, have failed to demonstrate any health benefits of the proposal. There was a lot of supposition—“Yes, having a whole single system will make it more efficient”—but she actually admitted in this chamber that it would not make the health system any better. When I asked her a question, one of her lines was:

It is going to have no impact on the future of Canberra, you fool.

Those were the words that she used. I tried to seek clarification:

It is going to have no impact?

And she said:

No impact. Nothing will change for the people of Canberra.

If the last plan was not going to have any impact, this one certainly will not because, as I understand it, the current arrangements in terms of who runs and operates Calvary hospital will be remaining the same. I think we can discount the fact that the new proposal is going to have much change in terms of the delivery of health services for the people of Canberra. At this point, after over 18 months of turmoil, we find ourselves in a position where we ask: are there any changes for health; are there any benefits for health? The answer is no.

Let us turn to the economic question and let us not pretend, as the government do, that the only way future investments can be made in Calvary hospital is if they own it. That is not true. That is their preferred option. That is what they want to do, but to stand out in the community and say, “Well, we can only invest \$200 million”—whatever the figure is—“into Calvary hospital if we own it,” is not true. That is just their preference. We need to invest money in Calvary hospital and we do not necessarily need to own it—or to find models that have been put forward by the government, or the single model as it is—in order to do so. I am not the only person that is of that opinion. I will read what Andrew Podger, who is the President of the Institute of Public Administration Australia and a former secretary of the federal health department, said.

... it is time someone put on the table the most important question for the Canberra public: will the proposed deal improve the quality of public hospital services for patients and their families? If not, then someone please get the accountants to fix a problem that is theirs, not the taxpayers’ or the hospital users’.

Professor Sinclair Davidson, from RMIT, described the budgetary argument as “simply nonsense”. He described the Treasury analysis as “the snow-job the ACT government is pulling over the numbers”. He said further, “The ACT Treasury analysis shows that cost-effective manner to be the maintenance of the status quo.”

Terry Dwyer, who has a PhD from Harvard in economics, made the point in his consultation submission that the accounting analysis “has nothing to do with the real economic cost to the community—which is the cash cost”. He said, “It does not matter who owns the assets so long as they are used for health care in the ACT.” His assessment of the ACT Treasury analysis is that “the Treasury analysis shows that, far from saving money, the proposed government takeover of Calvary hospital means the people of the ACT are to be made to pay an extra \$160 million in extra cold hard cash”.

Tony Harris, a former Auditor-General from New South Wales, who Ms Gallagher has lauded in this place, has said that we should listen to his advice and indeed damned the estimates committee for not listening to his advice. He described the Treasury analysis of her proposition as a contrivance. So it is not receiving support from anyone. Even when she paid money to Ernst & Young to provide her with a

report, what did they say? They gave her absolutely no backing for her position. In their paper they said, “There is no assurance over the independent transfer of the value attributed to Calvary hospital or the associated accounting treatment.” Further, they said:

... key elements of the data and assumptions are based on information received from ACT Health and were not validated by Treasury.

And so on and so on. Mr Stanhope has raised arguments that you would not invest in a rental property. If that was a rental property you were due to inherit and you were guaranteed to live in it for 88 years and pay no rent, I think that you can invest in it.

This has caused significant disquiet and disruption in the community, and I have referred to that. We can list countless organisations and groups that have spoken out against this and individuals in the community who have railed against it, and rightly so. Even members of the Labor Party—John Hargreaves and Wayne Berry; one from the right faction and one from the left faction—have said that the proposal was flawed, because it was. We know that the government is conducting further secret negotiations. We only found out about this because of Mrs Dunne’s question in question time last week. Let us not pretend that the government has been open and accountable about this. Because Mrs Dunne asked a question in question time we found out what was going on.

Mr Stanhope says in the media, “It’s very unfair; you shouldn’t ask Ms Gallagher so many questions.” If she stopped hiding the truth and was more honest with the community then maybe that would be the case. The only way that we can get to the bottom of what this government is doing is by asking the hard questions, by probing, by inquiring and by demanding answers. The opposition will continue to put the pressure on this government to make sure that the community knows what it is doing behind closed doors. When he was in opposition Mr Stanhope said:

Governments must be scrutinised. They must be accountable. This is a role of oppositions, and it is a role that is particularly necessary as governments become lazy, arrogant, aloof and accident prone.

What prophetic words, Madam Deputy Speaker. That is exactly what this opposition is doing. That is why Mr Stanhope goes out there in the media trying to spin it any way he can, because he does not like the fact that the hard work that the Liberal opposition is doing in the Assembly is getting to the bottom of what is going wrong.

Again, the government have provided a single option to be considered. I noticed in relation to the Tharwa bridge consultation that they at least presented four options for Tharwa bridge. We can do it for a bridge, but we cannot do it for something as big as this, something that is going to cost in the order of \$77 million. Once again, I think we are starting to see why this process is so flawed. We saw the spin from the government that they were going to look at all the different options. Remember that when the deal fell over he said, “Now we are going to go to the drawing board and look at other options, including compulsory acquisition and the status quo.”

It looked at that stage that we were going to see a broad range of options to be considered by the community. Certainly, a lot of options have been put on the table by people like Tony Harris and others. But what we see again is simply a single option being discussed behind closed doors. Here we are again—it is like *deja vu*—going through a process that has occurred before in this place.

We are calling on the government to disclose and provide to the community the details of what is occurring. We want to know what the detail of the latest plan is so that, instead of the government, behind closed doors, hiding this and not telling us what is occurring, we know what it is. We want to know: what is the analysis for this and where is the business case? Where is the detailed analysis that supports this case?

I would like to know what the details of the proposal are. I want to know what sort of price they are talking about. I want to know what the duration of any subleases will be. I want to know what the government's management arrangements are going to be for this new deal. I would like to know about the correspondence—who the government have been writing to with regard to this and who has been writing to them. What benefits are there? What evidence is there of any benefits for the health of Canberrans and what economic benefits are there? There is a lot that we are calling on the government to do. We want them to be open and we want them to be accountable. The only way they will do that is if we force them to do so by asking questions and demanding answers through motions such as the one before us today.

MS BRESNAN (Brindabella) (11.14): The Greens generally support Mr Hanson's motion about the ACT government's potential purchase of Calvary Public Hospital. However, I will be moving some amendments later. The Greens believe public healthcare facilities should be in public hands. It is something we have been consistent on and we are pleased to see the ACT government continuing to pursue this goal.

The Greens would ultimately prefer to see both public hospitals in the territory owned and run by the government. There were concerns raised by the Auditor-General about the accountability and efficiency of public-spent funding when it comes to Calvary, which could be alleviated if it were government run. But the Greens do appreciate that the government's proposal to purchase the hospital and leave the Little Company of Mary to run the hospital may be the best deal we can get, especially given the power which the church holds and which was handed to them by the previous commonwealth government.

In fact, the church may still say no to the deal; so nothing yet is set in stone. If the church does say yes, it is willing to consider the deal, there are a number of details that would need to be worked out and the ultimate approval of all parties, including those in this place, does weigh on the detail. But in comparison to the last proposal we had, which involved the sale of Clare Holland House to the Little Company of Mary, things have improved and the government has the Greens' in-principle support.

The Greens have previously expressed our concern about why one proposal or deal was being pursued at the outset and that other options had not been considered. Again, I will state that we have always been supportive of the ACT government having ownership of Calvary hospital. However, we do not think that you solve one problem by creating another, which specifically relates to the sale of Clare Holland House, the ACT's only hospice.

In relation to the amendments, looking at the text of the motion that the Liberals have proposed, much of clause (1) provides an inaccurate description of events as they

have transpired to date, and I will be moving amendments to appropriately reflect what has occurred. Clause (1)(a) in the original motion implies that the government having its initial discussion with LCM confidentially rather than, say, through the media is a bad thing.

The Greens party, however, appreciates LCM's desire to have quiet discussions about such a proposal before it went public, as the proposal is somewhat controversial for a church-based body and they did, obviously, need time to consider the proposal further, before answering media inquiries. This was a request by LCM themselves and it should have been respected.

Clause (1)(b) implies that the government is yet to demonstrate the benefits that will be gained by its purchase of Calvary hospital but I would argue that most of the interested ACT population have already been convinced of the benefits and that the only ones to remain unconvinced are the Liberal Party.

I have sympathy with clause (1)(c) but think the disquiet in the community from the previous process was mainly about the possible sale of Clare Holland House and all that it entailed. As such, I will be moving our amendments to reflect how the community reacted to the government's first proposal.

Clause (1)(d) is similar to (1)(a) in that it is fair to allow the church time to consider such a matter in private before engaging with the public. Clause (1)(e) is unrepresentative of the proposal in that it implies there are already a number of details available. And it is my understanding that, while a proposal about the purchase of the hospital sits before the church, the details have not yet been sorted out or discussed; so there are not yet any details the minister can provide. And these are, of course, all subject to negotiations, assuming that the church is willing to negotiate.

I do agree with clause (1)(f) in that the government has only presented one option, as I have already noted. This is a matter which has been frustrating and I do fear that the government believes it has all the knowledge on what is possible. I think there could have been more trust in the government and its dealings in the Calvary debate if its discussion paper that was issued last year had included some more options.

When it comes to clause (2), the Greens support the Liberals' call for a number of documents and, now that the parties are in a position again where matters are able to be made public, it is fair that the information is provided. I am proposing that we change the words "fully disclosed" to "provide" as I note there is likely to be a high level of confidentiality around some of the documents, like those outlined or legal options available to the government. I think we need to acknowledge that these legal processes will have an impact. I think the Liberals may find that the minister has already provided the Assembly with a number of the documents, like those linked with anticipated benefits.

I note that the motion does not contain a date by which the minister must table all the documents but I do understand that Mr Hanson may be moving an amendment to insert a date. In some areas this may be difficult as it may be hard for us to set, as discussions about the price, sublease and governance and management arrangements

are yet to take place. But I do think it is fair for the minister to table what is possible by a particular set date and we will be supporting that.

I have also proposed that we add a clause (3) asking the government to rule out the sale of Clare Holland House during its term. It has caused some concern amongst members of the palliative care society, for example, that this has not yet been ruled out and it would be reassuring to have such a promise put on the record.

I seek leave to move the amendments circulated in my name.

Leave granted.

MS BRESNAN: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I move:

(1) Omit paragraph (1), substitute:

“(1) notes the ACT Government:

(a) has been attempting to acquire Calvary Public Hospital (CPH) since August 2008;

(b) received significant community opposition in response to its first proposal for its purchase of CPH as it was tied to the sale of Clare Holland House; and

(c) has again proposed only a single option for consideration;”.

(2) In paragraph (2), omit “calls on the Stanhope/Gallagher Government to fully disclose”, substitute “calls on the ACT Government to provide”.

(3) Add:

“(3) calls on the Government to rule out the sale of Clare Holland House during the term of this Government.”.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Health and Minister for Industrial Relations) (11.21): The government will not be supporting the motion as it was put by Mr Hanson. I do not think Mr Hanson said anything new in his speech today. I think his office has just rehashed in the debate today every speech he has ever given on Calvary Public Hospital. But I think it is a sign yet again of the lazy opposition that we have that this is probably the 15th time that speech has been given.

Mr Hanson: You’re going on holiday, Katy, are you?

Mr Stanhope: You never do, do you, mate?

Mr Hanson: Not during estimates, I don’t, Jon.

Mr Stanhope: You had six weeks off over Christmas, mate.

Mr Hanson: Did I?

Mr Stanhope: Your leader did.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, Ms Gallagher has the floor.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

Mr Stanhope: You were in Florence, talking about the centenary, on taxpayers' money, yes.

MS GALLAGHER: In Florence, on taxpayers' money, I think, with this.

Mr Stanhope: On taxpayers' funds, in Florence, you were.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can you stop the clock please, Clerk.

Mr Stanhope: Florence, mate, giving speeches on the Canberra centenary.

Mr Hanson: Did he go during estimates?

Mr Stanhope: I'm not going during estimates.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Stanhope, please! Will you stop debating the other side.

Mr Hanson: I'm not going during estimates.

Mr Stanhope: Jeez, that's slimy.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Stanhope, please stop that.

Mr Stanhope: That is about as slimy as it gets, Mr Hanson.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Stanhope—

Mr Hanson: Yes, you are so pure!

MS GALLAGHER: I am sure your mother would be very proud of you, Jeremy. I am sure your mum would be very proud of you, the way you are behaving in here.

Mr Stanhope: Slime bucket. You are a slime bucket.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members! Mr Stanhope and the opposition, you are preventing Ms Gallagher from making her presentation. Will you please desist. Ms Gallagher.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The situation as it is with the discussions around Calvary Public Hospital and the ownership and potential for

the ACT government to purchase Calvary Public Hospital under a new proposal are at, I would say, the infancy stage. That is because we do not want to proceed to any more rigorous and thorough detailed discussions until we get a commitment that this proposal can be pursued.

There is no point going through all of the effort of ACT Health, ACT Treasury and, indeed, the community if, at the end of the day, it is not going to have the support of the broader organisation that is involved with the management of Calvary Public Hospital. We have written to the archbishop around this matter. The archbishop has responded, but I can tell you that there has been no commitment given that this proposal will actually proceed to the outcome that the government is seeking.

The issue for the government is how we best provide the networked system of hospitals that this community needs. We are the only jurisdiction in the country that has 30 per cent of its public hospital services managed by a non-government provider. No other jurisdiction has that. I think New South Wales may have the next highest non-government management of their public hospitals at about 12 per cent. But what we have here is two public hospitals under two different owners and two different managers. I do not think it delivers the best outcomes in terms of a seamless and integrated healthcare system.

Indeed, when you look at the work that has been done under the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission when they have been talking about networking hospitals—that is, having district hospitals managed by the same management arrangements as the tertiary hospital in that region—you can actually see that the detailed health planners understand the work that we have been trying to examine here and move forward with here.

Everybody in health management across the world understands that you need to network your hospitals in your local area. That is something that we, and I think governments of all different colours in this place, have struggled with under the arrangements with Little Company of Mary Health Care and ACT Health running the two different hospitals.

We also have the issue of the capital investment that is required. Although Mr Hanson finds it very easy to roll off Mr Dwyer and Sinclair Davidson as experts in this, no-one in all of their analysis has been able to demonstrate how you fund capital in an asset you do not own without it affecting your bottom line, and that is the issue for us. They will critique the Treasury analysis and they will have their own views around that and, in Mr Dwyer's case, you concentrate on the discounted cash flow, you do not actually look at other measures of performance of the ACT budget. Every time we give a grant to a non-government organisation—it happens with non-government schools, it happens with community organisations, it happens under those scenarios—it hits our bottom line.

Exactly the same situation occurs if we are to spend money on Calvary: the subacute facilities hit our bottom line; the intensive care unit, \$10 million, that hits our bottom line. When we proceed to a car park for Calvary—and we will have to fund that very soon—it will hit our bottom line. There is absolutely no question about it.

Mr Smyth: So the solar farm will hit the bottom line?

MS GALLAGHER: Mr Smyth, when you were in cabinet, any grant to non-government organisations hit the bottom line. This is the predicament we are in—\$200 million that we know we have to invest. It would be negligent of this government not to examine ways to make that investment without it hitting our bottom line. We cannot just go: “Oh, well, it hits our bottom line. Let’s just hand over \$200 million to a non-government organisation, to an asset we don’t own, and put our operating result under that kind of pressure.” It is already under pressure without having to consider a \$50 million a year capital grant, which is treated as recurrent expenditure, hitting our bottom line. That is the problem we have been trying to unpick with Calvary.

In many ways issues like looking at the third hospital would be easier for the government financially. It would be easier to fund a third hospital than to make that kind of recurrent expenditure at Calvary. Nobody who has critiqued the Treasury analysis has been able to prove that that money would not be treated as recurrent expenditure under the way that we present our budget or that it would not be considered by the ratings agency as having a deteriorating impact for a number of years off our bottom line. Indeed, it would prevent the government from providing \$50 million worth of additional health services. Because you are actually funding your capital, you cannot actually fund the services. That is the predicament the government finds itself in.

It has been a long and complicated history with Calvary, but we have the willingness of the current operator and owner of that facility to support us in our quest to provide the best healthcare system for the people of the ACT. Little Company of Mary have voluntarily and willingly engaged in these discussions, because they understand from running the place the work that needs to be done and the pressure that is on, and they understand from working in partnership with the government the pressure that the current arrangements place on our budget. They understand it. They are a larger health provider than the ACT government. They understand it. They have willingly entered these discussions. They want to build a private hospital. They want to invest in that site and they want to allow the public hospital to flourish.

That is what we are being criticised for today—for trying to invest in a public hospital. When you have these discussions with health ministers around the country who face difficult issues at times, like closing services from time to time, I do not think anyone can believe the criticism that is coming from wanting to spend \$200 million on a facility and to build a new public hospital for Belconnen. A new private hospital for Belconnen will come, because what you fellows seem to ignore is the fact that we will have to resume the private hospital very shortly to take over that place for public hospital beds. What is your idea around your private facility out there? You have none. You have not thought it through, because you do not understand the issues.

Now, I am more than happy to provide the Assembly with all the information that the Assembly seeks around this. I note Mr Hanson saying that Mrs Dunne uncovered the latest negotiations. Well, in a meeting with the archbishop, when it was requested that

the discussions remain confidential, the Chief Minister himself said, "That's fine at this point in time, but we will answer questions in the Assembly if they are asked, and people need to know that the confidentiality is made on that basis." So, the minute the question was asked, the information came out.

There was not a great deal to say at that point. A letter had merely been sent off to the archbishop and we were awaiting his response. But we were very clear that we would be up-front with the Assembly, particularly if we were asked a question. I could have chosen to answer Mrs Dunne's question in a particular way like, "Early discussions are occurring," and left it at that. But I did provide more information, because I understand the public interest in this. I am more than happy to provide the analysis and details of the proposal.

The proposed price, for example, has not yet been determined; the duration of a sublease has not been determined; governance and management arrangements have not been determined. We have not even got to that point. Officials have been speaking and meeting to try and progress this, but none of that detail can be provided today, because it is simply too early.

In relation to correspondence with stakeholders, I am happy to provide the letter to the archbishop that we have written. I thought we already had, but if we have not, I am happy to provide that. I will get my office to do that. I would be very surprised if that letter is not already in the hands of the opposition.

Mr Hanson: I assure you it's not, Ms Gallagher, I assure you.

MS GALLAGHER: Gee, your networks are breaking down there.

Mrs Dunne: So you just accuse everybody else of bad faith.

Mr Hanson: I assure you it's not.

MS GALLAGHER: Your networks are breaking down there.

Mr Seselja: It's all a conspiracy, Katy; it's all a conspiracy.

MS GALLAGHER: Anyway, I am happy to provide that letter. I am happy to provide all the detail that we can around Calvary Public Hospital. But I think the opposition needs to understand that what we are trying to do here is build a new public hospital and a new private hospital on the Belconnen site. That is actually what the parties are seeking to do. Little Company of Mary want to do that. The government want to do that. We want to be able to invest in the health infrastructure that our community needs, and we need to do it in a way that our budget can support. They are the issues for the government.

This is not, as the opposition would like to have it, some ideological pursuit by the government. Although our preferred option was to manage and own the building, that option is not going to be pursued. The fact that Little Company of Mary would remain as operators is something that the government are very happy about. We have had a

long relationship with them. It is not the ideal in terms of industrial arrangements for staff. Indeed, a number of the industrial organisations are unhappy about not coming under ACT Health, but that is the reality of the situation we are in now.

If we can be allowed to make the capital investment that the infrastructure requires on that site, if we can build the private hospital that needs to be built on that site in a way that all parties can agree on, if the Catholic Church want to maintain management of it—Little Company of Mary have agreed to do that, even though it is not their preferred option and never was, but they are prepared to maintain a management role at that site—if that is the way this ends up then I think that will still be a reasonable outcome for the people of the ACT. I do not think it is the best outcome, but it is a reasonable outcome, and it will allow us to make those investments and, hopefully, under a new service-level agreement, have an improved networking arrangement across both hospitals.

In relation to Clare Holland House, the government is agreeable to that part of the motion. I think it is difficult to rule everything out forever, but this applies to the term of this government. I think the issues that did arise around the sale of Calvary that made it controversial were pretty much all issues to do with Clare Holland House. In fact, there was much broader support for the sale of the public hospital, and a number of organisations, including the Health Care Consumers Association, the ANF, the Salaried Medical Officers Federation and the Public Health Association of Australia, all supported the sale of the hospital—

Mr Hanson: She used to work for Tom Brennan, didn't she? Didn't she? Prue Power worked for Tom Brennan as a Labor adviser?

MS GALLAGHER: They all supported the sale of the hospital to the ACT government, and all for really good reasons.

Mr Hanson: As a Labor adviser?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

MS GALLAGHER: Well, I do not know that Mr Hanson needs to sink to besmirching Tom Brennan's reputation now, because I do not think he is in here to defend himself, if we go back to the little argument the Liberals were running the other day.

Mr Hanson: You were besmirching people who got rid of the letter, weren't you?

MS GALLAGHER: It is fine for Mr Hanson to have a go at Tom Brennan now.

Mr Hanson: That's not what I was doing.

MR STANHOPE: Yes, you did.

Mr Seselja: That's not what he said.

Mr Hanson: That's not what I was doing.

MS GALLAGHER: Did you not just say Tom Brennan is a Labor adviser? Okay, so that was a compliment, was it? That was a compliment. Sorry, sorry, I did not understand. (*Time expired.*)

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (11.37): I wish to speak to the amendments, Madam Deputy Speaker. We do have some amendments to the amendments and, if they are agreed to by the Greens, we will be supporting the Greens' amendments. I will go through what Ms Bresnan has proposed and what our changes are.

I am disappointed that the Greens have chosen to remove, in their amendments, a number of items contained in the original motion because what they are removing is actually an accurate description of the process to date. If I can read it, the first one that they will be removing is the words "secret negotiations". That is what occurred. There is no doubt that the government was attempting to acquire Calvary Public Hospital since secret negotiations commenced in August 2008. If anyone thinks that they were anything other than secret negotiations, that they were open negotiations, then that had everybody fooled, including the electorate, who certainly were unaware when they went to the polls on 12 September.

The Greens also propose to delete the comment that the government "has failed to effectively negotiate the purchase of Calvary to date". That is true; it has. It has been trying for 18 months to negotiate a sale and it has failed to do so to date. I cannot see where that is not the truth. It has failed to "demonstrate any health benefits of the proposed purchase". That is indeed true. Indeed, with the new proposal being put forward, it is a reversion to the status quo, as I understand it. So it has failed, and it has continued to fail, to demonstrate any health benefits of what it is proposing. And it has failed to "demonstrate any economic benefits of the proposed purchase". There is certainly a lot of debate about the accounting treatments and the way it was used, but there is no demonstration of the economic benefits.

Mr Stanhope: You can't believe that garbage.

MR HANSON: I turn to one of the areas that we will be changing. The Greens—

Mr Stanhope: You are not that dumb, are you? Are you truly that dumb?

MR HANSON: I am feeling very bullied, Mr Stanhope, very bullied.

Mr Stanhope: You are very dumb. How can anybody who is as dumb as that be bullied?

MR HANSON: You are sitting across there, calling me "dumb". Of course, that is okay if you do it to me.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Stanhope!

MR HANSON: I am happy to accept that, but if we are to question and inquire of your members then that is bullying. What a contradiction, Mr Stanhope, that somehow when you sit there—

Mr Stanhope: Glass jaw, Mr Hanson, glass jaw.

Ms Gallagher: Watch out, we will get a letter from him!

MR HANSON: calling me dumb and calling to me to “get back into the hole you came from in the Army” and things like that, that is quite acceptable, that is quite fine and you are happy to do that. But should we question—and, yes, we do raise our voices at times; that is quite true, but I do not think we use the same sort of personal abuse. I do not ever use—

Mr Stanhope: Half an hour ago you attacked the Minister for Health for daring to have a private holiday at her own expense.

MR HANSON: You called Mr Smyth—

Mr Stanhope: You’re not personal. You just attacked Tom Brennan, you just—

MR HANSON: No, I did not. It is a very good way—

Mr Stanhope: You dared to attack the Minister for Health for having a private holiday.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Stanhope!

MR HANSON: It’s great, the way you spin things. I do not think—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, can you return to the debate and stop talking across the chamber.

MR HANSON: The problem is, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sitting here with the Chief Minister—

Mr Stanhope: Ask Mr Smyth about his holiday to Florence.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Stanhope!

MR HANSON: calling me dumb, and repeatedly calling me dumb, and you sit there and refuse to tell him to be quiet.

Mr Stanhope: I said nobody could be that dumb.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have spoken to Mr Stanhope several times, Mr Hanson, and I have already spoken to you.

MR HANSON: Well, if that is not working—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Stanhope, please desist. Mr Hanson, keep going with your contribution to the debate and do not respond—

MR HANSON: I will endeavour not to. Paragraph (1)(c) of the original motion said that the process had caused significant community disquiet as a result of the flawed process in its attempt to purchase Calvary Public Hospital. Indeed, there has been significant community disquiet. The Greens' amendment to that basically said that that was all tied to the sale of Clare Holland House. Indeed, I recognise that much of the disquiet in the community was as a result of Clare Holland House; there is no doubt about that. But there was also significant disquiet about the Calvary sale itself. Indeed, there was the Catholic Church across Australia—and we saw that with George Pell, and also locally with the archbishop. The AMA raised some concerns, and a number of other people have raised concerns, particularly in the community. I think we saw the volume of letters written in to the *Canberra Times* about Clare Holland House and Calvary. Both matters raised significant disquiet.

I propose, in my amendments to the amendments, that we simply say that it “received significant community opposition in response to its first proposal” and we eliminate any reference to it being more about Clare Holland House or that it was more about Calvary hospital. I think both caused an amount of disquiet.

The Greens are seeking to remove the comment that the government “has continued to conduct secret negotiations surrounding the purchase of Calvary”. It has continued to conduct negotiations and, no, they did not—I am just inquiring about the number of conversations going on, Madam Deputy Speaker. It seems that when the Liberals do that, you are instantly on top of people.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, will you not tell me how to do my job? I watched you ignore Ms Gallagher as she was making her presentation. I was wondering whether you were interested, actually, in what she was saying—obviously not.

MR HANSON: Fascinated, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do note there are conversations going on in the chamber and I will ask people to desist. You can continue, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Thank you. The second point that the Greens are seeking to remove is that it “failed to provide the Assembly or the community with the details of their renewed attempt to purchase Calvary”. Indeed, it has failed to do so.

I am disappointed that they will be removing those, but I do accept that that is the normal course of these things—that if there is anything that might remotely criticise Ms Gallagher for something she has done, the Greens will seek to amend that and to remove it. But with respect to the substantive issues regarding calling on the government, I think there is actually more agreement between the Greens and me. I will be seeking to amend the change to the first paragraph, where they have asked that the government simply provide these documents, so that it is more specific and actually calls on the government to table those documents in the Assembly by the close of business tomorrow.

The final amendment that the Greens have put is “calls on the government to rule out the sale of Clare Holland House during the term of this government”. Given the suspicion that the community has about the linkage between what is happening at Calvary and what is happening at Clare Holland House, and the fact that the government can, without an appropriation bill, bring that forward at any time that they want to, I think it is appropriate to put “during the term of this government”, because it would clearly be seen, if they were to bring that sale on, that that was directly connected with the Calvary deal. I think it would be difficult to see it in any other light. So that is an acceptable amendment to my motion and the opposition will support that. I seek leave to move the amendments circulated in my name together.

Leave granted.

MR HANSON: I move:

- (1) In proposed paragraph (1)(b), omit all words after “proposal”.
- (2) In proposed paragraph (2), omit “provide”, substitute “table in the Assembly, by close of business Thursday, 25 March 2010”.

MR STANHOPE (Ginninderra—Chief Minister, Minister for Transport, Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Business and Economic Development, Minister for Land and Property Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for the Arts and Heritage) (11.45): I rise essentially to support and reiterate the points made by the Minister for Health in relation to the issue.

The government has only ever been motivated by a determination to improve healthcare delivery in the ACT. We have a view—it is a view that we have developed over a number of years—that it is in the best interests of all Canberrans for us to develop, to the greatest extent we can, a degree of integration in the delivery of public health care that does require a new arrangement or new arrangements in relation to the ownership and operation of Calvary hospital.

We have two public hospitals in the ACT. We are unique in having, as a jurisdiction, only two public hospitals. We are unique in the fact that 30 per cent of public health care delivered through hospitals in the ACT is delivered by or through a hospital that is privately owned. It is unique in the context of public health care or public hospital operation and delivery throughout the whole of Australia, and it represents significant challenges to us in terms of our capacity, within available resources and with all of our other priorities, to invest in health and health care as efficiently and as beneficially as we wish to do and as this community expects of us.

We would perhaps wish it were otherwise. We do not have any hidden or other ideological agenda here; we simply want to create the best possible public health system that we can. We want to deliver the best health outcomes that we can. That requires that we be efficient, it requires that our system be integrated and it requires that the system be as efficient, as seamless and as smoothly operating as possible.

Despite the nay-sayers, despite those that simply will not accept the truth of the budgeting arrangements and the reality of budgeting treatments and accounting treatments, these are real issues for government. The simple dismissal, the wave or the flick of the hand to suggest that the budget implications for the accounting treatment are mere trifles, is simply a convenient attitude adopted by an opposition that are opposing for opposition's sake, see political advantage in opposing the purchase of Calvary hospital and are pursuing an ideological, oppositional position—and it is an oppositional position; a position of opposition for opposition's sake—because they see a political advantage.

There is no practical, objective reason for opposing the purchase of Calvary hospital when the government believes, through all the advice that it has available to it, that it is the best option in terms of public healthcare delivery and public hospital operation. And the owner of the building and the provider of the service wants the same outcome. One of the remarkable aspects of this is that it is something the government believes to be in the best interests of the territory and it is something on which the people with whom we are negotiating, the owners of the building, agree with us.

I find it remarkable that the government is desperately seeking to invest in public health through the purchase of what is currently a private hospital and the owner of that private hospital is desperately keen to sell it to us so that we can invest at the levels—and we are talking here, at least initially, up front and openly about the need for us to invest, over the next four or five years, up to \$200 million in additional public hospital facilities and infrastructure in Canberra. We simply cannot do it with the current budget pressures, our significant deficit, the blows that the budget has taken, if we do not own the infrastructure and cannot invest in it in a way that does not take our budget further into the red. These are simple facts. Those are the facts of the matter.

In relation to this motion today, we understand the motivation of our political opponents in this place. Another story, more dissension, greater obstruction, continuing obstruction, opposition for opposition's sake. But at some point, members of oppositions and members of crossbenches have to act responsibly. They have to allow governments to do the business of government. And part of the business of government in relation to a major commercial transaction such as this—accepting, of course, the deep public interest in the issue and the outcomes—is that governments must be permitted to negotiate in good faith.

We have a motion depicting confidential commercial discussions as “secret negotiations”. They were not. They were good faith negotiations where all the parties had agreed that it was in the best interests to pursue good faith negotiations to achieve an accepted outcome. And we have it here again. The government has entered again in good faith into negotiations with the Little Company of Mary. In negotiations at that initial meeting, it was agreed, and the archbishop of Canberra agreed, that those discussions or conversations would, appropriately, be held with a degree of confidence.

It was the government that said, “Well, yes, we understand that and we would support that.” But we made the point that we are subject to questioning, most particularly in

the Assembly, and we would answer fully and openly any questions that were asked, even after a discussion with the archbishop and the head of the Little Company of Mary in which they supported the need for good faith negotiations and discussions to have a degree of confidentiality around them, because that is the nature of consultations. Nothing is ever black and white in a negotiation. Negotiations are precisely that. A position is put and it is responded to. Another position is put and it is responded to. Positions are negotiated. Adjustments are made. Compromises are reached. And if it is not done with a degree of confidentiality, the potential capacity for good faith negotiations is destroyed.

There needs to be an understanding of that. Motions such as this, demanding instant reporting on negotiations that have barely started, essentially destroy the capacity of government to govern. This demand that the government provide by tomorrow documents that perhaps are not even in existence yet, to force the government, through a demand, to table this range of documents, this information, by close of business tomorrow, is simply unacceptable. It is simply not achievable. You seek to impose an obligation on government that, with the best will in the world, the government probably cannot—

Mr Hanson: She said she'd do it. She said she could do it.

Ms Gallagher: When they were available.

MR STANHOPE: When they are available. You are asking us now to table this by close of business tomorrow, in the context of discussions commenced initially with an acceptance by all parties that there would be an acceptance of the need for some confidentiality to support and assist good faith negotiations in relation to a major potential commercial transaction. And you want us to table all the details of the proposal, by tomorrow afternoon, around the proposed price, the duration of subleases, governance and management arrangements. We have just started negotiations. We, the government, have had an initial meeting with the Little Company. There have been further discussions. But asking us to table by close of business tomorrow all the governance and management arrangements when we have only just—

Mr Hanson: If you do not have them, that is fine. If you do, table them.

MR STANHOPE: We will have to look. We will have to look at what we have now. We will have to pull officials off a whole range—this is just unreasonable. This is simply unreasonable, to be passing motions like this, when a government is doing its best to meet the needs of the people of this community through a reasonable proposal.

If this is the way in which the government is being asked to govern the territory, you render it almost impossible in relation to something as significant and as sensitive as negotiations for the purchase of a private hospital, the negotiation of a completely new management arrangement and the development of a new, integrated public healthcare system. You are essentially making it impossible for the government to do its job. The government is increasingly being forced to other options, such as the prospect of accepting that this Assembly will not allow this deal to proceed in any shape or form. Essentially, we are being pushed inexorably to a decision to build and construct a third hospital.

MS BRESNAN (Brindabella) (11.55): The Greens will be supporting Mr Hanson's amendments. In relation to the first amendment, to 1(b), while we will accept this, I contend that Clare Holland House was the main point of concern that came out of the community and I think this was shown and demonstrated through the public forums which were held on this issue and the number of people who attended those forums. Also, judging by the correspondence we received, and I am sure other parties did, around this issue, it was primarily about Clare Holland House. Nevertheless, we will accept this amendment.

On the second amendment that Mr Hanson has proposed, to provide a due date, I do agree that it is fair to have a date. However, I will reiterate, as I did state in my initial speech on the motion, that we do accept that there may be some information which is not yet available. However, the government can table what information is available and we can simply note what is not. I think that is a fairly reasonable ask, so we will be accepting Mr Hanson's amendments.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Health and Minister for Industrial Relations) (11.56): I just want to make it clear that we will not be supporting Mr Hanson's amendments—I note “to ‘Mrs’ Bresnan's amendments”; I just note to Liberals that not all of us are “Mrs”, but anyway—to Ms Bresnan's amendments.

We will be opposing these amendments. Indeed, Ms Bresnan has given the reasons in her speech about why she is supporting them. In relation to amendment (1), she argued against the position she is only obviously going to take on the floor. In relation to amendment (2), I can be quite clear to the Assembly that what I will be tabling tomorrow is an A4 piece of paper that says, “Discussions are continuing and at this point those negotiations are commercial-in-confidence.” That is what will be tabled tomorrow because there is—

Mr Hanson: What a surprise.

MS GALLAGHER: Go back and have a look at what you are asking. The proposed price of purchasing: there is not one.

Mr Hanson: You said you would table a letter last week and you have not.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

MS GALLAGHER: The duration of a sublease: not agreed—not even anywhere near agreement. Governance and management arrangements: not agreed, early discussions. But we have not even got a clear indication back around whether this proposal will proceed, and that is the point. So the information that you will get tomorrow is a letter from the Chief Minister to the archbishop and the financial analysis that has already been provided for this deal, because the actual financial analysis of the three scenarios that were examined in the Treasury financial analysis as released for the last deal hold true because all of that—

Mr Smyth: So you have not done any work since then?

MS GALLAGHER: Mr Smyth, nothing has changed. All of that financial analysis focused on the ownership of the building. And, as we have said in a number of briefings, the issues around the recurrent operating impact were not dealt with in that financial analysis—and nothing under that has changed. So that is what you will get tomorrow. Just to make it clear: you will get the financial analysis that Treasury provided and a letter from the archbishop. In relation to all other aspects of the motion, there is no further information that I can provide to the Assembly.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (11.59): Just to be clear: the opposition is not asking the government to invent documents. If there is not a document that does not cover a point anywhere between (a) and (f), then of course the government cannot supply it. That is a simple answer: “No documents exist at this time.” What that will reveal, of course, is the depth of work that the minister has done, and that is the point that Mr Hanson seeks to make. What work have we done on this?

In the original proposal there is a document that purports to be analysis—which has been debunked by several commentators of high standing, including a former Auditor-General of New South Wales, which the Treasurer simply refuses to accept. She has said on numerous occasions: “Nobody has debunked my analysis. Therefore, my analysis stands.” But she clearly has not read the documents.

In Mr Harris’s documents he gives several opportunities for the Treasurer to explore. But the Treasurer chooses not to. And that is the problem with going forward with any confidence that this Treasurer, this Deputy Chief Minister, this Minister for Health, is actually up to the job. Just simply go to paragraph (2)(f), where Mr Hanson has asked for:

- (f) any analysis conducted of alternative courses of action that may have been considered.

The Treasurer is saying that there are no documents. So one can only assume from that that there was no discussion conducted, that there was no analysis conducted, of alternative courses.

Of course, remember that, when the deal fell over, everything was on the table, from compulsory acquisition. So does this mean there is no document about compulsory acquisition, even though the minister told this place that all options were being looked at? It will be interesting to see what work the minister has done in regard to what she told this place in previous sittings this year—that all options were on the table; that everything was being discussed: “No matter how silly it is, we are going to look at it.” But it would appear that we have simply come back to one option, without doing any work, if we take the minister at her word in what she just said.

Ms Gallagher: So you want to compulsorily acquire it, Brendan?

MR SMYTH: What we are saying, minister, is: did you do the work? We are simply asking the question: what work have you done? And, if you have done some work, table it. If not, I will go back and look at the *Hansard*, where the minister said, “We

will look at every option,” because, in that, if she has not done that work, then of course what she said to the Assembly would not be true. And God forbid that a minister would say something to the Assembly that is not true.

The problem for this is that this deal started in secret. That is your problem, minister. It started in secret because you told the electorate, before the 2008 election, “All our plans are on the table.” So one could really ask the question: what other secret plans were not revealed in the lead-up to the 2008 election, like the plan to close schools was not considered or released in the lead-up to the 2004 election? When you have got form on this, minister, that is when people start to doubt your word. You dig your own grave; you make your own bed on this issue.

In the lead-up to the 2004 election you said there were no plans to shut schools. That lasted less than six weeks after the election—six weeks. We have got the document where the minister wanted a heads of agreement signed before we went into caretaker in 2008.

Ms Gallagher: It was not signed.

MR SMYTH: Oh, it was not: “I failed to get what I wanted; therefore, it is okay.” It is kind of like the Labor club, isn’t it? “We failed to influence the sale of the Labor club; therefore, we haven’t done anything wrong. We failed to get the heads of agreement in secret to lock an incoming government into a position that they had no idea that they would have been getting into.” And that is what upsets people. It is this secret, this snide, this underhand, activity, minister, that you were undertaking, behind closed doors, in secret, despite protesting—your own words, minister—“all our plans are on the table”. Is it any wonder that people doubt what you say?

It is interesting that Mr Stanhope, who was riding shotgun—and, if you are having Jon Stanhope ride shotgun next to you, you should be wearing Kevlar, because it is bloody dangerous; he has just proven it—said the only motivation was to improve health care in the ACT. But the government’s concept of improving health care is: there will be no change to the delivery of health in the ACT; we are just spending the money.

What is the motivation here? He said, “I dispute the nay-sayers.” There again the Chief Minister attacks those who have a view contrary to his or his government’s. Who are the nay-sayers? Tony Harris, Sinclair Davidson and Terry Dwyer are nay-sayers now because they have the temerity to question this government. He said, “We are desperately seeking to make this happen”. Well, if you want it to happen, get people on board by sharing the information. Show us the work that you have done. But, if you have not done the work, I would be embarrassed. If you have got nothing to table tomorrow afternoon, it will be a damning indictment of the minister, because she said in this place earlier this year: “Everything is on the table. We are going to do the work. We are going to look at every option.” But apparently it has not been done. Yet again the minister has not done the work. And that is the problem.

Ms Gallagher: Wrong.

MR SMYTH: Well, we will see what you have done when you table it tomorrow. Prove me wrong.

Ms Gallagher: I have told you what you are getting.

MR SMYTH: Prove me wrong: drop the analysis of all the other options. Give us a list of all the other options. Show us the work that you did. You are the one with an enormous department—indeed, you are the one with the enormous brain—show us your ideas. Tell us all—

Ms Gallagher: We are not going to negotiate through the Assembly. That is what you are asking us to do—and we won't do it.

MR SMYTH: We are not asking you to negotiate through the Assembly, minister. You have got no defence so you attack the individual. You come in here and say: "You are lazy, blah, blah, blah. You have got no ideas, blah, blah, blah." If we stand up to this government, we get bullied. You have got a new deal on the table and we would like to know some details. We would like to know how you got to that position. We would like to know what it is that makes you think that this deal will work and is better for the people of the ACT. But we are not getting that information. I doubt we will ever get that information.

We do, of course, have the revelation of the government's new policy—that they will not invest in assets they do not own. And that has enormous implications for so many community groups in this territory, and it would be interesting to see that policy made clear. I have got a press release here from 4 March 2009 from Mr Corbell where he says:

The Government has also pledged \$30 million towards the construction of a solar power facility.

One would expect that the majority of that will have to be cash. If you add up the things that you might give that are non-cash, there might be the land, you might have a rates holiday, a payroll tax holiday, a fees and charges holiday—that is not going to amount to \$30 million. So how is it that we can put \$30 million into a solar-powered facility, which will affect the bottom line, and that is okay, but you cannot put money into a hospital because it does affect the bottom line?

Why do you not—

Ms Gallagher: \$200 million, Brendan—a little bit different.

MR SMYTH: So \$30 million is okay but \$200 million is not. That is okay; if that is your argument, that is fine.

Ms Gallagher: A little bit different in the impact on the bottom line. Come on!

MR SMYTH: So it is the scale and where it is going—that is fine—and the organisation. It is the scale, the size and the organisation: okay. That is interesting. So,

if it is small bits, we can put it here and there. But, if it is \$30 million, which I do not think is a particularly small amount of money, that is okay. It will be interesting to see whether the analysis that the minister will, or should, table tomorrow of her idea of “everything is on the table” was actually completed. And I will go back and I will review her words earlier this year where she said that and see what she actually said to the place: “Everything is on the table.” But, yet again, one option is presented—only one option. And it is this dogmatic approach, this dog with a bone sort of approach—“I’m going to get my way, no matter what I have to do”—that worries me.

We, of course, do not have any analysis that will prove health outcomes in the ACT. There is absolutely no analysis from the health minister. It is interesting that it seems to be run out of Treasury. The health minister is not up to it so the Treasurer is doing it. We have got the Chief Minister riding shotgun, saying things like, “We want to improve health in the ACT,” but there is no improvement to the delivery of health services. That argument is just shot to pieces. That is—

Ms Gallagher: So where do you put the beds? Where do you put your extra services—in a building that does not exist? You have got to build it.

MR SMYTH: You have not made the case. The minister interjects: “Where will you put the beds? How will you deliver the services?” So I assume that will be in the analysis tomorrow that we will get; that this will show us how this will improve health services in the ACT. When we get those documents tomorrow afternoon, what we will have is an analysis of how the government acquiring Calvary will improve health services in the ACT. If it is not there then the health minister has failed. If it is not there, it shows the health minister is not doing her job. If it is not there, it shows the health minister is lazy. If it is not there, it shows that the commitment that she gave to this place that all options were on the table was not met. It will show that their promise to consider everything was not done.

Yet again we come back to one option—“one option Katy”, “one trick Katy”. Just one option—that is all she puts forward on each occasion. Where is the discussion about the future of health and how it can be better delivered with the money that is at stake?

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (12.09): I thank Mr Hanson for bringing forward this matter today. Unlike the government, we in the Canberra Liberals believe that this is a matter of utmost importance to the community in the ACT and that the people in the ACT need to have some idea of what the government is planning to do with their money.

We have seen the Minister for Health, the Treasurer, floundering over this issue for a number of months now, starting when it became publicly known back in April. Hand on heart, she was saying: “This is the only way that we can progress this matter. The issue is about the bottom line. The issue is about where the money goes and who owns the asset at the end of the time.”

As a number of people have pointed out, if this is the issue there are myriad accounting processes that can be adopted short of taking over the hospital in a hostile takeover.

It is pretty much the case that the Stanhope Labor government have form on this. The Stanhope Labor government have considered Calvary and the ownership of Calvary by the Little Company of Mary a thorn in their side. And they have form on this: we saw the hostile approach that the previous minister, Mr Corbell, had to Calvary—to the extent, as Mr Smyth will recall, that there were times during budget estimates when it was impossible for members of the Legislative Assembly to put questions about the operation of Calvary hospital directly to the CEO of Calvary hospital. Mr Corbell on one occasion refused to allow him to come up to the table when a question was asked that was directly related to him. The next year he was uninvited to estimates; he was not allowed to even come into the room, for fear that he might be asked a question and give an answer. That goes to show the extent to which Calvary has been a thorn in the side for this government.

We need to keep the motivation in mind. The Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister and Treasurer talk about this as being really only about the accounting treatment. That does not wash with me. Over the years, I have seen their attitude to Calvary hospital. People of the ACT need to know that Katy Gallagher, Simon Corbell and, to a possibly lesser extent, Jon Stanhope have been hostile to Calvary ever since they occupied the government benches.

With that in mind, it is interesting to see the Treasurer's interaction today, especially in relation to the letter that apparently the Chief Minister wrote to the archbishop. I asked a question about where the government was with negotiations on this, because it was public knowledge that meetings had been held. There is public interest in this, and it is reasonable that the Canberra Liberals should ask these questions. It was interesting to hear the snide comments that the Treasurer made then, and she repeated them here today. Just in case people did not get it, the clear implication was "I do not know why I need to table that letter, because you have already got it, I bet". The implication was that a confidential meeting, where a letter was passed confidentially between the Chief Minister and the archbishop—that someone who had received that letter would bring it to the opposition and break the trust that the Deputy Chief Minister says exists between the government and the people negotiating on behalf of the Catholic Church and the Little Company of Mary.

I put it on the record for all to hear that I do not have that letter. I know of that letter's existence because the Deputy Chief Minister spoke about it the other day. And I have a fairly good idea that no-one—none of my colleagues—have that letter or have seen that letter. If anyone had given it to us without the approval of the Chief Minister, it would have been a breach of their trust. The accusation that the Deputy Chief Minister made last Wednesday and again today is that the people who were in receipt of that letter would have breached her trust, would have breached the agreement that they had come to. It shows that she thinks that they act in bad faith. I am putting on the record that, as far as I know, they have not.

She needs to think about what she said there. If she really wants to negotiate with these people and have a really good outcome for the health outcomes of the people of the ACT, she needs to treat the people she is negotiating with better. It is not the cut and thrust we have in here, when she can come in here and verbally beat people

around the head. These are people who have individual status and standing in this community. They deserve our respect, and Katy Gallagher demonstrated today that she does not respect them.

It will be useful if, according to the agreement made between the Chief Minister and the archbishop and those negotiating on behalf of Calvary, that letter does become available and becomes available in a way that is in accordance with that agreement. For the Deputy Chief Minister to insinuate that it has come to light in any other way is false. It is a sign of bad faith on the part of the Deputy Chief Minister.

I would like to just touch on a couple of issues. At one stage the Deputy Chief Minister said, “Look, we have to make all these investments in Calvary, and there is no other way.” She keeps saying, “There is no other way of doing it except that we own the assets.” As an indication of just how fallacious this argument is, she said, “One of the things we will have to do is build a car park.” There is no way in the world that it is necessary for the ACT government to own and operate a car park, for there to be a car park—

Ms Gallagher: Who else is going to build it?

MRS DUNNE: I could think of a whole lot of people who might do it—Wilson car parking, just as an example. There are a whole lot of people who are professional providers—

Ms Gallagher: Yes, for paid car parking.

MRS DUNNE: You pay for car parking at Calvary anyhow. There are professional providers of car parking.

Ms Gallagher: No, you do not. Libs support pay parking at the hospital? Well done, Vicki.

MRS DUNNE: There is pay parking, and it has been your proposal for a long time that there be pay parking. If it is necessary to provide car parking, it is not necessary for the government to own the structure.

The point is that there is a multitude of ways for this government to deal with the accounting problem that they say is the stumbling block to all of this. There is a multitude of ways. They can build extensions or improvements to Calvary hospital but keep them on their books and lease them to Calvary hospital at whatever rate. There is a range of things. You may not want to do it because it is not convenient for the government to do this, but there is a range of ways that they can do these things.

The critics of the original proposal to acquire Calvary hospital on a financial basis, the work done by Andrew Podger, indicate that there are ways of doing this. The work done by Tony Harris, the former Auditor-General in New South Wales, indicates that there are ways that this matter can be addressed without a hostile takeover, which is what was previously proposed by this government.

As Mr Seselja has said, the Canberra Liberals will be looking at this proposal with an open mind. We are not here, as is characterised by the Deputy Chief Minister today, to oppose this proposal. There has been nothing that has been said that says we will oppose this proposal. We will be looking to see whether this is, as the Deputy Chief Minister says, the only way to do things. I am not at this stage convinced that it is the only way to do things, but it is incumbent upon the Deputy Chief Minister to explain it if she wants to spend \$70 million of taxpayers' money that could be spent on hospital beds, on more nurses or on a range of other health facilities, as the AMA said. The AMA said very early in the piece, "If you want to spend that sort of money in health—

Ms Gallagher: It is capital money.

MRS DUNNE: Oh, here we go! You can just spend it on capital upgrades, new beds and new equipment if you like. If you wanted to actually spend that money in the health system, there are a lot more productive ways of doing it, as was highlighted by the AMA when this matter first came to light publicly in April. Again, I point out that every time the Deputy Chief Minister hears something she does not like, she talks over people. This is form for her: she likes to dish it out, but she cannot take it herself.

I would like to congratulate Mr Hanson on his motion today and for his cooperative work in dealing with the Greens and coming to a consensus on this motion. I commend the motion to the house.

Mr Hanson's amendments to **Ms Bresnan's** proposed amendments agreed to.

Ms Bresnan's amendments, as amended, agreed to.

MR SPEAKER: The question is that Mr Hanson's motion, as amended, be agreed to.

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (12.20): In closing, I would like to thank members for their contributions. This is an important debate that we have had today. It ultimately is about the future health of the ACT as well as about disclosure from this government to make sure not only that we are getting the best results in terms of health care for our residents but that we actually understand what is going on behind the closed doors.

I thank the Greens for the work they did with me on the amendments. Some of the changes that they made have somewhat watered down the motion where we were portraying an accurate reflection of what has occurred in the process to date. But in the interests of making sure that we get from the government the information that I think requires to be put on the table for the public to understand what is going on, I welcome their support for this motion.

I reiterate the point that we stand willing to be convinced, that we will consider this in good faith. We obviously do have a number of concerns and we are somewhat sceptical about the government's motives and the way they conduct this process. But once we receive all the information and we have the process of speaking to all the stakeholders, we will look at this deal for what it is, and it will be done in the interests

of what is best for the health of the ACT and what is the best decision from the point of view of our budget. What we will not be doing is obstructing for the sake of obstruction. That is not the way we do business, and we will not do so in this case.

The point is that this has been a flawed process to date. There has now been 18 months of flawed process. I suspect and fear that we are going down the same path. That causes me great concern, and it is part of the motivation for me putting this motion before the house today.

I would like to talk about the point about the \$200 million investment again, because it is an important point. The need to invest in Calvary hospital's infrastructure is beyond dispute. The Greens, Labor and the Liberals share the desire to see capital upgrades at the Calvary hospital. The point is that the \$77 million required for what Labor wants to do—transfer the ownership—is not an investment in health. To pretend that it is is a myth. Future money on capital investments is, but the \$77 million is not an investment in health. All it does is transfer an ownership agreement. Calvary Public Hospital remains Calvary Public Hospital regardless of who operates it, who runs it and who owns it. To pretend that in any way we oppose capital upgrades at Calvary hospital is a myth and is disingenuous from this government.

Jon Stanhope spoke about the need for an integrated system, for a holistic health system and integrated hospitals. The option that is now on the table, as I understand it, would largely maintain the operating arrangements as they are; the Little Company of Mary would continue to run the hospital. For him to stand up and say, "We need this because it gives you an integrated hospital system"—that is no longer a principle of the proposal they are putting forward. I do not think that he can stand here and lecture us on his need to have an integrated hospital system when that is not even a part of the proposal that he is now presenting.

The argument that I have heard Mr Stanhope put forward—I will go through this in more detail than I have now; this is the one he runs on the radio—is that you would not invest in a property that you rent. I just want to say this again: the point is that this is a property, a facility, that will come back to the ACT. We are going to inherit this facility in 88 years as the lease expires. What we are doing is investing in a property that we get to live in free of charge and will inherit.

In that context, it does not really matter where the money sits on the books or where the capital sits on whose books. And if it is going to cost us \$160 million, as it does over 20 years, to simply transfer ownership, we have to look at the opportunity cost of that. We have to consider whether we want to be spending \$77 million on simply transferring ownership if it could be spent on something else.

For example—this is taken from the ACT budget papers—a neurosurgery operating theatre costs \$10 million. A surgical assessment planning unit is \$4.1 million. A mental health in-patient facility is \$2.29 million. Gungahlin health centre is \$18 million. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rehab facility is \$5.8 million. And on and on. That is just \$40 million that I have mentioned there. Spending \$77 million simply to transfer an ownership agreement means that \$77 million

extrapolated over the period comes to \$160 million of infrastructure, of capital, that we will not have in our health system.

In terms of the Little Company of Mary, I think this is a good deal for the Little Company of Mary. They have not paid a cent for Calvary hospital. They are going to get in the order of \$77 million for an asset that they never paid a cent for. If you wonder why the Little Company of Mary would be supportive of this—I do not say that it is only because of this—it is that it is a very good deal for them. But I am interested in what is a good deal for the people of Canberra, not what is a good deal for the Little Company of Mary.

In terms of scrutiny, I will turn to Mr Stanhope's quotes. When Mr Stanhope was the Leader of the Opposition, he said that certain things would occur in his government. I will read them to you. He said:

Governments must be scrutinised. They must be accountable. This is a role of oppositions, and it is a role that is particularly necessary as governments become lazy, arrogant, aloof and accident prone.

Now we see a reversal of that. When we do inquire, when we do what he says an opposition should do, he criticises us for it. How quickly he has reversed his position from when he was in opposition to now when he is in government. He says further:

A Stanhope Labor Government will put an end to the waste and mismanagement.

We'll put an end to the fiascos.

I will lead a Government committed to openness, honesty, and inclusiveness.

If he thinks that the process for Calvary thus far is a process that is committed to openness, honesty and inclusiveness, he is somewhat misguided. He said:

Labor understands that good government does not bully. It leads.

The threats to compulsorily acquire Calvary hospital are little more than bullying. And although he has been talking much about bullying of late, this is a government that is characterised by bullying. If there is a phrase that most people use when they are describing Mr Stanhope, it is arrogance and bullying. He says:

Good government accepts criticism.

Good government has the courage to allow itself to be closely scrutinised. It conducts its operations in an open, honest and accountable manner, not in secret.

... Labor rejects behind "closed-door" deals and the failure of process ...

Essentially this is a critique of Mr Stanhope of 2010 by the Mr Stanhope of 2001. If he was genuine with the words that he said back then, he would give himself a fail for the way that the Stanhope government currently conducts its business. Based on the measure of how he assessed good governance, he would have to say that in the matter of Calvary hospital he has failed.

With regard to the Greens, I am not quite sure whether they will be supporting this proposal as it stands. I imagine that they will, based on some of the comments that I have heard on the radio. But I make the point that when they say, “Public health in public hands; therefore we would accept this new deal,” the deal actually locks a Catholic provider into running Calvary hospital for the next 88 years, 70 years or whatever the period is. I do not see that, simply because the ownership agreement, the piece of paper, rests with the government and not with someone else, that changes anything about Calvary. And I do not think that that constitutes public health in public hands simply because of who owns it. If it is still being managed, operated and run by a Catholic provider, I do not see how the Greens could support this deal in good faith.

I go to the letters that we found out about today. We knew about one last week, the letter to the archbishop. And Ms Gallagher has advised us that there is a letter from the archbishop. As Mrs Dunne has said, I assure the Assembly that I do not have, and my colleagues do not have, a copy of either letter. The comments by Ms Gallagher that suggested that we had been provided with them—and I can only imagine that she is saying that the archbishop would have provided us with them—are quite disturbing. Next time she meets with the archbishop, she should at least apologise to him for casting those aspersions on someone who would pride themselves on their integrity, their honesty and the way they conduct their business.

In closing, I thank members for their contributions today. I am glad to see that this important matter will get up and that we will be provided with at least some of the documents that will help inform the community about what is going on with the government with regard to Calvary hospital.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 12.30 to 2 pm.

Labor-Greens agreement

Statement by Speaker

MR SPEAKER: Members, I would like to make a further statement with regard to questions without notice and questions on notice relating to the ALP-Greens parliamentary agreement.

It is clear that there is some lack of clarity about when a question will be out of order if it makes a reference to the ALP-Greens parliamentary agreement, and in the interests of moving forward on this with clear guidance for members, I believe it is useful to outline how I propose to proceed on this matter.

During the course of the debate yesterday, Mr Smyth raised a number of previous questions that had made mention of the ALP-Greens parliamentary agreement that had not been ruled out of order, including a question from Mr Coe in April 2009.

I have taken the opportunity provided to me overnight to review those previous questions, and I acknowledge Mr Smyth’s concern that there is seeming inconsistency

between those questions not being ruled out of order and the ruling that was made last week. I note that no point of order was raised in regard to those earlier questions, and no rulings were made at the time. On reflection, under the current standing orders, some of those questions would have been ruled out of order had a point of order been raised.

I would like to summarise my understanding of how the standing orders and practices of this place should be applied in such circumstances.

Firstly, questions cannot be addressed to ministers about matters for which they have no ministerial responsibility. I believe that was clear in my ruling made last week.

Secondly, questions that substantively address the nature of an arrangement between parties would be out of order. This is consistent with established parliamentary practice and through which the Assembly is bound by standing order 275.

For example, the following question asked by Mr Coe, on 27 August 2009, could have been ruled out of order:

Is that statement representative of the integrity of the Greens-Labor agreement?
If so, why? If not, why not?

Thirdly, I would like to clarify that where the question is in regard to an item within the agreement for which a minister has responsibility for the implementation of that policy, but which makes passing reference to the policy being in the ALP-Greens agreement, the question would be in order. Mr Coe's question on 2 April 2009 demonstrates this. Mr Coe said:

My question is to the Treasurer, and it relates to the Greens-Labor agreement.
Treasurer, one of the agreed policy points of the agreement is to:

Adopt a goal of 10 per cent public housing stock.

Treasurer, has your department provided you with advice as to the cost of this policy and, if so, will you table that advice?

Clearly the Treasurer was being asked about actions taken by her department and accordingly was in order.

My ruling last week was made in response to a point of order raised by Mr Hargreaves, as to whether the ALP-Greens agreement fell within the portfolio of any minister, which it does not.

However, as has been stated previously, and as I ruled on the day, the substantive matter raised in Mr Seselja's question was in order, and was able to be asked of the Treasurer inasmuch as it related to her responsibility for invoices for small business. I acknowledge that inasmuch as Mr Seselja's question only made passing reference to the ALP-Greens agreement, the opening statement of the question was in order.

However, I ruled part of the question out of order as it requested information about the status of the agreement. As members are aware, I invited Mr Seselja to put the

question again, to request information about the issues rather than the status of the agreement.

Members, I would like to take the opportunity to comment in regard to how we proceed to constructively engage in establishing clarity around these types of issues.

Yesterday morning, I provided to Mr Smyth an early indication of my statement on the point of order raised by Mr Hargreaves on 18 March 2010.

I would like to state clearly for all members that my door is always open and that, should members wish to raise further issues of concern in regard to rulings or to provide further information for consideration in making those rulings, I welcome this at all times. Indeed I would always encourage members to seek clarity in a constructive way so that we can find the best possible way forward for the conduct of the Assembly.

I would ask that members take time to reflect on my statement today and to inform me should they require further guidance about this issue.

I would also remind members that the provision to review standing orders, procedures and practices exists through the administration and procedure committee.

Questions without notice

Capital works—program

MR SESELJA: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, yesterday you indicated that, as at 31 January, \$214 million had been spent on capital works in the ACT. How much of this expenditure relates to the commonwealth's BER funding and how much of this expenditure relates to projects that were initially budgeted to be complete in the 2008-09 financial year?

MS GALLAGHER: I am not sure that I have the detail of how much is under the commonwealth's stimulus plan, but I can certainly bring that back. I can say that, as at January 2010, \$91 million of the new works program had been expended, some of which would have been the commonwealth's stimulus spend. As at January 2010, \$123 million of the works in progress program had been expended.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Seselja, a supplementary?

MR SESELJA: Treasurer, yesterday you said there would be an underspend this year. What are the most significant projects that have been delayed and that are contributing to this underspend?

MS GALLAGHER: That has not been finalised yet. We will be releasing that closer to the end of the financial year but there are a number of underspends across agencies. The largest capital programs, of course, are done through TAMS and education, although they are delivering by far the majority of their program on time. There are underspends in health. I will be providing more detail of that in the financial report to the Assembly. The exact level of the underspend is not clear at this point in time. But

as I said yesterday, it will be an improved outcome on last year's capital spend, which is very pleasing.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, a supplementary?

MR SMYTH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Minister, will the government's decision to delay some projects contribute to an underspend in 2009-10, and what will be the quantum of that contribution to the underspend?

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, we have revised the capital program, as Mr Smyth would be aware, in the budget update, where the existing capital program went from \$782 million down to \$676 million. We have reprofiled \$105 million over the next couple of financial years. That does not necessarily mean delay. I should clarify that it does not necessarily mean delay; it is just a better estimation of when the cash will go out the door. We provided that in the budget update, and if there are any further changes to this year's program they will be provided in the budget.

MR SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: Mr Seselja's original question talked about the building the education revolution. What impact will there be on construction employment in the ACT when that comes to its inevitable end, which I believe is around the end of the year, from what Mr Barr said last week?

MS GALLAGHER: There is plenty of work around, Ms Le Couteur. That is the short answer to that question. Indeed, of our existing capital program, the building the education revolution is only a small component. One of the challenges for government, I think, as we move through the next financial year is how we maintain our support for economic growth in the private sector. We largely do that through our capital works program. That is what industry is saying to us, and that is why they asked us to look at reprofiling some of our work to make sure that, when some of the time-critical work is complete, there are still capital projects to roll out over the next few years. Certainly, with the infrastructure plans that are being put together across agencies, there is going to be no shortage of capital works across the ACT government, but it is a challenge for us to maintain the level of program that we had last year and this year.

Visitor

MR SPEAKER: Members, before we proceed, I would like to acknowledge the presence of a former member of the Assembly, Mr Michael Moore, in the gallery today. I welcome Mr Moore back to the Assembly.

Members: Hear, hear!

Questions without notice

Bimberi—Aboriginal liaison officer

MS HUNTER: My question is to the Minister for Children and Young People and it is about Indigenous young people in Bimberi. Concerns were raised with me this week on behalf of the Indigenous elected body regarding the official establishment of

an Aboriginal liaison officer within Bimberi. Can the minister please advise if there is an officially identified Aboriginal liaison officer working at Bimberi?

MS BURCH: We do prepare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children that are in care and protection. We have an Aboriginal liaison position at Bimberi that focuses on the residents and the residents' needs. There is staff training. Indeed, all people involved with youth justice at Bimberi are prepared in relation to dealing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait people, in dealing with their cultural issues, and appropriate supports are offered. There is a departmental liaison officer there.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Hunter, a supplementary?

MS HUNTER: Thank you. Minister, given there are also concerns regarding the funds allocated towards this position within the overall Bimberi budget, is there a specific allocation of funding for this position and, if so, is it being used for the purpose of working with other Aboriginal organisations and the delivery of culturally appropriate programs within Bimberi?

MS BURCH: I would have to take some advice on the particular budget line or cost line for that position, but certainly the Aboriginal liaison officer works with other services, and service relationships have been established with the Aboriginal Justice Centre, local Indigenous service agencies and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services unit within the Office of Children, Youth and Family Support. So it is around working not only within Bimberi but the services that relate to Bimberi and are connected on a referral basis when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are indeed not in Bimberi and back in the community.

MS BRESNAN: A supplementary.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Ms Bresnan.

MS BRESNAN: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Minister, can you describe how young people are referred to the Aboriginal liaison officer within Bimberi and how the community is given information about this position?

MS BURCH: I do not know the detail of the mechanics of the referral to the DLO but I would say that, on entry into Bimberi, staff are alerted that there is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young person coming in and that the DLO is informed of that. As far as how the broader community is aware of the DLO position, I would say that that works through communication channels with those other service relationships which I have just spoken about—the Aboriginal Justice Centre, Gugan, Winnunga, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service unit and the broader support networks that the department, the office, has established in responding to vulnerable families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and individuals within the care and protection and justice systems.

MR COE: A supplementary?

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, are convicted detainees segregated from remandees? What are the numbers of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in those categories?

MS BURCH: Separation in Bimberi is managed for a number of reasons: their age, their gender, their behaviour, how they fit in with the broader community there. The numbers vary from week to week. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, unfortunately, are over-represented within the Bimberi system.

Mr Coe: Will you take it on notice?

MS BURCH: I can flick through this and get back to you this week with the details we have.

Gaming—sale of Labor clubs

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Minister for Gaming and Racing. Minister, yesterday you indicated that you would not be taking any further action on the 86 documents requested by the gaming commission from the Labor club but not provided. Have you taken any advice from the commission as to the content of these documents, why the commission requested the documents and, if so, have you satisfied yourself that the documents can remain secret?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Smyth for the question. As Mr Smyth would be aware, as I am sure he has pored over the detail of the commission's report, the documents were legally privileged. The commission agrees that they are legally privileged and it has made those statements in the report. The commission has agreed with that and has proposed that no further action be taken in relation to those documents.

MR SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: Minister, given the commission report explicitly states that there is a conflict of interest between the Labor club and the Labor Party, is it appropriate for you to make further decisions with regard to the report?

MR BARR: Entirely, Mr Speaker.

MRS DUNNE: A supplementary question, Mr Speaker?

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how many members of the ALP administrative committee or board members of the Labor club work as ministerial advisers in the Assembly?

Mr Hargreaves: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I refer to your previous ruling. I would seek to have this question ruled out of order because it does not relate to a ministerial responsibility carried by this minister, as detailed in the AAOs.

Mrs Dunne: On the point of order, Mr Speaker, Mr Smyth's question relates to whether or not the minister may have a conflict of interest in relation to his

responsibility for the Gaming Machine Act and, therefore, it is reasonable to ask the minister whether or not he is aware of other people in his employ or in the employ of the executive that may have a similar conflict of interest.

MR SPEAKER: One moment, members. There is no point of order. I believe the question goes to the conflict of interest and I think it is open to ask the minister.

MR BARR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Yes, I am aware of one member of my staff who is a member of the Labor Party administrative committee but there are no members of my staff who are in any way on the board of the Canberra Labor club.

MRS DUNNE: I have another supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, will you be seeking to amend the Gaming Machine Act so as to allow the commission access to documents such as those in question?

MR BARR: That would be seeking an announcement of government policy, and I will not be outlining government policy in question time today.

Planning—building certifiers

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Minister for Planning and concerns building certifiers. What auditing of building certifiers does the government currently do, and does this auditing involve physical inspection of the site and comparing the plans with the actual finished building?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Le Couteur for the question, as this is a matter that has been the subject of some public debate in the letters page of the *Canberra Times* in recent weeks and months, and quite possibly over a number of years.

In short, yes, the Planning and Land Authority does undertake auditing. There have been a number of examples over the years where the authority has undertaken audits and then undertaken subsequent action to see matters rectified. But it is an audit process. It is reported against, I understand, in the Planning and Land Authority's annual report. There may indeed also be some reporting in the budget papers each year in terms of performance indicators for particular audits under the construction services branch which was newly established in last year's budget.

I do not have, off the top of my head, the exact number of audits that are undertaken, but I am happy to provide the member with that information once I have received some accurate data from the Planning and Land Authority in relation to that matter.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Le Couteur, a supplementary question?

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Does the auditing also include EER ratings and does that auditing involve physical inspection of the site, comparing the plans with the finished building, as well as redoing the software EER rating?

MR BARR: As I understand it, there is a difference in the EER process as that relates to a point of sale rather than a point of construction in some instances, although it can vary, of course, depending on the nature of the property. I will need to get some further advice as to the nature of the inspections that are undertaken. As I understand it, it is mostly software based and there are various software tools. Since this EER system was introduced in the territory more than a decade ago there has been an evolution in the sorts of analyses and tools that are used to assess the EER of buildings. As Ms Le Couteur would be aware, I think we are onto the second or third generation of software in relation to those sorts of analyses.

I will seek some further information in relation to whether there are physical inspections. Off the top of my head I do not believe there are. I understand physical audits are undertaken on a random basis, so not every EER assessment is audited. There is a random process then for checking. Of course, as we see the evolution of time and properties go on the market more than once, there is a requirement for EERs to be updated. From one point of sale to the next it is possible that the home owner could well have made changes to the property, one would hope to largely enhance the EER rating of the property rather than to detract from the EER rating of the property.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Hunter, a supplementary question?

MS HUNTER: What is the government target for both energy efficiency rating and other auditing, and have these targets been met?

MR BARR: These targets are published each year in the Planning and Land Authority's statements in relation to the budget papers and their annual reports. My understanding is that the targets have been met over the past few years. Of course, there will be further reporting on this in the months ahead.

MR SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Bresnan?

MS BRESNAN: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Given that building certifiers are often recommended by the builder, how is this potential conflict of interest minimised?

MR BARR: I thank the Greens for this line of questioning. There is potential, as I understand it, in the public mind for there to be some concern in relation to this recommendation process whereby a builder would recommend a certifier. I think it is important to note that there is that concern in the public and it has been expressed by a number of correspondents in the *Canberra Times*.

I do not believe that the current arrangements in the territory can address all of those concerns that residents have. So I think it is an area that we will have to examine more closely in the future. I think it is important that there is an independent auditing process. Certainly, I am confident that the Planning and Land Authority undertakes that role.

There is, I accept, at the heart of this matter a question around whether building certifiers should be on the government payroll or paid for by the private sector. There

is a very strong view in the private sector that private certification is the way to go. But I also accept that there is a very strong view from some in the community who have had bad experiences in relation to this that some greater level of regulation from government is required.

I am examining a range of issues. I am looking at a range of different legislative options to ensure that there is greater certainty for residents and that this perception of a conflict of interest can be addressed. Yes, I acknowledge that there is this problem and I am looking at a range of different ways to address it.

Public service—staffing

MR COE: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, the ACT public service profile for 2008-09 shows that staffing has grown in the ACT public service by 1,216 in the last 12 months. The average salary cost of a staff member is \$60,972. Treasurer, do you consider it prudent to increase staff costs by over \$74 million during a financial crisis?

MS GALLAGHER: The government does watch our staffing levels very closely.

Mr Smyth: Mr Stanhope used to not watch it. He was shocked that it had grown.

MS GALLAGHER: I was just wondering why the Liberals were being so quiet, but Mr Smyth has let the side down. I did have a suspicion that it could have been because Mr Moore is in the audience and they might be a little bit worried about a negative story in the *CityNews*, but good on you, Mr Smyth; you have let the side down.

Mr Smyth: Point of order, Mr Speaker. I have never been worried by Michael Moore's presence at any event.

Mr Hargreaves: Point of order, Mr Speaker. I have.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you for the commentary. Ms Gallagher, the question.

MS GALLAGHER: We do watch the issue of our staffing numbers very closely. If you go back and have a look at the staffing profile and where the great staffing increases have been, they have been largely in health, education or other areas where the government has made a conscious policy decision to deliver a program that has required staff.

As our services to the community grow, and they are growing every year, our staff profile will grow as well. But it is an issue that we watch very closely. We acknowledge that 60 per cent of our budget is our staffing costs. Part of our budget plan is to make sure that we have some wage restraint going on when our budget is under stress. Of course, staffing levels are a part of that equation in every decision that this government takes. We are very conscious of any expansion, but we do so with our eyes open.

MR COE: I have a supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Treasurer, what is the projected cost increase for this year, and will staff numbers also increase?

MS GALLAGHER: Staff numbers will increase in line with government policy decisions. I am not sure how else I can expand on that other than as in my first question. In relation to any additional expenditure that has been incurred since the budget was announced, I can confirm that the majority of that is for largely technical reasons. I think \$17 million—this is from our budget update—relates to rollovers; \$33 million, by far the majority of the increased expenditure, is a re-evaluation of TAMS's assets; and \$11½ million was an actuarial super valuation change. So, in terms of any additional expenditure, they have not been incurred for staffing reasons post the ACT budget of last year.

MR SMYTH: A supplementary, Mr Speaker?

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, what extra front-line services were provided to the ACT as a result of this expenditure and extra staffing?

MS GALLAGHER: I draw the member's attention to the budget papers where initiatives are clearly outlined.

Mr Smyth: You don't know?

MS GALLAGHER: I do know and I can go through them one by one. For example, in health—and I can go through these—there is an increased critical care capacity, which is an additional funded intensive care bed, as opposed to the plans those opposite took to the election, which was a fake intensive care bed—an intensive care bed you have when you do not have an intensive care bed; that is right, the intensive care bed that you use for surge in capacity. That is right. That was a good one in the election. There is an increase in elective surgery, for example. That means more doctors and more nurses and additional beds. There is an increased acute capacity: 20 beds. That usually equates to about 80 nurses to run those beds.

We can run through it but I think the short answer, to save everybody else from boredom, is: go back, look at your budget papers. The initiatives are outlined there very clearly indeed, as are the staffing numbers.

Public Service—staffing

MR HANSON: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, the ACT public service profile 2008-09 shows that staffing has grown in the ACT public service by about 6.5 per cent in the last 12 months. The average salary of a staff member is \$60,972. Treasurer, how many of these staff were essential and how many were non-essential?

MS GALLAGHER: All staff are essential. I have to say that, at \$69,000 per head, compared to what you guys over there get paid, they seem a little underpaid as well. As I said in answer to Mr Coe's question, our staffing increases have been the result of conscious policy decisions by this government. In relation to the decision we have taken around a staffing freeze, I do not know if those opposite did not notice but we have lost \$85 million from our bottom line that we were not losing at budget time last year, and we have taken further policy decisions since that loss of income.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, a supplementary question?

MR HANSON: What were the average on-costs of employing these staff?

MS GALLAGHER: The traditional figure that we use for one staff person is about \$100,000.

MR SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, how does this growth compare to previous years?

MS GALLAGHER: I do not have that document in front of me. Indeed, I think it comes under the Chief Minister's portfolio and is really with the Commissioner for Public Administration. I do not have that figure in front of me, but we do watch the growth in staffing numbers very closely. I am sure I will be able to provide that—

Mr Stanhope: It's in the annual reports. Read those.

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, actually, do some work—read the annual reports.

MR SPEAKER: A supplementary, Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, how much of this staff growth was due to the Greens-ALP agreement?

MS GALLAGHER: I cannot answer that question without going through—

Opposition members interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: There were additional staff under the Greens-Labor agreement. Indeed, there were additional staff for this place. I think there were additional staff for the committee office that I recall. There is additional staffing allowance. Wasn't there some additional money for the Liberals as well under that?

Mr Stanhope: Yes, they picked up some money.

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, so there have definitely been some additional costs.

Mr Barr: That is clearly non-essential, isn't it?

Mr Seselja: Why don't you answer the question, Katy? Can't you answer the question?

Mr Barr: We have identified some non-essential savings.

MS GALLAGHER: Talk about staff! Have a look at—

Mr Seselja: Is that why you guys don't want questions about it—because you can't answer them?

MR SPEAKER: Order! Mr Barr and Mr Seselja, thank you. Ms Porter has the call.

Infrastructure—investment

MS PORTER: My question without notice is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Could you update the Assembly on the government's progress towards delivering cycle infrastructure, footpaths and park-and-ride facilities and other infrastructure that was the subject of the ALP-Greens parliamentary agreement?

Mrs Dunne: Mr Speaker—

MR STANHOPE: I thank—

MR SPEAKER: Order, Mr Stanhope. Stop the clocks. Mrs Dunne, on a point of order.

Mrs Dunne: Mr Speaker, I do not wish to say this, but I am now completely confused as to whether or not mentioning the Labor-Greens agreement is in order or out of order. Ms Porter has just asked a question which goes to the heart of the Labor-Greens agreement. Last week you ruled on a point of order that Mr Seselja's question was out of order. I am now completely confused. Do you think you could cast some clarity on whether or not Ms Porter's question is in order?

Mr Hargreaves: On the point of order—

MR SPEAKER: There is no need to, Mr Hargreaves. Mrs Dunne, for the exact reason you have just raised, I made some effort at the start of this question time to provide some clarity and I think I was extremely clear that—

Mrs Dunne: No, I don't think you were; that's the point.

MR SPEAKER: I was extremely clear, I think, that in this case Ms Porter's question is not out of order. The Chief Minister has direct portfolio responsibility for the provision of the services provided. I used the example of Mr Coe's question, which I indicated would be in order. Where it directly relates to a minister's portfolio responsibility, a passing reference to the parliamentary agreement I do not believe is out of order, and I think I clarified that in my statement at the beginning of question time.

MR STANHOPE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and I do thank Ms Porter for her question and her continuing and abiding deep interest in the ALP-Greens agreement, an interest which all we members of the ALP share, of course.

It is pleasing, in relation to the provision of cycling infrastructure, footpaths, park-and-ride facilities and a range of other infrastructure, that the Greens share the government's commitment to continue to enhance infrastructure in relation to these very important parts of our city. Indeed, through our discussions we find that we share a commitment to continuing to invest in these priority areas. They are priority areas that we identified very early in our term of government. Indeed, over the term of the government, we have now, I believe, actually constructed somewhere in excess of 700 kilometres of footpaths and cycle paths since coming to government, and it is true that in the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement issues around continuing to enhance that pedestrian and cycling network were very much part of those discussions and are very much part of the agreement.

We have continued to work hard and, with the very obvious support of the Greens within this place, continued to govern in the interests of and for the future of all Canberrans.

One does need in this context to contrast our commitment, most particularly to cycling infrastructure, with that of the Liberal Party. Everybody who has been in this place for some years will remember the fierceness with which the Liberal Party opposed the retrofitting of existing roads with cycle paths. If it had been left to the Liberal Party, we would never have had on-road cycle paths built on Northbourne Avenue, or indeed all the way to Woden from Dickson. We would not have had the current roads that have been built, all the way from Stromlo Forest Park essentially back to Dunrossil Drive, and even early on in our terms—I think it was in 2003-04—a major commitment of funding to provide on-road cycle paths on Drakeford Drive.

Over and above the \$10 million-plus that we have spent on retrofitting existing roads, we have now essentially instituted the practice of including or ensuring that there are cycle paths on all major roads constructed in the ACT. Through that particular process, we now have, over our three terms in government, spent, I would think, tens of millions of dollars on just that.

Indeed, in this last budget, with the support of the Greens, there is a commitment to \$24 million of funding for footpaths and cycle path upgrades and cycling infrastructure—not, of course, to mention the almost \$10 million that has been invested in the Mount Stromlo world-class cycling facility, a real jewel in terms of support by this government for cycling and recreation. Just over this last summer, TAMS has sealed 66 kilometres of cycle paths—66 kilometres, the most expansive and indeed the largest investment ever in infrastructure and upgrade of cycling infrastructure in the territory, with just on 66 kilometres of cycle path upgraded throughout that. And we continue a major investment—I think \$2 million in this last budget—in footpaths throughout the city. It was significant that just before Christmas, reflecting of course the relationship between the Labor Party and the Greens, Ms Hunter and I were very pleased to attend the opening of the Mawson park-and-ride facility. (*Time expired.*)

MR SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter?

MS PORTER: Minister, can you further inform the Assembly how this investment compares with investments made by previous territory governments in essential municipal infrastructure?

Mrs Dunne: Including your own.

MR STANHOPE: I am more than happy to do that. Indeed, as Mrs Dunne encourages, including our own. It is a fact that just over these last few years—indeed, I think in each of the last three years—it is probably fair to say that the total investment in community infrastructure or infrastructure for the community for each of the last three years exceeds the total of seven years of investment by the Liberal Party in government during their term. In other words, we have invested more in infrastructure in this city in just the last year than the Liberal Party managed to achieve in two terms of government. Those are bare facts.

The numbers, of course, in relation to that are interesting and are a reflection, too, that in two terms of government over seven years the Liberal Party never managed to produce a single surplus budget. That was the great difficulty they had. The double whammy was they had seven straight deficits in government—seven in a row, deficit, deficit, deficit—and, of course, as a result of that, they averaged in their infrastructure spend an average of \$70 million a year over seven years. That was their average capital spend. That is a reflection of the fact that they could not manage a chook raffle in a pub on a Saturday afternoon. Seven consecutive deficits. Could not run a chook raffle in a pub on a Saturday afternoon. Seven successive deficits. Seven years of average capital investment of \$70 million.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR STANHOPE: Name one significant piece of infrastructure delivered by the Liberals in seven years. The Bruce Stadium upgrade. The illegal, late and over-costed futsal slab. Where do you go after you get past the Liberal Party's legacy of infrastructure in this town? It does not exist.

MS LE COUTEUR: Supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: Mr Stanhope, given that the government is planning to spend more, clearly, from what you said, on cycle infrastructure, will you commit to, when you are upgrading on-road cycling, not having the situation of the disappearing cycle path? It is really disturbing when it just disappears.

MR STANHOPE: We do our best in relation to our capacity to upgrade and maintain seamless cycle paths. But of course one of the great disabilities we have is that we are retrofitting roads that were ignored for seven years by the Liberal Party in government. You have to take account of the fact that ideologically and philosophically the

Liberals refused to provide on-road cycle paths. We are doing our best. We are making up for the mistakes of the past.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Stanhope, Ms Le Couteur did not invite you to compare your government's performance with a previous government's.

MR STANHOPE: I am not. I am explaining the difficulty of actually achieving exactly what it is that Ms Le Couteur—

Mr Hanson: In a very honest and disingenuous—

MR STANHOPE: Ms Le Couteur and I share more than just a joint commitment expressed through the parliamentary agreement; we share a very keen commitment to cycling. We are both keen cyclists. I know exactly what it is that Ms Le Couteur is saying; I know from personal experience, as does Ms Le Couteur. There are some places, particularly on roundabouts and some other tricky places to retrofit, where all of a sudden bike paths do disappear and one is forced to whiz back onto the road or go cross-country. It is disconcerting and it is unfortunate, but some of the engineering solutions to some of those problems are enormously expensive. As funding permits, as resources permit, I do hope over time that we will deal with all of those glitches in some of the difficult places.

Ms Le Couteur, you cannot dispute this government's commitment to cycling, to cycling infrastructure. I do hope, even within the next two weeks, to be able to ride on the new \$900,000 cycle path through Jerrabomberra. We are hoping that that will be completed. That is another \$900,000 investment in cycling and cycling infrastructure.

MR SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe?

MR COE: Of the 700 kilometres that you mentioned, Chief Minister, what proportion is footpaths or community shared paths as opposed to bike paths?

MR STANHOPE: The most significant proportion of the 700 kilometres is footpaths, mostly in expanding areas of Canberra.

Mr Hanson: New suburbs built by developers. Do you take credit for that?

MR STANHOPE: I do not have the length but in relation to all new major roads now being constructed—I would have to get the distance; for instance, major inner suburban routes, major roads—we now as a matter of course provide on-road cycling. What I will do, Mr Coe, because I know of your abiding interest in measures and distances and how many metres of green paint have been painted before traffic lights—

Mr Coe: At \$100 a square metre.

MR STANHOPE: and what is the cost—

Mr Coe: How is that red paint on Barry Drive going, Jon? How is that red paint?

MR SPEAKER: Mr Coe, order, please!

Mr Seselja: You can't even get the paint right.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Seselja!

MR STANHOPE: and how many lives has it saved and all those other things—how much green paint has been painted—

Mr Hargreaves: We had to do something with the leftovers from Bruce Stadium.

MR STANHOPE: as opposed to red paint and how much more did green paint cost than red paint.

Mr Hargreaves: What about Bruce Stadium?

MR STANHOPE: I know of your interest in these issues, Mr Coe.

Mr Coe: That hurts me; that really hurts, Jon.

Mr Hargreaves: That is where we got the green paint from.

MR SPEAKER: Order, members! Mr Coe, you are warned. Your volume of interjections is right up there with where we were yesterday, and your colleagues are all close to being warned. Mr Hargreaves, it would be helpful if you did not wind them up. Mr Stanhope, you have the floor.

MR STANHOPE: I will conclude on this point. I will provide additional information. That additional information that I will provide, in addition to the question asked by Mr Coe, will include a comparative analysis of the length of on-road cycle path provided by this government as opposed to that provided by your party when in government and, most particularly, the length of retrofitted on-road cycling that was delivered under the Liberal Party in two terms of government. I think I can answer that bit now: zero.

Calvary hospital—mental health unit

MS BRESNAN: My question is to the Minister for Health and concerns the older persons mental health unit at Calvary hospital. Minister, members of the community have approached me, concerned that Calvary Health Care have cut the number of beds provided in that unit from 20 to 13. Can you please advise whether the cut is due to insufficient demand for the 20 beds or was it because there were not enough staff to look after the beds?

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, this is a decision that Calvary have made in operating the older persons mental health unit. Health have been talking with them. It is for a range of reasons. It goes to issues of staffing, issues of demand and issues of budget. So there are three issues there—the staffing to staff the unit, demand for the beds in the unit, and an overall budget pressure that they are experiencing across the hospital.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Bresnan, a supplementary?

Mr Hanson: Or maybe they're underfunded. It might be a clue.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Ms Bresnan has the floor.

MS BRESNAN: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Minister, is the cut in seven beds a permanent or temporary move?

MS GALLAGHER: I understand it is temporary and they will be gradually moving back up to the full number of beds over the next few months. In relation to any concern that Calvary is underfunded, Calvary is provided with all the funding they require to run all of the beds. But, like any public hospital, they are under pressure and they are currently operating over budget. It is not a budget cut or the fact that they are underfunded, as Mr Hanson interjected. They are merely trying to manage increasing demand, as Canberra Hospital is as well.

MR HANSON: A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, are there any other beds across our public hospitals that have been closed due to a lack of staff?

MS GALLAGHER: Not that I can recall, but these decisions are taken day by day, so I cannot give 100 per cent certainty. Safety for staff and safety for patients is number one, and there are occasions when, for one reason or another, relief staff are not able to be brought on, where a reduced amount of beds are in operation. For example, on every day of the week, the number of beds in operation at the Canberra Hospital changes. It fluctuates depending on staffing levels. We currently run around 450 beds. I have seen it rise to 470 when there is peak demand.

We had 195 people through the emergency department on Monday, a record amount. Of that 195, 60 were admitted to the hospital. That is essentially two full wards who were admitted on that day to the hospital. We flex beds up and down as we need them. At the moment we are operating more beds than I can ever recall in the past. But, on occasion, if staff are unable to be found or demand is not there for that particular unit, those beds will not need to be opened. But they are there for when the admissions are required.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Le Couteur, a supplementary?

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Minister, what will the government do to address any unmet demand for this unit—the original one Ms Bresnan was talking about—in the future?

MS GALLAGHER: At the moment they are not running to full demand. The unit is there and they have not necessarily had the admissions they need to use all of those

beds. I know that there are mixed views about this in the community. I have had representations as well around concerns about whether that is actually the case—that there is demand there but the beds are not there. This is a decision that Calvary took in terms of managing their overall hospital, but we certainly work closely with them to make sure that if there is demand for their services and they are overdelivering—indeed, I imagine every public hospital in Australia is currently overdelivering on what their budget actually is due to record levels of demand—we work with Calvary to resolve those issues, as we currently are and will do in the lead-up to the budget.

Social workers—stress leave

MRS DUNNE: My question goes to the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services. Minister, yesterday I asked you to advise the Assembly whether a number of social workers within care and protection had gone on stress leave on or about the same time. You were also asked whether any of those who had gone on stress leave had done so because of workplace bullying and whether those included people who were recruited from the United Kingdom. You undertook to make inquiries of your department. Minister, what inquiries have you made in relation to this matter and what did you find out? If you have not made any inquiries, why?

MS BURCH: You saved me having to stand up at the end of question time in response to your questions and the supplementaries. The answer is no, no social workers in care and protection. Your question was: “Are there social workers out on stress leave?” The answer is no. Social workers in care and protection, like other staff in the ACT public service, are entitled to recreation leave but there is no pattern of social workers taking personal leave at or about the same time over the past six months.

Allegations of bullying are something that I take very seriously and I strongly encourage Mrs Dunne or indeed any member of this Assembly that has any information on such allegations to let me know. I can assure all members that I and the department would welcome any such information, and, if received, it would be referred to an independent body for investigation. So let me be clear: my office and the department do not tolerate bullying or harassment in any form and, if there is any information, it will be responded to quickly and comprehensively.

MRS DUNNE: A supplementary question, Mr Speaker?

MR SPEAKER: Yes, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, in your answer to my question, you talked about personal leave. Minister, did a number of social workers take sick leave on or about the same time?

MS BURCH: I think the answer is no. There is no pattern of social workers taking leave at the same time in the last six months.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, a question without notice?

MR DOSZPOT: A supplementary, Mr Speaker. Minister, will you table before the close of business today your department's anti-bullying policy statement? If not, why not?

MS BURCH: You have all adopted Mr Smyth's "if not, why not" but I am quite happy to bring our department's policy down.

Schools—commonwealth funding

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, I refer to the commonwealth funding for schools. Minister, can you assure the Assembly that no project funded under the BER in the ACT has seen a final price which is well above the industry stand for such construction?

MR BARR: Yes, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: A supplementary, Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, are you aware of the call from the New South Wales Teachers Federation asking for a public inquiry into that, and have you had similar concerns raised with you?

MR BARR: Yes, I am aware of that New South Wales call. It was in the media. I, like most people in this place, do consume the media from time to time. So, yes, I was aware of that claim. The Deputy Prime Minister in fact was asked a series of questions on the *7.30 Report* in relation to that particular claim and was quite clear about the range of processes that are in place in relation to the BER program in terms of auditing that is occurring both at a national and at a jurisdictional level.

I have every reason to have confidence in the process here in the ACT. I believe that we will be the first jurisdiction to complete all of our projects in the national school pride program. At this stage, subject to new advice, we will be the first to complete all of our projects under the primary schools for the 21st century program. I think it is clear that, in a jurisdiction of our size, we are very well placed to deliver capital works programs of this nature. Particularly in the context of the ACT government's investment in capital works, our capital works division within the Department of Education and Training are capable and have demonstrated their capability to deliver these sorts of projects. We are building a new school in this city each year for the next two, and we have completed two. So four years, four new schools, more than \$200 million worth of investment in new schools, half a billion dollars worth of investment in our public education system, the single largest investment in education in this territory's history. And I am so pleased that the opposition have finally recognised this.

MR SPEAKER: A supplementary, Mr Seselja?

MR SESELJA: Minister, how have you satisfied yourself that all of the costs associated with the BER are reasonable and will you table the documentation which has allowed you to come to this conclusion?

MR BARR: I sought regular briefings with my capital works team within the Department of Education and Training. Yes, I will be happy, at the completion of the projects, to provide information on the costings and the timetables that are outlined. There is, of course, going to be full transparency in relation to these projects.

MR SPEAKER: Ms Le Couteur, a supplementary?

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Minister, do you have any information about how the costings for the BER buildings compared with costings for the education department's similar buildings in previous years and, if it has changed, why it has changed?

MR BARR: The advice I have from the department is that in many instances, due to a reduction in some construction costs due to the economic downturn, in fact many of the projects that were part of the BER package were able to be delivered at a cost in some instances somewhat lower than has been the case in the ACT in recent years. So the answer to Ms Le Couteur's question is no, there has been no dramatic change in the costing. In some instances, they have been cheaper, particularly if we have been able to source particular material by purchasing in bulk across a range of programs—recognising, of course, that the BER proportion of overall capital works spend in education is about \$150 million of a \$500 million investment. It is a significant proportion and a most welcome contribution to investment in education from the commonwealth government.

It does stand in marked contrast to what occurred in the 11 years prior to the election of the Rudd government. In the context of investment in education in this city, the BER funding is only a small component. The vast majority of funding has been provided by this territory Labor government investing in quality public education infrastructure. We have been criticised. Mrs Dunne, time after time, said that it was throwing good money after bad to be investing in public education. Our record stands. Their record on investment in public education at the federal level and the territory level is appalling.

Environment—energy efficiency

MR HARGREAVES: My question is to the Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water. Can the minister please outline to the Assembly the progress of the government's energy efficiency programs?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Hargreaves for the question. Indeed, the issue of energy efficiency is another one of those items mentioned in the parliamentary agreement between the ACT Labor Party and the Greens, Mr Speaker. It is an area that the Labor government has been working on for some time. I am very pleased to provide advice to the Assembly on the steps the government is taking to improve energy efficiency in Canberra homes and businesses.

We are delivering a wide range of programs. Indeed, the government funded in the last budget a \$19 million initiative to provide energy efficiency rebates, programs and

advice to Canberrans. Of course, Mr Speaker, we have to remember that the Liberals' big idea when it came to energy efficiency was a mass rollout of insulation in Canberra homes, eerily similar to the program that they had been so robust in criticism of delivered at a national level. The programs that the ACT government—

Mrs Dunne interjecting—

MR CORBELL: Mrs Dunne does not like that point. She hates being reminded—

Mrs Dunne interjecting—

MR CORBELL: There is at least one similarity between her and Peter Garrett. The ACT government's energy efficiency programs include the ACT energy wise audits, the home energy advice team and the asthma monitoring awareness campaign. Since 2008, the heat team has handled more than 11,000 inquiries from members of the public, while there have been more than 1,300 ACT energy wise visits over that time. Another very successful program is the WEST program—the water and energy savings in the territory program—which is a multi-agency partnership focused on assisting low income households to improve energy and water efficiency and reduce the costs of those utilities to low income households.

We are also continuing with the CitySwitch Green Office initiative, which I was pleased to inaugurate last year, which provides advice and strategies for tenants of office buildings on how they can reduce their energy use. In schools we are implementing the AuSSI initiative, in partnership with the commonwealth, to see more than 100 schools across the ACT sign up to energy and indeed water efficiency measures.

Shortly I will be announcing the successful recipients of grants to community groups to improve their energy efficiency and to install energy efficient technologies. Those grants are worth up to \$40,000 each. The government is undertaking a broad range of programs to improve energy efficiency in Canberra homes, in Canberra businesses, in Canberra schools and in the non-government and community sector. We have a strong record and a proud record of investing in energy efficiency. You can see from that brief summary, Mr Speaker, that it is across the board. We will continue to implement this progressive program of reform to reduce energy costs to Canberrans and improve energy efficiency in our city.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hargreaves, a supplementary?

MR HARGREAVES: Yes.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hargreaves has the floor.

MR HARGREAVES: Can the minister provide more specific information about the new monergy campaign, and is there agreement with the Greens on this one?

MR CORBELL: I hope there is, because the monergy awareness campaign is designed to reach out to those Canberrans who have not yet considered tackling the issue of inefficient use of energy in their homes and to provide them with information and rebates to make the transition to a more energy efficient home. Monergy, of course, is a combination of the words “money” and “energy” and is designed—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR CORBELL: Just in case those across the way have not worked it out yet, which is highly likely, the monergy campaign is designed to convince people like Mr Smyth, Mr Hanson and Mr Coe that they too can save energy in their home and save money at the same time. The immediate focus of this campaign is to establish the grant and to raise community awareness of the availability of over \$19 million in rebates, assistance and education for Canberrans to improve energy efficiency and, indeed, water efficiency.

It is designed to get people thinking about the fact that these rebates and programs that I mentioned in my answer to Mr Hargreaves’s previous question are available. We believe we have achieved a certain level of penetration into Canberra homes and businesses about energy efficiency but there are many Canberrans in their homes and businesses who are not yet thinking about it or perhaps do not know where to go and find out what they can do. And that is what the monergy campaign is all about.

I would note that the Assembly asked for such a program in a resolution only in the last couple of weeks. The government is acting in a very proactive way in relation to this measure. The Assembly has asked for greater promotion of energy efficiency, and we are delivering.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, a supplementary question?

MR HANSON: Minister, can you advise the Assembly how you are endeavouring to become more like your idol, Peter Garrett, in delivering energy efficiency programs in the ACT?

MR CORBELL: Mr Speaker, I have outlined what the government is doing in relation to energy efficiency. I think questions that have irony in it are out of order, Mr Speaker, but it is a pity, of course, that we do not hear the Liberal Party talking about energy efficiency in Canberra. It is a pity that we do not hear them talking about and supporting measures to improve energy efficiency in Canberra homes or in Canberra businesses, because this government has a comprehensive program in place. Whether it is for commercial building tenants, whether it is for Canberra householders, whether it is for non-government and community not-for-profit groups, whether it is for schools, we are delivering a broad range of programs.

It is pity those opposite treat energy efficiency as a joke, because it is a very important issue. It is one of the most obvious areas to reduce energy consumption and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and all they are prepared to do opposite is make a joke of it.

MS LE COUTEUR: A supplementary question, Mr Speaker?

MR SPEAKER: Ms Le Couteur, a supplementary question.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, do you have any numeric outcomes as a result of these programs—for instance, CO₂ saved or kilowatt hours of energy saved or dollars saved in expenditure on energy?

MR CORBELL: Yes. My department has done a range of analyses in relation to those matters and I would be happy to take the question on notice and provide the information to Ms Le Couteur.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice Capital works—expenditure

MS GALLAGHER: In relation to Mr Seselja's question in question time today, I undertook to get back on how much of the \$214 million spend was related to the commonwealth stimulus program. I can advise that \$37.4 million was on building the education revolution and \$15.7 million was on the social housing program.

Alexander Maconochie Centre

MR CORBELL: In question time yesterday Ms Bresnan asked me a number of questions, as did a number of other of her colleagues on the crossbench, about the provision of services at the transitional release centre at the Alexander Maconochie Centre. The question that I was asked was, firstly: could I please advise the Assembly what steps ACT Corrective Services is taking to ensure these clients could access general practitioners and other necessary health services.

I was also asked what steps ACT Corrective Services is taking to assist community organisations concerned with health services to gain access to clients and what level of contact is there currently. And, thirdly, I was asked, in relation to public transport, whether ACT Corrective Services assists clients getting to and from health-related appointments.

I can advise, in relation to the first question, that transitional release prisoners are encouraged to access services in the community as part of the transitional process. Obviously the whole point of transitional release is to encourage prisoners in that setting to make the transition into a more normal way of life and make arrangements for themselves in the community.

However, once per week a doctor from the Hume Health Centre holds a clinic at the TRC to address any health issues of prisoners who are accommodated there. Nurses from the centre also visit the TRC daily in order to administer medication and methadone. In approved circumstances, prisoners have been permitted to enter and attend the Hume Health Centre at the doctors clinic that is held every Tuesday

afternoon. However, the AMC has an on-call doctor which TRC prisoners are also able to access when required.

In relation to the second question, ACT Corrective Services supports community organisations visiting the TRC for health-related matters. The ACT Hepatitis Resource Centre will shortly commence regular visits to the TRC. When health-related community organisations have approached Corrective Services requesting access to the prisoners accommodated at the TRC, these requests have been approved. TRC prisoners are encouraged, however, to also access such services in the community, for the reasons I have mentioned earlier.

In relation to the third question, TRC prisoners are provided transport to medical appointments in the community in a Corrective Services vehicle dedicated to assisting TRC prisoners attend appointments such as medical appointments, work commitments and other approved appointments.

Bimberi—Aboriginal liaison officer Social workers—stress leave

MS BURCH: Today during question time Mr Coe asked about the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees. I can advise that on 19 March there were 11 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander detainees in Bimberi.

Also during question time Mr Doszpot asked me to table the department's harassment policy. I have it here for those with an interest. I table the following paper:

Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services—Copy of Harassment Prevention Policy.

Volunteers—older Canberrans

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (3.09): I move:

That this Assembly congratulate older Canberrans for the contribution they make to the economic life of our community through volunteerism.

I am happy to be able to speak to this motion today because it is one of utmost importance to the community. As this week we recognise Seniors Week, I wish to draw members' attention to the fact that in the ACT we have one of the fastest growing populations of older people in Australia. There are over 66,000 people aged 55 years and over living in the ACT. It is expected by 2047 the proportion of people living in the ACT aged 65 and over will represent 21.5 per cent of the total population. This is double the current elderly portion of our population.

The challenges that are posed by this ageing population are increasingly becoming the focus of economic and social policy not only for the ACT government but of course for governments at every level. The population is ageing. People are expected to live longer and to continue to actively participate in the paid and/or the voluntary workforce beyond what is traditionally thought of as the retirement age and maintain a high level of general health and wellbeing.

Last year the federal government raised the possibility that in the near future Australians may need to wait until they are 67 to get access to their superannuation savings—in effect, making 67 a universal minimum retirement age. Madam Assistant Speaker, I can tell you that 67 is a wonderful age. I find it is interesting that, in this era when people are expected to remain longer in the workplace, others seem to be written off, not appropriate for further advancement, with doubts surrounding the ongoing contribution that they can make. I can assure you, Madam Assistant Speaker, that a 67-year-old still has much to offer to the workforce as a volunteer or otherwise. Indeed, I believe that I have demonstrated the energy and commitment a 67-year-old can bring to any given task.

It should be noted that many Canberrans remain involved in the workforce as volunteers beyond what would traditionally be seen as retirement age. In doing so, they make a significant contribution to the economic life of our community. Volunteerism is an important plank in the framework that sustains us as a community. During Seniors Week, what better time than now to recognise the economic contribution of many seniors in our community in the service of others or in protecting and improving our way of life in the ACT?

Members may not know that the word “volunteer” is derived from a Latin word which means “to will” to do something. This is an important point, as it addresses the issue of giving freely. I was recently directed to a paper written by Dr Thomas Nielsen of the University of Canberra that drew a distinction between a pleasurable life, an engaged life and a meaningful life. Dr Nielsen cited research on positive psychology conducted over more than 20 years that defined a meaningful life as one where an individual’s signatory strengths are used for higher purposes than one’s gratification.

Indeed, the act of giving is very much at the forefront of volunteering. In the context of this motion, I would say that the contribution made by seniors is the product of their experience and their capacity. The economic life of our community is not the only beneficiary of volunteerism of older Canberrans but also there is its social wellbeing as well through that generosity.

A major and significant feature of volunteering is that it is something that is done by choice. We often find ourselves doing something on any given day of the week that is unpaid work and does not attract a salary. But it is not something that we would choose necessarily to do. I am sure we are all aware that our day-to-day household tasks known as housework are probably something we probably prefer not to have to do from time to time.

There are myriad other examples we could think of. Caring is another example. Those who care for a member of their family are doing this because they have a personal responsibility to provide that care, and they would not necessarily have a choice in the matter. No other members of the family, though they may wish to do so, may be able to do so and provide that assistance.

I am sure, through my representations on this matter, members are now very familiar with the large range of voluntary activity that is undertaken by people in the ACT. For

too long the word “volunteering” conjured up a vision of a person delivering meals on wheels or other services relating to what people usually describe as community or welfare work.

However, I will take this opportunity to remind members that volunteering is present in all parts of our lives. In fact a number of years ago some research undertaken by Volunteering Western Australia showed that any given extended family on any given week can receive benefit from up to 20 volunteers in that week. Members may doubt this but it did not take me long to come up with a list once I stopped to add it all up.

Older people are currently everywhere you care to look in the voluntary sector. They are alongside me as I plant trees out at the Cotter. They are making my visit to the museum or gallery much more interesting. They are working to protect and promote our built heritage. They form a large part of the community fire unit that I am a member of and of the second unit established in Hawker. They work at the RSPCA where Lola hails from and they are there at the Domestic Animal Service also, working with shelter dogs. They are rescuing and caring for wildlife and fostering homeless pets.

I believe that we as a community can further draw on the senior members of our community who wish to volunteer their time in the service of others. As I said, volunteers for too long have been seen as playing a role limited to community or welfare work.

One particular form of work, very prevalent but often ignored when it comes to counting the number of volunteers in any organisation, are members of boards and committees, and most of these are run by volunteers. Unlike boards in the private sector, these are not positions that attract any remuneration.

Because of the years of experience of finance or governance, for instance, or particular other expertise, many older people sit on more than one board or committee and spend enormous amounts of time preparing for and attending these meetings, as well as representing their organisations in other places, such as at conferences or in meetings with government. As I said, boards and committees can take up an enormous amount of time in an older person’s life.

The federal government, through Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens, Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector, launched the golden gurus program in December 2009. Golden gurus is a new national program that started in January 2010 to provide mature-age Australians, aged 50 years and over, with a range of opportunities to support community organisations and small businesses.

There will be opportunities for mature-age people to take on a skilled volunteering role. This role could involve helping a community organisation to grow or helping a community organisation to deliver support to others; for example, by transferring skills and experience to people with a disability, to young people, to Indigenous Australians or to other people experiencing challenges in their life.

There will also be an opportunity for appropriately skilled mature-age people to take on a small business mentoring role. This role could include supporting a new small

business owner who has completed the government's new enterprise incentive scheme. The scheme helps unemployed people to set up their own small business. This is one way senior volunteerism can and will positively impact the economic life of a community. But there are others.

It would indeed be disappointing if we did not welcome experienced, senior members of our community in pivotal roles in education, in preventive health, in vital environmental protection, in sport and recreation, in arts and culture, to name just a few. Many settings which we normally see as the sole domain of young professionals are places where, if we ignore the skill and experience of older people in our community, we are in danger of sacrificing experience that cannot be replicated.

Speeches often refer to the idiom that it takes a village to raise a child, and I sometimes wonder whether in our education system, for instance, in the ACT and Australia-wide, we could benefit even more from the volunteer workforce of targeted senior citizens. My grandchildren benefit from older people reading to them at school, and I imagine that foreign language education could similarly benefit from senior volunteers volunteering in a school environment.

Telopea Park has demonstrated what can be achieved through drawing on volunteers from the community and the parent body. Over 50 parents/helpers come in weekly to assist with reading, both French and English, and assist in the library. Indeed, the Department of Education and Training's working with children and young people's volunteering policy, published in 2003, affirmed that volunteering was a highly desirable part of the ACT government school system, which is encouraged in a diversity of roles.

There is a significant amount of volunteering that occurs in the ACT. We all go about our day-to-day business, oblivious, I dare say, to the huge amount of volunteering, much of which is conducted by quite elderly Canberrans who help sustain and improve our everyday lives and our society as a whole. Indeed, the age groups 55 to 64 and 65 to 74 spend more time in voluntary work and care than any other age group.

Nationally, the value of volunteering to the Australian economy is estimated at in excess of \$40 billion. Regular volunteers aged 55 years and over contribute an average of between 5½ and 6½ hours per person per week. This contribution to our economy through volunteerism is significant.

I would like to commend all those who volunteered through ACT COTA or other organisations to prepare for Seniors Week and will work throughout the week to make it a success. I would also like to commend all older volunteers in their day-to-day work and encourage them to nominate an older friend whom they work with for the volunteer of the year award.

I would like to close with a rather touching and somewhat amusing story that I have on good authority is a true story. When I was with Volunteering ACT and Volunteering Australia, one of the workers from the federal government shared a story with us that a woman had been concerned about her elderly mother and suggested to her elderly mother that she might like to move into a smaller, self-care

unit rather than remain in her large house with its large garden. She agreed to do this and after some time she moved into this unit.

Her daughter was also concerned that she may need some extra assistance. So she suggested to her mother one day, who was in her late 90s, “Mum, what about meals on wheels?” And her mother said, “Oh, no, dear, I think I am a little bit past volunteering now.” I think there are a lot of volunteers out there in their 90s. I congratulate all of them and I thank them for the work they do and the contribution they make to the economy of the ACT.

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (3.22): I rise to support Ms Porter’s motion and to recognise the importance of older Canberrans’ contribution to the community through volunteerism. The importance of the work done by volunteers of all ages in the community should be recognised and applauded. The work of our senior Canberrans brings a level of care and expertise that deserves particular recognition and acknowledgement.

Many sectors in our local community are reliant on a network of volunteers in a wide range of areas. In fact, many areas of our community would not be operable at all were it not for the selfless input from volunteers. What would Saturdays be like for our kids who like to play sport if it were not for the contribution of parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, officials and officers who help to manage and run the many soccer, football, cricket or netball games that kids participate in? What would it be like for those kids who perhaps enjoy music, dancing, acting or other artistic pursuits? How well would our community-based childcare centres operate if it were not for the weekend contribution of volunteers to running the centres, maintaining the grounds or assisting the staff with excursions?

There are the contributions to the community organisations that employ volunteers, such as Lifeline or Meals on Wheels, that have provided a great deal of support to our more vulnerable Canberrans. Many of these organisations rely on volunteers and many of those volunteers are older members of our community. It is our older volunteers who often have the time and inclination to become involved and the experience and expertise to make that involvement not just valuable but vital. Without these volunteers, and many of them are older Canberrans, providing this support, Canberra would be a much poorer place.

As I mentioned, a large number of the volunteers that keep our community sector ticking over are older Canberrans. According to Communities@Work, tasks can be as varied and diverse as providing parent support and being a friendship visitor. This includes visiting a parent in their own home for a relaxed chat and a cuppa; nursing, playing with or reading to children while the parent feeds or attends to other children; and providing another pair of hands.

It can include being a transport driver. This might entail picking up a client from their home, driving them to their medical or social appointment and returning them home; assisting the client into and out of your car if required; assisting with mobility aids; assisting the client into or out of the venue of their appointment, if required; and supporting the client in a friendly and caring manner.

Being a friendship visitor involves visiting the elderly or a socially isolated person in their own home for a relaxed chat and a cuppa; taking the person on occasional outings in their own car; and taking the person to social groups they like to attend.

A shopping helper might pick up a client from their home, drive them to their local shopping centre and return them home. It might involve driving, helping a client while they do their shopping, and bill paying and banking if required. If the client uses mobility aids, it might involve placing such items in your car when transporting the client, ensuring that they are available to the client upon their exit and providing other assistance to the client as required.

At this point, as we recognise just how important is the contribution that older Canberrans make to the community sector, we must also recognise just how tough it is for some older Canberrans. Disengagement from the community can contribute to a sense of disconnection and even poor health. Therefore, it is important that government policy and planning encourage community building as a means to strengthen the wellbeing of residents and the enrichment of our community. We must recognise that many older Canberrans, especially those on the pension, make many sacrifices for themselves, their health and standard of living just to make ends meet. But it is these people who are unselfishly often volunteers in many different community organisations.

The 2008 survey by the Council on the Ageing demonstrated just how tough things can be. The survey is particularly concerning. It made the following findings: in relation to health impacts, about 100 of those surveyed had ceased their private health insurance, even though this is the time in life when they most need it. Half of those without health insurance previously had coverage in a fund, but had to cease their membership because of rising living costs.

One in eight had reduced or ceased medical treatment because they could no longer afford it; a third said they were buying less food, buying cheaper food or changing their diets; over 200 had changed their diet, particularly by cutting spending on items like meat and fruit; more than 300 had reduced their use of heating, including by going to bed early to limit their electricity bills.

In relation to social impacts, 40 per cent of the senior Canberrans questioned in the survey had reduced social and recreational activity in the previous 12 months. Sporting and recreational pursuits were hardest hit. Social clubs like Rotary, Lions and CWA also faced a loss of participation by senior members who were stretched financially. One-quarter limited their visits to friends to avoid the costs of travel across Canberra; two in five were reducing their contribution to volunteering activities; and around 30 people had sold their car as a cost saving measure, which means a major loss of mobility.

I think some of those figures speak not just about the contribution of older Canberrans to volunteering; of course, they also speak about some of the difficulties that many of them face in volunteering and some of the needs they have for volunteers as well. We have a bit of a cycle there. But there is no doubt that older Canberrans are making,

and will continue to make, a significant contribution to the community sector, to volunteering in the ACT. We commend them for their contribution, we value their contribution and we look forward to further opportunities to acknowledge their contribution in this place.

MS BRESNAN (Brindabella) (3.28): I thank Ms Porter for the motion she has moved today. As Ms Porter has already said, it is National Seniors Week; so it is a fitting time to discuss this issue. The Greens will be supporting the motion. Older Canberrans do make a significant contribution to the community through their volunteering activities. This is in many areas of our community including volunteering through schools and establishing important relationships with younger people; volunteering with their peers through organisations such as Council on the Ageing and the University of the Third Age; at residential aged-care facilities; and at seniors clubs, to name but a few.

Being actively involved in the community is shown to have benefits for seniors' health and wellbeing. One of the most important aspects of volunteering for older people is addressing the significant issue of social isolation. For older people, this can become one of the most debilitating issues for them as their mobility becomes impacted and they may not be able to drive any longer or be able to use public transport. This then has a flow-on effect to other areas of life. When people lose those connections with their community, their health, in particular, including their mental health, can be greatly impacted.

Targeting the issue of social isolation is one of the most important issues for keeping older people healthy and connected to their communities, which is a basic right we must extend to all people in our community, particularly older people, many of whom have already made significant contributions to their communities. At the very basic level, we should be providing these opportunities to older people, as getting older should not mean that you can no longer be a contributing member of society. We have an ageing population that is generally healthy for longer, has more leisure time and has a huge amount of experience. Many older people who are in our communities feel they would like to give something back in some way or form.

I would like to talk about some of the programs run by community organisations that not only provide volunteer opportunities for older people but also provide activities for older people to address the issue of social isolation. Communities@Work, which Mr Seselja has already mentioned, runs a number of programs which seek to address these issues. These are in the Weston Creek and Tuggeranong areas. The programs include a transport program run primarily by volunteers, senior social groups, SuperGrands, and Men's Sheds. They also provide community meals every Tuesday in the Tuggeranong community centre. Again, this is predominantly run by seniors. With over 200 volunteers who give tirelessly to a great variety of programs, over 75 per cent of these volunteers are seniors who are extremely active in a range of areas.

Communities@Work also have a transport program with around 700 clients on their database. Four cars with paid drivers are on the road and the other cars providing transport are provided through volunteers. This service makes a significant

contribution by providing transport for older people to attend social functions, appointments, doing their shopping and undertaking other such activities.

Many of the volunteers who are part of the program are older people themselves. It allows them to remain active and connected to their community. The Tuggeranong community service is regularly represented at many forums, seminars and conferences on aged care. The centre provides a friendly and inclusive environment for volunteers to get together. It is the energetic nature of volunteers who have made the centre what it is today.

The Tuggeranong 55 Plus Club is one of the key groups in the Tuggeranong area that provides volunteering and social opportunities for older people. While the construction of their new building is yet to begin, they have been running a variety of programs from the Tuggeranong community and function centre, including digital photography, bike riding, jazzercise and much more.

These programs encourage healthy habits and interaction with a great range of people from the Tuggeranong Valley. The volunteers who have contributed to the foundation of the Tuggeranong 55 Plus Club have brought thousands of people together from around the valley. They have put volunteers and services in touch with each other. They have become a true communication hub between services.

While I am talking about the Tuggeranong 55 Plus Club, it is currently waiting on final approval from the ACT government for the go-ahead for the construction of a stand-alone facility. The feasibility study has occurred and a preferred site has been identified; so I do hope that approval will be given and the 55 Plus Club will soon have their own premises. This will allow them to extend on the activities which they already provide. I will note that through our discussions with Communities@Work, which auspices the 55 Plus Club, members would like to have more social outings and activities on the weekend. Having a stand-alone facility would assist them to provide this.

Another of the excellent programs run by Communities@Work is SuperGrands, which is based on a New Zealand model. It provides free mentoring to families. It recognises the financial stress and challenges faced by many families in the ACT and the fact that this can have an impact on the health and wellbeing of families. This program is also about giving older people an opportunity to share their wisdom and experience.

I will just read some of the information about SuperGrands that I think really sums up this really excellent program very well:

SuperGrands are dedicated volunteers who offer one-on-one home mentoring and/or group coaching to help families develop practical household management skills. SuperGrands share their knowledge of a lifetime to coach families in skills such as budgeting, menu planning, establishing routines, basic home maintenance and gardening ... By helping to strengthen living skills and confidence within families, SuperGrands help to build a stronger community.

Another part the brochure states:

It's about sharing skills between generations and is ideal for young parents or families without an extended family nearby. SuperGrands is all about strengthening skills that families *want* to develop.

The Men's Shed, which I mentioned earlier, is another one of the programs provided. One is run out of Tuggeranong and the other is run out of the Lions Youth Haven at Kambah. Men's Sheds are not solely for older people. However, they do provide a space for men from all backgrounds, age groups and social mixes to share their knowledge, skills and experience while pursuing other interests. Again, it is one of those great programs which addresses the isolation of people and brings them together as a community.

Another area requiring a greater focus in regard to older people is people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This is a group of people particularly at risk of social isolation as they may not feel confident in attending something like a 55 Plus Club or a Men's Shed. Communities@Work do try to match their volunteers to people from similar backgrounds, which does then encourage people from other backgrounds to engage socially.

With an ageing population and demand on existing health services, finding effective ways to prevent disease, illness and injury needs to be central to our planning. Volunteering enhances seniors' health and strengthens their support networks. Many seniors who volunteer also feel personal satisfaction from contributing their knowledge and skills to help others. This provides opportunities for older people to share previous experiences with younger people and it also provides opportunities for seniors to learn new skills.

We also do need to look at how volunteers are supported and how organisations that run these programs are funded to support them. There is currently no allowance, for example, in the home and community care program for volunteers and the programs under the HACC program form a significant part of those services which are for older people and also older people who are volunteers. So there does need to be a much clearer model for funding to support volunteers.

As I said earlier, during National Seniors Week we should be celebrating all of the contributions that older people make to the ACT community. The health and wellbeing of seniors is linked to the health and wellbeing of the communities in which we live—communities that are safe, inclusive and supportive, and encourage seniors' participation in community life. With the thousands of volunteers who give tirelessly, seniors have provided an anchor of support for many organisations and individuals and they need to be commended for this.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services, Minister for Children and Young People, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Women) (3.37): I thank Ms Porter for bringing this motion here today. Ms Porter referred to the ACT strategic plan for positive ageing, which I had the pleasure of launching in December last year. The aim of this, the first ACT strategic plan for positive ageing, is to create an age-friendly city, a place where active ageing is encouraged.

The seventh strategic priority in the plan relates to work and retirement and acknowledges the importance of continuing to be actively participating in our community, including through paid work or volunteering. The ACT government is committed to expanding and promoting opportunities to volunteer in our community. As we are all aware, this week is Seniors Week, and it is a great example of what just a few volunteers can achieve. The ACT Council on the Ageing, proudly sponsored by the ACT government, organises Seniors Week every year with the assistance of volunteers who undertake a wide range of tasks, from administrative tasks to organising and hosting events.

This year, Seniors Week includes nearly 100 events and involves over 100 organisations. Many of these events would not be possible without volunteers, such as the seniors clubs grand party in the park last Sunday, which I went to, the seniors breakfast that I attended on Monday, or the ever popular Chief Minister's concerts. Even if these events could happen without the volunteers to assist, they certainly would not be as successful, and many seniors would not be able to attend without the volunteers supporting them.

Ms Porter has told us how much volunteers contribute to our economy. Many organisations rely on volunteers to provide essential community services, often to older or disadvantaged people in our community. For example, I am aware that volunteers are an integral part of most emergency financial and material aid programs here in the ACT. In such circumstances, volunteering can benefit both the volunteer and the person receiving the services, particularly by reducing social isolation, which we know can contribute to poor health and wellbeing.

Older volunteers may also be involved in work with younger people, providing mentoring and passing on valuable knowledge gained through life experience. I think Ms Bresnan touched on that with the SuperGrands program that operates out of Communities@Work. Volunteering help builds a fair, safe and inclusive community through fostering social networks, trust and cooperation, often with those on the margin and the more vulnerable in our society. Older people make up a significant proportion of our volunteer workforce and, without them, Canberra would be a significantly poorer place to live.

I also want to acknowledge the work that is done through our many regional community services, such as Communities@Work. Just last Friday I had the pleasure of attending the Woden community service as they celebrated 40 years of service. They noted that night not only the longevity of their staff who have been with the service for 10 and 20 years but the fact that they have a base of over 130 volunteers.

I join the Chief Minister and all of us in encouraging seniors to volunteer and assist others to attend as many of the activities that are on during this Seniors Week that are being held across Canberra. I would also urge the seniors who are not already involved in volunteering to use Seniors Week to explore new and challenging ways of getting involved through volunteering. Again, I thank Ms Porter for bringing this motion to the Assembly.

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (3.41), in reply: Thank you very much, members; I am really appreciative of your contributions to this debate. Mr Seselja, Ms Bresnan and Ms Burch mentioned a number of important roles that volunteers play in our community and how beneficial they are both in the work they do socially and also in the economic contribution. They also mentioned the important aspects of supporting volunteers.

Mr Seselja particularly mentioned the financial support that volunteers need. Of course, this is an important aspect of making the decision people often need to make about whether they can volunteer or not. I have often mentioned in this place that volunteering is not free. Whilst it is freely given, sometimes it costs an organisation to manage a volunteer, and certainly it can cost a volunteer financially if he or she wishes to do it.

That is why the government has provided financial assistance to the tune of \$1.25 million to Volunteering ACT to pass on to volunteer organisations assistance to pay for out-of-pocket costs, petrol, bus tickets and the kind of things they need to assist them in their volunteering. These funds are distributed to the community to recognise that volunteers, especially at this time of economic hardship, may want to volunteer but may find it financially disadvantageous. We know that we need to put the investment in as a government if we are going to support our volunteers to continue.

Ms Bresnan also made a point about socialisation, as did the minister. We know that social inclusion can have a positive effect on the health and physical and emotional wellbeing of older people. One way people can obviously remain connected with their community is through volunteering opportunities. That is a reason why people often choose to volunteer—they want to continue to have a network. It is particularly helpful for older men when they leave the workforce, because sometimes that is their only network.

Volunteers contribute to the community by helping that social cohesion and, as Mr Seselja said, by picking up people and taking them to social events and making sure they are socially connected. Volunteering is recognised as an important indicator of the social health and connectedness of a community. Research tells us that there is a strong link between volunteering and health, suggesting that volunteering may lead to improved physical and mental health. Indeed, there is also a contribution to our economic life because it keeps older people healthier for longer.

A clear benefit of volunteering, especially for those who are ageing or retiring, is keeping active and feeling part of the community. Indeed, every Monday at the start of Seniors Week there is the breakfast, which a number of us around this room were glad to go to this year. The Chief Minister encouraged seniors to volunteer and to assist other people to attend Seniors Week events by offering to pick them up and to take them to those events.

Older people who volunteer provide skills and experience acquired during their professional and private lives, as I said when I was talking to my motion before. They

pass on that knowledge to the next generation. Ms Burch mentioned how important it is that sometimes volunteers, both young and old, can get together on the one project. The ACT government's vision is that we can all enjoy an inclusive community that supports our most vulnerable members and enables everyone to reach their potential. It is only possible with the contribution of volunteers, and that is why it is so important and that is why we are talking about it today.

I think that we ought to be aware that volunteers are not necessarily a bottomless pit, as it were. Older people are more and more often choosing a variety of other activities to fill their lives with once they retire, which is a fantastic thing. But those that manage volunteer organisations and the government need to be aware of that, because research into the baby boomers generation has shown that about three-quarters of the baby boomers may choose to do things other than regular volunteering.

Those that regularly volunteer will be looking to volunteer in organisations that are supportive. Ms Bresnan mentioned the importance of support and training for those volunteers. Many volunteers will choose selectively to go to those organisations that best support them. Additionally, numbers of people will choose what we call episodic volunteering—they will occasionally volunteer. These people will do that to fit in with other activities they have, such as study or travel. Still more will choose to continue in the paid workforce for much longer or take on paid consultancy work. Of course, unpaid consultancy work still goes on, and that is something that volunteers do. Pro bono work is probably not recognised as volunteering by many people, but there are many law firms that provide pro bono work through older members of their staff particularly, assisting organisations in that important area of legal advice.

You can see that volunteering is a very diverse field. It is also a very valuable field when we look at the economic and social lives of our society, but it is also one that we must support if we wish it to continue. We must always be conscious of the cost of volunteering to the community and to the individual as well as the benefits. I am very pleased to be able to recognise older volunteers during Seniors Week.

Motion agreed to.

Budget—expenditure

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (3:48): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the complete and utter failure of the Stanhope Labor government to manage the ACT budget sustainably;
- (b) the lack of action by the Treasurer in the 2008-09 budget to prepare the territory for further budget shocks;
- (c) the failure of ministers to identify spending cuts within their portfolios;
- (d) the subsequent:

- (i) appointment of a \$4.5 million fly-in fly-out razor gang to recommend spending cuts to ministers; and
- (ii) need to make deeper cuts in the 2010-11 budget than would otherwise be necessary;
- (e) the continued wastage of taxpayers' funds on many projects and policies, including, but not limited to:
 - (i) at least \$20 million wasted spending on the Gungahlin Drive Extension (GDE) by failing to duplicate the GDE when it was first constructed;
 - (ii) hundreds of thousands of dollars wasted on government advertising;
 - (iii) expensive public art at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) and along the GDE;
 - (iv) the wasted \$5 million on the non-existent Belconnen to Civic busway;
 - (v) the blowout on the:
 - (A) Emergency Services Agency headquarters;
 - (B) cost of Tharwa Bridge; and
 - (C) capital and operating costs of the AMC;
 - (vi) \$5 million wasted on FireLink, a communication facility which was never delivered;
 - (vii) the failure to manage the budget of the Department of Territory and Municipal Services, as outlined in the Ernst and Young report; and
 - (viii) the lack of control that the Treasurer has exercised over the ACT budget; and
- (2) calls on the Treasurer to prioritise spending in the budget context to ensure that:
 - (a) core services provided by the government are protected; and
 - (b) vulnerable Canberrans do not pay the price of the Government's fiscal ill-discipline over the last eight years.

I take much pleasure in moving this motion because, at the heart of the delivery of any service, the protection of the environment or the protection of where we live is, of course, the ability to pay for it. And, if you cannot pay for it, it is not going to happen unless you debt-fund it—and that has all sorts of implications for the future. This motion deals with some extremely important matters that are of concern to both this Assembly and to the Canberra community. I will set the environment for this motion and my colleagues will comment on the details of the various parts of the motion.

The context of this motion is the continuing fallout from the global economic and financial crisis, which of course some now call the North Atlantic crisis or the North American and European crisis. And there is continuing concern that, while there have been some positive signs, especially in Australia—and no doubt due to the good stewardship of the former Liberal Howard government that left us with no debt, large surpluses and a fantastic financial regulatory framework—the general prognosis around the world is still not overwhelmingly positive. And, of course, that has impacts on Australia and, if it impacts Australia and particularly the federal government, it will impact the ACT.

There are concerns with large sovereign debts in other countries, and—not in a derogatory sense—there is the group known as the PIIGS, Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain, which have enormous sovereign debt. And then there are problems even in the UK and Japan, and there is the potential for some global financial problems to re-emerge.

Then there is the concern about the quantum of debt in the United States—trillions of dollars; numbers that are almost beyond our comprehension—and there is increasing pressure on the Obama government to deal with this debt issue. One only has to look at the recent warning from the International Monetary Fund, a very severe warning, on debt:

Advanced economies face acute challenges in tackling high public debt and unwinding existing stimulus measures will not come close to bringing deficits back to prudent levels,” the first Deputy Money Manager of International Monetary Fund, John Lipske, says.

He goes on to say that the crisis had left deep scars in the fiscal balances of the world’s advanced economies, which should begin to rein in spending next year as the recovery continues.

In our region, there are also concerns about the way in which the Chinese economy will turn. Will it continue to grow at eight or nine per cent with such factors as demand for consumer goods from the burgeoning middle class and demand for more energy supplies, more infrastructure, more steel production and other manufactured goods? Or will the government put a clamp on the availability of credit and choke off the rate at which the economy has been growing? In such an uncertain environment, we in the ACT need to ensure that we are positioned as well as we can be to deal with further issues that arise.

That brings me to the motion proper—the issue of management of the ACT over the past nine years—where we have seen the Stanhope-Gallagher government’s history of budgeting for deficits. Yes, that is right: at the top of the economic cycle, when we should have had surpluses. Between 2001-02, the first year of the Stanhope-Gallagher government, and 2009-10, that is nine budgets, the Labor government budgeted for seven deficits. Note that this data is in terms of the GFS, the government finance statistics, the now accepted format for government financial reporting.

Mr Stanhope would have us believe that this never happened; that there were no budgeted deficits; that it was only the former Liberal government that had budgeted for deficits. And that is wrong. At the top of the cycle, the Labor Party budgeted for deficits. Facts are facts. The deficits were, in order, \$17 million, \$69 million, \$5 million, \$17 million, \$365 million, \$68 million—and then there were two surpluses—and \$83 million in 2009-10.

As if this is not bad enough, most of these deficits, as I have said, were budgeted for at a time of a revenue boom in the ACT, when the government had almost an additional \$1.8 billion above what they had expected. So we have the crazy situation of a government budgeting for deficits when revenue was flooding into the ACT coffers. It defies conventional economic wisdom that in the good times resources should be husbanded. This was not sustainable, and it certainly did not position the ACT as strongly as could have been the case.

The paramount issue that faces us in the ACT is the need to curtail our spending in the ACT budget. This is a matter on which the Treasurer has spoken on many occasions, even lecturing us on what needs to be done. But, at the same time, you have got a Treasurer that has made no attempt whatsoever to diversify the ACT economy to bring us extra revenue lines. Ultimately, the Treasurer has not done what she has asked others to do; she has not reduced spending. She has only said that she needs to reduce spending. The budget speech in 2009, on pages 4 and 5, said:

The Government will take a measured and longer-term approach to addressing the deficit.

This is not deferring the problem.

But, if you look at page 19 of budget paper 3, reductions in spending for the 2009-10 year, the proposed reduction in spending is zero. So it is deferral. The Treasurer said:

Mr Speaker, our Budget Plan is a strategy to restore a balanced budget by 2015-16.

That is seven years—seven years of deficit, even though, on the same chart, on page 19 of budget paper 3, it expects growth at five per cent to outstrip expenses at 4.5 per cent. So even in the minister's own documents there are inconsistencies. She went on to say:

Mr Speaker, the Plan sets a goal and a clear path towards that goal.

No, it does not. All it simply says is that we need to do something, but then chooses not to do anything. She went go on to say, however:

But further savings will be required.

And, yes, they will be. The problem now that we in the ACT face is that Ms Gallagher still has not had the courage to make the spending decisions that are needed. She has failed to such an extent that the government has had to engage a panel of external

accounting advisers to find the necessary savings. And let there be no mistake: we must find savings. This imperative is even more pressing now following the decision by the Grants Commission to recommend reducing GST funding for the ACT by \$80 million a year.

We need to position our budget in the best possible way to return to a balanced budget as soon as possible while also being able to withstand the consequences of any spending cuts that may be made by the federal government. Some others have referred to this as the perfect storm. This has been said by others who have considered the ACT's financial position. Are we facing the financial perfect storm? If we have harsh reductions in spending in the ACT budget plus reductions in the federal budget this year, what will be the consequence? The Canberra Business Council, in their presentation to the estimates committee, said this last year, and I remind members:

When those two occur at the same time—

that is, federal cuts and cuts in the ACT—

the pain for the ACT is going to be significantly compounded. The worst case scenario is a perfect storm where you have budgets at both levels taking drastic measures to return the budgets to balance or surplus and that is likely to have a substantially and disproportionately negative impact on business and employment in the ACT.

Do nothing and people will suffer. The government have done nothing and the potential for great suffering is there. The situation we now face is that, following the failure of the Treasurer to provide substantive spending cuts in 2009, we now have to consider even more harsh spending cuts to protect the ACT into the future.

Let us talk about that future. We need to talk about the recent panic from the Treasurer. We saw the recommendation from the Grants Commission to cut the ACT's revenue from GST by more than \$80 million a year, and what happened? Ms Gallagher, who should have been well aware that this may have happened—all the signs were there; we saw the draft report—did not seem to bother to argue the ACT's case with the commission, and we are now paying the price. We had panic and it resulted in a freeze on the recruitment of non-essential public servants. We see now an attempt to renegotiate the Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement. We see a ceiling on wage claims for public servants. This is simply economic policy on the run.

Ms Gallagher: It is still more than you ever paid them.

MR SMYTH: The minister interjects that it is more than we ever did. But we were the government that had to make up for your last mess—the \$344 million operating loss that was left to the people of the ACT and, indeed, compounded by the cuts that the Howard government put in place. We spent six budgets fixing up your last mess. I am sure that when we get to office we may well be doing the same.

At the same time, the minister needs to protect core services. The issue of course is to define core services. We have seen the advice to departments and agencies on 5 March 2010 about essential services. But what it does is leave whole areas of

departments, and indeed whole departments, out in the cold. What about librarians and their impact on education and the wellbeing of the community? They are not essential? What about, for instance, Treasury officials who might help rectify this mess? They are not essential? Indeed, what about planning officials, which I am sure most members would agree is probably the biggest issue that we often face in this place? But, no, they are not essential either?

A staff freeze is rather meaningless until other parameters are agreed to. And what we need is more guidance from this Treasurer—guidance that we are not likely to get when you remember that when she assumed the Treasury portfolio this Treasurer thought that it was all about guesswork and estimates: “It’s just guesswork.” That is the level to which this Treasurer sees the putting together of the budget: it is just guesswork. And remember that in December 2008, when the full impact of the global financial crisis started to unroll, we were going to have a stimulus package. By the end of January it was reduced to a local jobs package and then in February apparently we were too small to stimulate. That is the attitude and the skill set of this Treasurer.

This is a very important motion and it calls on the Treasurer to do two things. It calls on the Treasurer to prioritise spending in the budget context to ensure that core services provided by the government are protected and that vulnerable Canberrans do not pay the price of the government’s fiscal ill discipline over the last eight years—and, let us face it, the only way to describe the last eight years is eight years of reckless spending. Every year they received additional revenue above what they expected; every year they managed to squander it.

On the subject of vulnerable Canberrans, you only have to go to the ACTCOSS press release from Monday, 15 February this year to see the effect of eight or nine years of Stanhope-Gallagher government in the ACT. The press release is entitled “One in ten having to be turned away” and it states:

The Australian Community Sector Survey, released today by the Australian Council of Social Service, shows demand for community sector services in the ACT continues to grow.

“These figures show that demand for community sector supports is high, but we are being hampered in our mission to work with Canberra’s most vulnerable by inadequate funding and onerous contract requirements,” commented Roslyn Dundas, Director of the ACT Council of Social Service.

What did ACTCOSS say? Their attempts to help the most vulnerable are being hampered by inadequate funding and onerous contract requirements. Some of the key results were:

over 50% of community sector organisations reported they were unable to meet demand for services;

Local agencies turned away one in ten people who were eligible for their services. Of people turned away 53% were seeking child welfare, child services and day care;

62% of respondents disagreed with the statement that ‘Government funding covers the true cost of delivering contracted services.’ And 51% agreed that

Government contract requirements and red tape adversely affected organisations' capacity to deliver services;

While respondents indicated an increase in the number of paid staff, 62% reported that the current salaries in the community sector make attracting and retaining staff more difficult;

To give her her due:

Positively, 82% of respondents indicated they were able to speak publicly about issues affecting their clients.

This is the dilemma that we face. This is the human side, the community side, of the perfect storm that the Canberra Business Council spoke of last year and warned the government that, if they did not have a strategy to address their debts, did not have a strategy to address their deficits—their deficits for the next seven years—business and employment would suffer.

We all know that a job and a roof over your head are the most important social determinants of health. And what we have from the most recent survey is that one in 10 are being turned away, most are not getting the services they would like, and most of the organisations cannot deliver the services adequately because of underfunding from this government and the onerous requirements of this government's red tape.

This is at the heart of the budget. I say this so often: you cannot have social sustainability and economic sustainability unless you can afford it. That is why paragraph (2) of this motion looks at vulnerable Canberrans and hopes that they do not pay the price for this government's fiscal ill discipline over the last eight years. But the reality is that they will, because Katy Gallagher had no plan this year. This is the Treasurer who had to hire outside help. She does not trust, obviously, her Treasury. She is obviously not getting the proposed cuts that were asked for from the departments. So she had to take \$4½ million dollars and go looking for outside help, because this is a Treasurer who is not up to the job of delivering an economically sustainable Canberra and thereby a socially and environmentally sustainable Canberra.

I commend the motion to the House.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Health and Minister for Industrial Relations) (4.03): The government will not be supporting this motion, and I do not think that will come as any surprise to the shadow treasurer. The presentation we have heard from the shadow treasurer is very similar to the presentation we had from the shadow health minister, rehashing a speech they have given probably 10 times in this place but offering no new ideas and no solutions.

This motion is about sustainability of the budget. But as the shadow treasurer has just indicated yet again, he has a very selective memory and a very short memory of recent occurrences and the impact that they have had on our budget. He also forgets what the Labor government has done. I think he went to the predicted deficits. What he did not go to is the fact that this Labor government delivered five successive

audited surpluses, including the biggest and second biggest since self-government. He also forgets—although he did go to it, and then blamed—the four consecutive years of Liberal government deficits, the highest being \$344 million and the lowest being \$157 million in 1997-98.

In his motion, Mr Smyth asked us to prioritise budget spending—in his words to “ensure that ... vulnerable Canberrans do not pay the price of the Government’s fiscal ill-discipline over the last eight years”. That is exactly the spending priorities of this government. On another page—it might not have been written down—Mr Smyth then accuses the government of eight years of reckless spending. Tell that to child protection, Disability, Health, teachers in education and the community sector. They have received record levels of investment. Yes, sure, they want more, but there have been record levels of investment from this government. You come and say that is reckless spending, reckless spending in this community. We have prioritised budget spending to redress the chronic neglect of services to the most vulnerable in the community—not in our eight years, but under the previous government. We have talked about that neglect and how we have now redressed it many times, and I do not need to go into that detail again.

This motion is ironic, given the state of disability services and mental health services. What was it? There was the lowest per capita spend on mental health services in the country here when we came to government. The child protection services—I think there were 30 child protection workers that managed all of the child protection inquiries across the ACT. There were the 114 public hospital beds that were cut from the public health system and the attacks that you waged against nurses in your pursuit of a regressive industrial relations agenda—and then you did not budget for any wage increase that you had promised them. That was really tremendous budgeting, wasn’t it? Let us go out and promise an annoying workforce, people who have given us a lot of problems, a wage increase, but not actually budget for it. That is your legacy, Mr Smyth. It is not a decision that this government has taken. We have taken decisions to show and to provide for wage increases right across our workforce.

The shadow treasurer last year moved a motion criticising me, from memory—no surprise to anyone in this place—for the economic conditions at that time. That was in March last year, I believe. Members would also recall, and would see if they go back to that debate, that I did try to explain to him there about the most synchronised and sharpest economic slowdown that we have seen across the world—

Mr Smyth: And what did you do in response?

Mr Seselja: Which CommSec said you were insulated from.

MS GALLAGHER: and the fact that this has had a massive impact on our budget.

Mr Smyth: What did you do in response?

MS GALLAGHER: All right, Mr Smyth: you are denying that the global financial crisis had any impact on our budget. Is that it?

Mr Smyth: No, I did not say that.

MS GALLAGHER: You just interjected saying that we were cushioned, that we were protected from the global financial crisis. The issue that they are talking about there is the economy, not the ACT government budget that did see massive impacts from the global financial crisis in terms of our own investment, in terms of GFC, in terms of interest rate reductions.

In the year before the global financial crisis, we had already planned for a surplus of around \$85 million, and we committed to a \$1 billion building the future program of investment in the territory's infrastructure. The buffer we budgeted for was helpful in cushioning that financial shock—though admittedly not enough. But what I think the opposition are arguing for is that we should have larger surpluses, maybe in the order of \$300 million to \$400 million, just in case there is a once in a century shock of that type.

That is what Mr Smyth's motion effectively argues for—that you sit on a surplus of that size just in case something happens, so you do not prioritise funding. You cannot have it both ways. If you are going to have a large surplus sitting there, you are obviously not meeting the demands of the community or you have raised taxes to the point that your revenue is far exceeding your expenditure, which I do not think is something that this community would want. You want a buffer of that order. In order to deliver that, you either raise taxes so that revenue exceeds expenditure or you cut your expenditure.

Mr Smyth: Or you diversify.

MS GALLAGHER: Here we go. I do not think you went to one issue of diversification, Mr Smyth—as usual. It is very easy for you to stand up here, as you do, and go, “She's failed to diversify the economy.” I think you accused the Chief Minister of that when he was Treasurer. Indeed, I think you accused Ted Quinlan of that when he was the Treasurer. But you yourself never have an idea—and you never did—about what you would do if you were diversifying: if you were in charge and you were able to diversify the economy.

The budget plan that we introduced last year was right. In fact, apart from those opposite, I have not had one person come and say that that plan was wrong. I have had industry groups—indeed, the ACT Business Council as of last Monday—confirm their support for the seven-year recovery.

Mr Smyth: Did they?

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, they did, Mr Smyth, and I welcomed their support—as did the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Master Builders Association. All of them spoke of the strength of the ACT's balance sheet and the fact that we could withstand a recovery of this length.

Indeed, the seven-year plan was introduced so that we did not have a sharp shock to our budget to recover in one year; we gave ourselves the capacity to see how the recovery across the world happened. In fact, it happened a lot earlier than Treasury

had predicted, including the Australian Treasury. And prior to the announcement about the Commonwealth Grants Commission in the budget update, it proves it. We saw about a \$129 million recovery for the 2009-10 year and a recovery of in the order of \$70 million in every outyear. The decision not to slash and burn the budget at that point in time was the correct one, and I stand by that decision.

Since the Commonwealth Grants Commission report has come out, yes, I have gone on the record and said that the job ahead of us is harder. The \$85 million that we lose next financial year, growing to \$105 million in the outyear, does make that savings task harder. I have gone out and publicly said that. But the decision to have a seven-year recovery is the correct one.

Prior to the Commonwealth Grants Commission handing out their report, there was a view in my mind that we could have brought forward the seven-year plan to an earlier point in time. That related to a number of different decisions that were never taken. I felt that there was opportunity to reconsider the seven-year plan in light of the recovery we have seen across the ACT economy and bring it forward. I think it is the view of everyone in this place, no matter what side you sit on, that a recovery as soon as possible is preferable. Indeed, I think those were the words that Mr Smyth used in his speech—that he wanted to see a recovery as soon as possible. Then he stopped short of actually going to a date that he believes would be a responsible date to recover the budget into surplus. That is no surprise. No ideas, no views; just criticise.

Mr Smyth: Because we are not in charge. No faith in you at all. All guesswork; just guesswork.

MS GALLAGHER: Here we go: opposition for opposition's sake.

Mr Smyth: Bingo.

MS GALLAGHER: I knew you would enjoy that. I knew you were waiting for it. You cannot come in here and say that you do not agree with the seven-year plan but you want to see the budget recover as soon as possible—but then you do not have a view about that. What is it? Is it one year? Is it two years? Is it three years? Is it four, five or six years? It is obviously not seven. I think we can take from your argument that you think seven is too long, so it is obviously less than seven—greater than one perhaps. You have got to come in here and stand for something so that you have got some credibility. You cannot just come in and whine and criticise and then not offer any ideas.

On top of that—we have not recovered the budget in time—I have got to commit to ensuring that we essentially do not cut any service to the community. You stop short of saying that we do not raise any further revenue, but I am sure that has come from the Liberal Party in previous speeches—that they do not want to see any increases in revenue. You cannot have it every which way. You cannot say, “No increases in revenue and no cuts to services but we want to see the budget recover earlier.” It is simply not possible.

We are working very hard in the decisions that we take. In our seven-year plan, we did acknowledge that the budget will continue to grow. Mr Smyth, in your speech in a

way you support my argument by going through all the issues that ACTCOSS has raised around the level of need and the level of unmet need in the community. It goes exactly to that challenge of government. It goes to the challenge of government. When needs across government continue to grow, and indeed rapidly outstrip your growth in your revenue, if you funded everything that had come forward as a priority project for government you would be in big trouble. You simply cannot do it. Therefore you do have to go and prioritise spending.

Look at how health demand is growing as it is, and demand for disability services. Let me just take disability services, for example. People are surviving accidents they never survived in the past. Children are living with significant disabilities, living longer than they ever have before. That is all fantastic, but what it does is impact on the demands for government expenditure, because growth in disability continues. Growth in disability is growing as fast as growth in health, and that presents a challenge to government.

Revenue is not growing anywhere near the speed that demand for government services grows. Nobody wants to have their government services cut. Government does not want to cut services either, because the level of need in the community is there. But government has to go through a job of weighing up what is reasonable in terms of revenue, what is reasonable in terms of expenditure, what services we can offer, and what are those really difficult decisions about what services we cannot fund because there is not enough money. The issues that ACTCOSS raised are issues that we are very well aware of.

I can say that we have funded the community sector. I know that those in the community sector are out there struggling, and their wages are appalling. I understand all that. But we have funded the community sector more than any other government in this place. Indeed, we have indexed them in a way that they were never indexed before, to give them some capacity to grow their services or their wages every year. We have funded new community services. We are building new community centres for them in former school sites so that we can alleviate the pressure from their rent, which has been a big issue for many of them, particularly those in the private rental market.

I reject completely the allegations that we have had eight years of reckless spending. Look back through the investments we have made in additional health services, the additions we have made to support children who are at risk, the additional support to people with a disability, the additional support going into homelessness and into our emergency services. But there is always more that governments are asked to do. We are always asked to do more. As I said, our demand continues to grow and continues to outstrip by far the amount of money that we raise through our revenue lines.

That is the balance that I seek to address through the budget each year. They are difficult decisions. We have a plan. The seven-year plan is the right plan. It avoids the sharp shock. It allows us to continue to grow our budget, deliver key services and protect those core services. Indeed, the second part of Mr Smyth's motion is not objectionable. The challenge is there for the government but it is one that we are up for.

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.18): No matter how the Treasurer tries to deny it, no matter how many times the Treasurer tries to claim otherwise, this government has engaged in reckless spending. What we are faced with now are the challenges that come when you cannot control your spending for years. We are faced now with the difficulties that come when you cannot control your spending. We have seen it in so many areas. I think one of the most interesting aspects of any debate we have in this place with the government is that they always measure what they do by the amount of money they have spent on it. We have used the example of some of their capital works projects. They had a \$120 million dam which became a \$360 million dam.

Mr Smyth: That is a good thing, apparently.

MR SESELJA: That is a good thing, because according to the Labor Party way of thinking in this place, they have spent \$240 million more on dams than they had planned to. On the inputs-based way of measuring things, which is inherent in their mindset, instead of only spending \$120 million on water, they have spent \$360 million on the water security project—plus all the others. It is a ridiculous way of looking at things, and it goes to the heart of the mindset of this government that they think that whenever they spend money on something that is the same as getting an outcome. What the community is concerned about is the outcome.

We can take Gungahlin Drive extension, for example. In the end, people wanted a two-lane road. They wanted it a while ago, but what they are getting is a one-lane road and eventually a two-lane road, and they are paying at least, even on the government's own figures, an extra \$20 million for the privilege. They are paying more than \$20 million extra. That is the conservative blow-out on the government's own figures, not counting the fact that it started as a much cheaper project. Just on the government's figures it is about \$20 million more by not duplicating it straightaway. So the people of Gungahlin are paying more and getting less, as we see in so many areas. They are getting a two-lane road, but they are getting it years after they should have, and they are paying at least \$20 million, conservatively, for that privilege.

The government come into this place and they talk about capital works and they say, "We spent more than you on capital works." My oath you did, because you cannot control your spending. They have spent more than anyone has before on dams because they had a \$120 million dam and suddenly it has blown out to a \$360 million dam. No-one has ever spent that much on dams in the territory, let me give you the tip. When it comes to overspending on capital works, this government get the gold star. They get the prize for spending more because they cannot control their spending, and we see it in so many areas.

Ms Gallagher, who does not like to talk about the specifics, needs to consider the areas where they have failed to control their spending and the impact of that. There are two real aspects to this in terms of the overspend. There is the fact that we have a government that for years and years and years have been getting more and more revenue than they ever anticipated—the greatest revenue boom in our history. The budget will have nearly doubled by the end of this term; it will have nearly doubled in roughly 10 years.

Ms Gallagher would have us believe that, in around 10 years, we will have seen a doubling of demand, a doubling of prices in every area of government expenditure. It is simply not the case. Every year we have seen that money coming in, and the government, thinking that it would go on forever, spent it in such a way. You do not have to just believe us; we hear it from the Auditor-General. This goes to the heart of the clash that we are seeing— this fairly nasty, personal clash that we are starting to see—from the government ministers in relation to the Auditor-General. The Auditor-General is the independent person who actually highlights the waste in this government.

It is the Auditor-General who pointed out the massive blow-out in the costs for the ESA headquarters, for instance. The Auditor-General looks at these projects, gives recommendations about how things could be done better and more efficiently, and, for her trouble, instead of the government accepting that advice and saying, “Thank you, Auditor-General; by taking your advice, we might be able to save some money for the taxpayer, more efficiently deliver the services, lower our expenditure in that area, but still deliver the outcomes for the people,” they attack the Auditor-General.

We know why they attack the Auditor-General—they are amazingly sensitive on this issue. The Auditor-General highlights the fact that they cannot control their spending, and we see it time and time again. We have talked about the Cotter Dam blow-out, and Katy Gallagher will say that that is off the books so that is okay. But, in the end, Canberrans will pay for that. One way or another, Canberrans will pay for that, either because there will be fewer dividends coming to the government or because we will pay more for our water. We will pay for those blow-outs.

We have mentioned the Gungahlin Drive extension. Never has there been a more obviously stupid decision on an infrastructure project than the Gungahlin Drive extension—

Ms Gallagher: How many four-lane roads did you build, Brendan?

MR SESELJA: The idea—

Mr Smyth: It is half a road.

Ms Gallagher: How many four lane roads did you build?

Mr Smyth: Well, you haven't built any four-lane roads.

MR SESELJA: —that you should build a one-lane—

Ms Gallagher: No. How many? You tell me how many. How many two-lane roads did you build? How many did you build?

Mr Smyth: You haven't built any. That's the whole point.

MR SESELJA: —into the growth area of Canberra—

Ms Gallagher: How many did you build?

MR SESELJA: Madam Assistant Speaker, it is getting difficult to hear. If she is going to heckle, she can heckle me and not have conversations across the chamber.

Ms Gallagher: Come on, Zed.

MR SESELJA: It is far easier for the flow—

Mr Hanson: You're not bullying Brendan, are you?

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mrs Dunne): Order, members!

MR SESELJA: Rather than three-way heckling going on—

Ms Gallagher: It has been robust.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I call opposition members to order. Ms Gallagher, you will come to order. The opposition members will cease interjecting. Mr Seselja has the floor.

MR SESELJA: Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker. Ms Gallagher can address her interjections to me.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: No, that would be disorderly, Mr Seselja.

Ms Gallagher: But enjoyable.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: It would still be disorderly.

MR SESELJA: One lane to the largest growth area in Canberra. Who would have thought that that was a good idea? I do not think I have spoken to anyone outside of that cabinet that actually thought, "No, this is a red hot idea. This is a good idea. We should do it." We point to large blow-outs, we point to the \$240-odd million blow-out in the dam, we point to the big blow-out on the GDE, and then we point to small blow-outs. When we point to small cost overruns, they say, "Oh, well, it's only \$100,000," or, "It's only half a million dollars," or, "It's only a million dollars." All that adds up, and it is their attitude to spending. FireLink—\$5 million for nothing. The busway—\$5 million for nothing. That is \$10 million on projects where we have absolutely nothing to show for it. What could have been done with that \$10 million in Disability? What could have been done with that \$10 million in Health? What could have been done with that \$10 million in education or, God forbid under this government, what could have been done with that \$10 million in maybe not raising taxes as much as we have seen over the last few years? All of those were options.

This is a government that lost a couple of million dollars because it could not collect rates. It forgot. The government forgot to collect rates, so it lost a couple of million bucks as a result. That is incompetence. That is a failure to manage. That couple of

million dollars—Ms Gallagher might right it off, saying, “It’s is only a couple million dollars,” but then there is the \$10 million and then there is the \$20 million and of course there is the \$240 million—does add up. It is reckless spending and it does have consequences. You cannot blame it on the GFC, and you cannot blame it on the Grants Commission, and you cannot blame it on everyone else, as you would like to. They are your decisions; they are the failure to manage your departments and your government’s agencies.

The Ernst & Young report into TAMS talks again about the failure to manage, the lack of oversight. The document reveals a lack of financial discipline and says that management have limited visibility of the activities performed within the department and that the financial systems appear not to rigorously adhere to core financial management requirements, and cost allocation is not transparent. Now, tell me, Treasurer—the Treasurer has stopped interjecting, I must point out—was that lack of financial discipline a result of the global financial crisis?

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: You would not be encouraging the Treasurer to be disorderly?

MR SESELJA: No I am not. Was it due the financial crisis? Was it due to the Grants Commission? Was it due to the commonwealth government? No, it was due to your government having a lack of financial discipline and not putting in place the rigour. That is why we lost millions of dollars from not collecting rates. That is why we lost \$5 million on FireLink, \$5 million on the busway and hundreds of thousands of dollars on your propaganda. We see the blow-outs on the GDE, we see the blow-outs on Tharwa bridge, we see the blow-outs on the dam. That is not someone else’s fault. You cannot blame others for that. We, as Canberrans, will pay the price for that. We will be paying more in taxes; we will be seeing less in services. As always under this government, we will be paying more and getting less. You, Treasurer, need to take responsibility for that.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.29): I do not think there is anyone in the ACT who actually thinks that services are getting better. Madam Assistant Speaker, as a member for Ginninderra, you would know how many people in Belconnen contact our offices complaining about service delivery. You would know how many people object to the way the ACT Stanhope government treat the ACT community with contempt. They do it at every single step of the government process. They show contempt in their raising of money, they show contempt when they are supposedly discussing how they are going to spend the money, they show contempt when they are spending the money and then they show contempt in trying to sell what they have done.

You only need to look at some of the big ticket items of any other government—any government anywhere in the world. They should be able to have a grand launch of the Gungahlin Drive extension and say, “This is the best road.” They should be able to go to Tharwa bridge for a photo op every other month. They should be able to do this over and over again, but they cannot. Why? Because they are symbols of just how bad this government is, especially when it comes to capital works.

Earlier today and yesterday in question time we spoke about capital works and how much money has been underspent in the capital works area. In 2001-02, the

government promised \$165 million and they only delivered \$110 million. We had an underspend of \$54.5 million. In 2002-03, they promised \$153 million and they only delivered \$56.2 million. In 2003-04, it was \$169.9 million and there was an underspend of \$61 million. In 2004-05, they promised just short of a quarter of a billion dollars and there was an underspend of \$118 million.

Anyone can make promises about how to spend money. We see it all the time from the government. Usually they are pretty good at wasting it. In this instance, they cannot even spend it—they cannot even spend it wastefully. They cannot spend the money properly that the ACT community entrusts to them. In 2005-06, \$314 million was meant to be spent on capital works and there was an underspend of \$151 million. In 2006-07, \$353 million was promised and there was an underspend of \$135 million. It goes on and on and on. Repeatedly we see in the ACT government an inability to invest Canberrans' money properly.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition's motion today is spot on in noting the complete and utter failure of the Stanhope Labor government to manage the ACT budget sustainably. When you hear this government talk about sustainability, the only thing they ever talk about is sustainability with regard to press releases on the environment. That is the only thing that is sustainable about this government. It is just lip-service when it comes to environmental issues.

Sustainability should be about having financial stability and financial sustainability as well. That is something we certainly do not have in the ACT. That is, of course, evident by the fact that if an externality kicks in, like an \$85 million blow to the budget in GST, and you do not have proper risk management systems in place and you have not prepared for these sorts of externalities then it is going to be very hard to incorporate them. It is going to be very hard to handle them when they occur. And they do occur. They are externalities. They are variables beyond our control. You are meant to hedge a risk against those sorts of scenarios. Instead, we have a government that has not done that. We have a government that lives day to day, hand to mouth. We have a government that is unable to have a vision or a plan for the future.

Mr Seselja spoke about the Ernst & Young report. That is a particularly telling report of this government. I note that Mr Assistant Speaker Hargreaves has taken the chair. Indeed, he was the minister for a few years leading up to the report being commissioned. That report was pretty damning. It talked about cultural problems in a department. It talked about systemic cultural problems in a department which meant it could not do its job. It meant it could not do its core business. It meant it could not handle its money properly. It meant it could not deliver the services that Canberrans expected from it.

The report also said there was too much political interference. Not only could the department not spend money and deliver services properly but there was political interference as well. If there was political interference and if the political interference was positive, in that it may have resulted in some sort of action, it does not excuse it but it does at least give some explanation as to the political interference. But when you have political interference in a department and they still cannot spend money properly and deliver services properly then what is the political interference? What it

is is bad leadership. It is a minister or a series of ministers who are unable to control their departments and unable to do what the people of Canberra elected them to do.

That Ernst & Young report was limited to the territory and municipal services department. I wonder, if a similar report was commissioned for each department in the ACT government, how many other systemic cultural problems there would be. We have heard in the last couple of months in particular about the health issues at the Canberra Hospital. Again, this is about core, systemic cultural problems. We have got them in Health and we have got them in TAMS. Do we have them in other departments?

I think the onus is on this government to get to the bottom of it. I think the onus is on this government to commission an Ernst & Young style report into the other departments to see whether the systemic cultural problems are prevalent across all departments in the ACT. In which case, what does that tell us? That tells us that there is a serious problem with cabinet and a serious inability to lead, to make decisions properly and to actually deliver services for Canberrans.

As for the crew opposite, these five ministers, I do not think I would trust them to run a corner store, let alone a \$3.7 billion budget, a multibillion dollar economy. If you are going to entrust them with a \$25 billion economy, you would think they would have some skills. You would think they would have some leadership and you would think they would have some decision-making ability. But obviously they do not, as shown in the Ernst & Young report commissioned by the government and reluctantly released after pressure from the opposition.

Mr Smyth's motion talks about a number of the key problems and the Gungahlin Drive extension. As to the \$20 million blow-out in the Gungahlin Drive extension, there is one piece which is so symbolic. It is really champagne Labor when it comes to capital works. Just this morning driving from Nicholls to work, to the Assembly, it took an hour and 10 minutes—an hour and 10 minutes to go 15 kilometres. In that same time I could probably have ridden my bike from Nicholls to here, back to Nicholls and be half-way here again. If I did not need a car when I am here, that would be a good option.

That said, the off-road bike paths are deteriorating and falling apart so much that I probably would have crashed or had a puncture on the way and would have been delayed anyway. Or I could have been waiting for an ACTION bus and doubled the numbers—and that includes the bus driver—and given \$3.80 to the ACT budget. Talking about ACTION, that brings us to the \$8.5 million subsidy that the ACT taxpayer is giving to ACTION with regard to dead running.

The dead-running saga is absolutely appalling. Here we have yet another example of a minister who is unable to control that authority. We have a minister who is unable to put his foot down and say: "This isn't good enough. We have to change." I think there are some cultural issues within ACTION. A number of people in this chamber would be aware of some of those cultural issues. It is incumbent upon this government and this minister to do something about it. He has been in the job for nine years and we still have not seen inroads into the ACTION authority to make it efficient and boost

patronage to a level that is reasonable and fitting of the \$100 million operation which it is.

I commend Mr Smyth for moving this motion. It is worthy of our support. I think we should all be cognisant of the fact that we are just a couple of months away from the next budget. This sort of motion is very timely in making sure that the ACT government does, indeed, deliver on its promises.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (4.39): Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker, for occupying the chair to allow me to speak to this motion. This is an important motion in the run-up to the budget. I congratulate Mr Smyth on bringing it forward and for calling on the Treasurer to bring proper priorities to spending in the ACT budget to ensure that core services are provided by the government and that the vulnerable do not pay too much.

The first part of the motion goes to some of the areas where the ACT taxpayer has paid too much after years of wanton and reckless spending by the Stanhope government in its many guises. Mr Smyth and Mr Seselja before me, and Mr Coe as well, have pointed to a great number of those excesses. Mr Seselja made the cogent point that this government measures its performance by its inputs. I will be a happy woman in this legislature when eventually a government starts to measure its services by the quality of its outcomes rather than by how much money we spend on them. As Mr Seselja rightly says, we can say how fantastically we are doing because we are spending \$360 million on a dam—overall, half a billion dollars on water infrastructure. But that half a billion dollar figure that ACT water users are going to be paying for infrastructure was substantially less a few years ago. It was something less than \$250 million a few years ago.

The figure has blown out through time wasting, putting off decisions and simply the government taking its eye off the ball over years and years of neglect of water infrastructure in the ACT. That has been partly due to delays. The cost of building has gone up. Jon Stanhope wanted to do everything he possibly could do to avoid building water infrastructure in the ACT. I fear, Mr Assistant Speaker, that I am part of the cause of that problem. When Brendan Smyth and I went out on 4 February 2004 and announced that we would build a dam to secure our water future at Tennant, Mr Stanhope's immediate response was to find a way of avoiding coming up with the same policy. It was inevitable. It was inevitable that a dam would have to be built to increase our water security in the ACT. As recently as 2007, the Chief Minister was saying: "We may never have to do it. We may be able to put it off for 30 years or perhaps forever, and wouldn't that be wonderful?"

It was not wonderful because, through his prevarication over five years, the people of the ACT have ended up with a huge water security bill. It is much higher than they would have had if we had got on with doing the job earlier in the piece. We are now looking down the barrel of \$500 million worth of water security when we may have been spending something in the order of \$200 million. Of course, it is off-budget so Ms Gallagher is not worrying about it. The people of the ACT worry about it because they are paying for it in their water bills. Their water bills are projected to go up \$100 and now, because of the blow-out in the cost of the dam, another \$100. So year in,

year out, ACT families—average working families—are going to be paying at least another \$200 on top of their already inflated water bills because of the delay and neglect of the Stanhope government.

Ms Gallagher kept saying, “Well, what was it like under the Liberal Party?” It is really quite simple. Mr Smyth interjected. It was slightly disorderly so I will say it here. The legacy of the Canberra Liberals when we left office in 2001 was a budget in surplus for the first time since self-government. Under Gary Humphries, in 2000-01, for the first time since self-government, the ACT had seen a budget in surplus. It was the first time.

We also had much shorter hospital waiting lists than we do now. For all that Ms Gallagher can say about how terrible the hospitals were et cetera, the waiting lists were roughly half of what they are today for elective surgery. That is the Liberal legacy. Since 2001, what have we seen? We have seen a few years of surplus followed by years of deficits, which will now blow out to seven years of deficits, if we are lucky, because of the reckless spending of the Stanhope government and people like it.

I will give a couple of examples. We have seen blow-outs in costs everywhere. Ms Gallagher, for instance, proposed that we should build a new youth detention centre—much overdue, much needed. Originally, I think it was \$25 million. Before you knew where we were, the minister had gone back to cabinet for another \$40 million. It is a \$44 million edifice—

Ms Gallagher: Forty, I think, or maybe 44, 42?

MRS DUNNE: Basically, she went to cabinet and said, “I need as much money as you have already given me,” and she got it. At the same time as we were spending \$40 million-odd on Bimberi, we were spending \$1.5 million just to transport a demountable to Quamby, plus all the costs of re-establishing that. Only this week we have seen that the provision for the secure mental health facility is going to increase by \$3 million. Those are just a few in Ms Gallagher’s portfolios in the time that she has been the minister in this place.

There was just a little one today. The Chief Minister was talking with some pride about \$900,000 worth of bicycle path in Jerrabomberra. I said to my staff: “Refresh my memory. How long was that bicycle path in Jerrabomberra that the Chief Minister was so pleased about?” The answer was 800 metres. That is over \$1,100 a metre for a bicycle path.

I do not build many bicycle paths, but I do know a little bit about concreting and associated things. If you do the sums, as I have, the materials that would go into that could not cost the territory any more than \$300,000. When you work out how long the bicycle path is, how wide the bicycle path is, how deep the bicycle path is, the materials cannot cost—even if you go for high-quality concrete, which we are probably not doing; it is probably asphalt—more than about \$300,000. So how does it cost three times more than that? It cost three times more than that, Mr Assistant Speaker, because nobody in this government is good at cost control. No-one is good at

cost control and there is no one to oversee them. Every time a pad of concrete is laid in this town it costs an exorbitant amount of money because no-one is good at cost control. So we have ridiculous prices for very small projects.

Spending nearly \$1 million to build 800 metres worth of bicycle path is a disgrace. It is not that we should not have the bicycle path—in fact, I have been advocating that the bicycle path be upgraded for some time—but we do have to question the fact that we are spending quite an exorbitant sum of money on it. It is incumbent upon all of us in this place to look after the investment of the people of the ACT and to see whether the people of the ACT are getting value for money.

I would predict that the people who use that bicycle path through Jerrabomberra would be embarrassed and that, while they welcome the new bicycle path, they would be horrified to know that it is costing, basically, \$1,100 a metre. It is a disgrace. It is a symbol of the reckless spending that we have seen by the Stanhope government in the ACT.

MS HUNTER (Ginninderra—Parliamentary Convenor, ACT Greens) (4.49): Firstly, I would like to say that it is disappointing that yet again the Assembly finds itself debating what might be described as a less than constructive motion brought by the Liberals and one that is very similar to other motions that we have seen before the Assembly within only the last six, seven months or so. There are legitimate concerns with and reasonable alternatives for a significant number of government policies and departmental actions. When these concerns arise, it is our job as non-government members to highlight these and represent the alternative views in this place. It is our job to engage constructively and present credible and well-considered alternatives for consideration by the Assembly and the community. And I think the people of Canberra see that the Liberal Party seems to be failing to do this.

This is the parliament of the ACT, and the consistent motions have had little substance and are about political point-scoring. And that is inappropriate. As I said last night in a speech, we really need to look at the tone of the Assembly and the conduct—

Mr Seselja: Madam Assistant Speaker, a point of order on relevance. I am not sure that Ms Hunter is actually speaking to the motion. The motion is about Treasury. It is about the failure to manage the budget. And I would ask you to ask Ms Hunter to be relevant rather than rambling on as she did yesterday about how she would rather be somewhere else.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mrs Dunne): On the point of order, Ms Hunter, there is a motion before the Assembly that does refer to the budget and I would ask you to refer to the motion.

MS HUNTER: Certainly, Madam Assistant Speaker. I think that if they had not been talking over the top of my speech they would have actually heard me mention the motion that is about the budget. I have talked about the importance of members in this place engaging with that discussion and actually looking at alternatives, looking at solutions, looking at other new ideas. I have said all of that but, unfortunately, my

colleagues on the opposition benches were talking over me. So I would really ask for your support, Madam Assistant Speaker, so that I can actually give my speech without being drowned out.

As I was saying, it is important that we look at the significant issues around how spending is conducted in the territory. But we need to do it in a constructive way. We need to do it in a productive way. And that is why, I guess, I do have concerns with the way that this motion has been put forward today. It does not talk about a way forward. There does not appear to be vision that I would like to engage with, that I would be very pleased to engage with and that, I know, the ACT Greens would be pleased to engage with. In fact, people across Canberra really are crying out for alternatives to be put up and for other discussions to be had in our community about the priorities of spending and how money is spent. These are all incredibly important issues. I agree, and I am very happy to engage.

But I would like to pick up also on what I was disappointed in and what I did not see in this motion today, and that was some substantial ideas around how we can diversify the economy in the ACT. This is something that Mr Smyth has raised again and again. I do recall being involved in a political panel, I think it was, at the ABC radio station. It was just after the budget. Mr Smyth was speaking quite passionately about the importance of diversifying the economy, that we could not continue to rely on the commonwealth, that under the previous Liberal government there had been less reliance on the commonwealth and there had been a growing private sector in the ACT.

I was inspired by how passionate Mr Smyth was when talking about this need to diversify our economy. I said that I would be very keen to be part of further discussions with him about what that actually looked like and what could be put forward to ensure that happened. Unfortunately, Mr Smyth has not put forward some of those ideas in this motion today and I do find that a bit disappointing because I think it would have been a great way forward to look at concrete proposals and ideas about how we can look at other ways to improve our economy, to enhance our economy, to not look at the same landscape that we have been looking at for some time, which is really the reliance on commonwealth money, and looking at the same small number of areas where we can try to raise revenue. So, I would be delighted to be able to have that conversation and look forward to when Mr Smyth can actually put forward those concrete ideas about how, in the ACT, we can diversify the economy.

On the issue of the need to protect vulnerable Canberrans, many people would know that I have worked with vulnerable Canberrans for over 25 years. I did get a little confused there for a moment when Mrs Dunne talked about vulnerable Canberrans being taxpayers and I was not quite sure what that meant and, therefore, what the Liberals' definition of vulnerable Canberrans is. But it is important to pick it up in this motion.

It also took me back to anti-poverty week in October last year in the territory. I decided to go back to *Hansard* and have a bit of a look at that debate. I put forward a motion and one of its purposes was to call on the government to commit to quarantining community organisations which provide assistance to people in poverty

from efficiency dividend measures in their 2010-11 budget and to include a poverty impact analysis as part of the triple-bottom-line framework that is currently being developed by government.

Mr Smyth again talked eloquently around the crisis that many of our community services are having out there. They are turning away one in 10 people. We know the ACOSS survey this year has told us that there is a huge amount of unmet need. As I said, I went back to this motion in October last year where we wanted to ensure that those same community organisations who are delivering services to those vulnerable people would not be hit even harder.

Guess what? At that time, the Liberal Party, through Mrs Dunne, put forward an amendment to my motion to take those two things out. They felt it was economically irresponsible for the ACT government to quarantine those same community organisations that provide these services to these vulnerable Canberrans that Mr Smyth is talking about in his motion today. I found it quite astounding, a little audacious, that it might be put into this motion today, considering that only a few months ago the Liberal Party refused to support that part of my motion that very much goes to the heart of what Mr Smyth appears to be talking about today.

The Greens have agreed to support the provision of core services. Again, that is mentioned in Mr Smyth's motion. In the agreement with the ALP—it is called the parliamentary agreement—we have agreed to support “the passage of appropriation bills for ordinary annual services of the government”, in other words, the core services this motion of Mr Smyth's expresses concern for. I note that last year the Liberals did not actually support the provision of these services when we got down to a vote on the budget.

So I would like to take the opportunity to clarify that with Mr Smyth, yet again, in regard to the budget for this year, because obviously his motion is all to do with budget expenditure. But we have not agreed to pass the budget; rather, our support is guaranteed for the core services that Mr Smyth is seeking to protect in this motion. For Mr Smyth to continue saying that we have agreed to pass a budget as presented without questioning the expenditure is simply wrong and, in fact, is actively deceiving the people of Canberra.

If we go to a couple of other things—I know they have been raised by other members in this place—there was the question of the Gungahlin Drive. That is probably a straightforward one for the Greens. We did not believe that was the right road to build in the first place because we thought it was unfortunate that the government at the time had, and of course now continues to maintain, a focus on cars rather than looking at alternative forms of sustainable transport.

We have consistently argued for improved public transport, including, in the future, light rail. We think that would have been a better alternative to the GDE. My fear is that yes, these extra lanes will be built and they will be clogged up. They will be clogged up from day one. And that is the problem with continuing to build roads. It does not mean that people get from A to B faster; it allows more congestion on our roads. And there is plenty of evidence out there to show that.

In relation to Territory and Municipal Services expenditure—and it is in the Ernst & Young report—it does appear that the government has endeavoured to address the recommendations made in that report. My understanding is that the practices within the department are improving. However, there are still some issues that need to be addressed and I look forward to estimates and annual report hearings later this year as a most appropriate forum for ensuring that departmental expenditure is justified and is an effective and efficient use of public funds.

We do have differences in how we believe that budget priorities should go. We have differences with the government. One of those that I would use as an example is the rangers in parks across the ACT. We really do not have enough of these rangers. If we take as an example the PCL staff who manage the tree protection unit, there is only one person to manage all the private trees in south Canberra; one does the trees in central Canberra; and one in north Canberra. This is almost an impossible task for even the most dedicated and skilled staff.

We also believe that there needs to be greater expenditure for those rangers that are out in our remote areas across the ACT, that they also need to be supported. I think Mr Smyth would have to agree that the interaction between these workers and people in the volunteer bushfire brigades and so forth is an incredibly important synergy. If we properly support our rangers then we believe that that is a good way to expend money.

On the issue of spending cuts and government savings, firstly, the words “fly-in, fly-out razor gang” are really loaded language that is not appropriate for motions. The minister has outlined that this money has not been spent. My understanding—and Mr Smyth’s understanding, I am sure—is that this amount of money has been set aside so that external consultants can be engaged to identify savings.

There will be issues about government spending and the need for scrutiny. The Greens, of course, share concerns about getting the best return for public money, getting the best bang for our buck, and we would hope that all the money is spent as efficiently and as effectively as possible. And it is our job to scrutinise that. As I said earlier, the Assembly does have processes and mechanisms for addressing these issues and providing that scrutiny.

I would say that external sources—and this fund is being set up to engage these external experts to get advice—may be able to improve the way things are done within the departments, and that seems to be reasonable, with the appropriate safeguards and limits. And it is quite a responsible and reasonable way to go, I would have thought, to identify where we can do things better, where we might be able to save some money that then can be redirected at other high-need areas or other areas where we are experiencing particular cost pressures.

I think at the beginning of my speech I was also saying that, although speakers in this debate have said that the ACT government needs to take full responsibility, we do need to understand the context that we find ourselves in in 2010—the context of the global financial crisis; the context of \$85 million being taken away through a recent

decision of the Grants Commission, that is, \$85 million of our share of the GST pie, which is 2.5 per cent of our budget. These are factors that any reasonable person would need to take into account if you are going to move forward. For the reasons I have outlined, we will not be supporting this motion today. (*Time expired.*)

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (5.04): What a great pleasure it is to have Ms Hunter in the Assembly today, rather than her observing things on television, which is her normal contribution to economic debates in this place, particularly throughout estimates. But what a bizarre thing it was that we just saw where she refused to stand up and speak, as leader of her party, or as the parliamentary convenor of her party, and basically played musical chairs with the rest of the members of this place, seeing who would stand up first. I had to stand up, sit down, stand up and sit down before she actually dared to stand up and put her party's position or her own position forward in this debate.

I have never seen that before. I have not been in this place very long—others might be able to contribute further to that—but has anyone else seen a leader of their party or a supposed parliamentary convenor—

Ms Hunter: I believe a point of order was taken on me very early in my speech around relevance; so I would like to raise the same point of order of relevance. We are talking about Mr Smyth's motion. If Mr Hanson could address himself to Mr Smyth's motion, I believe that was your advice last time, Madam Assistant Speaker.

MR HANSON: On the point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker, Ms Hunter indeed had that point of order taken against her. But she spent much of her speech actually criticising Mr Smyth, his style of debate, what the Liberals bring forward and what they are saying in the Assembly, not responding to the motion. She spent much of her speech criticising not the motion but the Liberal Party and their approach to debate in the Assembly. So I think it is a bit rich for her to say that my speech is not relevant, because I think I am drawing directly from what she basically spent about two-thirds of her speech doing, which was criticising Mr Smyth and the Liberals' approach to debate in this Assembly.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mrs Dunne): One of the things I really would like to avoid is tit-for-tat points of order. But what we have here is a debate, and there will not be tit-for-tat points of order. The thing one needs to remember is that when speakers speak they often reflect on the speakers that have come before them. However, in doing so, they should also be mindful of the fact that there is a motion and that they need to be relevant to that motion. Mr Hanson has the floor. Keep that in mind.

MR HANSON: Maybe it is a debate for another time; but, if anybody has actually seen a leader of their party hide from debate so that they can go last in this chamber, I would be most interested to hear when that has ever happened in this place before.

In bringing this motion forward, the Liberal Party calls on the government to do certain things:

... to prioritise spending in the Budget context to ensure that:

- (a) core services provided by the Government are protected; and
- (b) vulnerable Canberrans do not pay the price of the Government's fiscal ill-discipline over the last eight years.

They are the substantive things that Mr Smyth is calling for. But he has also put a lot there in paragraph (1) which actually provides the context for that. So for people to be dismissive of that and say “we just do not want to debate that sort of stuff because it might be perceived as slightly negative” is not valid. If you do not understand the context of what you are debating, it is not relevant. We saw that Ms Hunter lasted about three minutes at her chair before retiring to the gallery. It is a good motion—

Ms Gallagher: God, you are a nasty piece of work.

MR HANSON: You are not bullying me, are you, Ms Gallagher?

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Could you sit down please, Mr Hanson. Can you stop the clock, Clerk? Members, it has got to the stage where it is becoming extremely difficult to conduct a debate in this place. The level of sniping is becoming quite difficult, and the regular interjections, along the lines of one person or another is a nasty piece of work, are unparliamentary and I do not want to hear them continue. If they continue, I will warn and name people. That goes for everybody.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker. It is indeed a very good motion and I commend the speeches that have been made, particularly by the members of the Liberal Party in support of Mr Smyth's motion. One of the criticisms levelled in some of that debate today by the crossbench has been that it does not set forth a positive policy agenda, and that is the debate that Ms Hunter is waiting for. If that is a criticism, I think we would be glad to grant leave if she would like to come back to her place in this chamber and lay out what she is demanding of the Liberal Party, which is a 15-minute or 10-minute speech on a positive policy agenda that she wants to see in this place. If that is what she wants to see in this place, it is very easy to do: get off the gallery seat, come back to your seat and do that. Do not snipe at other people because you have not done it yourself. We quite clearly in this town are not being served well by—

Mr Rattenbury: By the Liberal Party.

MR HANSON: the Labor government. I can have a go at you as well, Mr Rattenbury, if you want to join the debate. It is nice that you have come down. I look forward to your contribution.

Mr Rattenbury: I am sure you are appalled I am not in the Speaker's chair, Mr Hanson, but you will get over it, I imagine.

MR HANSON: I will, I am sure. I look forward to your contribution to this debate on this issue if you are going to.

Mr Rattenbury: I wouldn't bother.

MR HANSON: You would not bother, no. Okay. If you turn to the—

Mr Seselja: It's just economics.

MR HANSON: Yes, it is economics; that is right. It is not money.

I turn to some of the significant concerns that have been raised by members about this government's obsession with inputs and disregard for outputs. If you look just in the portfolio of health, which the Treasurer also has, we now have health costs increasing in the ACT at 11.1 per cent. That is more than in any other jurisdiction in Australia. Look at some of the excessive costs in that area. The cost of the hospital car park has gone up and there is the fact that in the ACT we pay more in just about every area for our health services than anyone else. But then you look at the service that we are receiving and across just about every area in health—be it primary health, GPs, in terms of access and the amount that we pay; hospitals, with the amount of time that we wait in our emergency departments and for elective surgery—you see that this government is putting a lot of money in but we are not getting a lot out as a community. Others have expressed that that is the case across other portfolio areas, whether it be in terms of our infrastructure, our road systems, in education or in other areas.

Examples of some of the wastage that we have seen occurring are the hospital car park that doubled in price; the GDE and the government's failure to duplicate that road when they should have; roadside art; advertising; and the AMC, not only in the sort of bizarre artworks that have been put there but in this government's failure to even consider and discuss with New South Wales the prospect of bringing their prisoners, their regional prisoners, from Cooma or Yass or Queanbeyan into the AMC which would actually draw revenue into the ACT. They have ignored that issue. Last week we heard that the mental health facility has gone up by \$3 million, and from the debate that we had earlier today we know that the government still want to spend \$77 million on transferring ownership of Calvary. It will cost us \$160 million over the next 20 years.

But you have got to remember that this government, for all its boasting, has failed to deliver much for what it spent. But it was actually given the gift of GST revenue. The revenues that have come into the ACT government's coffers since this government has been in power have almost doubled. Why? I will tell you why. It is because of the good work done by the Howard government in those 11 years that the Howard government was in power, in particular its decision, against Labor Party and Greens opposition, to implement the GST.

The reason that this government has been the beneficiary of almost \$2 billion of extra revenue per annum has been directly as a result of an initiative brought in by the Howard government but rejected at every level by every state Labor Party across this country. They sit here and say: "We spent this money. We spent that money. Aren't we wonderful?" But where does the money come from? It comes directly from the GST that was a Howard government initiative—and this government here are so quick to ignore that.

Let us look at the money that is being spent. In Mr Rudd's latest plan about changing GST revenues for hospital plans, what people blithely ignore is that no-one is talking about removing the GST that was implemented. If anything is given to the ACT, it is that money that, although it has gone through the funnel of waste which is the ACT government, who have been able to mismanage much of that GST revenue, there is no doubt that the money that has been expended here has been a direct result of that investment.

Sadly, what we are seeing, though, is a reversal at the national level of the great economic management by the Liberal government federally to what we now have as a situation where we have gone from significant surpluses federally to significant deficits; where we have simply squandered \$14 billion across projects in schools which, although no doubt they are very nice for the schools to receive, have done little to enhance the productivity of this nation. Indeed, in many cases they have been projects that people simply did not need in their schools or they have been delivered vastly over cost, because that is the Labor way of doing it: spend, spend, spend; spend lots of money. But, in terms of what is delivered, what the outcomes are, it is pitiful. We now find ourselves in a situation where federally we will be over \$100 billion in debt and that is going to be paid off for generations. And, when the cuts do come, I can assure you they will be deep in this territory.

What we are seeing across jurisdictions is a failure to manage budgets. Despite the rivers of gold that have come into this territory, what we have seen here is a failure to manage budgets. What we are seeing is not a crossbench that are prepared to hold this government to account, to make sure that our money is spent judiciously, to make sure that it is spent wisely and particularly in these stringent economic circumstances; we see a crossbench that will spend more of their time defending their Labor colleagues, defending the government for its mismanagement and attacking the Liberals, rather than actually doing any hard policy work or any hard scrutiny of this government.

In fact, what we saw today was a leader of the Greens actually hide from the debate. This time she was not watching it on TV; she was simply hiding from the debate in the chamber. (*Time expired.*)

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (5.16), in reply: I thank members for their contribution to the debate today. Contrary to what Ms Hunter said, this is a very important debate. We are about to enter a period that the Canberra Business Council described as potentially the perfect economic storm. But Ms Hunter thinks that holding such a debate on this issue is less than constructive. Indeed, I am not sure she read the motion before she stood up, because the Greens often claim to represent the most vulnerable Canberrans.

The motion calls on the Treasurer to prioritise spending to protect vulnerable Canberrans, and to be attacked in this way by the leader of the Greens is simply amazing. As for her saying that there is little substance in the debate, you need to read the documents that ATCOSS have on their website about there being nothing left to give and the press release saying that one in 10 people have to be turned away. To say that there is no substance in this debate is absolutely extraordinary.

What is true, though, is that Ms Hunter was less than constructive and had very little substance in what she had to say. Some days it is hard to work out what party Ms Hunter actually represents. She had said she was the party of third party insurance. I thought a third party insurance party would have been interested in looking after vulnerable Canberrans, but perhaps that is just a fraud.

The contribution from the would-be Chief Minister, the Treasurer, was very instructive because the Deputy Chief Minister, the Treasurer, went to options for balancing the budget. She said we could raise taxes or we could cut services. Of course, she forgot about the third option, which was to diversify the economy, and then staggered back to it when she realised her mistake—

Mr Seselja: Spend more efficiently.

MR SMYTH: It is a very efficient way of improving the lot of Canberrans if we can get there. Let us look at the record on this and what various ministers have said. The Chief Minister said:

I acknowledge that the ACT does have a limited economic base.

He said this on 8 April 2008 and then he went on to say:

... we have to acknowledge that economic diversity opportunities are limited, but we do have strengths in other areas.

They may be limited, but have you worked at maximising the return from the areas that you have got? Indeed, have you looked outside the square to get a better result? On 6 May 2009 the Treasurer said:

... no-one one will argue against having a diversified economic base.

No, nobody will argue against it; it is just that the government will not do anything about it. And that is part of the reason that we find ourselves in the problem that we are in. The Treasurer went on to say:

Does he mean a larger share of the private sector in the economy?

Her response to her own question was:

It would be unrealistic to think that this proportion would change in any significant way, even with major government intervention.

That is the proportion of private to public sector. When we came to office in 1995, 60 per cent of the ACT employment base was public sector. When we left in 2001, 60 per cent was in the private sector. So you can in a short period of time turn it around. In six years, the former Liberal government turned it around. But the ACT Labor government have now turned it around again and the last confirmed number I saw was 55 per cent, so it had gone from 60 to 55 per cent as private sector employment, and I suspect it is even less now.

The problem is that, if you do not work it, if you do not believe in it and if you do not have a plan for it, of course that will happen, and that is part of the problem of the economic woes that we have.

The government are very quick to jump at how much they spend. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out so well, they are very good at telling you what they have spent. What they cannot tell you is what you get for it, and we are perpetually now in the situation where Canberrans as taxpayers pay more and get less from their ACT government, and wait longer for it.

Let us put it into perspective: the budget expenditure in GFS format in 1989-90, so the first ACT budget, was \$1.132 billion, \$1.1 billion. In the decade to 1999-2000, it went from \$1.1 billion to \$1.4 billion—a 25 per cent increase. In the decade from 1999-2000 to 2009-10, it went from \$1.412 billion to \$3.623 billion—a 157 per cent increase. And we still spend more and get less for it. There is nothing in that period, in the nine budgets of the Labor Party, that you can point at as a huge gain for the service delivery to the people of the ACT. By any measure, things are worse. You only need to go to the ACTCOSS press release that I mentioned and to their *Nothing left to give* document and to their priorities for the budget document to know that this is an area under stress.

That is the whole point of this motion today. One of the ways you look after those who are vulnerable is to improve the economy: create jobs, make housing more affordable, deliver more effective services and deliver them more efficiently, so that you can actually spend on the people who deserve to have it spent on: the taxpayers of the ACT. But, according to Ms Hunter, that notion is less than constructive and has little substance. I think people will come to know what Ms Hunter stands for—and apparently it is not very much.

That is the problem that we have: a Treasurer who can only focus on raising taxes or cutting services and who is not willing to address the proportion of the public sector to the private sector. Both sectors need to prosper and thrive in the ACT for the ACT to be viable long term. It is well and good to talk about being socially sustainable or environmentally sustainable, but if you do not put the third leg on the triangle, economically sustainable, you cannot achieve the other two. You will never achieve the other two. And that is why this motion is so important.

To hear the convenor of the Greens say that going back to these issues is a waste of time and some sort of foolish repetition just shows the level of understanding that the spokesperson for the Greens truly has about these issues. These are important issues because every time the government put their hand into the taxpayers' pockets for increased fees and charges and taxes and rates, it affects how our families live. It is real for them. It is very real for those who are vulnerable and it is very real when we are facing the perfect storm as forecast by the Canberra Business Council.

We think about the people of Gungahlin who, if the Greens had their way, would be at the end of a one-lane dual carriageway, who would not be getting the services that the upgrade is about to provide. We welcome the upgrade. The people probably would

not even get one lane if the Greens had their way. It is a shame, and I am sure that the people of Gungahlin will look at the statements of the leader of the Greens with great dismay. We know about the traffic jams on the GDE, we know about the traffic jams on Northbourne Avenue and, yes, we do need to find different ways to do things. But punishing the people in Gungahlin is not the way to do it.

This is an important motion. We are now six or seven weeks away from the budget. We clearly have a Treasurer who is not up to the job. She deferred, in this financial year 2009-10, taking any decisions—until we got the knee-jerk reaction of a couple of weeks ago when she said she was going to put a staff freeze on. It was a knee-jerk reaction, because in the year, as we heard in question time, almost 1,200 new staff have been put on—1,200 additional staff, then you have a staff freeze. Famine, feast, famine, feast; you have got to avoid that sort of cycle.

This government have had extra revenue of almost \$1.8 billion, a 157 per cent increase in the decade, and they still cannot balance your budgets; they still cannot put a buffer in their budgets against the downturn; they still cannot provide adequate services, whether it be to the community sector, to address waiting lists or waiting times or the delivery of infrastructure on time. Again, go back to Gungahlin Drive and Mr Corbell's budget promise: "on time, on budget, four lanes open by July 2006". When did it open? January 2008—two years late, half a road and now its cost will escalate to such a degree.

As Mr Seselja pointed out, every one of those wasted dollars is a dollar that could have been spent on more essential services or on improving the amenity of the residents of the ACT. It is not our money; it is their money. It comes out of their wallets, the taxpayers' wallets. It is taken away from their ability to provide for their families, to secure their futures.

This is a very important motion. I am disappointed that Ms Hunter has treated it with such disdain; that the aspirations and the money of the people of the ACT are treated with such disdain. It is disappointing in that regard. But it is an important motion, and it will be interesting to see when the vote comes to see if the Greens do vote against looking after vulnerable Canberrans or they vote to ensure that vulnerable Canberrans do not pay the price of the government's fiscal ill discipline over the last eight years. It will be very interesting to see. (*Time expired.*)

Question put:

That **Mr Smyth's** motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 6

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mr Seselja
Mr Smyth

Noes 11

Mr Barr
Ms Bresnan
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell
Ms Gallagher
Mr Hargreaves
Ms Hunter
Ms Le Couteur
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury
Mr Stanhope

Question so resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

Energy—low income households

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (5.30): I seek leave to amend my notice of motion with the amended motion that has been circulated.

Leave granted.

MR RATTENBURY: I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) recognises:

- (a) the importance of reducing the ACT's greenhouse emissions as part of the global and national effort to tackle climate change;
- (b) that policies designed to reduce greenhouse emissions, and the impact of climate change, may disproportionately impact on low income households;
- (c) that approximately 19% of ACT households are considered to be low income; and
- (d) that the rising costs of energy will disproportionately affect low income households;

(2) notes:

- (a) the 2008 report Social Impacts of Climate Change in the ACT issued by the ACT Government;
- (b) the public housing energy efficiency program; and
- (c) the successful operation of the Water and Energy Savings in the Territory (WEST) program; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) undertake poverty impact assessments for all energy policies and programs and include amelioration measures to address equity in these proposals;
- (b) ensure that the community sector is adequately resourced to advocate on behalf of low income households on emerging energy policy issues such as deregulated pricing, time of use tariffs and National Energy Market consultations;

- (c) review the criteria for the energy concessions program every five years in view of the changing impacts of rising electricity and gas prices on energy poverty;
- (d) increase the energy concession to a level commensurate with energy price increases and establish a mechanism by which percentage increases in energy prices are automatically applied to the energy concession each year;
- (e) consider extending the methodology of the WEST program to other low income families;
- (f) ensure that low income and other vulnerable households are specifically targeted in all energy efficiency policies and programs implemented by the ACT Government; and
- (g) report back to the Legislative Assembly on progress on the above by September 2010.

I am very pleased to be debating this topic this afternoon. I think this motion is an important one and addresses the issue of impacts of climate change and future energy policies on low income households in the ACT. We know that as a community we must take action to reduce our greenhouse emissions and move towards clean renewable energy. The Greens support the development of an energy policy for the ACT that will deliver the significant reduction in carbon emissions that we need to meet our commitment to the global effort. We believe that local action is important in the global effort to reduce emissions.

I say this in response to what I know will be criticism from those who want to delay taking action—it is patently clear that reducing emissions in the ACT will not solve the global problem, nor will any other community individually solve the climate problem. But in the absence of international and national leadership, we are seeing communities right across the globe taking leadership and showing how the transition from a fossil fuel based society and economy to a smart, clean energy society can happen.

Theorists of social change might speculate that this is not unexpected, that the climate challenge is perfectly demonstrating how change happens not always from the top down initially but also from the bottom up. Community-driven change is powerful change indeed. For local communities, there are benefits in early action. The earlier we move forward, the better prepared we will be for the anticipated changes in the energy landscape—that is, rising costs of fossil fuels, decreasing costs of clean energy, the global oil crisis as the impacts of peak oil begin to bite, and the growing clean energy economy that will boom as the imperative to cut emissions translates into national policies.

Australia, and more specifically the ACT, has benefited over the decades from access to cheap and reliable electricity generated from our many coal-fired power stations. Energy prices in Australia have been kept low until recently, and so community

expectation has been that energy is an abundant commodity that we can easily take for granted.

But energy prices are rising. Firstly, irrespective of the climate change imperative, we are seeing price rises as a result of higher demand driving a need for expanded energy infrastructure and upgrades to the electricity grid. This is important to recognise—network costs increased more than 18 per cent in the last electricity price determination by the ICRC, whereas green energy policies only resulted in a five per cent increase. In New South Wales, network infrastructure was responsible for approximately half of the price increase in the 2009-10 price review. So it is network costs, due to rising demand and ageing infrastructure, which are driving prices up.

In addition to these cost pressures, it is well accepted that energy prices will rise over the years ahead as the true cost of fossil fuel generation is factored into the market and cleaner power sources become competitive. In order to radically change our consumption patterns, we must learn to value electricity as a commodity. A recurring issue when we plan the shift from a community that has had plentiful and cheap coal-fired electricity to one that must operate in a carbon constrained world is that of equity.

We must be aware that those who are most vulnerable in our society are also more likely to be affected by rising electricity prices in a way that is not equitable. The Greens believe that, first and foremost, we must make the changes to the electricity market that will drive the bulk of the market to value electricity in a way that reflects the true cost. However, as a wealthy city, we can afford to protect those that we know are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change and rising energy prices, and this is something that we must commit to.

The Greens' position on climate change is well known, as is our support of those in the community who are most vulnerable. So the issue of the impact of climate policies on low income households is a natural nexus for the Greens. Given the paramount importance of moving ahead on climate and energy work in the ACT this year, now is a good time to address these concerns further.

There are people who, over the years, have pulled every argument out of the hat about why we should not take action on climate change—"It will destroy our economy; we'll lose jobs; we can't afford it," are the usual reprises. It is time to move on from those outdated arguments. We know that it will not destroy our economy; in fact, we know that we can grow green jobs, and we know that we can afford it.

We have had clear advice that we cannot afford not to take early action, that early action will be cheaper than delayed action and it will avoid the worst impacts of climate change. However, as a community that is, I hope, going to take strong action on climate change, we must ensure that those who are most vulnerable to energy price rises can both continue to afford their energy bills and that they are our very highest priority for energy efficiency programs that are rolled out through the community.

We know climate change is likely to impact on low income households disproportionately both globally and locally. The Australian Council of Social Service

suggests that there are three main reasons for this: firstly, low income earners tend to live in areas more likely to be adversely affected by climate change and are less likely to have the flexibility and the resources to adapt; secondly, on average, low income earners spend a greater proportion of their total weekly household budget on energy and water, essential services for which prices are inelastic and for which price can be a blunt, regressive and unreliable tool for demand control; thirdly, low income households are currently less able to introduce measures to improve energy efficiency in terms of both capital improvements and updating appliances.

While the first of these may not apply in a geographical sense in the ACT, it is applicable in that low income families are more likely to be renting and may also be living in less energy efficient homes to start with. The latter two are clearly applicable to the ACT, as they are anywhere else in Australia, and are central to energy policy development, particularly in regard to price deregulation and time-of-use metering, as I will discuss shortly.

So what are the policies that will impact on energy prices? Of course, any price on carbon, such as implied under the CPRS or through a national carbon tax, will have an impact on energy bills as we move to phase out fossil fuel generation and towards the generation of renewable energy. That, of course, is the purpose of a price on carbon—to more accurately account for the cost that the release of carbon dioxide has on our environment, a cost that currently is not factored into the price of electricity. However, if an accurate price on carbon is applied we should, over time, see a more level playing field in regard to electricity generation that will encourage a growth in renewables. This, in turn, will expand the industry in such a way as we will start to see a drop in cost per unit of renewable energy generation.

In the ACT, feed-in tariff policies, as well as other renewable energy purchases, are likely to have impacts on the electricity bills for Canberrans, but this is not a reason to not implement those policies. Rather, it means that we need to identify what those impacts will be and ensure that those who are not able to absorb those impacts are clearly identified and supported.

An issue that the government highlighted in its draft sustainable energy policy—it has flown somewhat under the radar, I have to say—is that of deregulated electricity prices, smart meters and time-of-use tariffs. The argument put forward by the government is that electricity price deregulation will deliver increased competitiveness in the market and will drive efficiency. However, electricity is an essential service. As I mentioned earlier, some people do not have discretionary control over the amount of electricity they use; therefore, efficiency gains can be hard to achieve.

In the short term, deregulation may lead to price rises, as energy retailers have already argued that in the ACT the regulated price is too low. Discussion of deregulation of the retail price was limited in the draft policy, and we would encourage the government to fully assess the impact of it on low income households.

Smart meters are also mentioned in the government's draft energy policy. Smart meters bring an increased awareness of the value of electricity and can lead to

changes in behaviour to reduce consumption. Smart meters also work to improve network efficiency and save costs on meter reading. They also play an important role in assisting networks to manage supply and demand. This is particularly important as we move towards a decentralised energy system with more renewable generation, as it will allow network managers to follow supply to meet demand, giving much more flexibility in network management.

Smart meters also mean that electricity suppliers can move customers on to time-of-use tariffs, where consumers are charged the price of electricity at the time of usage. Time-of-use tariffs effectively remove the equalisation of electricity prices across the day, exposing daytime consumers to higher prices during peaks and reduced prices at night. While this has the effect of encouraging people to value the commodity at its real price, it also results in a shift of the cost burden. Those people who are in an office during the day will be relieved of significant heating and cooling costs while those who are at home during the day will bear the brunt of increased prices.

St Vincent de Paul have argued that there are key groups who are likely to be adversely affected by time-of-use charges and price deregulation: those who have low energy consumption already and therefore little room to shift their discretionary use; dual-fuel households; and households with people who are at home during the day, which can include pensioners, people with disabilities, the unemployed, carers and young families. They have also made it clear that high take-up rates of time-of-use metering will mean that governments must consider how to protect low income families.

The ACT Greens support a two-pronged approach to address the impact of energy policy changes on low income households. Firstly, the immediate impact of paying higher energy bills should be managed with direct subsidies to low income earners, as currently occurs under the energy concession rebate. The review of the rebate scheme is welcome, as the level of support has dropped over the past five years as a proportion of the average household bill. We want to see the energy concession rebate lifted to its previous level of 20 per cent of the average household bill. It is currently sitting at about 15 per cent.

With energy prices on the increase, it would be useful to index the energy concession rebate more directly so that over the next few years it does not lapse behind again. The Greens cautiously support a review of the eligibility of criteria for the energy concessions rebate, but recommend that this review includes full consultation with advocacy groups that represent the needs of low income households.

Secondly—this is the second of the two prongs—it is crucial that energy efficiency programs are specifically targeted at those most at risk in our community. The Greens advocate a hands-on approach to targeting efficiency programs for these groups as well as specific rebates and assistance. The ACT has developed successful models of engaging with vulnerable households through the water and energy savings in the territory program, more commonly known as the WEST program, a combined industry, community sector and government program that works on both water and energy efficiencies.

We understand that the program is heavily oversubscribed in the ACT, with 90 per cent of applicants missing out every year. We would like to see the government consider extending that program to target more low income households in the ACT. Households that do have difficulty paying the energy bills, or who default on their payments, often seek assistance through ACAT. However, outreach programs could also assist those who do pay their bills, the sorts of people who would not consider defaulting on a bill but who will go without in other areas in order to ensure that they do meet that commitment and that obligation. Programs such as WEST, and the highly successful home energy advice team, the HEAT scheme, could be integrated into any retailer strategy, as the expertise of these services is invaluable.

We would also support specific targets within other energy efficiency programs, such as the suite of measures under ACTSmart or within the objectives of an energy retailer target, such as occurs in the UK retailer scheme where 40 per cent of the efficiency gains are required to be made with at-risk groups.

The Greens' motion today calls on the government to put in place a range of measures that we think make a strong statement and a strong commitment to the people of Canberra who are in low income families and who must be a priority for us as we move forward on implementing clean energy policies. What our motion does is call on the government to implement a series of real and concrete steps which I believe will make a real difference for households in the ACT.

I understand there are going to be a number of amendments put forward today. I will speak to those as we come to each of them. I think it is important to note, though, that the measures we have put forward are real and concrete. They require specific actions. They seek specific outcomes. We do not want to end up with a series of fine words, future promises and a series of aspirational statements. We want to put in place concrete measures that deliver for the low income households in the ACT. We do need to move forward on climate policies.

We do need to move forward on shifting our energy market, shifting how we receive energy and what energy costs. These are necessary steps, but we also know there are vulnerable communities, and we must put them first in our thinking on this issue. That means taking steps now to effectively protect those most vulnerable families whilst enabling us to move forward as a community to cut our greenhouse emissions so that we can play our part in protecting this planet that we live on from the vagaries of climate change. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water, Minister for Energy and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (5.45): I welcome the motion from Mr Rattenbury today and note that many of the measures he is advocating and, indeed, is supporting are measures that the government has already announced that it intends to pursue. In particular, I note his comments about the move for mandating energy efficiency in dwellings as part of carbon reduction schemes that may be required of industry, in particular electricity retailers. Indeed, he is echoing the comments on the future directions that I outlined in my statement to the Assembly last year. So I welcome his support for these measures.

The government recognises that climate change is the most critical issue facing us today as a community. Responding to climate change will be a measure of this generation. The policy we set today locally, nationally and internationally will face judgements over many generations to come. We need to work at all levels to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Everyday decisions by individuals, community groups, governments and business are the building blocks now to how we reduce carbon and greenhouse gas emissions.

The government is committed to the responsible management of the ACT, considering not just today's needs but also the long-term impact climate change will have on our natural environment, quality of life and economic activity. The government, through the introduction and implementation of progressive and practical measures and programs, is seeking to take a leadership role worthy of our capital city and as a leader for other cities in Australia. To that end, the government has already announced a broad range of measures and approaches to tackle this issue.

Of course, the government has committed to an ambitious yet achievable long-term goal of zero net greenhouse gas emissions for the territory. In focusing on the ACT becoming carbon neutral within the next 50 years, the immediate challenge is to halt the growth in per capita emissions as soon as possible. The government has announced that we will be adopting a target of a peak in ACT per capita emissions by the year 2013, which is of course also Canberra's centenary.

The transition towards zero net emissions will require the active involvement of the community, all sectors of the ACT economy and ACT government agencies. While there will be costs associated with action, the costs and risks associated with inaction, as have been already widely documented, are too large to avoid and to not act.

The government has, through the development of its draft sustainable energy policy and feed-in tariff, already seen significant results in terms of community feedback and consultation. There is a high level of awareness of climate change in our community, and many in the community see the move to renewable energy as a central plank of that process.

The government wants to see more Canberrans generating solar power, for example. We are reviewing Australia's most generous feed-in tariff to potentially enable more Canberrans to sell power to the electricity grid. The feed-in tariff scheme commenced one year ago. As members know, it pays a premium tariff for all electricity generated. It is a growth scheme and renewable energy generators of up to 30 kilowatts in size are able to access the scheme at this time.

Canberrans are getting behind renewable energy in a big way. Residents, community groups and businesses are all installing solar on their properties. We currently have 1,535 systems installed. This has been a growth rate of 196 per cent in the first year. We estimate that the scheme will have an impact of less than \$1 a week on electricity bills of householders. The feed-in tariff is proving to be an excellent policy reform that is increasing the uptake of renewable energy, helping create a clean economy in the territory. It is a progressive and practical solution.

But equally, the government recognises that maintaining equity and recognising the impact that any increase in electricity prices can have on low and vulnerable income earners is a cause for continued policy action. This is recognised in our draft sustainable energy policy, where maintaining equity is a key component and a key driver of the policy. The draft policy recognises that external factors such as upgrades to existing electrical infrastructure, both in the ACT and in the national electricity market, measures such as the proposed carbon pollution reduction scheme and the renewable energy target will all increasingly shift energy generation from fossil-based fuels to renewables, and, with that, the price of energy in the short to medium term will rise.

Therefore, minimisation of these cost pressures is a crucial consideration in the development of the ACT's sustainable energy policy, especially through measures that assist the community in reducing energy consumption and people's energy bills. The draft policy outlines what the government is proposing to do, and the motion today from Mr Rattenbury repeats many of those initiatives.

The ACT government is already committed to a review of energy concessions, a review of the indexation rate, the development of energy efficiency programs for all households and indeed the expansion of them—and I discussed some of those during question time today—and targeted programs for low income households. The draft energy policy covers these issues, and it is comprehensive in doing so.

The government already offers a wide range of concession payments to support equity of access to essential services for low income and other disadvantaged ACT households. Payments relating to the supply of essential utility services, including electricity but also gas, water and waste water, make up a significant element of this program. My colleague Minister Burch will elaborate more fully on the range of concessional support the government provides to low income households, but it is important to say that the government takes its commitment to maintaining equity seriously.

Currently, approximately 19 per cent of all ACT households are in receipt of some form of utility cost support from the government. The government recognises that the utility support schemes need to keep pace with changes in utility costs, and detailed work is currently underway and in play in terms of the consideration of the development of the forthcoming budget to ensure that it maintains and keeps pace with changes in electricity costs.

The government is currently undertaking a review of the energy concession as a result of the introduction of a range of measures in the renewable energy sphere. While outcomes such as the CPRS are still not certain, the review is continuing and the government will be making an announcement on the value and mechanisms for review and adjustment of the energy concessions later this year.

But financial assistance can only go so far. Concessions are part of the answer but it is true to say that the cheapest unit of energy is the one you do not need to buy, the one you do not need to purchase at all. Using energy more efficiently reduces energy use, reduces the cost to consumers and ultimately reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Overseas and local experience shows that the combined effectiveness of small-scale retrofits, consumer education and targeted financial assistance in dealing with household utility services are important. In many cases, inadequate knowledge and poor energy habits are the driver of bill stress—not exclusively but they are part of the picture. Targeted education has been successful in reducing future price impacts and risk.

Therefore the government is ramping up its efforts in promoting energy efficiency to low income earners, to vulnerable households and the broader community. The government is currently advertising its energy efficiency programs under the monergy banner to make clear the link between energy savings and money savings.

HEAT, the home energy advice team, provides ACT residents with free advice on energy efficiency. This includes advice on house design, on appliances and on simple things that can be done every day to reduce energy needs and costs. So far, close to 24,000 Canberrans have taken advantage of this service. These have been simple, complex and face-to-face inquiries.

The ACT energy wise program goes a step further and provides an on-site inspection by an energy auditor, with a report on potential improvements customised to each residence. To again highlight our commitment to lower income households, the fee for this service is waived for concession cardholders and of course there is a rebate as part of taking measures recommended through that audit process.

Since November 2004, 4,285 energy wise audits have been conducted in Canberra homes. The number of inquiries and audits has increased each year that the program has been running. The government is continuing to expand the delivery of programs and rebate services and the \$19 million ACTsmart initiative, as it is now known, providing a broad range of education and rebates to Canberra households, with a particular emphasis on low income households, will continue to be rolled out over the next three years as we deliver that program and provide a greatly enhanced program of rebates, assistance and advice to households, not just on energy efficiency but on water efficiency as well.

Mr Rattenbury's motion is quite specific in some of its measures, and the government do not fully agree with some of the specific measures that Mr Rattenbury is calling for in his motion. We recognise absolutely the importance of tackling the issue of the impact on low income and vulnerable households of increases in utility concessions and the need to make sure that criteria and concessions regimes keep pace with changes in utility prices. But we do not accept that the level of specific action, in terms of the specific approach Mr Rattenbury is asking for, is appropriate. We believe that there needs to be a recognition that there is a range of ways of achieving the outcomes that Mr Rattenbury is seeking.

The government does not wish to pre-empt the outcome of its review of the energy concession arrangements nor, indeed, the decision the government will take in terms of the improvement that is possible in the level of payment for low income and vulnerable households. Therefore I will be moving amendments to Mr Rattenbury's

motion that indicate that the objectives are clear. I think the objectives are agreed across this chamber but we should not be as specific as the way Mr Rattenbury is seeking, simply because it pre-empts a process that is already underway. I seek leave to move the amendments circulated in my name together.

Leave granted.

MR CORBELL: I move:

(1) Omit paragraph (1)(c), substitute:

“(c) that approximately, 22 000 households in the ACT receive the energy concession; and”

(2) Insert new paragraphs (2)(d) and (e):

“(d) that the community sector is resourced to advocate on behalf of low income households on energy policy issues; and

(e) that the ACT Government Sustainable Energy Policy 2010-2020 is due for release in mid-2010 and that the policy is seeking to address assistance for low income and vulnerable energy customers as part of Outcome Five: Maintain Equity; and”.

(3) Omit paragraph (3), substitute:

“(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

(a) develop a triple bottom line assessment tool that builds on the Government’s previous work on poverty impact analysis;

(b) report back to the Legislative Assembly on progress on the above by September 2010; and

(c) ensure that the financial impact of clean energy policy on low income and vulnerable energy customers is minimised.”.

At 6.00 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.

Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 pm.

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (7.30): I thank Mr Rattenbury for bringing this motion forward this evening. This motion is essentially addressing the very real issue of environmental outcomes versus the financial effect of implementing those environmental outcomes. That is at the heart of what we are grappling with in this motion and I think that that is at the heart of what we grapple with often when we are dealing with environmental issues.

It is on the one hand about the recognition that we do want a better environment. We do want to protect our environment. If you were to take a poll, I am sure that there

would be overwhelming support for a better environment and for strong environmental outcomes. Where it becomes difficult, where it becomes challenging, is when you have to pay for those measures, when you have to pay for those programs and what people are prepared to pay for those programs. There are lots of policies which most people agree on but there is always that question about how much we pay.

I wanted to look at these issues around cost of living, the impact on people's bottom line in relation to environmental programs. I also wanted to look, I think importantly in that context, at bang for your buck—the efficiency of what we do. I will also look at some of the election promises that we had in relation to the environment.

I will first look at Mr Corbell's amendment, as we are speaking to the amendment. I think that there is some merit in some of what Mr Corbell has to say in the amendment. Mr Corbell's amendment, I understand, is about addressing some of the cost implications that are inherent in Mr Rattenbury's motion. If we look at Mr Rattenbury's motion, there are a number of aspects, most of which I think we could agree on. Some of them are statements of fact broadly. But in terms of calling on the government, words like "adequately resourced" are a very broad concept. I think that that is what Mr Corbell has touched on in moving his amendment.

We are essentially calling on the Assembly or calling on the government to commit to certain funds in the budget context and in light of the fact that we will be having a budget delivered very soon. In fact, this is the second last sitting day before we have the next financial year's budget presented. For that reason, we would broadly be supportive of Mr Corbell's amendments.

But there has been some back and forth discussion. This goes back to last week when this was originally going to be debated. We did have back and forth between our offices about what we could accept. We took the view that in looking at the effects of environmental programs, of energy efficiency programs, we cannot simply say, "We have got low income earners covered in terms of rebate schemes," without acknowledging the impact and the potential impact on middle income earners.

I want to spend a little time looking at why we believe we should do this. I have circulated an amendment that would simply slightly amend Mr Corbell's amendment. If this amendment to Mr Corbell's amendment were to be accepted, we would be happy to support Mr Corbell's amendment. The understanding I have from the government is that that will not be the case but I have not heard from Mr Corbell on this. I am sure he can speak to my amendment, which I will move before I sit down.

It is often the case that middle income families are asked to bear the burden when it comes to new policies. For instance, let us look at the feed-in tariff. I think it is worth touching on the feed-in tariff for a while. Let us take environment bang for your buck. We are talking about, on a per tonne basis, a very expensive way of reducing greenhouse emissions. At the moment, on the latest figures I think we have, it is somewhere in the order of \$427 per tonne. It has been higher than that, it may be a bit lower than that, but the current feed-in tariff scheme that we have is over \$400 per tonne.

That does not compare favourably to other methods of reducing emissions. So when we look at these schemes we have to ask ourselves some questions. Is it good for the environment? Is it an efficient way of improving our environment and reducing emission? And what are the cost implications for people in the territory?

Mr Rattenbury's motion is at pains, and rightly so, to focus on how low income earners can be protected from the burdens of subsidy schemes such as the feed-in tariff. We know that high income earners do not need particular protection from such a scheme. But at the same time, what we are potentially faced with, and this is our concern in the Canberra Liberals, is a situation where low income earners get a rebate, as they should, to deal with rising energy costs. With high income earners, many of them will get a windfall from having a solar panel on their roof and middle income earners get squeezed.

Middle income earners inevitably will have to bear more of the burden. The more subsidies we have in place, as much as those subsidies may be reasonable, the more middle income earners will have to pay, along with high income earners. But, of course, many of those high income earners, firstly, can afford it and, secondly, may be enjoying the financial benefits of engaging in the solar feed-in scheme.

It is worth looking at the burdens on middle income families in the territory. Particularly under this Labor government, whether you look at the stamp duty concessions or other things, they often try to put people who are on incomes of \$70,000, \$80,000 and \$90,000 a year into the high income category. But if you look at the mum and dad with two kids on what, I think, is a fairly reasonable level of income in the territory, and a lot of people would be in this category, these are people who do not have lots and lots of disposable income.

For instance, let us look at the mum, dad and two kids: primary earner on \$80,000, part-time earner on \$40,000, so a combined income of \$120,000. That is not uncommon and it would not be uncommon for there to be a mortgage of around \$300,000. To get into the market at the moment, that is the baseline. That is a baseline mortgage you would be looking at. Of course, many people are forced to look higher than that. One child is in care part time, one is in a non-government school, dad is repaying a help loan for a uni degree and they have private health insurance.

Let us look at the costs. We have done a breakdown of some of these basic costs. For an income that at one level sounds good and is reasonable, there is not much left after all of the key expenses—after tax, after health, after Medicare, after the mortgage, after childcare, car, shopping, utilities, school fees. There is very little left out of that \$120,000.

We would make the argument that any discussion of the impacts of environmental measures which push up the cost of energy, which in some cases will push up taxes, has to include a discussion about middle income families. Middle income families will bear much of the burden. As I said earlier, it is right that low income earners are compensated but what we will have if we ignore middle income earners is a situation where middle income earners inevitably have to bear much of that burden. They will

inevitably have to bear much of that burden. The example I use is the feed-in tariff scheme. Many high income earners will put a solar panel on their roof and will potentially get a financial windfall. Low income earners, as they should be, will be compensated. Those in the middle will end up paying the burden, as they often do.

In terms of bang for your buck, we talk about the solar feed-in tariff. But if you were to ask many middle income families in Canberra, “Would you be prepared to pay a little bit more for energy in order to get a good environmental outcome?” many would. They would then also want to know and want to be assured that we are getting maximum bang for our buck, that what they are paying extra, those few dollars a week or more potentially down the track are getting strong environmental outcomes. The solar feed-in tariff, in many ways, does not meet that. It does not meet that because of the inefficiencies inherent in the scheme that we are seeing.

It is worth just going through some of the policies that we had at the last election in terms of issues around climate change. We had the solar power plant and renewable energy park. We had the energy and emissions savings, public and private, through climate change Canberra, the climate change task force based on the UK model that was about driving efforts to identify energy and emission savings in government and the private sector. We had green loan funds with strong interim and long-term targets and investment in greenhouse gas reduction with insulation for those who need it. That suite of policies would have significant environmental benefits but we always try to take care, in framing our policies, to limit the financial burden and to ensure that we get the maximum bang for our buck.

I now move the amendment to Mr Corbell’s proposed amendment that has been circulated in my name:

Omit paragraph (3)(c), substitute:

“(c) ensure that the financial impact of clean energy policy on low and middle income and vulnerable energy customers is minimised.”.

As I say, if this amendment were accepted we would be prepared to support Mr Corbell’s amendment and then we would be prepared to support an amended motion. It simply recognises that we should be looking to minimise the burden on the middle income earners.

I am not quite sure why it appears the government would not be willing to support something like that. What is it about protecting middle income earners that the government have concerns about? From the indications I have had, they will not be supporting it. I understand that I will not get the opportunity to speak again, so I will just deal with those issues now.

We believe that those families, whose primary earner is on \$60,000, \$70,000 or \$80,000 a year, perhaps with part-time supplementation, are not wealthy. They are families who often are doing it tough, who have a lot of pulls on their finances. These are the nurses, these are the police officers, these are the teachers, these are the labourers, these are the public servants—the APS 4s, 5s, 6s and EL1s. These are the

middle income earners who often bear the brunt of tax measures, who often bear the brunt of policy decisions.

We in the Canberra Liberals believe very much that governments should look to limit the burden. As I said, many middle and high income earners would not mind paying a little bit more. They need to know they are getting something for that. But I find it interesting, to say the least, that it appears that the government, the Labor Party, will not be supporting this amendment. I hope they have changed their mind. If they have, I welcome that. But the fact that they would not support this suggests that their concern for these middle income families is not what it should be.

Mr Corbell talked about \$50 a year and the like but we know that cost will grow. We know that that cost will grow. The scheme is designed to grow, so that \$50 will become \$100 and \$150 and \$200 over time. We believe governments should be framing policies to try and protect these families. You do that by looking at policies that get maximum bang for the buck.

As I said, if this amendment is accepted we would be prepared to support Mr Corbell's amendment and the motion. If we do not recognise this, we will not be supporting the amendment and we will not be supporting the motion. I commend the amendment to the Assembly.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water, Minister for Energy and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (7.44): The government will not be supporting Mr Seselja's amendment. The reason for that is that the key emphasis in terms of addressing equity considerations must be on vulnerable households and low income earners. We have 19 per cent of all households in the ACT receiving some form of concession right now. That is a significant proportion of ACT households where the ACT government is already funding concession regimes of some form, at some level or another, to assist those households with the impact of utility prices.

The key issue that Mr Seselja and the Liberal Party fail to understand is that vulnerable households exist across the spectrum, and that includes middle income households. Vulnerable energy customers, which is the language used in the government's amendments, will include a whole range of households that are vulnerable because of job insecurity, household size or family size. A range of factors can make a household vulnerable. That is where taxpayers' funds should be targeted—to those families that are vulnerable, to those households that are vulnerable and to those households which are on recognised low incomes that therefore place them at increased pressure because of potential changes in utility prices. That is the Labor Party's position, and it is an entirely justifiable and reasonable position. It recognises that this is about addressing vulnerability. This is about addressing people on low incomes who are least able to address it.

That does not mean, and it should not be construed, that the government does not believe that the impact on consumers overall should be minimised. Of course, it should. Let me put it on the record right now so that it cannot be misconstrued. All consumers—all consumers—should be able to operate in an environment where the

costs to them are minimised. But the particular area of emphasis when it comes to the delivery of concession arrangements, which is what this motion is about—it is about the concessions regime—must be on low income earners and vulnerable energy customers.

The government will not accept the proposition from the Liberal Party that this means that we do not care about middle income families. That is not what this motion is about. This motion is about the concessions regime, and the concessions regime must be targeted at low income households and vulnerable energy customers.

Are the Liberal Party suggesting that the concession regime be expanded to a far larger number of energy customers? If they are, I would be interested to hear how they propose to pay for that and at what level they determine that middle income ceases and high income commences. That would be interesting to hear as well. What is it, Mr Seselja? Where do middle income earners end? Where do middle income earners end, given that the average income here in Canberra is higher than the national average income nationally? Where does middle income end, Mr Seselja? That is the question for you, Mr Seselja.

Mr Seselja: You do not want to minimise the impact?

MR CORBELL: You have had your turn, Mr Seselja. You have had your turn, and you have been heard in silence. Mr Seselja, where does middle income end?

I also heard that Mr Seselja argued that the feed-in tariff does not deliver the outcomes the community wishes in terms of the cost on the community. I would simply put this to the Liberal Party, because they failed to understand it today. We hear Mr Smyth stand up in this place time and time again and talk about the need to diversify the economic base of this territory, talk about promoting new industries in this city that will create jobs, new economic activity and new investment in new industries. What does the feed-in tariff do? It grows jobs. It grows jobs in the economy. It grows new investment in new technologies. And it grows the deployment of new economic activity.

Here we have the hypocrisy of the Liberal Party. At one level they say that Labor does nothing to diversify economic activity. And when the feed-in tariff does just that, they oppose it. They oppose that measure. The fact is that the feed-in tariff grows jobs. Read the analysis the government has commissioned in this regard. It grows jobs. Then the challenge is to lock in that growth over the long term. There need to be measures to lock in that economic diversification in the long term through a range of other measures. This is identified in the government's analysis on the feed-in tariff and options for expansion. It is also identified in our draft energy policy.

Which party in this place have not made a contribution to either of those papers? The Liberal Party. Not a single considered word from them in the development of that policy. The Greens put forward their views. If Mr Seselja says that he is such a strong champion of the problems with the feed-in tariff, why did he not say anything when we invited public comment on it? There is nothing to stop you making comment on it. If you felt so strongly about it, why didn't you stop being lazy and actually make a

submission on what you perceived were the problems with the feed-in tariff? You said nothing. Your words are hollow; your words are simply political rhetoric designed to win a cheap vote—simple as that.

The feed-in tariff grows jobs. It grows diversification of the economy. You can look at that in every country that has a feed-in tariff around the world. In every jurisdiction that has a feed-in tariff around the world, it grows jobs, it grows investment, it supports research and it creates the clean economy we want for the future.

The government will not be supporting Mr Seselja's amendment, for the reasons that I have outlined. The important thing is that we have a framework for the development of an energy concessions regime into the future that recognises the need to maintain equity, the need to address the impact on low income households and on vulnerable energy customers. That is what Labor's motion seeks to achieve.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (7.52): It is interesting to hear Mr Corbell admit that some middle income families are at risk. But when Mr Corbell is presented with the opportunity to include those middle income families and vulnerable energy customers in this motion to minimise the impact on them, he will not support it. I wonder whether Mr Corbell, who prides himself on his logic, has actually read what Mr Seselja has said.

Mr Hanson: He's such a goosey.

MR SMYTH: He is such a goosey. I will read it for Mr Corbell:

... ensure that the financial impact of clean energy policy on low and middle income and vulnerable energy customers is minimised ...

So admit that middle income earners will be affected, but when the opportunity comes to protect them you vote against it. I will read it again. I will even read it a bit slower so that Mr Corbell can take this in:

... ensure that the financial impact of clean energy policy on low and middle income and vulnerable energy customers is minimised ...

I am not sure what is wrong with that. I am not at all sure what the argument is. It is interesting. Mr Corbell actually did not have an argument. So you go the standard route, which is to blame the Liberal Party for all the evils of the world. You then castigate us for doing exactly what you did in opposition, which was not put in submissions on government papers and discussions.

In the time that Mr Corbell was in opposition, I do not recall that he ever put a submission in. He can correct me; he can go and dig them out of his archive and table all the submissions he put in. Having the pot stand up and call the kettle black is the basis of debates and the most hypocritical of debating techniques. We see that from Mr Corbell all the time.

I challenge him to simply go away and get all the submissions. Go and find one submission that the Labor Party put into anything that we asked for submissions on.

There are none, just none. It is lovely to stand there and be sanctimonious, be pious, but you make the point yourself, Mr Corbell, that middle income earners will be affected by this, middle income families will be affected by this. The opportunity is given to you to support those middle income families, but you turn it down. You do not give a reason or excuse for it. You go to the rhetoric; you go to the attack; you go to the bull. But when you read it, it simply says:

... ensure that the financial impact of clean energy policy on low and middle income and vulnerable energy customers is minimised ...

I do not see the problem with that; it is a reasonable stance to take. We should protect as many people as we can. Perhaps this goes back to the motion this afternoon on the economic situation we now find ourselves in: this government are very good at spending. They will end up being the highest taxing government this territory has. They will become even higher taxing after the budget in six or seven weeks. And the pocket they will put their hands into will, in the main, be middle income earners.

If you want to damage those who earn a middle income, go right ahead with this. There is an opportunity here to get it right. It is a shame, as always, when it comes to taxation, that the Labor Party, which are big on spending, but very poor on getting outcomes for that spending, will continue willy-nilly on their merry way, without any regard to the people and the families of Canberra.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (7.56): I am rising to speak with regard to both sets of amendments. I will start with Mr Seselja's comments. I think it was a very interesting analysis that he provided of the cost of living pressures in Australia. I would be interested, in fact, to see the real details of his figures because he started to talk about them but did not finally conclude on how much was left over; he just said "not much". I would be interested to see those numbers at some stage, because it sounds like it is an interesting piece of work.

But it was frustrating to hear the same old arguments about the feed-in tariff from Mr Seselja. I think he constantly comes back to this thing about it being a high-cost way to reduce emissions. I have now, on a number of occasions, spoken in this chamber about the fact that a feed-in tariff has a number of different goals. Mr Corbell has stolen my thunder on this point somewhat in articulating the economic diversification opportunities as one of the other factors that can arise out of a feed-in tariff.

I think it is also interesting that Mr Seselja has this fixation that only high income earners can get the feed-in tariff. Again, I would like to see his data and where he gets that from. I certainly am aware of at least one family that earns well under Mr Seselja's model family of \$120,000 a year and that has put solar panels on their roof and got the feed-in tariff, because they think that is an important thing to do. They are prioritising the expenditure of their money and they think that is a good contribution to make.

That is obviously not everybody's choice but I think Mr Seselja's fixation that only high income earners can get the feed-in tariff is simply not true. It perhaps reflects his

personal experiences but does not reflect what is happening in the community where people who believe in the future, who believe that it is our job, as this generation, to do something now—not later, not some other time, not somebody else’s problem—are getting out there and taking action.

I think it is also important to put in perspective the cost of the feed-in tariff. The current pass-through from the ICRC that ActewAGL are allowed to charge is \$27 a year. When we start talking about ordinary families and that cost, \$27 is less than what it costs two people to go to the movies in this town. So we need to be really mindful of these impacts but we also need to put some of these things in perspective—job creation, industry diversification, all for less than the cost of a household going to the movies once a year.

I would now like to come to some of the comments from Mr Corbell on some of the amendments. In doing so, I would like to touch on my amendment, which I forgot to speak to earlier. But in relation to substituted paragraph (3)(d), having heard some of Mr Corbell’s comments, that is specifically why I put an amendment forward. I have actually changed it to read:

increase the energy concession to a level commensurate with energy price increases and establish a mechanism by which percentage increases in energy prices are automatically applied to the energy concession each year;

I heard Mr Corbell’s concerns about the specification of 20 per cent, that it might be a more appropriate level. So I have actually taken those words directly from page 19 of the government’s draft energy policy paper, right out of the government’s document. So I assume that the government will be happy to support my amendment because it is actually their own words. The Greens are happy to hear feedback and accept it as sometimes a better way to put something, and we have taken that on board.

But with regard to Mr Corbell’s other amendments, the Greens will not be able to support them in total. I think that the effect of Mr Corbell’s amendments is to gut the motion of all the concrete action points that are in there. But let me take it in parts. In part (1) he has sought to substitute:

that approximately, 22 000 households in the ACT receive the energy concession;

This is obviously a statement of fact. I have no objection to this additional information being provided. I am unclear why we need to remove:

that approximately 19% of ACT households are considered to be low income;

That is obviously just one of those drafting things.

With regard to Mr Corbell’s addition to paragraph (2), one of the key things is that the Greens are seeking to ensure that the community sector is adequately resourced to advocate on behalf of low income households. I think it is important that those households do have advocates on their behalf. People who are struggling through various other things in life are unlikely to be approaching the Assembly, to be

lobbying the government, to be writing letters to the editor, advocating on complex and difficult policy issues when they have got a whole lot of other things going on in their life. That is why we have the community sector advocating on behalf of, in this case, low income households who are struggling with energy pricing issues.

The government seems keen to assure us that, in fact, this is already the case and that services provided by ACTCOSS and the CARE Financial Counselling Service are meeting this objective. First of all, the CARE Financial Counselling Service is all about helping individuals with specific problems. It is a debt crisis management service. It is about helping individuals with specific personal problems. It is not an advocacy organisation.

I think it would be fair to say that the community sector do not agree that they are adequately resourced to do the job that the government assumes that they can do. In their 2009-10 budget submission that was rejected by the government, ACTCOSS made a specific request to “fund a position in the ACT to engage in systemic advocacy around the needs and interests of low-income and disadvantaged energy consumers”.

The Greens would urge the minister to reconsider this, if not in this budget then at least in the next budget, because I think ACTCOSS is an organisation that understands the pressures of low income households. It has done considerable policy work in this area and produced some very substantial documents and submissions. It is clearly one of the key experts in the ACT. Resourcing them to do that job well, I think, is an investment in the social fabric of the ACT.

Speaking to Mr Corbell’s proposed paragraph (e), this is the one where he noted:

That the ACT Government Sustainable Energy Policy ... is due for release ... and ... is seeking to address assistance for low income and vulnerable energy customers as part of Outcome Five: Maintain Equity;

Again, there is obviously no problem acknowledging what the government are doing but I think his text is scarily aspirational. For example, will the government address assistance for low income and vulnerable energy customers or will they not? Or will they just try? I am afraid this paragraph is sadly symptomatic of the government’s entire draft energy policy, a document that is full of statements like “we will consider”, “we will explore”, “we will think about”, “we might look at”. I think the draft energy policy was quite poor on that front and I am concerned that we are seeing similar sort of language brought into a motion that is all about specific and concrete things to do to try to assist low income and under-pressure households with rising energy costs.

When it comes to omitting part (3) of my original motion, as I said, this is where the real kicking comes in, where the government basically seeks to gut the Greens’ motion. It takes out all of the concrete outcomes. I think it is interesting that the feedback that we have received from both the government and the Canberra Liberals is that they cannot support anything in this motion that will cost money. It is concerning, even in financially difficult times, that we cannot even have a conversation about what we should be spending money on and where the priorities

are. And I am disappointed the government did not bring a more constructive amendment to the table.

It has been challenging to engage the Liberal Party on the specifics of this. As I said, I think Mr Seselja's conversation about middle income earners is an interesting one to have in this context. But I think this is where we need to get down to the roots. When we want to talk about money and what it all costs, this is where we need to get some focus and this is why we cannot support Mr Seselja's amendment. It is not focused. We need to focus on this in a tight budget situation. We have had a lot of that discussion about the financial pressures on the ACT and we need to be fiscally responsible. In that context, that is why our motion is very specifically focused on those most vulnerable households.

That is where I think the useful distinction that Mr Corbell drew is a good one. It is not about all middle income households. There are middle income households who will be facing vulnerability, who will be facing pressure because of energy costs. If Mr Seselja is open to an amendment to his amendment, I think we could look at that. But I think a blanket reference is not the sort of focus that we need in this kind of a motion.

That is why the Greens will not be supporting the amendments either from Mr Seselja or from the Labor Party, because they both take out the concrete, specific actions that the Greens are proposing and they seek to make this a motion of generality, of platitudes and of the sorts of statements that do not add anything to this debate.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services, Minister for Children and Young People, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Women) (8.06): I rise in support of Mr Corbell's amendments. The ACT government has invested in a range of initiatives to address the potential impact of climate change on low income households.

I understand that the former Community Inclusion Board report into the social impacts of climate change in the ACT and the 2008 paper *Development of a poverty impact analysis approach in the ACT* will inform the triple-bottom-line assessment framework currently under development. This framework would embed sustainability into the decision-making process, in line with commitments made in the ACT government's sustainability policy. The paper is available through the Chief Minister's Department website. The capability to conduct a poverty impact assessment is being developed as part of the government's progress towards a triple-bottom-line reporting.

I would like now to outline a range of ACT government programs for low income households in this area. In 2008 the ACT government developed a concession policy to provide for long-term sustainability of government concessions. The ACT government concessions policy supports a system which provides equity, effectiveness, accessibility and transparency for all those accessing concessions.

The ACT government funds and administers a range of concessions that aim to achieve a balance in the standard of living and access to essential services for all

community members. These concessions provide support in areas such as energy, water and sewerage, and largely correspond with concessions in other states and territories.

The ACT concessions program aims to ensure that each target group is supported to access an essential service or item, some of which assists them to participate in the community. The general eligibility criteria for these concessions are for low income individuals and households who are entitled to commonwealth income support. For example, the energy concession provides a maximum of \$194.87 per annum to approximately 22,000 eligible households in the ACT.

The ACT government concessions portal provides a front door to concessions and is designed to make it easier for low income households to access information on concessions. The ACT government concessions are one way to promote access to essential services for low income households.

I would like to highlight to the Assembly that concessions work alongside a range of ACT government policies and programs. The ACT government has committed \$20 million over 10 years for energy efficiency measures in public housing. As part of this program, there have been energy efficiency improvements to over 1,600 properties, including wall and ceiling insulation, draught seals and high-efficiency hot-water systems for new and existing dwellings. A photovoltaic electricity generation system has been installed into apartment complexes. The hot-water systems, where suitable, are five-star gas, electric heat pump or electric boosted solar, and are being installed where the existing system has failed.

As a result of the report *Energy efficiency strategy for ACT public housing (2007)*, Housing ACT developed an action plan to improve public housing properties. As of last month, over 700 public housing properties have had thermal improvements installed. Housing ACT expects to improve all its properties by 2017. I am pleased to advise that during the 2010-11 year Housing ACT will invite a select number of tenants to allow access to their energy records. The information will be used to assess the effectiveness of the energy improvements that have been installed.

The ACT government provides funding for water and energy savings in the territory program, WEST. This program is a partnership between the government, business and community sectors. And WEST helps low income households with high energy and water consumptions. It provides an energy audit, efficiency education and minor retrofitting. The program raises householder awareness of what causes high energy and water costs and helps them reduce their consumption costs so that they are less likely to incur large utility debts.

The WEST program has been very successful. A quantitative data analysis of WEST found that 83 per cent of program participants reduced energy consumption in the year after the home energy audit date, compared to the year before. A comparison of energy bills of participants found a general reduction of consumption of approximately 20 per cent. Only a few households with good outcomes showed a relapse in either 2007 or 2008.

I am aware of a range of valuable energy efficiency programs for low income households in the community. The ACT energy wise home energy audit provides, at no charge for a concession cardholder, a professional energy audit of a household and an energy report identifying energy savings.

Successful programs like WEST and these ACT government programs involve one-to-one education on how to reduce energy consumption. This active engagement of clients achieves greater outcomes than relying solely on written education materials. Another important feature is the ability to have technical experts that can relate to others compassionately, clearly and without judgement.

These programs are specialised because they are aimed at permanent behavioural change. Their methodology has been developed over many years by experts in the fields of: energy efficiency, community support and financial counselling.

The Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services currently funds ACTCOSS to provide systemic advocacy for low income households on a range of policy matters, including access to essential services. ACTCOSS's strategic goals for the next three years include bringing social equity into environmental debates on climate change mitigation strategies.

CARE Financial Counselling Inc is funded to the tune of \$370,914 to provide an integrated financial counselling service and systemic advocacy on issues important to low or fixed income clients. CARE ensures low income customers are treated fairly and helps them overcome debt through counselling and advocacy, such as in submissions to the ICRC on the feed-in tariff and by raising community awareness. CARE is part of the WEST project and has participated at forums to discuss the introduction of pre-paid metering in the ACT.

The ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal also promotes social equity in energy supply, by dealing with hardship cases on a case-by-case basis.

The ACT government has developed a strong partnership with advocacy agencies in the ACT. And these organisations provide valuable policy and program advice to improve our support for vulnerable members of the community. As you can see, Madam Assistant Speaker, the ACT government has developed a suite of measures to support low income households to actively engage in energy efficient practices in our community.

MS HUNTER (Ginninderra—Parliamentary Convenor, ACT Greens) (8.14): We must take action, we know, to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and move towards clean renewable energy, and we know that community change is important and that local action is important. We know that there will be rising energy costs; these will be due to climate change and due to the real cost of energy that is now being factored in and that will continue to be factored into people's household bills. Some of these costs are also to do with an increase, an improvement and an updating of energy infrastructure. And we also know that we have major challenges ahead because of peak oil.

What is critical here is that we do not leave people behind. It is important to ensure that nobody falls through the cracks and that we have a society that is going to ensure that those who are vulnerable, those who are low income earners, are not going to be left to freeze in their homes in winter or have some sort of cooling during summer.

We can spend effort now, and we have to spend effort now, to reduce higher energy costs in the future. It is very important that we protect those who are most vulnerable. It is quite clear. We know that the ones who will be most affected, who will be disproportionately affected, by rising utility bills will be low income households. They are the most vulnerable to energy price rises. They will be the people who will not be able to continue to afford to pay their energy bills. And they do not have the flexibility in their income to adjust to this change. They will need to have assistance.

I want to go to a report that was done by the Victorian Council of Social Service, called *A snapshot of electricity and gas services and their impact on households seeking emergency relief*. In the introduction to this report, it says:

Electricity and gas bills can have a significant impact on low income households. A typical quarterly electricity bill of \$255 is over:

- 50 per cent of a fortnightly Newstart payment for a single person,
- 44 per cent of a fortnightly single Parenting Payment,
- 41 per cent of a fortnightly single Aged Pension,
- 38 per cent of a fortnightly Disability Support Pension payment,
- 22 per cent of gross fortnightly income for a person earning \$30,000 per annum; and
- 11 per cent of fortnightly full time adult ordinary time earnings.

This list goes from those on very low incomes through to those who would be on full-time adult ordinary time earnings. It reflects that for those on full-time adult ordinary time earnings it is 11 per cent. That is still quite high, but it is more affordable than for someone who is on a fortnightly Newstart payment, where, for a single person, 50 per cent of that payment will go on their utility bills, on their energy bills.

This is why Mr Rattenbury has brought on this motion today—to focus quite clearly on where we need to start in this debate, where we need to start to put in place concrete action, concrete proposals. We do need to start to talk about specifics. We cannot walk away from that. We are not going to be doing it all at once. We need to acknowledge that there will be many households and there will be many more challenges in the years to come. But we have to start somewhere. We need to start to focus on those low income households who are going to be the first to feel the impact of rising energy costs.

That is why I bring it back to why Mr Rattenbury quite clearly drafted this motion to focus on these people—these people who are living here in Canberra today. About one in 10 people are doing it tough, and that includes a lot of children in those households. It is also important, as I said, to focus this down, to get a bit of an idea about some specifics, some ideas, some programs.

Yes, it is true: there are some programs out there that the government funds and delivers. We have talked about the water and energy saving in the territory program, the WEST program. But we need to understand that at the moment, there are about 100 families that are assisted through this program. One part of the motion that Mr Rattenbury has put forward is to extend that. We are going to have to extend those sorts of programs. We are very much going to have to first and foremost target these assistance programs, these types of programs that go out and audit and assist people to save energy—subsidies as well. But first and foremost they need to be targeted to these very low income households. That is why we have brought this on.

As I said, our motion makes clear the impact of climate change. It is here. We cannot be sceptics about it. It is no good for anybody around here. That debate is over. We have moved on. Climate change is real, and climate change is going to have real impacts on real families here in the ACT. That is why it is so timely that we start to move towards this. We know that we have some tough years ahead with the budget. That is why we need to put this on the agenda now. We need to start talking about how we will need to put in some funding and put some focus on those who are going to be at the front line of these increases in energy costs—and why it is so important to do that.

It is interesting to look at the issue around middle income households. There are middle income households who would be vulnerable. They may have family members who have an illness where there are high costs, where they have to support that person. There are many scenarios; we cannot stand here tonight and come up with every one. So that is something that needs to be factored in as well.

But let us first and foremost start somewhere. We cannot just keep putting this off; we have to start somewhere. Therefore, we need to start with these low income households. We know who they are as far as the work that has already been done out there in the territory is concerned. We know who is receiving a Newstart benefit, a disability allowance pension, an age pension and so forth.

It is no good just to say: “It is about costs. It will cost too much. It is all too hard. There is always tomorrow.” As Mr Rattenbury said far more eloquently earlier on, we need to take action now. This is not something into the future. It is time to move forward. That is why I would urge both the Liberal and Labor parties to support what Mr Rattenbury has put forward here tonight—a very clear motion that clearly outlines the current situation; the challenges we face; some very clear, specific ways forward; and the importance of first and foremost focusing on low income households, looking at what sort of policy programs and subsidy supports can be directed to those households. We need to start. We need to start now. Therefore, I commend this motion to the Assembly and urge both the Liberal and Labor parties to support it.

Motion (by **Ms Gallagher**) put:

That debate be adjourned.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 10

Noes 5

Mr Barr	Ms Hunter	Mr Doszpot
Ms Bresnan	Ms Le Couteur	Mrs Dunne
Ms Burch	Ms Porter	Mr Hanson
Mr Corbell	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Seselja
Ms Gallagher	Mr Stanhope	Mr Smyth

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Debate adjourned to the next sitting.

Public areas—maintenance

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (8.26): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

(a) the important role that the ACT Government:

(i) has in maintaining the look of Canberra; and

(ii) should be playing within local communities to maintain streetscapes, local shops and to provide basic services to the community;

(b) the importance of local shopping precincts to local communities within the ACT;

(c) the Government's bungled program to refurbish local shops; and

(d) the significant impact that delays and poor timing of this bungled program has had on small businesses at local shopping centres, especially outdoor cafes; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

(a) immediately:

(i) reassess the timing of its bungled program to refurbish local shops to ensure that it has a minimal impact on business; and

(ii) address basic maintenance issues with local services and within community facilities and local shops, such as lifting and uneven pavers, inadequate and broken lighting and graffiti; and

- (b) more efficiently manage funds within the Department of Territory and Municipal Services to allow the department to undertake adequate maintenance of public areas, including local shops, around Canberra each year.

I am pleased to be bringing this motion forward this evening. The provision of municipal services is one of the most important roles of the ACT government and, indeed, of any local government. Along with issues such as health, education and law and order, the provision of basic municipal services is what people expect of their government; it is what they pay their rates for; and it is what people deserve in our city.

This motion notes the very important role of the ACT government in maintaining the look of Canberra; the role it plays with local communities to maintain streetscapes, local shops and provide basic services; the importance of local shopping precincts; talks about the government's bungled program to refurbish local shops; the significant impact that delays and poor timing have on small businesses; calls on the government to look at the timing of its refurbishment of local shops and address basic maintenance issues with local services, with community facilities and local shops; and, indeed, more broadly calls on the government to more efficiently manage funds within the Department of Territory and Municipal Services to allow the department to undertake adequate maintenance of public areas, including the local shops around Canberra, each year.

Madam Assistant Speaker, I am sure you, like many of us, often receive correspondence in relation to the look of the city, in relation to the look of our local centres, in relation to the provision of basic services at those local centres. We in the Canberra Liberals spend a lot of time at these shopping centres. I know that all of my colleagues have been spending time in local centres in their electorates. I have been spending time in local and group centres, not just in my electorate but right across the ACT, along with my colleagues, finding out what are some of the issues, finding out where we can assist, making representations on behalf of not just shop owners but local residents who use these local shopping precincts.

I think it is one of the most important jobs we have as local members. I want to read firstly from some of the constituent correspondence I have had and then talk about some of what we have seen at the local shops and at our local centres. This is one of the letters I have received recently:

Most days, as a retiree, I am able to take a walk, normally around the Hughes area. And what I am seeing in the way of discarded rubbish disgusts me. Bottles, cans, plastic, paper etc are everywhere. You would swear that some people had no civic pride and saw it as the norm to dispose any item they had finished with, wherever they happened to be ... In yesteryear we thought of Queanbeyan as being "Struggle Town". Not any more ...

I think Canberra is a fantastic place but you see that frustration from residents when they do not see the basics being taken care of. This is one of the fundamentals of a local government.

This is from another letter, received from a gentleman in Scullin:

I am deeply concerned about the ongoing neglect of Canberra's streets where weeds, cracked concrete and gravel erosion are beginning to show hazards all around. Shoddy lawn mowing and lengthy delays in mowing periods, inadequate weed abatement, poor path maintenance and more such problems are becoming very common occurrences in the ACT.

It goes on:

I would ask you to take a good drive around the Belconnen district suburbs of Florey, Macgregor, Higgins, Page, Belconnen town centre, and no doubt many other areas of Canberra which are scrappy in appearance, to say the least, and realise how bad the problem now is.

I know that my Ginninderra colleagues, Mrs Dunne and Mr Coe, not only regularly go around these areas but are also advocating on behalf of the residents in these places.

I want to go to some of the issues at some of the shopping centres we have been to—there are a number—and I want to talk just about a small handful. Just last Friday Mrs Dunne and I visited Evatt shops and I am sure Mrs Dunne, when she has the opportunity to speak, will talk a little about some of the feedback we got at Evatt shops. We heard from shop owners about the basic maintenance work that needs to be undertaken by the government. This includes improved lighting, removal of graffiti, repair of cracked concrete and a lack of basic signage on nearby arterial roads directing people to the shops.

Evatt is an ageing centre. It has been with us for many years. It is clearly in need of a facelift as, Madam Assistant Speaker, I am sure you would know. This is a local centre. In many ways it is a thriving local centre. It has a number of different stores. It is important to the community of Evatt and it is important that the government takes up these concerns. We have written to the Chief Minister—I think we signed the letter today—in relation to this, to try to get action in relation to Evatt.

We visited Manuka shops a couple of times in the last couple of weeks and we were shown around the shopping precinct by a local retailer. He showed us lifting pavers, which were dangerous to staff in cafes, broken street lights, graffiti, inadequate and missing signage.

I wrote to the Chief Minister on this issue and, I understand, today I have received advice from the Chief Minister that these issues are being addressed. We hope that they will be addressed very quickly, because Manuka, of course, is really one of our great centres. It is a place where not just a lot of Canberrans like to go but, indeed, a lot of tourists. It is a showcase of Canberra. Many people from interstate and internationally come there.

I think it is important that we put our best foot forward in relation to Manuka. As I said, and the Chief Minister would not have heard, I did receive a letter back from the Chief Minister on this issue—today was when I first saw it—undertaking to address this. So we certainly hope that the issues around Manuka can be addressed.

I want to turn to the issues at Deakin shops. Deakin shops have seen a much-needed upgrade in recent times. It has been a long-delayed upgrade but it has to be said that it has not been handled very well by the government. And we saw the recent article in the *Canberra Times* in relation to the owner of Double Shot raising concerns about the impact on his business of the way that the refurbishment has been handled. It is worth reading out a couple of extracts from that article in relation to what is going on at Deakin. It says:

After having his Deakin cafe barricaded behind fences for six weeks, Daryl Hehir-Nielsen is starting to lose patience with ACT Government's \$1.1 million upgrade of the Deakin shops.

He says Territory and Municipal Services has failed to live up to its promise that "works will be carefully planned and staged to minimise impacts on businesses and users of the centre" ...

Mr Hehir-Nielsen said he was told the work outside his cafe would start about January 10 and be finished before the end of the month. It started on January 20 and was still going.

"From day one it's been what I like to call pie-crust promises, easily made and easily broken," he said.

"I have written to TAMS and to Jon Stanhope asking them where and how they have minimised the impact on my business, because digging all this up during the busiest month of this year ... is having a big impact." ...

Cafe D'Lish owner, Peter Zimmermann said the upgrade was a "disaster" and a waste of taxpayers' money, changes to the car park actually making it more difficult for drivers to negotiate the space. He was also upset about the timing of the work.

The Deakin newsagency owner also expressed concerns. The issue here, having spoken to Daryl about this, is this has been a long-needed upgrade but it seems that, instead of actually working with business owners in terms of the timing so that we could minimise the impact on these businesses, the government, unfortunately, did not work as constructively as it should have. What we saw instead was far more disruption than was needed. And for small business owners this is quite significant. Indeed, the headline was "Gas bust compounds Deakin 'disaster'".

I was visiting with Daryl to talk about the issues that very day. I went to go into his cafe and the cafe had been closed because the gas main had been ruptured or affected and the cafe had closed for the morning. So not just the morning's trade had been lost but the timing has meant that the outdoor area—we know in Canberra there are only a few months where you can really use the outdoor area at its maximum use—has been affected during the warmer months.

I think Daryl would have preferred that there had been less disruption, that it had been done during the cooler months and that, when they said it was going to be done in a couple of weeks, they stuck to that time frame. Unfortunately that has not been the case.

I am sure, if Mr Coe gets the opportunity to speak this evening, he will talk about the issues that we saw at Spence shops. There are a number of issues in the back lane there and a number of maintenance issues there.

We also had the opportunity to visit the Platypus centre at Ngunnawal. That is a newer centre and is in far better condition than we saw particularly in places like Evatt. But we have had it put to us by one of the restaurant owners that indeed there were ongoing issues with vandalism, ongoing issues with break-ins. I have written to the Attorney-General in relation to that to see what can be done in terms of a police presence to try to protect the property at that centre.

I am conscious of the time and I know that a number of other members want to speak. I think we are adjourning at 9 o'clock so I will wrap up in a second. But we have had the opportunity to visit a number of different shopping centres in recent times. We have had a lot of correspondence, much of which we are passing on to ministers in order to try to get action.

This is core business for the government. There is no doubt about it that this kind of maintenance is core business—the maintenance of public areas at local shopping centres, the look of the city, the maintenance of the place is core business. As I say, along with issues such as education, health and law and order, these kinds of services are at the core of what people expect of their territory government.

The final part of the motion talks about ensuring that we manage the funds within TAMS in order to get this stuff done. We have seen the Ernst & Young report which raises questions about the management and the financial oversight in TAMS. That all has an impact. That all has an impact because every time you blow your budget in one area, every time you do not control costs in one area, it makes it harder, it means there is less money to deliver some of these services, to deliver the maintenance. We know government cannot do everything but it is clear that this continues to be a significant issue for people, not just in my electorate but right across the ACT.

I look forward to the contribution of other members who have been hearing from not just shop owners but residents in their communities about these concerns. We put this to the government. We call on them to do this. We will continue to advocate for local residents on these issues and we look forward to getting a positive response and to getting better outcomes for all the people of the ACT.

MS LE COUTEUR (Molonglo) (8.39): This is a very interesting and important topic and I am very glad that Mr Seselja has brought it before the Assembly today. Unfortunately, there is only 20 minutes before the adjournment debate. I will attempt to be reasonably brief so that the debate can be concluded in that time. The Greens agree with the gist of the motion. I suppose it is the use of the word “bungled”—it kind of bungled the motion by saying “bungled” all the time. We are not in a position to agree with it as is. Mr Stanhope has just circulated an amendment. It is an amendment which started off in my office and it has ping-ponged backwards and forwards. In the interests of time there will just be one amendment. I am not going to move one and then Mr Stanhope move another.

Moving on to the substance of the motion, while I do not agree with some of the words, I do agree with many of the things that Mr Seselja talked about. He talked about the look of the city. Canberra is an attractive city. It is well known for looking spacious, clean and well organised. People have different opinions, of course, as to what constitutes the right look for our city. Some people appreciate neatness and think that is attractive. Some people think that neatness equals sterility and would prefer to see the city looking a bit more wild.

It is a significant challenge for government to maintain the look of Canberra to everyone's standard all the time. Graffiti, for example, takes time to clean up. Weeds take time to be cut and to die. With over 600,000 street trees in Canberra, there are a lot of leaf, branch and other maintenance issues that pose a constant challenge. TAMS has to manage all of this with very limited resources. One of the realities of life for the ACT government is that there will always be unmet demand for the sorts of things that TAMS does. We could all give lists of footpaths which we would like fixed and the pot holes which we would like filled in. I do not think that it is simply a matter, as the opposition has said, of TAMS managing its budget better and then everything will be okay. I wish that was all that was necessary. We have a very large city, a dispersed city. Part of that is due to the planning decisions which were made in previous eras when the car was king and we had the Y plan. We cannot easily undo those decisions. We have an expensive city to maintain and I believe it will take more than being more efficient to maintain it.

Getting back to the focus on local shops, the Greens think that local shops are important. They are the heart of communities; they are the hub of the communities. We think that protecting them in these times is very important. I am conscious of the time that we have left to finish these two speeches and vote on this.

The amendment that will be moved talks about improving facilities for sustainable and active transport. That is certainly something which the Greens would like to see. This afternoon Mr Coe said that the situation was such that he could bicycle to work twice as quickly as he could drive. As I understand it, he does not bicycle to work. For people like Mr Coe, we need to improve the facilities for active transport. Given that it is not a timing issue, there have got to be ways of improving our transport. One of them is by having bus stops at local shops with bike parking hoops.

We also talk about working on a trial to implement 40-kilometre speed zones to improve safety for vulnerable road users such as walkers and people riding bikes at shopping centres. This is important to improve the safety and amenity of our local shopping centres. If people feel safe at the centres they are more likely to use them.

Another thing which we would like to see a lot more work on is billposting. This is something which the planning committee has worked on. There is a bill yet to be presented in the Assembly on billposting. One of the recommendations from the planning committee was that shopping centres in general—and here we talk about local centres—should all have adequate billposting facilities. I am glad to see that that is something that will now be part of this motion.

Other important things to talk about are artwork. That is something which I am pleased to see the government has done in previous upgrades. It is one of the things that are very controversial, but it is one of the things that make the local shopping centres interesting places to go. Even if you do not like the artwork, at least you can go and see it and say what a waste of money it was. It makes it something to talk about. It is something lively and interesting, rather than having a sterile office or a sterile set of shops.

Finally, in closing, I would say that one of the reasons the Greens support local shopping centres and sustainable transport is food miles. There has been a lot of discussion about food miles, that we should not be buying whatever it is that is fully imported from Norway or flown from California or whatever. But the studies that have been done show that, for most food purchases, the major transport impact is not the impact of getting the food from the producer to the retailer, it is getting it from the retailer to the shopper.

If we have local shopping centres that actually work—if people can walk, ride their bikes, catch a bus or even drive a short distance to the local shopping centre—it can help to significantly reduce the energy that we spend on shopping and buying things. This is one of the many things we need to do to make a city more sustainable. In the interests of time I will conclude at this point. It would be nice to give Mr Stanhope a go and then we can—

MR SPEAKER: Before we proceed—I will come to you in a minute, Mr Doszpot—there seems to be some confusion, members. If I can perhaps seek your guidance. I have an amendment on my table—

Mr Stanhope: I have just discussed that with the Clerk.

MR SPEAKER: That is fine.

Mr Stanhope: Ms Le Couteur and I came to an agreed position.

Ms Le Couteur: Yes.

Mr Stanhope: I apologise for the mistake.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you. Mr Doszpot, you have the floor.

MR DOSZPOT (Brindabella) (8.47): I am pleased to speak in support of Mr Seselja's motion today. The ACT government, led by Mr Stanhope, is responsible for the current look of our city and it is a very tired look, Mr Stanhope—similar to the look of your government. I am constantly hearing from constituents about the state of our city and our neighbourhoods. It is an issue that is brought to my attention every time I visit a shopping centre, every time I attend a community council meeting and often through representations from constituents.

Mr Stanhope: There is no more beautiful city in the world.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Speaker—

Mrs Dunne: And you're running it down.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, just continue. You have the floor.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. It is an issue that is brought to my attention every time I visit a shopping centre, every time I attend a community council meeting and often through representations from constituents. I have recently addressed issues that range from street lights out of action for over three months near Calwell shops to uneven footpaths and the lack of kerbs and gutters in Bonython. In the scheme of things these issues do not seem as important as other issues, but for the community these issues are paramount. These issues come first for them.

One issue I have recently made a number of representations to Mr Stanhope on is in relation to the maintenance of grassed areas that are potential bushfire hazards. I have heard from one family who could not walk behind their home because of the waist-high grass that they could not get mown or slashed. There is the case of a home owner in Kambah who is constantly reminding the government to maintain a grassed area between his home as well as other residents' homes and a nature reserve behind their properties that is a proven bushfire risk. This patch of grass was well alight during the 2003 bushfires. Without the action and quick thinking of residents, other fires over the years could have resulted in serious property damage or worse.

Our local shopping centres are the hub of the community. They need to be safe, clean, well-maintained places that people are comfortable to visit. The failure of this government to stick to a plan in terms of shopping centre refurbishments is something that will long be remembered. Some of the original Tuggeranong suburbs are ageing and along with them their shopping centres. The residents of these suburbs are also ageing and require adequate and safe infrastructure in terms of footpaths and roads. Simple things like bus shelters and seats are not unreasonable requests and should be installed at every opportunity.

I was pleased to see the Chief Minister respond and install a bus seat at a bus stop in Calwell recently after contact from my office. I had made representations on behalf of a group of older constituents who, after a reasonable walk to the bus stop, would be glad of the opportunity to take a seat while they wait for their bus. Again, that is a simple, not unreasonable request. The installation of this seat and hopefully soon a shelter as well will make all the difference for this group of residents.

Graffiti vandalism is rampant across all suburbs in the ACT. No one suburb is immune. The vandalism is now a regular part of our landscape. We only need to travel down Athllon Drive to see graffiti tags covering the fences of homes in Torrens or travel down Tharwa Drive towards the Lanyon Valley to see a constant landscape of graffiti. The laneways and drains of Gordon, Chisholm, Monash, Calwell and Theodore are all adorned with those tags. Brindabella is not alone. The same graffiti can be found in Manuka and Kingston, in Gungahlin and along fences adjacent to Belconnen Way. It is everywhere. Even government-owned buildings and facilities

are constantly covered in graffiti. Schools, bus shelters and backyard fences are all used as canvases by vandals time and again.

The fact that often the same facility or structure can be graffiti-ed over and over again is proof that the strategy adopted by this government is simply not working. Graffiti vandalism causes many individuals in our community a lot of anguish and sometimes cost, particularly when it is their private property or business premises that have been affected. In addition to being unsightly and illegal, graffiti vandalism also damages our local pride, the pride we have in our surroundings.

The ACT Neighbourhood Watch groups in Calwell and Theodore have long campaigned for a different approach to graffiti vandalism. Residents and members of the Neighbourhood Watch groups throughout Tuggeranong are sick and tired of their suburbs being the targets of vandals and are calling for a new plan. Nick Tsoulas, the Tuggeranong coordinator of Neighbourhood Watch, along with the Tuggeranong Community Council, is looking to conduct a graffiti forum to better understand the issues and to look at some solutions to this seemingly never-ending problem. I also know how keen Neighbourhood Watch are to investigate options adopted by councils and governments across Australia to combat graffiti. I know that Nick and other members keep a close eye on issues relating to the overall look of our suburbs and report issues as soon as they detect them immediately to the government. They conduct working bees and galvanise the community and make a valuable contribution to the ACT. In other words, they perform much of the role that the government and responsible departments should be performing. A letter to the editor published in the *Canberra Times* on 9 March says:

So Jon Stanhope cannot remember Canberra looking more divinely beautiful in the past 41 years ... (March 6, p3).

All I can say is—

and I am quoting from the letter—

that he must live in a different Canberra than I do.

There is nothing beautiful about dead trees, weeds, cracked footpaths, neglected roads, overgrown laneways and graffiti covering buildings and fences, and unoccupied dilapidated government-owned buildings.

The reduction in the GST allocation for the ACT is an excellent opportunity for Stanhope's Government to stop squandering money and to reallocate resources ...

The letter goes on, but I will not embarrass Mr Stanhope any further. Just this afternoon I received—

Mr Stanhope: I'm not embarrassed a bit, Steve. I stick up for Canberra.

MR DOSZPOT: Well, you should be. You should be embarrassed, Chief Minister. I would be embarrassed if a letter like that came about the city that I was in charge of,

like you. Just this afternoon, Chief Minister, I received an email from a Tharwa resident from which I quote:

Dear Steve,

The Tharwa Tennis Club is looking like having to fold up because of burgeoning costs. For instance they are charged \$75 per quarter from ACTEW for the lights plus land rent, \$200 per annum, and public risk insurance about \$700 per year ... Just too much for a small club to have to wear considering only a few years ago the club was just charged a peppercorn rent. If the club folds as it has no other option, the risk is there that we will lose the courts given the record of stupidity that Tharwa has had to endure.

Just another nail in the coffin of Tharwa.

This government has quite a history of neglect of this small community, a community that has had its very soul almost destroyed through the local school closures. Its residents were treated with utter contempt by the then minister in charge of the Tharwa bridge fiasco. And now it looks as though they might even lose their small tennis club due to the record of stupidity that Tharwa has had to endure from this government.

It is time for the government to open their eyes to the deterioration of our city and its suburban areas, adhere to timetables and address the issues that are out there. The constant response from Mr Stanhope, as it was from his predecessor, is, "There is a program in place." The trouble is that we never seem to get to some of the smaller suburbs that just keep getting pushed further and further to the end of this queue. They never seem to get near the attention from this government. The list of things that need doing for them just grows and grows.

Mr Stanhope: Didn't you write that yourself, Steve?

MR SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot has the call.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Stanhope, anything that you do not write or say appears to be stupid. I cannot take it as anything other than a recommendation from you. As Mr Seselja has outlined, there is a litany of waste that can be attributed to your government, Mr Stanhope. There is room to efficiently manage funds within the Department of Territory and Municipal Services that would allow for the department to undertake adequate maintenance of public areas, including local shops around Canberra on a yearly basis. The electorate would welcome this move. Mr Speaker, I commend Mr Seselja's motion.

MR STANHOPE (Ginninderra—Chief Minister, Minister for Transport, Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Business and Economic Development, Minister for Land and Property Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for the Arts and Heritage) (8.56): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Mrs Dunne: Mr Speaker, I was on my feet and I had your eye.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Stanhope already sought the call, Mrs Dunne.

Mrs Dunne: So I cannot speak for the three minutes before—

MR STANHOPE: It is two minutes to nine and, consistent with the agreement, I thought this would be the agreement of all of us.

Mr Coe: It is two minutes to 9 o'clock.

MR STANHOPE: Two minutes to nine.

Mr Coe: Two minutes to nine is two minutes to nine.

MR STANHOPE: I was trying to do justice to Mrs Dunne or any other possible speaker and I moved that the debate be adjourned at one minute to nine.

MR SPEAKER: I am sorry, Mr Stanhope. Do you mean that this motion be adjourned or that the Assembly do now adjourn?

MR STANHOPE: I have moved that the debate be adjourned. Subject to the outcome of that, I will move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Debate adjourned to the next sitting.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Mr Stanhope**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Public areas—maintenance

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (8.58): There are a few matters that I would like to touch on, including some that I was going to touch on briefly in the debate which Mr Stanhope just adjourned.

I will take up where Mr Seselja left off. Mr Seselja and I visited the Evatt shops last week, along with one of our staff. We spoke with most, if not all, of the shopkeepers there in the course of the afternoon. There was a very clear message that they felt that the government had pretty much neglected the Evatt shops. It is a very prosperous set of shops. It has a good mix of shops, and everyone we spoke to when we were there was telling us that business is good overall and that it provides a great service to the suburb. But they are crying out for some refurbishment, some prettying up. As the longstanding shopkeepers will tell you, nothing has been done at the Evatt shops for

20 or 30 years—to the public domain. It is not that they want to spend a large amount of money, but they want to perhaps look at improving parking access, improving some signage and just making the place look a little cleaner.

On the subject of cleaning, when Mr Coe and I went to Clean Up Australia Day in Macgregor back in early March, I arrived about a quarter of an hour or 20 minutes before the appointed time. An elderly gentleman had driven down and was waiting to see Mr Coe and I when we arrived, because he was so incensed by an article in the paper where Mr Stanhope had basically said that people should stop whingeing about the state of the city. He was incensed about the lack of cleanliness and the lack of mowing. He was a long-term previous employee of TAMS in its previous orientations. He had been involved in the mowing campaigns in the ACT. He was incensed that the Chief Minister could say that Canberra is looking fantastic. As we all know, it is not. This is the gravamen of Mr Seselja's motion here today.

This was brought home to me again this week, when a staff member and I visited a constituent who had some problems where someone had complained about the way they were keeping their chooks. I went inside their immaculate yard—an absolutely immaculate yard, with extraordinarily well-kept chooks, other birds and things like that. It was a great garden, where there was not a blade of grass out of place. Someone had complained, probably out of spite because they were not getting enough free eggs over the back fence. I do not know why, but it was interesting to look over into the common land from these people's backyard. I said to the house owner, "Who looks after the common land out there?" It was clearly common land. He said, "Vicki, the only time it gets mown is when I do it." This is what people are finding over and over again. If they want something done, they have to do it themselves, because the Stanhope government is not providing services in the electorate.

I cannot let today go by without doing one other thing. Ms Hunter reluctantly spoke in the motion on the budget and, in doing so, embarrassed herself in relation to her electorate by saying essentially that people should not be complaining about the GDE. If the Greens had had their way, the GDE would not have been built at all. It is very easy for Ms Hunter to say that; she does not have to get out of Belconnen every day when she goes to work, because Ms Hunter does not live in her electorate. Mr Coe, what was it this morning? An hour and 40 minutes to get to work from Nicholls? On most mornings, what used to be a 20-minute run is now closer to an hour from Evatt. Ms Hunter lives in O'Connor; she does not have to battle her way out of Belconnen, as Mr Coe's constituents do and my constituents do.

The traffic delays that we are experiencing in Belconnen are an absolute disgrace, and they are an absolute disgrace brought about by the shiftlessness of the Stanhope government, which would not build a proper road in the first place. We are now in a situation where we are being confronted with more traffic delays because of roadworks that have been forced upon the government because they did not do the job properly in the first place.

Legal aid

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (9.03): I rise to talk about legal aid and some services that are new initiatives. I regularly meet with officers from Legal Aid ACT, who

update me on initiatives in their area. I was pleased to meet with them again this week. They brought with them a copy of the latest strategic plan for 2008-12 and a paper to highlight the latest program changes that fulfil some of the new directions they outlined in that document.

This paper is called the snapshot paper for 2009. There is mention made of recent research in Australia and overseas that, not surprisingly, reveals that conventional methods of providing legal aid services to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our community do not necessarily meet their needs. These are groups such as the homeless, those living with mental illness and the elderly. I will read from the paper in relation to some of these initiatives:

- adopting a holistic ... approach to service delivery by building relationships with other community services to facilitate cross referral of people in need of legal and other kinds of help;
- improving access by vulnerable and disadvantaged people to legal aid services by establishing outreach ... services at community service hubs around the ACT;
- expanding and diversifying community legal education programs, and improving the targeting of legal information to those with special needs, and
- establishing a Prisoners' Legal Service at the ... Maconochie Centre ... to protect prisoners' rights and support rehabilitation by assisting prisoners and their families to resolve legal issues that arise during imprisonment and on reintegration into society.
- Establishing an outreach legal service for homeless people in the Territory, in partnership with community legal centres and the Aboriginal Legal Service.

I want to dwell a bit longer on that particular outreach to homeless people, which is called Street Law. It was just recently established and has a manager by the name of Amy Kilpatrick. Amy wrote to me about the program to give me a little bit more detail after the legal aid officers had been to see me.

The service commenced in November 2009 following a grant from the ACT government and a one-off grant from the commonwealth. It was a joint initiative of Legal Aid, the Aboriginal Legal Service and ACT community legal centres. It began by consulting with the homeless community as to where they should meet. They negotiated and discussed where they should provide this outreach service, with over 60 stakeholders, in order to help build an understanding of how legal aid could actually meet the needs of homeless people that are in need of their service. This resulted in not only the name Street Law, but also the provision of service through local advice centres. They will be providing services through local advice centres at host agencies, appointments booked at and through community services, and telephone advice.

There are going to be six host agencies for local advice around the city, including the Gungahlin Child and Family Centre, Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services, Indigenous services, some of the women's refuges and regional community services.

This will provide a place where homeless people will know that they will be able to get legal advice from Street Law. It fills a real need and a gap that they have identified in providing legal services to people in the ACT.

Institute of Foresters of Australia

MR COE (Ginninderra) (9.07): I rise tonight to speak about forestry, the Institute of Foresters of Australia, and the commitment of Bob Newman OAM in this field.

I believe that the forestry industry unfairly gets a bad rap from media and many involved in politics. Forestry has much to be proud of, and if we had more foresters involved in the management of our parks we would all benefit from their expertise.

The Institute of Foresters of Australia was established in 1935 and has more than 1,300 members involving all areas of forest management and conservation. The main objects for which the institute was established are:

- i. To advance and protect the cause of forestry
- ii. To maintain a high standard of qualification in persons engaged in the practice of forestry
- iii. To promote professional standards and ethical practice among those engaged in forestry
- iv. To promote social intercourse between persons engaged in forestry
- v. To publish and make educational, marketing and other materials available to those engaged in forestry
- vi. To provide the services of the Institute to forestry organisations inside Australia and in overseas countries as the Board may deem appropriate.

The institute produces the *Australian Forestry Journal*, which is a world-class publication, a newsletter called the *Forester* and more.

Last Sunday was World Forestry Day. A dinner at the ANU was held on Monday night to mark the occasion, for the presentation of awards and to hear from guest speakers. My Liberal colleagues Zed Seselja and Brendan Smyth were in attendance. Also in attendance were representatives of companies, government agencies, academics, students and others interested in forestry. The main award which was presented was the ACT Forester of the Year Award. This year the recipient is Claire Howell, who is a senior research scientist at the Bureau of Rural Sciences. I congratulate her on winning the prestigious award.

The guest speakers for the evening were Robert Newman OAM and Dr Peter Volker. Dr Volker is the national president of the institute and he delivered a presentation about the future of forestry and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Bob is a legend of the forestry community, especially in and around Canberra, as he has been active in the industry for 60 years. He and his wife Janet are wonderful,

community-minded people who continue to give much to Canberra. Bob received a Diploma of Forestry from here in Canberra and a Bachelor of Science in forestry from the University of Melbourne in 1958. He is a fellow of the Institute of Foresters and a life member of Timber Communities. On Australia Day 2006, Bob received the Medal of the Order of Australia. The citation reads:

For service to forestry through administrative roles in industry organisations and as an educator and author, and to the community.

Bob worked at the Victorian Forests Commission; CSIRO; Australian Newsprint; the Victorian State Electricity Commission; Strahan and Davies Pty Ltd; Timber Distributors Canberra and Southern NSW; and his own business, RL Newman, consulting foresters. I commend Bob for his ongoing commitment to forestry.

I would also like to commend the ACT Division of the Institute of Foresters of Australia for their promotion of the institute and the issues here in the federal district. In doing so I would like to acknowledge the committee members: Philip Pritchard, the chairman; George Dashwood, the secretary; and Peter Kanowski, Peter Langdon, Ian McArthur and Mark Parsons, who are all committee members.

This year, 2010, marks 100 years of forest education in Australia. Here in the ACT we are very fortunate to have what is regarded as one of the leading forest education providers, the ANU. As part of the celebrations this year, memorabilia will be on display; there is a social weekend in Creswick in Victoria on 16 and 17 October; and many other events are in store. People interested in finding out more should visit www.forestry.org.au.

In Bob Newman's address on Monday night, he discussed the need to get foresters back involved in managing our parks. We also heard of the lack of central leadership in many of the states where multiple government agencies are responsible for different aspects of the forests, which creates confusion and inefficiencies. We also heard about the many comparative advantages of forestry, one of them being with regard to the industry's position as a low emission industry.

Foresters always have been and always will be concerned with sustainability and managing changes in our climate. I urge all in this place to seek the views of foresters and the institute when it comes to how we manage and sustain our forests and parks.

Public areas—maintenance

MR HANSON (Molonglo) (9.11): Mr Speaker, I have been out and about in my electorate of late, and this relates to the motion that was brought on about local public areas. I would like to talk a little bit about the shopping centres in Molonglo and particular ones that I have been to over the last few months. One of those is the shopping centre at Ainslie, and I note that, although there is an intention to upgrade the car park and the shopping centre, this has been an ongoing plan for quite a while now. There is a certain amount of confusion amongst the shop owners there about actually what is going to occur, when it is going to occur and what the final result will be.

Certainly, they have been living at the Ainslie shops for many a year with a dilapidated centre. In particular, the issue that has been raised with me by many of the shopkeepers and many of the people that frequent the Ainslie shops is the state of the car park, particularly to the rear of the shops. That is where many of the people who work there park, and you almost need a four-wheel drive to park there. If you have been there you will know what I am talking about. The problem that business owners complain about at the front of the shops is a lack of car parking. It really does affect shop owners plying their trade and attracting people to come to their businesses.

A similar situation exists at Campbell shops, and if you go and visit the shop owners there they will complain to you and explain to you that there is a real problem there with the facility: the upkeep of the shops, the lack of public toilets—I know that is an issue that has been raised with government with no response; lack of parking; and lack of lighting, which has led to people allegedly conducting drug deals around the shopping centre and unfortunately a ram raid that occurred at those shops lately. There are some great shops at Campbell, places like Hello Cafe and some great restaurants that many of us have been to. Some of the small business men are really doing it tough, and the problems are making their jobs just a bit harder.

Other shopping centres I have been to include Mawson. If any of you saw the front page of the *Chronicle* today, you would know that Bob Smith, who is one of the community-minded shopkeepers, and others are very concerned about the state of the Mawson shops: the graffiti that covers the place, including the park-and-ride facility that was discussed today in one of the other debates; the drug deals that are going on around the place; the lack of maintenance, including the state of the grass in all the areas; and the rubbish that just covers the place. Problems that were raised with me at O'Connor include problems with long-term parking, the potholes, the cleanliness of the area and so on.

I just make the point that this is a real issue for many of the shopkeepers, small business men and women who are doing it very tough in today's economic environment. They are finding that the state of parking in the town around the local shopping centres and the rundown nature of public amenities mean that it is increasingly difficult to attract people to their shopping centres, because if you know you are not going to get a park, if you know it is going to be poorly lit, if you know it is looking a disgrace and it is a threatening area because there is graffiti everywhere, you will choose to shop elsewhere, and that is what is happening. I commend Mr Seselja for the earlier motion that was brought on, and I ask that the Stanhope government look into this issue with greater zeal than they have to date.

Canberra After Suicide Support Canberra Convention Bureau

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (9.15): Mr Speaker, I want to mention a couple of organisations: firstly, yesterday evening I had the opportunity to attend a function where Canberra After Suicide Support and the Mental Health Foundation of the ACT hosted the unveiling of a memorial seat at Weston park, Yarralumla, in memory of those who have lost their lives to suicide. It is a beautiful spot near the lake, and the seat is intended to be a special place for reflection, meeting,

solace and support for all those bereaved by suicide, as well as a means of quietly informing the wider community of the heartache that suicide leaves in its wake. The seat was funded by a Southern Cross community grant and bears the inscription:

In memory of precious lives lost to suicide
Dedicated by survivors of suicide bereavement
*“Although the world is full of suffering,
it is full also of the overcoming of it”—Helen Keller*

Canberra After Suicide Support is a self-help group organised by people who have experienced the consequences of the suicide death of someone close to them. CASS helps reduce the isolation suffered by those bereaved by suicide by introducing them to others who understand the heartache of suicide bereavement. CASS also organises the annual remembrance ceremony for lives lost to suicide.

I would just like to really pay tribute to Carmel O’Reagan and Sally Emerson who founded Canberra After Suicide Support. Both have been affected by suicide in their families. I think they are courageous women who are performing what I see as a very important service and offering a very important support to those who are suffering what must be one of the deepest forms of grief that any of us could imagine. I have been to a couple of their events over the years, and they never fail to move. Unfortunately for many of us, words fail us, but I cannot speak highly enough of both Carmel and Sally and all of those who work with Canberra After Suicide Support.

I want also to make note of the Canberra Convention Bureau and the top secret showcase dinner which they put on last Friday night. I did not get a chance to speak to you, Mr Speaker, but I believe you were in attendance. My colleague Mr Smyth was in attendance, as well as some federal representatives, including Annette Ellis. This is a real showcase. As the name suggests, it is the showcase dinner, which is about showcasing Canberra. The few days over which they have interstate clients is about showcasing Canberra. It is an important tourism event, because this is about people choosing Canberra as a convention venue, and we know the significant economic benefits of the conventions industry.

Robyn Hendry does a sensational job as the Chief Executive of the Canberra Convention Bureau. I would like to pay tribute to Robyn and her staff—Robyn always seems so calm under pressure, regardless of what is going on—Carla Huetter in sales, Robert Doyle, Jemma Davie and Leslie Francis, who are the main team, and I am sure there are others whose names I do not have.

I pay tribute to the Canberra Convention Bureau, particularly Robyn Hendry for her leadership. It was, as always, an excellent dinner, an excellent event, an excellent opportunity to showcase Canberra. For us as local representatives, I think it is important. When I go to these dinners, I always feel I am advocating for the ACT, advocating for Canberra, and it was a fantastic event. Once again, I thank the Canberra Convention Bureau for their hospitality.

Litlinks

MR DOSZPOT (Brindabella) (9.19): In my capacity as shadow minister for education and training, I was pleased to attend for the second year running an awards ceremony called Litlinks, held at the National Library theatre last night.

The Litlinks awards ceremony is an initiative of the ACT Association for the Teaching of English, or ACTATE, and generously sponsored by Roger and Maxeme Tall, owners of the Paperchain bookstore in Manuka. Litlinks is also supported by the National Library of Australia and the ACT Writers Centre.

The event celebrates and rewards young student writers from schools and colleges across the ACT. The event last night also showcased and launched the 2009 Litlinks book of writing by the creme de la creme of ACT high school and college students in years 10, 11 and 12. This year the competition attracted 47 entries from seven colleges and six high schools. The ceremony itself was emceed by Ms Jacqui Burke, a former MLA and now a frequent contributor to community activities.

Prior to the finalists and the eventual winners being announced, Ms Burke hosted a panel of experts that included last year's winner, Ms Ashley Orr; Mr Jack Heath, an author and the ACT 2009 Young Australian of the Year; and Mr Omar Musa, a renowned Canberra poet and rapper and the 2008 Australian slam poetry champion. They were very informative and entertaining as they shared their literary successes with students, teachers, parents and guests.

Dr Anthony Eaton, a Canberra-based author and lecturer at the University of Canberra, was the guest speaker, and he also had the unenviable task of selecting the overall competition winner, who was Jessica Swann of Erindale College, while the runner-up was Rachel Stokker from Lake Tuggeranong college. As a member for Brindabella, I take special pride in congratulating Jessica Swann and her teacher, Toby Grundy, from Erindale college and Rachel Stokker and her teacher, Danelle Gannon, from Lake Tuggeranong college.

Vice-president of ACTATE and Litlinks coordinator, Ms Suzanne Kiraly, said:

The best aspect of this competition is the hope that in some small way, it may be instrumental in launching new writing careers from as young an age as possible. We need more young authors to come forward and to hopefully encourage them through the *Litlinks* Writing Competition.

I echo and support Ms Kiraly's sentiments. The executive team of the ACT Association of the Teaching of English is comprised of the following members: Michelle Morthorpe, president; Suzanne Kiraly, Litlinks coordinator and vice-president; and members of the executive who were helping out last night, Jacqui Burke as emcee, Rita van Haren, Jennifer Evans, Cara Shipp, Christian Riley, Dennis Flannery and Gai Britt.

I would like to congratulate Ms Kiraly and the executive team on their hard work in launching and nurturing this initiative. As I said to them last night, I will be happy to

spread the word and encourage all schools in Canberra to promote the Litlinks competition to their students, as this wonderful initiative deserves for this competition to become a major event on the ACT education calendar.

South Australian and Tasmanian Greens

MS HUNTER (Ginninderra—Parliamentary Convenor, ACT Greens) (9.22): I rise to congratulate the Tasmanian Greens and the South Australian Greens on the elections over the weekend. We know that in South Australia the Greens have gained another upper house seat, and the ACT Greens send their congratulation to Tammy Jennings.

Of course, in Tasmania it was a thrilling campaign and a tremendous result. One in five Tasmanians voted Green and now, of course, we are witnessing minority government happen in that state. It is an unusual thing for Tasmania. As we know, here in the ACT it is the norm, but in Tasmania it is a rare thing. We are very proud of the campaign that was run down there. I would like to send our congratulations to the Greens' leader, Nick McKim in Franklin, Kim Booth in Bass; Cassy O'Connor in Denison and Tim Morris in Lyons. Also, we are very hopeful that Paul O'Halloran will get that fifth seat in Braddon.

Tasmania did vote for the Greens in very large numbers and chose to end majority government in that state. Nick McKim said:

What an opportunity this is for Tasmania, what an opportunity for a new era of constructive cooperative politics.

We can reflect upon these words here, particularly after the sorts of things that have been going down in the last couple of sitting weeks. There is a responsibility for politicians, in particular political leaders, to respect the will of voters and in good faith cooperate to deliver good outcomes for all the people of their jurisdictions.

As I said, we are thrilled by this result, and we will continue our efforts in the ACT Assembly to bring an open and cooperative approach to politics. I did speak to Nick McKim in the last couple of days to give my congratulations to him and to his team down there. It is still quite uncertain what sorts of arrangements might come into place, but we will watch that closely and with great interest.

The result was inspiring, despite the fear campaigns. Unfortunately, it seems to be a part of many political campaigns in this country—that last-minute smear tactic that is used. In this case I was surprised that it was the Labor government that chose to use a fear-and-smear approach. Here in the ACT, my experience of that was in the last federal election when it was actually the Liberals with Gary Humphries who decided to go down that path. The Greens' campaign was a very positive campaign. It spoke about the future of Tasmania, and I believe that that is what people, the voters, responded to.

I will finish with one of Nick's quotes that I found inspiring. I spent some of Saturday night getting onto the various websites of the electoral commissions in Tasmania and South Australia following the vote. I was quite inspired when Nick was on the TV and

said that the result in Tasmania was clearly “a result for the new believers”. From the ACT Greens to the Tasmanian Greens and the South Australian Greens: congratulations on a great result.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 9.27 pm.